

Delta Green Ground Beetle (*Elaphrus viridis*)

Status - Federal: Threatened State: None



Photo: Larry Serpa



Photo: Bud F. Turner

The Delta green ground beetle is a small (1/4 inch = 0.6 cm in length) metallic green carabid beetle which probably historically occurred through much of California's great Central Valley, though its actual former native distribution is unknown. It is presently known to occur only in Solano County. Even though Delta green ground beetles are small, few larger creatures eat them. They

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exude defensive secretions when attacked, and their bright metallic green, often bronze-spotted coloring is an effective camouflage when they remain still.

The beetle is largely diurnal, but may be active during the evening. The Delta green ground beetle is associated with vernal pool habitats, seasonally wet pools which accumulate in low areas with poor drainage, throughout the Central Valley. Dry in the summer, these pools fill with the onset of winter rains.

Range: The historic range of the Delta green ground beetle is unknown. The beetle's current range includes the Solano Land Trust/The Nature Conservancy's Jepson Prairie Preserve, and Wilcox Ranch which are largely protected. However, other known sites nearby are on private land and require ongoing negotiations to ensure protection of the habitat.

Life Cycle: The beetle's life cycle is in synchrony with its habitat; it emerges in January, breeds in February and March, and then enters a period of dormancy in May as the pools dry up. Female beetles probably reproduce one time a year in early winter. Both larvae and adults are active predators, and feed by sight, seeking out small soft-bodied arthropods and invertebrates. The beetle's life span is estimated at 9-12 months or more, but whether adults live for more than one year is unknown.

Conservation of this beetle depends on the protection of the vernal pool habitat which is itself endangered.