Common Myths About Lovebugs, Florida Folklore

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& Jim Cuda
Lovebugs are economically important!

http://www.carwash.com
Lovebug season is good for business. Lovebugs have actually been helping some local car-care businesses.

Their guts have some kind of enzyme that eats through the clearcoat on an automobile. It burns almost like an acid burn in your paint job. You can't scrape it off. You can't clean it off - it's permanent.

We're getting lovebugs off of vehicles all the time. We hope that lovebugs stay around until Christmas, it's good for my business.
How can you prevent lovebugs from damaging your car?
What are lovebugs?

✓ Lovebugs are not bugs but flies
  - Order Hemiptera- “True bugs”
  - Order Diptera- “Flies”
    • Family Bibionidae- March flies

✓ Lovebugs have other names
  - *Plecia nearctica* Hardy
  - Honeymoon bugs
  - Airline bugs
  - Two-headed bugs
  - $@#$&@$%$#/ !!!!!!!
Male lovebugs's eyes 4x larger than the female's - help locate potential mates?

Female lovebugs larger than males - deposit ca. 350 eggs

Adult lovebugs live only 3-4 days
Lovebug Mating and Dispersal

- Mating begins when females fly into a swarm of males usually in the morning.
- Larger males near the bottom of swarms have greater mating success.
- Up to 8 males compete for 1 female.
- Mating lasts up ca. 12 hrs.
- Dispersal continues for a day or two (or until smashed by a vehicle!).
Where do lovebug larvae live?

½ in
What do lovebug larvae do?
Lovebug Larvae

Lovebug larvae require several months to develop into adults
- Oct to April - Spring generation
- May to September - Fall generation

Lovebug larvae are beneficial
- Recycle decaying organic matter
- Large numbers found under cow manure
Can lovebugs hurt you?

NO! They are a part of nature, a nuisance but a minimal problem compared with mosquitoes…
How can I avoid lovebugs?

✓ Will it help to spray pesticides to control lovebugs?
✓ How can I get rid of them?
✓ Do they have any natural enemies?
✓ Occur Apr-May & Aug-Sept.
Lovebug Flight Activity

Leppla et al. (1974)
Where did lovebugs come from?

- Lovebugs emigrated from Central America into Texas
- Lovebugs spread east along Gulf Coast
  - Louisiana - 1920s
  - Mississippi - 1940s
  - Alabama - 1940s
  - Florida - 1950
  - South Carolina - 1975
Distribution of Lovebugs
Common Lovebug Myths

- UF researchers brought lovebugs into Florida and genetically engineered them to eat mosquitoes.
- Lovebugs are mating the entire time they are coupled.
- Bees do not visit flowers infested with lovebugs.
- UF is conducting research to control lovebugs.
- Lovebugs are attracted to light-colored objects.
- Lovebugs are attracted to cars and exhaust fumes.
- The body fluids of lovebugs are acidic.

http://ipm.ifas.ufl.edu
Information on Lovebugs

- **UF/IFAS Featured Creatures article on lovebugs:**
  http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu

- **EDIS article on lovebugs:**
  http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG068

- **UF/IFAS extension information source:**
  http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu