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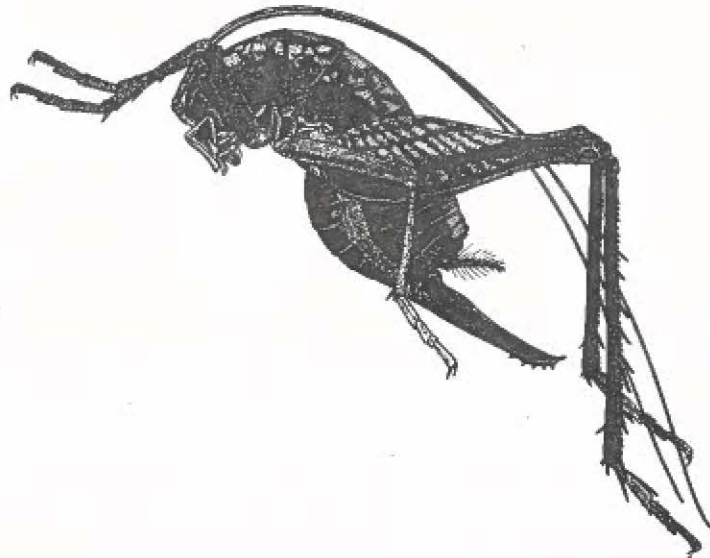


INSECT NOTES

CRICKETS: CAMEL, CAVE AND FIELD

About this time of year homeowners often encounter some strange looking and noisy insects in their basements. The strange looking ones are usually camel or cave crickets, the noisy ones are usually field crickets.

Camel Crickets. These crickets are wingless and have a noticeable hump-backed appearance. Their hind legs are long and they are excellent jumpers (as they would have to be, without wings to depend on!). They have long antennae. They are called cave crickets because they are often found in dark and damp locations, and are common in caves. In fact, there are eyeless *cave crickets* known only from the depths of some caves in North America. They spend their entire life in darkness--depending on their long antennae and sense of smell to get about and feed. The name camel cricket comes from the hump-backed appearance? Who knows!



Cave or camel crickets feed on decaying organic matter, and prefer damp and dark locations. They can be found in basements, but usually not in great numbers, and usually in basements with a definite moisture problem! They are rather secretive, and may go unnoticed for a long time.

Control. Solving the moisture problem is usually the first step in controlling cave crickets. If a chemical method is required, any of the common aerosol insecticides will be effective.

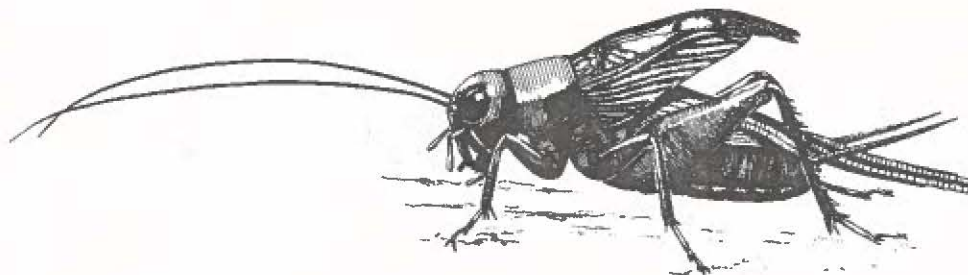
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Field Crickets. These black crickets are common noise makers around houses in the late summer and fall. When the weather turns cold they often come close to houses to take advantage of the heat retained during the night. They can be attracted to lights at night, and can fly to second floor apartments at times. In the fall these crickets can gain access to houses, and the males can make their presence known by chirping. This sound is made by rubbing their wings together (and all this time you thought it was their legs!).

There are lots of wild stories of these crickets destroying household items, such as sweaters and carpeting. The fact is that they rarely occur in numbers large enough to cause any damage, and rarely live very long in houses. Modern houses are much too dry for these insects, and many of them die because they do not have enough water. (Which is why they are often found in kitchens, and frequently under the refrigerator--where the drip pan for the frostless refrigerator is located!)

