

NATURE NOW

Insects' Wiles Basic Means of Existence

By LYDIA KING FRETSE
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

(Editor's note: This is the final installment on Mrs. Fretse's article on the insect world.)
Of all life forms, insects are the most fabulous in their habits and manners. They demonstrate to an astonishing degree that untaught behavior which we call instinct. We have space for only a few examples.

Wasps, bees, ants and termites reach an advanced stage of interdependence and have a highly organized social order. Ants especially have their work schedules, their social duties and their sex patterns so tuned to the good of all, that the group moves with efficiency and precision.

One of the strange insects is the praying mantis. "Preying" means it would be a more suitable name for this little hypocrite who uses its fore legs like arms—folding them in an attitude of prayer while waiting to pounce upon some other insect. The female eats her mate as soon as the courtship is over.

THE MUD DAUBER wasp seals in each of her egg cells, a paralyzed spider which she has previously immobilized by inflicting two expertly placed stings, one on either side of its thorax. This she does so that the developing larva can feast upon a continuing supply of fresh meat.

Certain ants keep and care for plant aphids from which they milk the sweet nectar which is their food. Others cultivate tiny fungi which they eat. These they grow on leaves which they bury in subterranean tunnels.

The walking stick, bereft of all trimmings, so resembles the bare twig upon which it rests that it can scarcely be seen unless it moves. The leaf insect of the tropics looks so much like a green leaf, even to veination and to decorating its legs with what appears to be tattered leaf-fragments, that its mimicry is almost beyond belief.

In our own country insects destroy an estimated \$2,000,000,000 worth of crops each year. As a destructive agent, the western grasshopper heads the list.

He descends in countless hordes and from dawn to darkness can leave behind hundreds of acres shorn of every spear of corn, grass or wheat.

EACH SPRING the tent caterpillar begins his destructive work, while his tent decimates many a stripped cherry and apple tree. Almost no garden crop is safe from some variety of beetle, grub or louse. Farmers now have machinery suitable for spraying insect-killing chemicals upon entire fields either by land or from the air. Thus, man has helped to control but has not been able to eradicate insects by chemical warfare.

IN NATURE'S balanced economy, agents of destruction are as necessary as agents of production. Here the insect renders an important service for millions of his kind are members of the sanitary squad ridding the earth of tons of both plant and animal debris.

Certain species of flies and their maggots are constantly at work disintegrating dead flesh. Ants and beetles are especially effective in returning dead vegetable matter to the soil.

In these pages frequent reference has been made to the service insects render as cross-pollinators. An orchard owner needs to see to the bee population of his area if he wishes a fruit crop. One who plans a harvest of clover seeds must also depend upon bee-pollinators lest the flower heads go unvisited with the result that at season's end they will be dry and empty.

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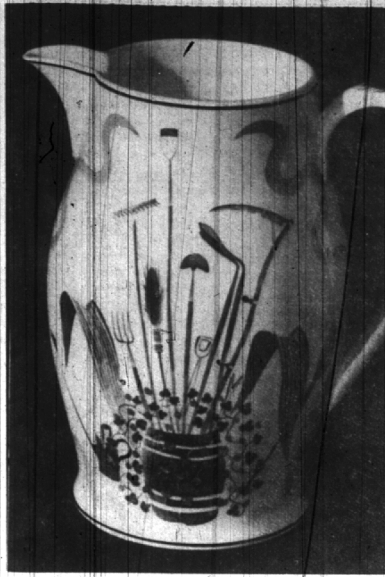
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EARTHWARE JUG designed by Eric Ravilious for Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, Lt., Stoke-on-Trent, England is among an outstanding selection of home furnishings in an exhibition called "Design from Britain" at the Museum of Cranbrook Academy of Art, from July 18 through August 16. The museum is open daily except Mondays, from 2 to 5 p.m.

roadside and garden of much of their color and beauty.

And, as an after-thought, what about the honey that sometimes drips from your breakfast muffin, or that length of pure silk you are thinking of making into a dress?

Insects multiply with such staggering rapidity that some entomologists say they will finally inherit the earth. But they are so held in check by nature's balanced economy that if they were to destroy man's food they would at the same time be destroying their own.

Only a few insects are carnivorous and these in the final chapter would then like the famed gangham dog and calico cat, be forced to "eat each other up."

NEED SOMETHING FOR YOUR HOUSE? Then locate it by reading or using the classified ads in The Eccentric each week.

Clarence W. Birman, Atty., 207 Wabash Bldg., Birmingham, Mich. 4-1111

STATE OF MICHIGAN - The Probate Court for the County of Oakland, In the Matter of the Estate of CARROLL B. GRIFFIN, Deceased.

At a session of said court, held at the Probate Court in the City of Pontiac, in said County, on the 23rd day of June A. D. 1953:

Present: Honorable Arthur E. Moore, Judge of Probate.

Order appointing time for hearing claims.

Notice is hereby given and it is hereby ordered that the time and place for hearing on claims against the above estate shall be the 11th day of September, 1953, at nine o'clock in the forenoon at the Probate Court in the Court House at the City of Pontiac, Michigan.

All creditors or claimants against the above estate are further notified and ordered to prove their claims at said hearing and prior to said hearing to file written claims therefor, with this Court and with the Secretary of this estate, under oath, containing sufficient detail reasonably to inform the fiduciary of the nature and amount of the claim.

ARTHUR E. MOORE, Judge of Probate. (19)

PLAY IT SAFE!

Cleaners Risk Much, Save Little

The process of dry cleaning a garment or other fabric in the home is one of the most dangerous jobs that can be attempted. The liquid materials required for this operation have, in some cases, the lowest flash point possible for petroleum products.

Many people who attempt this work at home do not have the proper knowledge of volatile liquids nor do they have the proper equipment for testing them.

With most people, their first thought in cleaning is to use naphtha or gasoline. Because of the volatile characteristics of these materials they vaporize faster than any other liquid, and because the fumes are heavier than air, they spill over the top and out of the cleaning vat or tub and cover the floor area first, to then build up a density throughout the room.

The person using this type material is never conscious of this density until ignition from a stove, match, light switch or some other source has touched it off.

The result is too often death to the user and other occupants of the home, plus heavy damage to the building.

Recently, approved non-inflammable liquids have appeared on the market. The label on their containers indicate whether or not the material is safe for home use.

Never copy submitted, early is necessarily given preference, so the "early bird" usually gets the space.

Birmingham Fire Department

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