

Picasso's Beetles

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Nature is the greatest artist, proof of which is the *Sphaerocoris annulus*, known as the Picasso bug. The colorful insect is found only in Africa (Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Cameroon), where it is considered a pest by local farmers. The adult insect reaches a length of only 8 millimeters, but the beauty of the eleven ring-shaped spots on its elytra makes it a true masterpiece, as if painted by the brush of the Spanish artist.

In addition to their impressive appearance, the small beetles are also known for the sharp odor they emit, similar to the well-known green shield bug (*palomena prasina*) in our region. The coloration and unpleasant odor help the insect defend itself. Another curious fact related to the Picasso bug is its taste preferences. It feeds on nectar from plants within its endemic range,

including some commercial crops, but it most prefers coffee shrubs of the arabica variety (*Coffea arabica* - Rubiaceae) and citrus plants (Rutaceae). The reproductive period of the *Sphaerocoris annulus* species begins at the start of the dry season (November-December).

You can find more photos of the Picasso bug in the gallery below the article.