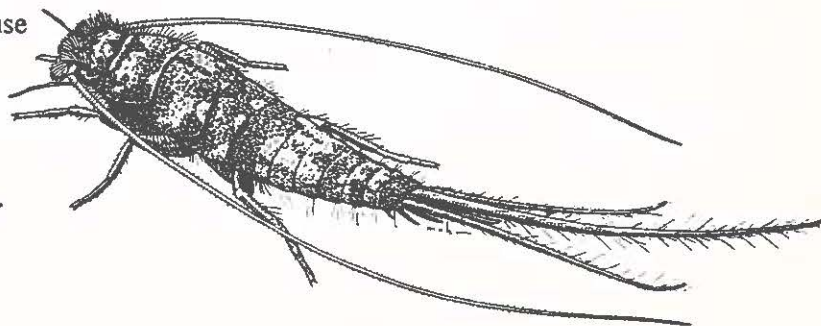
Control. These crickets are not usually present in large enough numbers to warrant the use of an insecticide--a vacuum cleaner or a fly swatter can do a good job. Common aerosol insecticides can be used if necessary.



SILVERFISH

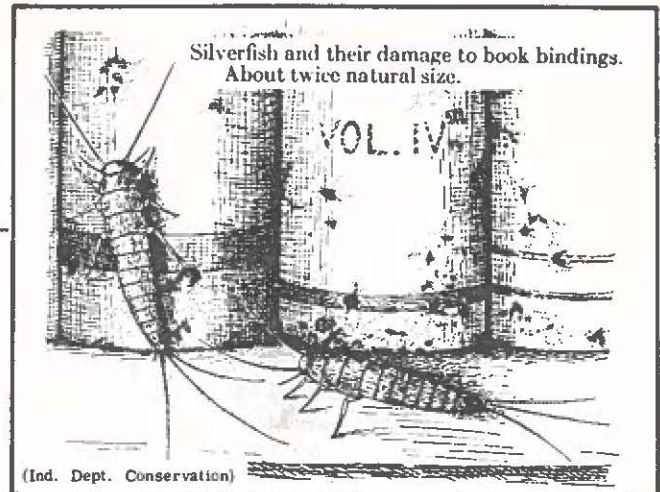
Silverfish are primitive insects that are often found in cool and moist areas such as basements, and bathrooms and kitchens. They are fast moving, silvery to dark steel gray insects that can be observed at any time of day or night. The food preferred by these small insects includes starchy material, such as glazed paper, cereal, starched clothing (they are often accused of damaging clothes), wallpaper paste, glue, leather, and dried insects. Quite a list!

They can occur in large numbers, and seem to be increasing in their pest status in modern houses, perhaps because of the popularity of wallpaper in the last several years. They are often difficult to control with common aerosols because they can be almost anywhere, and it is difficult (or at least it should be) to spray everywhere. There seems to be a definite stigma attached to the presence of these little



critters in the house--akin to having cockroaches!

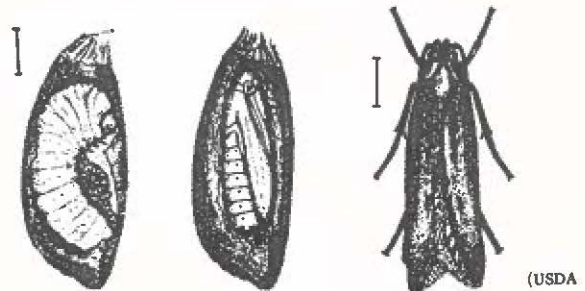
Control. They can be difficult to control. Their food source should be looked after first--toss out the collection of magazines, old books, and infested cereal. The use of moth crystals and moth flakes in areas in which they seem to be abundant can be effective. Aerosol sprays can be effective, but surfaces will have to be treated, allowed to dry and then the material replaced upon them. Good luck.



HOLES IN THE INDIAN CORN

The Indian corn frequently used as ornamentation during the fall can become infested with tiny caterpillars and produce moths in late fall or winter. The pest is the Angoumois grain moth. The adult moths are very small and are not usually attracted to lights--they tend to remain close to the dried ears of corn. Eggs are laid on the corn kernels and the caterpillar feeds within one kernel! The adult moth is produced in about one

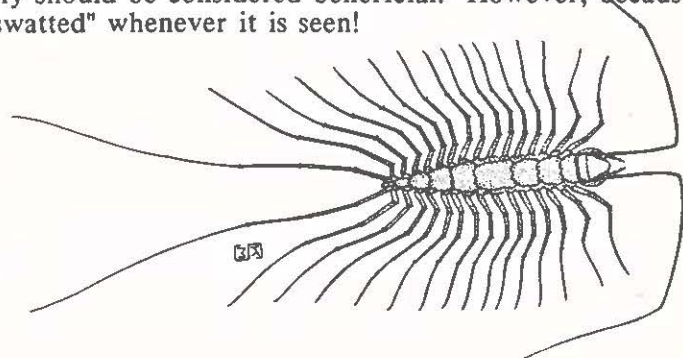
month. There can be more than one generation. Ornamental corn ears may already be infested with this pest when they are purchased, but the infestation may not be evident because the caterpillar does not puncture the surface of the kernel when feeding. The first sign of trouble may be the cloud of moths produced when the corn ears are moved one day!



