

Six-Legged Immigrants Crawling Across The Land

by Joy Aschenbach
 National Geographic News Service
 WASHINGTON -- This is not meant to sound unfriendly, but foreign bugs can be the biggest pests.

Whether they're Medflies from Africa, gypsy moths from Europe, fire ants from South America, or other alien insects, they worm, sting, crawl, and chew their way into every corner of the country in a most uncontrollable manner.

On balance, alien creatures cause more damage than native American bugs. At least half of all agricultural losses in the United States -- about \$22.9 billion worth a year -- are attributable to foreign pests, most of them insects.

Foreign insects do so well on U.S. soil basically because they leave their natural enemies, their "biological control agents," back home. Some are so well established here that there's no getting rid of them. Science simply has not moved as fast as the bugs.

We're Outnumbered

Scientists admit that the best hope at this point is to try to reduce their numbers to levels that most people can live with. But the insects don't make that job easy. There are more insect species that all species of plants and other animals put together.

So far nearly a million distinct kinds have been described, and an estimated 2 to 9 million more unknown varieties are crawling around out there. The United States has 150,000 to 200,000 kinds, about 600 to 700 of which are foreign in origin.

Only about 5 percent of all insects are considered pests, but about 40 percent of the foreign ones here are. Alien insects are so unwelcome that the only way they can legally enter the country is dead: dried and preserved.

Most of the unwanted live ones -- those not issued special visas to be used for scientific research -- slip in with returning or visiting travelers. Right up there at the top of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's current "wanted list" of foreign bugs are the various fruit flies: Mediterranean, oriental, and South American.

USDA inspectors intercept more fruit flies than any other bugs, but it would take just one infested piece of souvenir fruit to create another California Medfly crisis.

Costly Critters

Nearly \$100 million already has been spent trying to eradicate the flies from California, the only state

besides Hawaii in which they are now found. Medflies have been longtime residents of Hawaii, the probable source of the California infestation.

Officials hope to declare California completely Medfly-free by the end of the summer. Fields have been sprayed, traps put out, and a citizen Medfly program set up. Residents are to turn in any Medflies found in backyard fruit trees. The rice-size Medfly larvae live off more than 200 varieties of fruit and vegetables.

The well-traveled gypsy moths, which arrived here from Europe before the first quarantine laws of 1912, have established residency in the Northeast and are moving south and west, showing up as far away as Florida, California, Oregon and Washington.

In their voracious caterpillar stage, gypsy moths ate the leaves off a record 5 million acres of trees in 1980 and more than doubled that last summer, defoliating 13 million acres.

"It looks like winter in July in the forests," said Entomologist Dr. Warren Johnson of Cornell University. This summer is expected to be as bad or worse.

And the gypsy moth is here to stay. It has been in this country so long that it is practically a naturalized citizen. The moths were first brought to Massachusetts in 1869 by a French naturalist who was trying to breed a better silkworm. Some moths escaped from the lab and by 1889 the caterpillars were so thick on the trees that they "stuck together like cold macaroni."

At the rate they're now traveling, they may eventually change the character of some forests, Johnson said. The moths travel long distances on the underside of campers and recreational vehicles, where the non-flying female frequently lays her eggs.

Although the caterpillars like numerous species of trees, they prefer oak. "Oak is no longer going to be the dominant tree in some areas," Johnson said. "One day there may be no such thing as an oak hardwood floor." It takes a heavy infestation to actually kill a tree, which can survive two or three defoliations.

Southern Nuisance

Becoming almost as infamous in the South as the boll weevil, which crossed the border from Mexico in 1892, red fire ants have invaded more than 230 million acres in nine southern states. Officials are trying to keep them from moving farther west across Texas.

Foreign Insects on Move in U. S.



A decade ago gypsy moths started moving out from their northeast stronghold, and now infest parts of more than a dozen other states. As caterpillars they defoliated a record 13 million acres of trees in 1981. Red fire ants have taken over the south at an explosive rate since the late 1950s, traveling about 20 miles a year and still heading west across Texas. Medflies are entrenched in Hawaii, but may be out of California by the end of the summer.

Photos by Emory Kristof, Fred Ward, and Charles O. Rear, © 1982 National Geographic Society



GYPSY MOTH CATERPILLAR



RED FIRE ANT



MEDITERRANEAN FRUIT FLY

The vicious ants, which probably boarded a freighter in Brazil and sneaked into the country through Mobile, Ala., in the 1930s, have made a real nuisance of themselves. They sting people -- repeatedly. They wreck farm equipment by building foot-high nesting mounds that are as tough as tree stumps when dry. Each mature mound swarms with 200,000 ants and there may be 50 mounds per acre.

The world's most destructive pest of stored grains, khapra beetles from India started infesting U.S. spice processing plants and warehouses in 1980 and 1981 for the first time since the 1950s.

The return of these hardy beetles, who hitchhike into the country in spice shipments and packing crates, forced the USDA this year to make fumigation mandatory for such things as brassware from India and chili peppers from Pakistan. Inspectors of the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service intercept the beetles at seaports 150 to 300 times a year.

Not all foreign bugs are bad. Some are actually sought after by USDA agents based in Europe, Asia, and South America. Most are brought here because they like to

eat bad bugs. None has turned out to be a pest.

