

# The Maine Entomologist

A FORUM FOR STUDENTS, PROFESSIONALS & AMATEURS IN THE PINE TREE STATE

Volume 8, Number 1, February 2004



## From the President

I hope that all of you are staying “warm and toasty” in spite of the cold. After a much milder than usual November and December, I thanked the woolly bears for a welcome forecast and then in January - WOW what a switch! I am frequently asked what this cold, rather snowless (in southern Maine) weather, will do to insect populations? While I honestly don't know in most cases, I suspect that there will be some impact especially on more vulnerable species such as our newcomers (invasives). Most of our native species should make it just fine in this more typical Maine weather. Your observations would be appreciated.

As we approach March and you bring out those seed catalogues, don't forget to check over your collecting supplies! You have an extra day this leap year to get in step! Even though it can be snowy and cold for at least another couple of months, insect activity is already underway. Check your MES calendar or “What to Look For” in this issue to see what's likely to be going on.

I would again like to thank all of our members who have supported us over the past year; at field events, in writing items for our newsletters, supporting our calendar and most recently at our January workshop in Portland. Those of you who have been there for MES know just

how important this support is and how much more we can all learn and what fun we can have with a diverse group. I would be remiss however not to mention that to continue our momentum we could use a much stronger and diverse commitment.

While our core group continues their selfless efforts, it would take only a little additional effort by a “new face” to give a spark to brighten their day. The 2004 season is already starting out to be a season of change with the optional availability of our newsletter electronically as a “pdf” document. Some of our key people have been working hard for a number of years and they need a break. So let's ALL pitch in and make increased member support a part of the exciting changes for 2004. Show us that you really appreciate all that has been done and prove that the MES is here to stay. A little more effort by each member can make a BIG difference overall. Take a few minutes over the next couple of months to contact a member for information or just to talk, write a short article on some interesting insect or entomological experience that sparked your enthusiasm, read this issue and jot a note on your calendar for one or more of our 2004 field events that you could attend. I hope to see more of you afield in 2004. Stay warm!

-Dick Dearborn

## Inside This Issue:



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## New Officers Wanted!

2004 will mark a turning point for the MES as three members of the Executive Committee will be ending their terms. Treasurer Edie King and Newsletter Editors Chuck and Laura Lubelczyk will be leaving behind vacancies that need to be filled. Anyone willing to participate should contact an MES Executive Committee member. Officers will be elected for 2005 at the annual meeting in September.

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## Shake Rattle and Roll

Last spring at the MES field trip hosted by Bob Nelson at Colby College we were collecting around the edges of a dried up beaver pond. On our walk to the pond I had accidentally broken the tip of my aspirator (more on how to make an aspirator in a future article) so instead of being able to suck up tiny insects, I was forced to using my fingertips to grab them. Unfortunately each insect brought with it a pinch of fine, silty mud, and my kill jar soon became a dirty mess.

At home I placed the dirty insects in a petri dish with warm, soapy water, swirled them around a bit and then let them soak for twenty minutes or so to clean off the dried mud. They looked pretty clean. But what a let down I had when I finally tried to identify them through the microscope! The fine silt was unaffected by my meager attempts at washing, and was caked into every small feature on the insects, making identification very difficult. But I remembered a tip that Dick Dearborn had given me for cleaning insects. His suggestion was to try a denture-cleaning machine, which can be purchased from a dentist. A call to my dentist revealed that he didn't carry them, but a quick Internet search found quite a few of these "sonic cleaners" which are also used to clean both dentures and jewelry for around \$20. A few mouse clicks and a week later I had one.

These units are basically small cup-shaped containers into which a cleaning solution is placed along with whatever is to be cleaned. When plugged in the solution vibrates at a very high frequency loosening any caked-on dirt. ("Ultra-sonic" cleaners are also available which vibrate at even higher frequencies, but they are much more costly). I have used mine with both soapy water and the cleaning solution that comes with the machine for very good results. Five minutes or so in the cleaner seems to be adequate for even the dirtiest of specimens. Even older specimens that are pinned can be cleaned by inserting the pin into a block of foam and suspending them upside down over the unit so that the bug is in the vibrating fluid. Now before I pin any new material they routinely go into the sonic cleaner for a quick shake, rattle, and roll!

-Chuck Peters

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## Second Annual Winter Workshop

On Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, after a few cold weeks of sub-zero temperatures that had challenged the hardiest of snowbirds, the Maine Entomological Society held its second annual winter workshop at the University of Southern Maine's Portland campus. It was a much-welcomed event for the many hard core 'buggers' who can't wait to get outdoors this spring and begin collecting.

