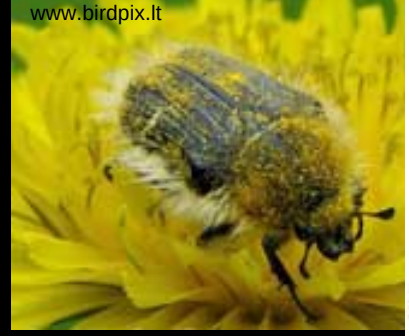
Blossom feeder scarab - *Epicometis hirta* Poda.

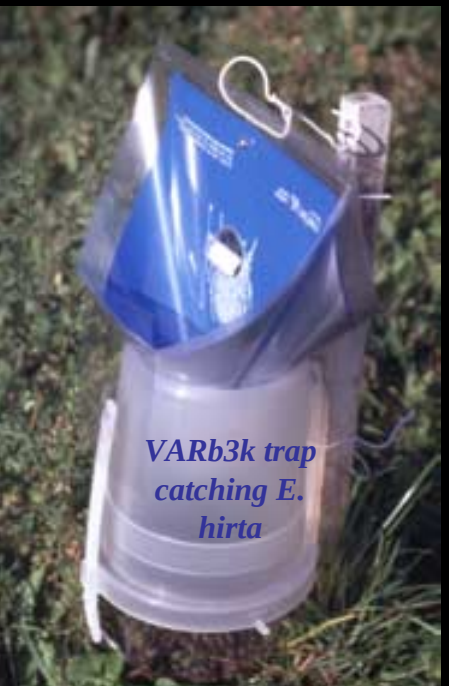
The beetle is flat, rectangular-shaped (length 8-13 mm), grayish black in colour. All surfaces of the body are covered with yellowish-whitish hairs. The elytrae are black, with whitish-yellowish spots.

Host plants: The adult beetle causes damage to flowers of apple, cherry, and many other spring-blossoming fruit trees. It damages frequently also cereals, first of all ears of rye. The beetle can feed also on many flowering weeds, i.e. different spp. of Compositae and Cruciferae. The beetle chews the petals, staminae and stigmae thus rendering the flower infertile. It can damage not only flowers in full blossom, but also in the bud stage. The grub (larva) lives in the soil, feeds on rotting plant material, it causes no damage.



The beetle, which is caught in the trap

The trap should be suspended in orchards from lower branches or placed on the soil by the trunks of trees. In strawberry fields the trap should be set on the soil, fastened to a pole. It is of utmost importance that the blue coloured upper funnel of the trap be in contact with sunshine as long as possiblеduring the day; beetles do not like to come into traps in the shade.



VARb3k trap catching E. hirta

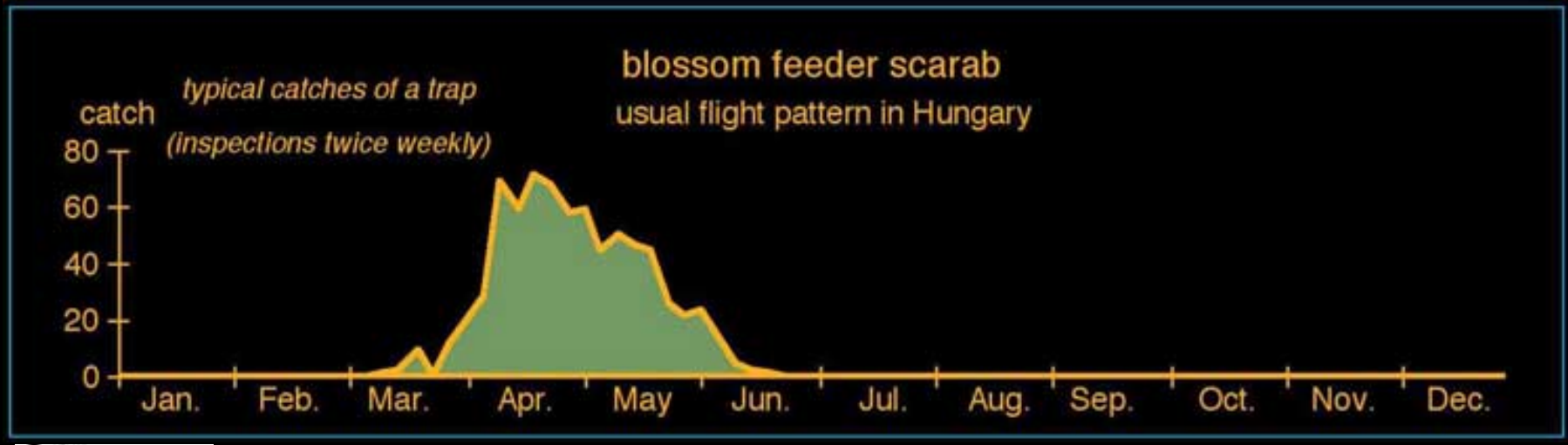
Usual beginning of trapping in Hungary is beginning of April, in any case it is advisable to set up traps several days before blossoming starts.

