

# Tale of Four Assassins more: [kayakpeter.net/etAlia](http://kayakpeter.net/etAlia)

On June 4th while walking a ridge top in Ojos Frios I spied an unfamiliar pretty bug all red black and bejeweled lurking midst a mint, Lacy Germander (*Teucrium laciniatum*). I was half expecting that as I had



noticed a red spot there in an earlier photo from April.

While checking an Oak shrub for gall wasps, I spied another lurking which disappeared when I attempted to capture it. So I went back to the mint and caught a third.



Later while at lunch I examine that one I had boxed: some sort of bug, but no wings so a nymph, fore legs most developed with hooks, head to tail 9mm, large. Later at home found out that it was an assassin bug after seeing my photo of a Predatory Stink Bug nymph (*Zicrona americana*) with the same sword-like mouth parts. Ah ha! look for predators, not plant suckers, killers!

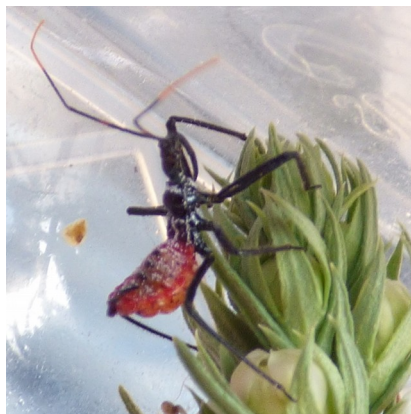


*Predatory Stink Bug w/ prey that she never released all the time I handled her*

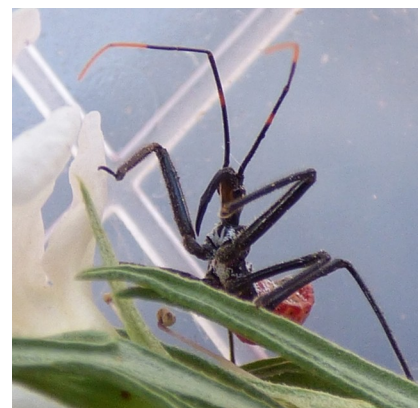
On 16 June 16th I returned to Ojos Frios and the patch of Lacy Germander, As I approached, my eye is on the mint to see if I can spy any of my so far unidentified assassins. No, but one of them sees me when I was almost on top of him, she takes off in a slow noisy blue-gray mini-cloud over the roof of the house.

Later, on the night of June 21 I came across a web page describing the Wheel Bug with photos of the nymphs and adults which have a thoracic crest that resembles a gear wheel sticking out of its thorax. A match and ID! even the slow noisy blue-gray flight of the largest of True Bugs,

my 1<sup>st</sup> assassin  
**the Wheel Bug**  
(*Arilus cristatus*).



*On my lunch time investigation*



*intimidating stance  
brings repatriation*

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On June 18 as I started my walk-about and spied a new moth, a Grape Leaf Skeletonizer (*Nealbertia onstans*) a block from my home on a Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) in the same family as grape (*Vitis*) while photographing this new find I noted that its right shoulder appeared wounded and as I moved in for close-ups of the moth I finally noticed the assassin lurking behind and below who I believe was the moth's assailant, the moth moved very slowly as I handled her.



Assassins inject a poison along with a digestive when they stab you, I understand it is very painful. Their forelegs covered with sticky glue (as they lack claws) cocked over their thorax are ready to jump out, grab and stab. I found it easy to ID my 2<sup>nd</sup> assassin:

**Pale Green Assassin Bug (*Zelus luridus*)**

On June 21 while checking on the moths I find what looks like two Pale Green Assassins with one prey, I box the whole gang with leaves for sorting out and photo shoot at home. A bit later on my portal it is a the female (~18 mm) dining on honey bee while copulating with a smaller male (~14 mm). Not wanting to further disturb them I



*home with a swollen abdomen*

cover them with a leaf and slip off to dinner. Later I return to find them finished, he wants to depart as his part in this is over, OK, I let him go, she is digesting, I'll return her tomorrow.

A month later the VA Creeper is out of bloom, the bees have found new blooms and the assassins have followed. On 12 July I see one in a garden on Valencia and on July 27 at the same garden I see an egg mass which meets the description and web photo of a *Zelus luridus* egg mass of ~58 potential assassins, the newly hatched will use the sticky stuff mom used to cover the egg mass to coat their front legs, their catching legs.



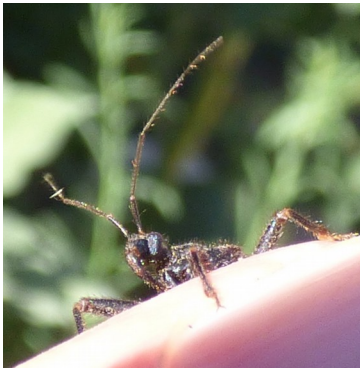
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“Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—  
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a ... ”

...not a tapping but a whiny buzzing in my ear,  
a mosquito flying near, even in drought?  
Dropping my tome, Vollmann's *Argall*, looking about  
I discover sitting beside me, basking in my reading light.

**Lenore?** I boxed her that last night in June thinking  
seed bug. On close inspection next day I discovered my  
third Assassin that month.

**Assassin Bug (*Oncocephalus?* sp.)**



Farewell **Lenore**,  
off into the garden with you



On July 7<sup>th</sup> in the Wild Garden while checking up  
on some recently hatched Predatory Stink Bug  
<<eggs I see on a nearby Purple Aster (*Dieteria*)  
leaf a very interesting mass of eggs >>



On July 11th We have emergence!

The nymphs were congregated under the leaf  
holding the empty eggs, but immediately began to  
disperse when I tried to photograph them. I think

that I missed the first hatching as there are two sizes the smaller 1.5mm.  
I looked out for a later instar, but never again saw them. Those spiny  
fore-legs are great fore grabbing  
prey, discouraging predation and  
provide the English name:

for the 4<sup>th</sup> assassin  
**Spined Assassin Bug**  
(*Sinea* sp?)