The event started at 9:30am, with a number of exhibitions having been set up by various MES members. Included were exhibits on caddisflies, fly tying (not lassoing but for fishing), insect stamps and coins, new and old entomology books available, insect collecting and monitoring, dragonflies, insect galls, and a section on entomology for kids. All of which were spread out over four lab benches and accompanied by their respective presenters, eager to share their knowledge concerning their exhibits.

At 10:30, Don Pummil from L.L. Bean, gave a very informative lecture on global positioning systems (GPS) in the nearby auditorium. With various models and maps as visual aides, the presentation became an interesting exchange between novice and experienced GPS users. Even with all the questions, Mr. Pummil was forced to end his knowledgeable presentation before lunchtime.

After lunch, Dave Powell began a presentation on digital cameras. His down-to-earth explanations concerning their usage with his own camera and television monitor, elicited comments and questions from an attentive audience.

The meeting began to wind down around 3:30 as attendees packed up their displays, all the while saying their good-byes. With the slowly approaching spring promising to bring warmer weather, MES members can now look forward to the next meeting on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

-Dana Michaud



### DOUBLE REMINDER!

First, don't forget to renew your membership if you haven't already done so or this will be your last issue. Second, if you wish to receive the newsletter via e-mail in PDF format, please let the editors know by e-mailing [naturbuf@gwi.net](mailto:naturbuf@gwi.net). Please let us know whether you would like to continue receiving a hard copy or not when you write.



## Maine Damselfly & Dragonfly Survey Update

A couple of quick announcements from the MDDS:

First, let this serve as a final reminder to get all 2003 (or previous!) MDDS specimens and field forms to me now so that Paul Brunelle can process 2003 data in time for final specimen curation, databasing, and summary analyses.

And second, while the official MDDS project draws to a close this winter, stay tuned for post-MDDS protocols for those interested in continuing to collect and submit Maine specimens to the project. Our understanding of the fauna is obviously never complete and we don't want to discourage on-going participation by motivated members. To this end, it would be helpful for me to know who among you have a continuing interest in Maine damselfly and dragonfly collecting in a scaled down post-MDDS project. Interested volunteers should contact me on this as soon as possible (e-mail, phone, or letter).

Thank you,

Phillip deMaynadier  
Endangered Species Group  
Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
650 State Street  
Bangor, ME 04401  
Phone: (207) 941-4239  
E-mail: [phillip.demaynadier@maine.gov](mailto:phillip.demaynadier@maine.gov)  
<http://mds.umf.maine.edu/~odonata>



## Bats (and Others) in the Belfry

A recent article published in *The Journal of Medical Entomology* examined the ectoparasites from seven species of bats, including *Myotis lucifugus*, the little brown bat. The most commonly collected arthropod parasites were the bat flea (*Myodopsylla insignis*), the wing mite (*Spinturnix americana*), the bed bug (*Cimex adjunctus*), and a species of soft, or argasid, tick (*Ornithodoros kelleyi*).

Most ectoparasites of bats spend the majority of their lives either continuously feeding on the host (wing mites) or attaching for brief periods then residing in the roosts (ticks and fleas). While many of these are very host-specific, the diversity of a parasite community may be a result of many factors including host behavior, size and type of roost, and the home range of bat species.

According to Dick Dearborn, there are records of bed bugs being taken from bat colonies in the Bethel region. However, there are no records of soft ticks in Maine. It would not be a surprise to find them though. It may just be a matter of looking in the right spots (or roosts). They become a concern for people when bats roost initially in buildings. As they abandon the colonies, the ticks may be left behind, and seek other hosts. One report from Iowa indicated that these ticks were able to survive years after bats were excluded from a home.

The actual effect of these parasites on bats is unknown. But the high density of bats that roost together might make exchange of these arthropods very easy.

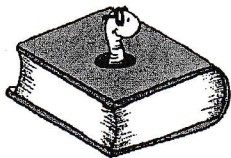
-Chuck Lubelczyk

## The Vast Minority

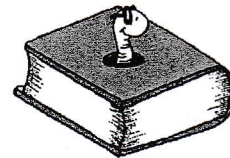
For those of you that missed it, the National Public Radio program "Living on Earth" that was broadcast on December 12, 2003 covered the current plight of biodiversity and taxonomic studies. In a nutshell, taxonomy, is a dwindling field and not being filled by enough new blood to replace the old. It may be a rare event when a new "significant macro-vertebrate" such as a whale is described in 2003 but many scientists are worried that among the 10 to 30 million potential species of living organisms that could exist on the planet, only a fraction (about 20 to 30 percent) have been given formal names or at least marginally studied in some way. As the current rate of extinction increases at an unprecedented rate, scientists hope to discover and describe as many of them as they can before the clock runs out. For those interested in hearing a replay of or seeing an e-archive of this program, go to [www.loe.org](http://www.loe.org), and check out the archive section for the December 12<sup>th</sup> show. Folks can also write to them at:

Living on Earth  
20 Holland Street, Suite 408  
Somerville, MA 02144

-Chuck Lubelczyk



# BOOK REVIEWS



## A Guide to Common Freshwater Invertebrates of North America

By J. Reese Voshell, Jr.

