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Food review: *Urocerus flavicornis* (Fabricius) (Hymenoptera: Siricidae)

by Matt Bowser¹



Figure 1: Larvae from spruce wood, 8.March.2015.

Last March as my family was working on putting up wood at my household in Kasilof, there was a time when

we came across quantities of large larvae in spruce (*Picea × lutzii* Little) rounds from a tree that had died in the last couple of years. We usually feed these to our chickens, but we found enough at this time that a meal for a person could be considered.

Most of these I am pretty confident were *Urocerus flavicornis* (Fabricius), which we have collected here (KNWR:Ento:8613), but some of the smaller siricid larvae could have been *Sirex nitidus* (T. W. Harris), also known from our property (KNWR:Ento:7175). There were also a few of what may have been beetle larvae.

I sautéed all of these larvae as if they were shrimp in a scampi sauce of butter, garlic, lemon juice, and crumbled, dried celery leaves. They cooked to a firm texture not unlike cooked shrimp and had a surprisingly sprucey flavor like spruce tips, spruce gum, or pine nuts. This seemed a little out-of-place in the scampi, but it was not bad. The terminal spines were surprisingly sharp and poky. It would have been best to chop off the hind ends of these larvae after they had been cooked.

In future, I think *U. flavicornis* larvae might be best served roasted, then chopped into a fresh pesto, where that sprucey taste might be a welcome, cheaper alternative to pine nuts.

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