Control. The availability of microwave ovens makes the control of some flour, cereal, and meal pests a little easier. I suggest that the infested ears be placed in the microwave and "nuked" for a minute or two. All we want to do is kill some larvae, and not heat the corn too much. As the caterpillar is all liquid, the microwave blast should easily kill it.

HOUSE CENTIPEDE

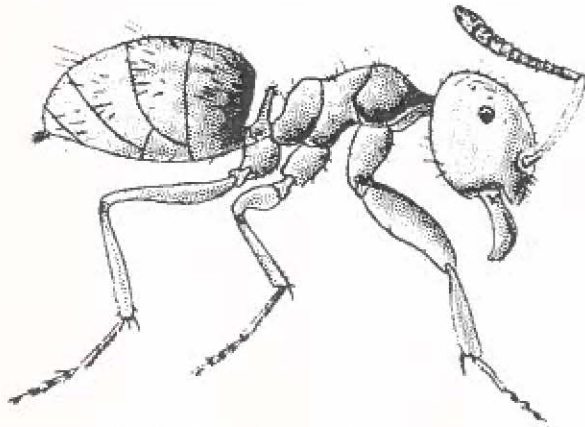
Another critter often encountered in basements--and in other part of the house--is the house centipede. It is a strange looking animal, with long legs on each segment of the body, and a pair of long, elbowed antennae. It can move very rapidly and climbs walls very well. This close relative to the insects is a predator--it feeds on insects and spiders it encounters in houses. It can move quickly and capture prey with its jaws. It is not a threat to humans, and probably should be considered beneficial. However, because of its looks and actions it is usually "swatted" whenever it is seen!



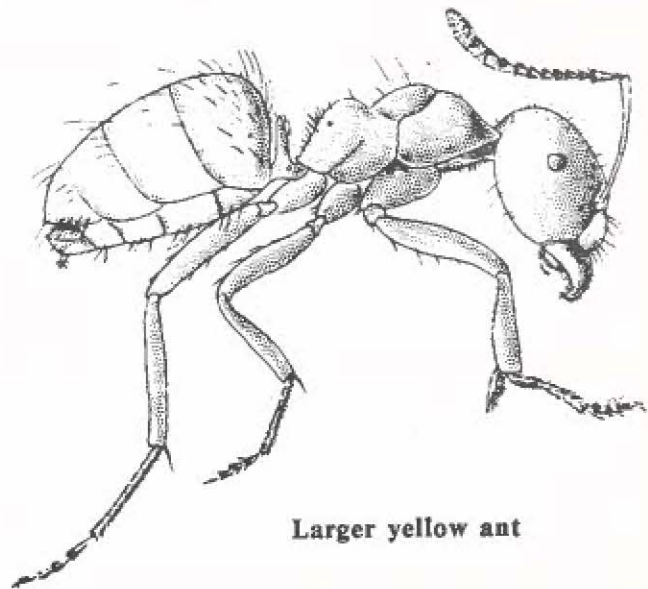
YELLOW ANTS - LARGE AND SMALL

Yellow ants frequently "swarm" in the fall of the year--and these swarms often cause some concern among homeowners. These ants are probably the most common group of ants associated with houses in Virginia. Colonies of the *larger yellow ant* and the *smaller yellow ant* are usually found around the outside of houses, under the sidewalk, or next to the patio, or against the foundation, or sometimes in the foundation. They go unnoticed for most of the year, except for the times the colonies produce swarms--winged ants (males and females) that leave the nest to form new colonies. It is not uncommon for several colonies in the area to produce swarms at the same time. That can lead to a lot of ants flying around the neighborhood!

Yellow ants are not structural pests. They nest in soil, but rarely nest in wood at the foundation level of houses. They have been reported to nest in the sill plate (wood on top of foundation block) of houses, and to enter the basement. Control of these insects is not difficult--once the nest is located. If control is necessary, use liquid formulations of *diazinon* (*Spectracide*), *carbaryl* (*Sevin*), or *chlorpyrifos* (*Dursban*).



Smaller yellow ant



Larger yellow ant