Published by McDonald and Woodward  
Publishing Company in 2002

This book might be disappointing for a trained entomologist looking for a key or a way to identify a specimen to species but would be a great resource for amateur naturalists, teachers, students, people working in water quality monitoring or anyone with enthusiasm but little or no invertebrate ID experience.

The book, a softcover, is broken down into three sections. The first, the introduction, is centered on the biology and ecology of freshwater organisms and their environments. It also explains how to study freshwater invertebrates with homemade or inexpensive, simple-to-use scientific equipment. There are photos to demonstrate how to use the equipment. Many of the helpful hints given would be perfect for the environmental educator. After several years of doing stream surveys, I still picked up a few techniques and tricks.

Section two of the book is the real meat of the text that describes nearly 100 of the most common groups of invertebrates with excellent full color illustrations by Amy Bartell Wright. One very helpful tool is a 'non-technical' key resembling a chart that helps you get started with the identification process.

Section three contains in-depth information on the life history, distribution, habitat, method of movement, feeding strategy, and general ecology of each group. It also discusses their relationship to humans, origins of their nomenclature, and tolerance for environmental stress, making it particularly interesting to those using macroinvertebrates as indicators of water quality.

There are only a few detractions to this book. First is the lack of a glossary. Although few technical terms are used and those that are mentioned are well defined in the text, for a layperson, it might be handy if a glossary were presented somewhere within the book. Second, this book only keys the invertebrates down to family or whatever group can be ascertained through visual comparison of the whole organism. No dissection or microscope is needed, although folks might want to have a hand lens handy when using the book. This may actually be seen as a positive

aspect rather than a drawback, however, when you consider the target audience.

This book is a bit pricey at \$29.95, but a great addition to someone's library that can be used as a desk reference or a field guide.

-Laura Lubelczyk

## The Butterflies of the White Mountains of New Hampshire

By Warren J. Kiel

Published by the Audubon Society  
of New Hampshire in 2003

This very attractive and well-done book is a must for naturalists interested in butterflies of the Northeast. Most of the 77 species included can also be found in Maine. Readers should, however, refer to one of the regular field guides for identification purposes as some photographs are not adequate for this purpose. While this book is not a field guide, it does have a lot of useful, friendly information on butterfly populations of the area as recorded over the years by one of our old time observers of nature. Warren has spent nearly fifty years in the same area observing changes in species composition and habits. In these days of great mobility, a work such as this is a rarity. Warren's anecdotal accounts of species, including their habitat, larval foodplants, and environmental concerns, is something we all can find useful in our field experience. Warren was mentored by one of the outstanding butterfly collectors of northern New Hampshire, Don Lennox. Starting in the early 1950's Warren began his journey as a field naturalist and has since collaborated and communicated with many of the great Lepidopterists of North America. Warren's familiarity with many area collectors from Maine, New Hampshire and, Vermont and his knowledge of historic records provides great validity to his contrasts with the situation as he observes it today. I found the narrative very pleasing to read as well as enlightening. Warren's descriptions of some of his experiences with other collectors such as Don Lennox and L. Paul Grey of Maine, whom I have met, made this book extra special to me. The arrangement of the book and the excellent illustrations by Lois De Luca make me want to place this book on a living room table for all to see.

-Dick Dearborn

## The Blackjacket

A bluejacket is another name for a sailor, while a yellowjacket is a ground nesting hornet, so what is a blackjacket - a member of a motorcycle gang or an insect? Since this is an entomology newsletter you will probably guess it's an insect. In fact, it's a yellowjacket that isn't yellow. It is white where the yellowjacket is yellow so logically it could be a whitejacket.

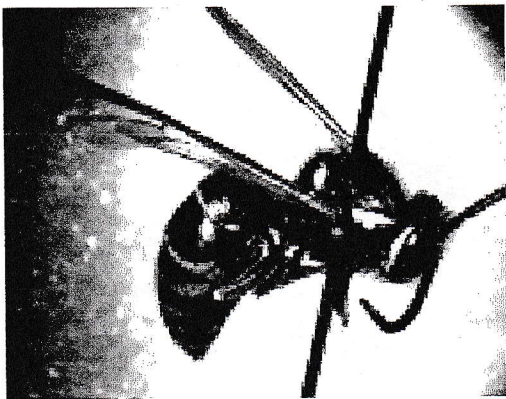
Actually yellowjackets are black and yellow, and the blackjacket is black and white. It looks much like the "baldface" (or white-faced) hornet, which makes the big rounded nests usually ten feet or so high in a tree. The baldface is one of our largest native hornets. The smaller blackjacket undoubtedly gets protection from looking like the baldface. Actually, the two are not closely related. The baldface belongs to genus *Dolichovespula*, the aerial hornets, and the blackjacket to genus *Vespula*, the yellowjackets, and each stands out among related species, which are black and yellow. *Dolichovespula* hang their nests high in trees and have long faces, with space between eye and jaw on each side. *Vespula* nest underground or in hollows in tree bases, and have shorter wider faces, with eye and jaw very close together.

