

Common Myths About Lovebugs, Florida Folklore

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SOLUTIONS
for *your* LIFE

IPM Integrated Pest Management
Florida

Lovebugs are economically important!

Professional
Car care Online



<http://www.carwash.com>

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Lake City Reporter

- ✓ 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?**

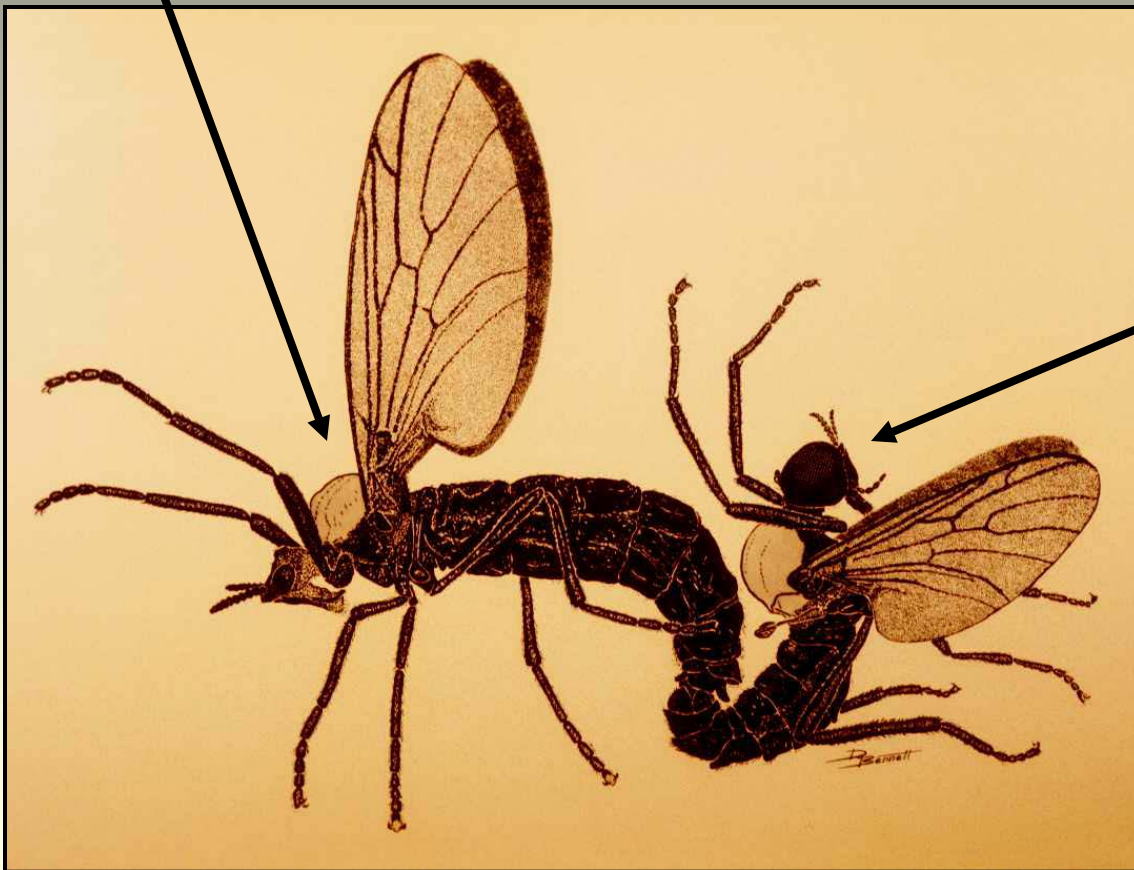


What are lovebugs?

- ✓ 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
 - \$@#%&@%\$# !!!!!!!

Adult lovebugs live only 3- 4 days

Female lovebugs
larger than males-
deposit ca. 350 eggs



Male lovebug's
eyes 4x larger than
the female's- help
locate potential
mates?



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?





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



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Can lovebugs hurt you?

NO! They are a part of nature, a nuisance but a minimal problem compared with mosquitoes...

