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The New York Times

'SUPERFLIES' HELP PROTECT FORESTS BUT CREATE A FUROR IN MAINE

AP. New York Times. (Late Edition (East Coast)). New York, N.Y.: Jul 21, 1983. pg. C.14

Abstract (Summary)

"Friendly!" exclaimed Deputy Sheriff Tommy Giroux of Somerset County as a dozen or so of the flies hovered around his lemonade carton. "I think I'd rather have the caterpillars."

"Those are one treat we didn't need," he muttered over a steady hum that filled the woods like the sound of a floor polisher. "It's a good thing they don't bite. They'd murder people."

"They're just about the most aggressive thing I've ever run into," said Mr. [Bud Dillihunt]. "They even drive the deer and moose crazy. You see them go charging right into the water."

Full Text (487 words)

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For weeks this summer, red-eyed "superflies" have taken over patios, lake fronts and general-store conversations in a string of western Maine logging towns. Although boosted by officials as valuable killers of destructive caterpillars in a state where commercial forests cover 90 percent of the total area, the superflies remain an accursed nuisance to outdoors-loving residents.

"Friendly!" exclaimed Deputy Sheriff Tommy Giroux of Somerset County as a dozen or so of the flies hovered around his lemonade carton. "I think I'd rather have the caterpillars."

When the first bulgy-eyed visitors swarmed through the woodlands along the Quebec border a year ago, "We didn't know what they were," recalled Bud Dillihunt.

When they returned to northern Maine this year, said District Ranger Galen Cook of the state forest service, "you'd leave the windows of your vehicle open and they'd fill it right up."

People around Moose River and Big Wood Lake are used to working and relaxing outside, and they are no strangers to the mosquitoes, black flies and midges that infest the woods that power the local economy.

But the incessant buzzing and ticklish crawling of the nonbiting bugs -oversize look-alikes of the housefly and identified as *Sarcophaga aldrichi* - now commonly send citizens, as well as the deer and moose that fill the forest, scampering for cover.

In a wooded picnic grotto on the grounds of the Border Riders snowmobile club in Dennistown, Mr. Dillihunt stood still under a sizzling sun and shivered slightly as two dozen descended upon him.

"Those are one treat we didn't need," he muttered over a steady hum that filled the woods like the sound of a floor polisher. "It's a good thing they don't bite. They'd murder people."

Even without biting, the flies have provoked a collective drone of hostile comment. Between feedings they leave yellow spots and droppings everywhere, clouding windows and soiling laundry.

"They're just about the most aggressive thing I've ever run into," said Mr. Dillihunt. "They even drive the deer and moose crazy. You see them go charging right into the water."

Some residents say the infestation was caused by an ant caterpillar assault by Canadian foresters that went awry. But Richard Dearborn, a state entomologist, maintains that the visitors are native and fairly harmless. Indeed, he insists they are productive because they eat tent caterpillars and spruce budworm caterpillars, which threaten to strip the forests.

The flies moved in behind a recent surge in caterpillar populations over the last four years, he said. Those outbreaks "have been the most striking here in the East in the last 20 years," Mr. Dearborn said.

As parasites, the flies lay living larvae on the cocoons of the forest tent caterpillars - enough, officials hope, to reduce the costly pests' numbers.

Forest-product production in Maine was valued at more than \$3 billion in 1980, and Mr. Dearborn said state officials and the industry were grateful for any help they could get.

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