Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel

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Mimosa Webworm…There Here And Doing Damage

It is that time of year when mimosa webworm (*Homadaula anisocentra*) caterpillars (larvae) are feeding and creating their protective habitat on honeylocust, *Gleditsia triacanthos* and mimosa, *Albizia julibrissin*. The larvae are 1/2 inch long when fully grown, and rapidly move backward when disturbed. Larvae web leaves together on the ends of branches. Webbing usually starts at the tops of trees and serves to protect caterpillars from natural enemies including parasitoids and predators, and spray applications of contact insecticides. Heavily-infested trees appear brown or scorched as the larvae skeletonize the leaf tissue. Larvae eventually fall from trees on a silken strand just prior to pupating. Mimosa webworm pupates in bark crevices or the pupae can be observed glued to structures. What can be done to alleviate problems with mimosa webworms during this time of year? Well, in some instances, it may be too late although initial damage may be minimal. Insecticides recommended for control or regulation of mimosa webworm…that are primarily exposed…include acephate (Orthene), *Bacillus thuringiensis* spp. *kurstaki* (Dipel and Thuricide), indoxacarb (Provaunt), spinosad (Conserve), and carbaryl (Sevin). In addition, several pyrethroid-based insecticides (e.g. bifenthrin and cyfluthrin) may be used to "regulate" mimosa webworm caterpillars. Be sure to read the label of each product to make sure that at least webworms are on the label. Also, high-volume sprays are essential in order to contact the larvae inside the protective webbing. If trees are heavily-infested with webbing then it may be too late to apply an insecticide. If feasible, selective pruning will quickly remove mimosa webworms.

Raymond Cloyd

Silver Spotted Skippers in Soybeans

Soybeans are still the focus of attention for a myriad of insects; however it is the late planted/double-cropped fields that are still at risk, at least for the most part. We've already discussed most of these pests in previous issues, but there is one unique insect that we have had several calls about in the last week. Brian Edelman, Bern Seed, Bern Kansas, discovered some fields infested with silver spotted skipper caterpillars (see photos). This seems to be a rare event, not that silver spotted skippers are rare, but that they have infested soybean fields at this density level. They generally are considered more of a garden/horticultural pest, if considered a pest at all, so to find them feeding in soybean fields at this infestation level is very rare and we hope it does not start a trend for future years. Several insecticides are registered for control of this insect although there is no established economic injury level in soybeans.

Photos courtesy of Brian Edelman

Jeff Whitworth *Holly Davis*

Return of the Magnificent Seven …….

In staying with movie trivia (as so often happens with my articles): this 1966 remake of the original 1960 movie, The Magnificent Seven, is somewhat misleading ----- only the characters Chris, Vin and Chico actually **Return** (the other 4 were killed off). But never fear, 4 new characters were inserted to bring the "good-guy gang" back to 7 (although not quite as **Magnificent** --- personnel opinion). [And Yul Brenner (Chris), the guy who made "bald is beautiful" a catch phrase, was the only "repeat" movie actor].

Well, **S**even **M**agnificent **C**reatures who do seem to **R**eturn to our homes and businesses in Kansas every fall are hackberry nipplegall psyllids, crickets, spiders, multicolored Asian lady beetles boxelder bugs, squash bugs and elm leaf beetles, (Figure 1).

