

Big-Eyed Bugs

By Arthur L. Antonelli, Extension Entomologist
WSU Puyallup

Two species of big-eyed bugs may be found in field crops and orchards of the Pacific Northwest—*Geocoris pallens* and *Geocoris bullatus*. Adult big-eyed bugs are about 1/8-1/4 inch long, mostly buff, gray, or blackish. The large bug eyes of these insects separate them from other similar-sized insects. Immatures are similar in shape and color to the adults but range from 1/16-1/8 inch in length.

Life Cycle

Geocoris pallens spend the winter as adults in debris or other convenient hiding places. *Geocoris bullatus* overwinters as eggs. Big-eyed bugs appear in the field when other insects such as lygus bugs begin to increase to economic levels in the field. They are often found as predators of aphids, immature bugs, and leafhoppers. Eggs are subcylindrical, somewhat football-shaped and grayish-white; red eyespots are noticeable just prior to hatching. *Geocoris pallens* usually has two complete generations per year while *G. bullatus* has three. Big-eyed bugs are often confused with lygus, the nymphs in particular. Neither big-eyed bug nymphs or adults, however, should be confused with lygus bug nymphs, as all big-eyed bug stages are very similar in appearance and the large eyes and generally gray or buff color usually easily distinguishes them from the small-eyed greenish or brownish lygus nymphs.

Beneficial Effects

Both the adult and nymph big-eyed bug are predaceous on lygus bugs. The big-eyed bugs are also effective predators on other plant bugs, aphids, and leafhoppers. They are also known to feed on spider mites.



Fig. 1. A big-eyed bug feeding on a lygus bug nymph. By Jack Eves.