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Invertebrate of the Month

August 2008



Pests of Pests

“So, naturalists observe, a flea
Has smaller fleas that on him prey;
And these have smaller still to bite 'em;
And so proceed ad infinitum.”

Poetry, a Rhapsody, by Jonathan Swift 1733

The apple weevil *Otiorhynchus cribricollis* Gyllenhal is an exotic weevil pest of many trees including plantation eucalypts in Western Australia. It commonly ranges from 5-15 mm long; the specimen above was 5 mm. This specimen offered the opportunity to show its attending mite population, seen here as clusters of cream spots on the weevil's ventral surface, demonstrating the concept of pests of pests. Many insects, including indigenous forest dwellers have ectoparasite populations, much like Jonathan Swift's fleas on fleas.