

Non-technical Summary

First Report of *Larra bicolor* (Hymenoptera: Sphecidae) in Alabama

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Article Citation: *Midsouth Entomologist* 1: 81–84.

Larra bicolor is a parasitic wasp introduced into Florida for biological control of pest mole crickets. Wasps hunt for mole crickets in the pastures and managed turfgrass. Once found, wasps chase the mole cricket to the surface where it is stung. The sting temporarily paralyzes the mole cricket enabling the wasp to deposit an egg. The wasp egg hatches and the larva feeds as an external parasite on the host mole cricket. The larva consumes the mole cricket then spins a cocoon in the soil. There are 2-3 generations of *L. bicolor* each year. Wasps have spread throughout Florida and into the northern Gulf states such as Mississippi where *L. bicolor* were discovered in 2004. The present study was conducted to determine if *L. bicolor* was present on golf courses in Mobile and Baldwin Counties (southernmost counties) in Alabama. In fall 2007, eight golf courses in these counties were identified and surveyed for *L. bicolor*. Wasps were observed or collected on 4 of the 8 golf courses surveyed. The discovery of *L. bicolor* in southern and coastal Alabama provides a new record for this species but more importantly it provides new information for turfgrass managers. On-going research projects are investigating the role of flowering plants in parasitism and survival of *L. bicolor*. Turfgrass managers and homeowners in Alabama can now utilize the findings of this and future research on biological control of mole crickets.