

Leafhoppers — Invisible insects of the meadows

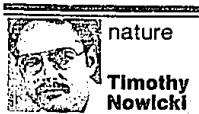
WHEN A person looks out over a meadow in southeastern Michigan, the beautiful summer wildflowers mirror a rainbow, spider webs reflect the morning dew, and the wind waves the whispering grass. Even from the surface, a meadow is a grand place to view.

But just as the ocean surface may reflect the beauty of a sunset, the most spectacular beauty is found beneath the surface. Oceans provide coral reefs with their multitude of colorful fish and corals, meadows hide the world of insects.

Until you take the time to sweep the meadow grasses with a simple insect net, you will not know the real hidden beauty of a meadow. Insects exhibit such variety of forms and colors that it would take volumes to describe. But let's look at one invisible insect of the meadow you will surely find.

Leafhoppers are invisible until you walk through the grasses. Then like kernels of corn, they pop in profusion in all possible directions. They are not much bigger than a kernel of popcorn either. When you examine one that has landed on your pantleg it will be about a quarter-inch long.

One species, the red-banded leafhopper, is blue and red striped. Particularly striking when seen, their



nature

Timothy Nowicki

beauty often goes unnoticed.

Before it moves away, examine how the wings are held over the back in a tent-like manner. Then, once you have satisfied your curiosity, induce it to jump by gently nudging the tail with your finger. In an instant, the leafhopper has rocketed from its launch point a distance of 12 inches. A 6-foot man would have to jump the distance of a football field to span an equivalent distance.

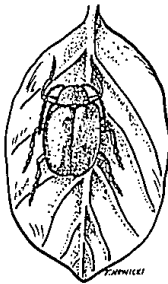
Some leafhoppers travel even greater distances in order to find food during the summer. When the adults become active after their winter dormancy, they may fly 150 miles north to find additional food. Young raised in this new area will fly south in fall to take advantage of warmer winter weather.

There are many other insects which are easy and enjoyable to see, if you take the time. Damselflies, dragonflies, beetles and other bugs

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are amazing and fascinating to adult and child alike.

The writer is a naturalist at Independence-Oaks in Oakland County.



around Oakland

Senior citizen picnic on tap

A picnic with free food and entertainment will be part of the Senior Celebration Day festivities from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, July 26, at Independence Oaks County Park.

Bus transportation will be provided by the city of Pontiac, Oakland County Parks and Recreation and the Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency from designated senior citizen centers in the county.

The deadline for reservations is July 19; call Marie Evans, 858-5163 for additional information.

Entertainment will include a pup-

pet and magic show, OAKlowns bingo, square dancers, cloggers, and Gladys Russell of Hazel Park, a nationally recognized whistler.

Barbecued chicken will be served for lunch. An optional donation of \$1 for those 60 and older, or \$3 for individuals under 60, is requested for the meal.

Independence Oaks is on Sahabaw Road, 2.5 miles north of I-75 near Clarkston. Senior citizens who drive to the picnic will not be charged a park entry fee.

OU appoints arts dean

John K. Urlice of Muncie, Ind., is the new dean of Oakland University's arts and sciences college.

The new dean comes to OU from Ball State University, where he has been first dean of the fine arts college and a professor in the theater department.

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