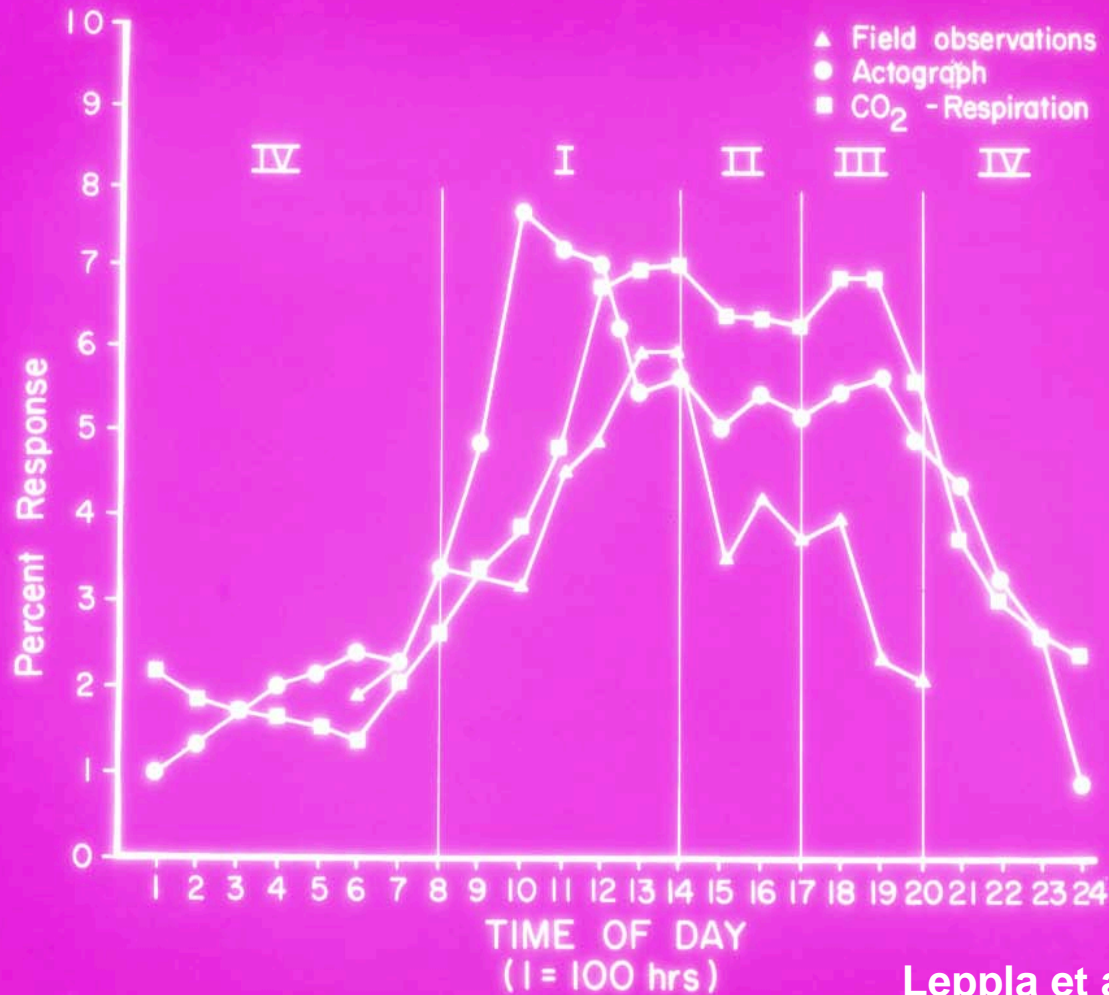


How can I avoid lovebugs?

- ✓ 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.



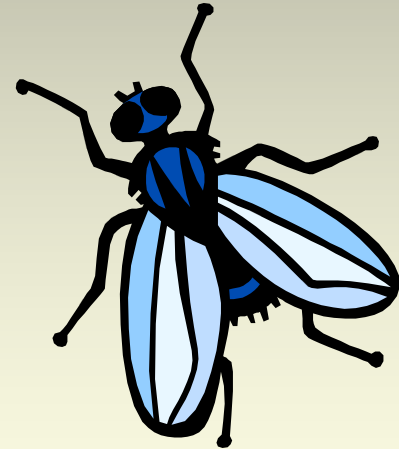
Lovebug Flight Activity



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

A detailed illustration of two lovebugs (Plecopterus) is positioned in the background. One lovebug is in the foreground, facing left, with its wings spread. The second lovebug is slightly behind and to the right, also facing left. The insects are depicted with brown bodies, long antennae, and translucent wings with visible veins.

- ✓ **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>