Selectivity of the CSALOMON® trap (based on tests performed in Hungary): the bait in the trap is a flower volatile, which increases attractancy of the light blue colour of the upper funnel of the trap. Besides *E. hirta* the trap can catch substantial numbers of *Oxythyrea funesta* (Scarabaeidae, Cetoniinae; mostly later in the spring). This beetle is similar in shape and size to *E. hirta* but it is not so hairy, and its black body colour is usually with metallic tinge. *O. funesta* can also cause damage by feeding on flowers, so catching it can help in control. Occasional catches of other closely related scarab (cetoniin) spp. can also be expected, i.e. *Cetonia aurata* and *Potosia* spp., which are much larger than *E. hirta* and are of different shades of bright metallic green, or *Valgus hemipterus*, which is smaller than *E. hirta* and its body is without hairs.

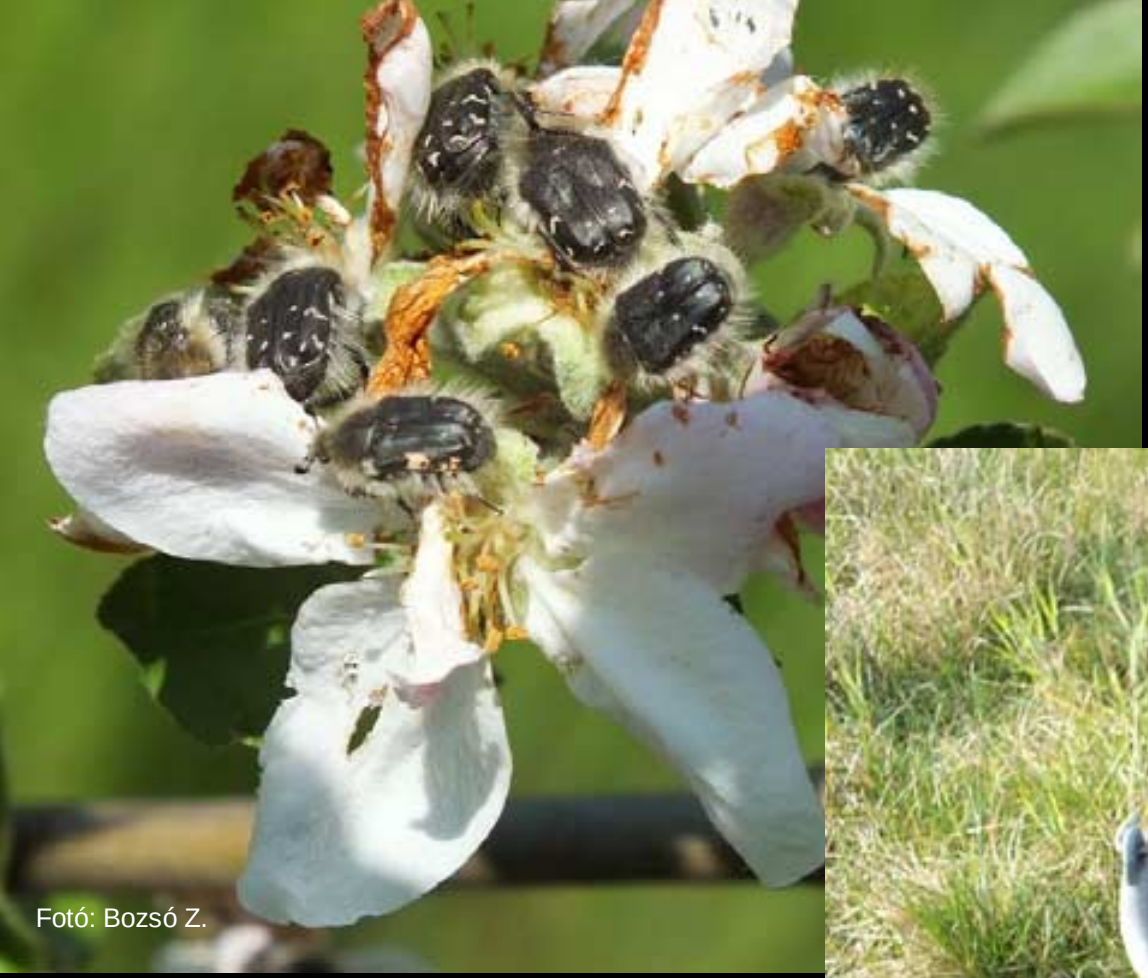
Longevity of the CSALOMON® trap in field conditions: depending on the warmth of the weather effectiveness of the attractant bait can start to diminish after 2-3 weeks.

After this period we suggest to exchange the bait for most effective detection and monitoring.
Timing of control measures against *E. hirta* should be based on detection and monitoring. Our traps enable sensitive detection of the first occurence of the pest in the given site, thus the direction of attack, centres of infection can be localized easily. Our VARb3 trap design has a very large catch capacity, so that is can be used apart from monitoring also for mass trapping of the pest, thus directly diminishing damage levels. From this viewpoint it is of further benefit that our trap catches both females and males of the pest. Beetles captured in the trap definitely will not cause damage to any more flowers in our garden! In case of mass outbreaks it may be necessary to take supplementary control measures. Such measures should be "bee-friendly", as at the time of attack of the pest pollination by bees is also very intense[1]. In backyard gardens it is possible to prepare suitable egg-laying sites for the beetles (soil dug up, mixed with hay, and covered by plant debris), and the hatching young larvae can easily be killed by a soil insecticide, in consequence the overwintering population will be decreased[1].

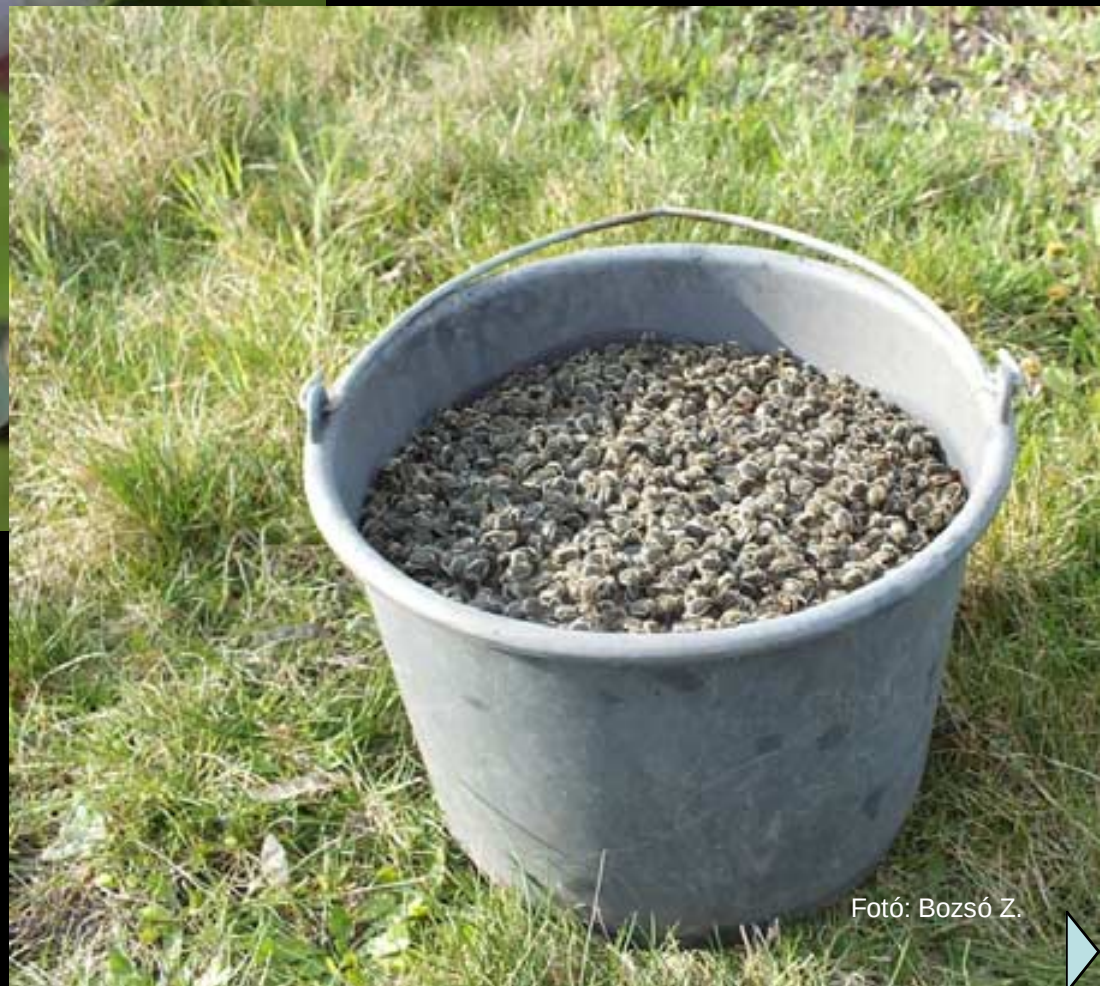
[1] *Jermy T, Balázs K. (eds.) A növényvédelmi állattan kézikönyve IIIA. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1990.*



To order / to inquire: MTA ATK Növényvédelmi Intézet (Plant Prot. Inst. MTA ATK) Budapest, Pf 102, H-1525, Hungary; phone. +(36-1)-391-8637, +(36)-30-9824999; fax +(36-1)-3918655; e-mail: <csalomon.orders@julia-nki.hu> or <h2371tot@ella.hu>; internet: <http://www.julia-nki.hu/traps/>.



Damaging beetles on blossoming apple and mass of scarabs captured during a week by four VARb3k traps in an outbreak year.



So it looks when caught in the CSALOMON® VARb3k trap!