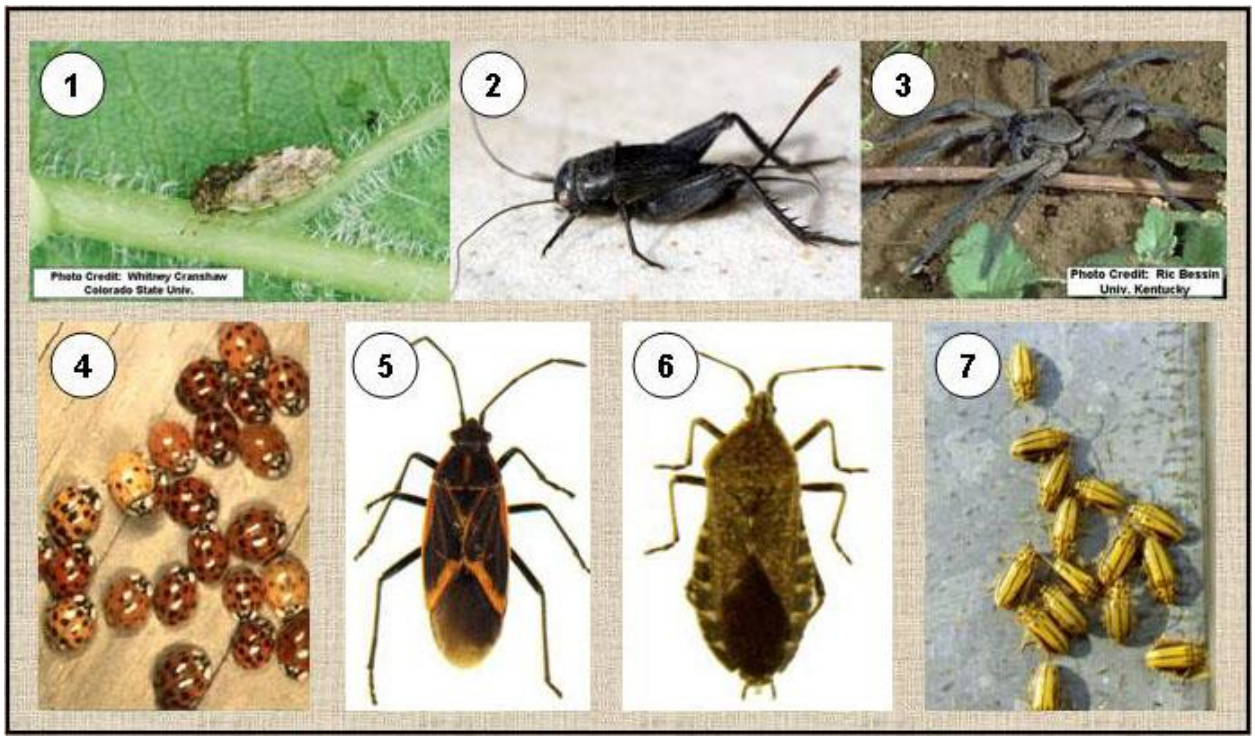

Figure 1

Most of these overwinter as adults. And all are trying to get in out-of-the-cold.

#1 – Hackberry nipplegall psyllids are very small insects which (during the fall of the year) emerge from the galls within which they developed through the summer months. They overwinter as adults. They seek out secluded areas into which they secret themselves away to escape the harsh winter elements. In natural settings, this means any available crack or crevice, and in and under debris/trash. In residential areas, homes offer alternative overwintering sites. In the dark of night, indoor lights will attract psyllids to window areas. Because

of their small size, they are able to slip through window screens thus gaining entrance into homes. They become a nuisance because of their presence.

#2 – While crickets overwinter as eggs deposited in the soil, adults will seek warm quarters. Moving towards sources of heat (radiated heat from house/building foundations), crickets slip through any available opening to gain access to indoor areas. Again, their mere presence can be annoying. In addition, while the chirping of male insects may be considered beautiful music-in-the-night out-of-doors, indoors it may be regarded as a noisy racket. Although not bona fide fabric pests, being what they are (insects with chewing mouthparts pests) and doing what many insects do (test/taste-their-surroundings), crickets may be responsible for creating holes in and leaving stains on light-colored fabrics (curtains/sheers the oft-cited areas showing damage).

#3 – In the eyes of many (most?) people, spiders are regarded as creepy entities. All spiders are venomous ---- this is how they "still" their prey. However, bear in mind that most spiders are so small that their fangs may be too weak to penetrate our toughened skin, have but a very mild poison (to humans) with which they "still" their prey, and are not aggressive. Yet they too (who ordinarily live outdoors) will seek to bask in the warmth of homes/buildings. In the don't-cry-wolf category, "wolf spiders" give some people the heebie jibbies due to their size (some species with a 4-inch leg span) and hairy appearance. Overall color varies from brown to grey, and they may be flecked with different body patterns. Wolf spiders are hunting spiders that are always on the prowl. But they are timid creatures and do not seek out and attack people.

#4 – Multicolored Asian lady beetles (MALB) are a relatively recent addition to the list of nuisance pests. While in nature, most coccinellid (lady beetle) species are beneficial predators (as is the MALB), the MALBs have become a nuisance pest due to their habit of congregating (especially) on the south side exteriors of homes and buildings. They then seek any available opening to gain indoor entrance.

Their crime? Again, their presence. Also, when disturbed (if picked up or brushed up), they leave behind an orangish fluid causing a stain. There is an odor (objectionable to some) accompanying the beetles. And some people say that MALBs bite (to which I respond, "Show me the blood!" ---- but I do agree that they may "pinch" with their mouthparts).

#5 – Boxelder bugs (BEB), also known as "Democrat bugs", are regarded as nuisance pests, again, based on their presence whether (in number) one, several or many. Although their preferred host is their namesake tree (boxelder), ash and maple serve as alternative tree species upon which BEBs thrive. Especially in the fall of the year, these insects will gravitate towards areas of warmth (again south sides of homes and buildings). Some gain access into indoor areas while others seek shelter beneath debris/rubble around home/building foundations. Throughout the winter months during brief warm spells, BEBs will be "awakened out of their slumbers", and actively crawl up the sides of houses and buildings to bask in the sun.

#6 – Ditto for squash bugs except to change their preferred host plants to squash and pumpkins. One great difference, however, is that whereas BEBs cause no apparent damage to their tree hosts, squash bugs are all-too-

well-known for their deleterious effects on squash and pumpkin vines/plants. But in the context of this newsletter, they are regarded as indoor nuisance pests.

#7 – The feeding activities of elm leaf beetles (ELB) and their larvae result in elm trees taking on a "burnt appearance" in late summer and early fall. Second generation beetles seek dry protected sites to escape the rigors of winter. Again, "indoor sanctuaries" favor their survival through the winter months.

So we have named "The Seven". What does one do to prevent them from entering homes/businesses? **Deny-them-entryways!** This is easier said than done. There is no "perfect structure". Even newly constructed homes and buildings have gaps and holes through which insects can easily move. A person needs to inspect their property(ies), identify portals of entry and seal them off (be generous with caulk). Check exclusionary screening (and repair or replace as needed) over/behind gable vents, roof vents, breezeways. Replace seals around windows, doorways and garage doors. Remove debris and trash around foundations to deny protected sites providing harborage(s). Consider a 6-12-foot "barrier" insecticide spray treatment around homes/buildings, and (possibly) extending up the side of the structures.

Despite one's best efforts, insect/arthropod "visitors" may still be encountered indoors. Simply remove and dispose of them ---- by hand, vacuum or any other method-of-choice. Bear in mind that all of these are OUTDOOR SPECIES which are merely seeking refuge/survival during the winter months.

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