Bug Against Bug

In 1981, 65 species of insects from 17 countries were let in. Thirty-eight different kinds were released against 20 pests. "Almost all pest insects have enemies. I can't think of one that doesn't," said Dr. Jack Coulson, head of USDA's Beneficial Insect Introduction Lab. "The gypsy moth alone has over 100 natural enemies."

But scientists have established only 12 here. Most haven't survived the new environment, especially in winter. More gypsy moth predators

were brought in last year from the Soviet Union, India and Japan.

It's still not enough. "We've given up looking for the silver bullet. Our real target is to cut the population down to acceptable levels," Coulson explained.

Another group of foreign bugs may help our bees in pollination. Japan's hornfaced bee, imported for study in 1978, has been found to pollinate 80 apple tree flowers for every one pollinated by a honeybee. The reason: Hornfaced bees fly faster and have a definite preference for apple flowers. They're not distracted by flowering weeds as are some honeybees.

Employees Given Birthday Party

Employees of the Raeford plant of Faberge, Inc., born on June dates were given a birthday party Thursday by the management at the plant cafeteria for lunch.

They are Maurice Hurst, Nancy McGuire, Lou Monroe, Helen McAllister, James Purcell, James Caulder, Pamela Carter, Catherine Purcell, Carol Beasley, Chula Livingston, June McLaughlin, Johnny Craycraft, Martha Mc-

Gregor, Johnnie Galberth, Fletcher Oxendine, Barbara Chisolm, Maurice Price, Jr., Major McQueen, James Carter, Caroline Daniels, Aleatha Locklear, Daniel Hopler, Chester Branch, Alice Taylor, Jean Long, John McPhatter, Jr., Billy Blackmon, Mae Jordan, Betty Luckie, Elizabeth Anderson, Frierson Barnes, Shirley A. Blue, Doretha Locklear, Theresa Stubbs, Marcia Smith, Robert Mattox, and Maude Duffy.

Deaths And Funerals

Mrs. Janie T. Monroe

Mrs. Janie Townsend Monroe, 76, of Rt. 2, Raeford, died Saturday at her home.

The funeral was conducted Monday afternoon in Galatia Presbyterian Church by the Rev. David Sutton. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Surviving are her sisters, Mrs. Treva T. Koonce and Mrs. Walta Bostic of Raeford, and Mrs. Ophelia Cameron of Carolina Beach.

Crumpler Funeral Home was in charge of the arrangements.

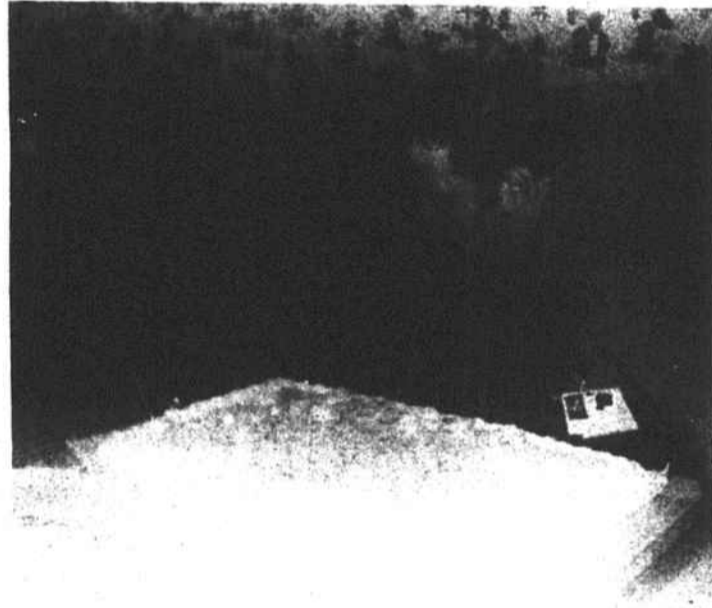
Revival Week Set For July 26-30 At Solid Rock

A Miracle Revival Week will be held July 26-30 at Solid Rock Church of God in Raeford.

The services will start at 7:30 p.m. daily and will be conducted by the ministers of Solid Rock. The pastor is Eldress Elouise Campbell. Everyone is invited.

Trial Inductory

Sis Flossie Taylor will preach her trial inductory the first Sunday in July at St. Mary Holiness Church. The service will start at 7:30 p.m. Bishop George McKoy is pastor.



Billy Blackmon just blew out the candles on the birthday cake.



GIRL SCOUT CAMP -- Girl Scouts of all ages will head for Camp Graham on Kerr Lake near Hendersonville July 25 for a week of fun and learning. This photo was taken at camp. Girls interested in attending are advised to contact Karen Rooks at 875-8186.

KIDS REVIVAL

The Rev. Delbert Garrison of Cedar Creek will conduct a Kids Revival at the Church of God on Green St. beginning July 11 thru July 18. The Barnyard Gang, Count Sin, Mr. MacGregor, Georgia and more will be featured. Each night there will be games, stories, a puppet show and a special message preached for children and their parents. Services will begin each Sunday at 8:30 p.m. and Monday thru Saturday at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

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