I met the blackjacket when an allergy doctor sent one for me to identify. It looked very much like a baldface, but there were differences in color pattern. The baldface has all the white marks on the rear half of the abdomen, while the blackjacket has some narrow white marks farther forward. The faces look different, which may be how the wasps recognize their species when they come together. Many people see baldfaces at flowers or at their conspicuous nests, but sensible people are rarely stung by them. In fact, the usual victims are small boys who throw stones at the nests. Blackjackets, on the other hand, are deep forest insects. They nest mostly in hollows at the bases of trees, and the usual victims are loggers.

I got to thinking about yellowjackets because yesterday I went on a walk at Shelburne Bay Park. I became a bit tired, and found a nice log to sit on. Unhappily, some yellowjackets were living in the log, and selfishly decided to make me move on. I quickly decided to comply with their wishes. Mostly they gave me only light stings, which were quite painful for about 15 minutes, and then faded away. I hit at one on the middle finger of my right hand but hit too hard, so I accidentally separated the hornet from her stinger, and succeeded in squeezing the entire contents of the poison gland into my finger. At first,

this didn't hurt any more than the other stings, but it didn't go away. Twenty-four hours later, the finger is still swollen and sore. I know these wasps were yellowjackets, but I couldn't tell whether they had white or yellow marks. I was wearing sunglasses and wasn't able to change glasses while fighting wasps and trying to retreat.

-Ross Bell



## Rivers Need A Low Salt Diet



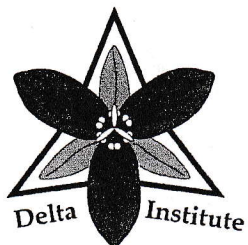
Anyone who has lived in the north-east for any length of time knows about road salt. We see it regularly from December through March then put it out of our minds after we begin visiting carwashes in spring. So it was with interest that I found an article published in the journal *Environmental Pollution* that looked at the impact of road salt on stream communities in Michigan.

Titled "Field and laboratory investigations on the effects of road salt (NaCl) on stream macroinvertebrate communities," the authors, Blasius and Merritt, examined the effects of short-term exposure to stream communities, in essence, mimicking the effects of snow melt runoff in the spring. Comparing the communities of a stream both upstream and downstream of a heavily salted roadway, the authors found little difference in the composition of species. In the laboratory experiments, only on species of amphipod and two species of caddisfly showing higher mortality at elevated salt levels. The authors feel that communities must have a surprising amount of tolerance to short-term exposure.

Interestingly, the authors also state that sand applied to roads in winter might do more damage to stream invertebrates than salt due to increased sedimentation downstream of roads.

-Chuck Lubelczyk

Blasius, B.J. and R.W. Merritt. 2002. Field and laboratory investigations on the effects of road salt (NaCl) on stream macroinvertebrate communities. *Environmental Pollution*. 120:219-231.



## Announcing the New Delta Institute

The Maine Entomological Society announces the arrival of the Delta Institute of Natural History in Bowdoinham. The purpose of the Delta Institute of Natural History is to provide courses, trips, and presentations covering a variety of natural history topics that are:

-conducted by instructors who respect their students and are accessible to them,

- based on the latest research and up-to-date taxonomy, and
- affordable in both time and money.

The Delta Institute is housed in two buildings. The education building contains a 23 foot by 35 foot lecture/lab space equipped with five dissecting scopes and a digital projector. At the opposite end is a reference library for use by students and instructors. A bookstore is available to program participants and is open to others by appointment. The Institute maintains an herbarium of vascular plants from New England and maritime Canada, and gardens and natural areas provide living material for study. The second building is a 7-room house that can accommodate 6 people overnight and serves as the center for meals and informal gatherings.

The Institute will offer one-day courses, weekend courses, multiple-weekend and multiple-day courses, field trips, slide programs, and workshops. Also, programs can be specially designed to meet a group's needs. Programs for 2004 are being developed and will be posted soon on the web.

Although the Institute will eventually house a variety of natural history collections—many boxes of shells, rocks, minerals, and fossils are currently in storage—the initial focus, because of already scheduled courses, is on vascular plants of northeastern North America. Several private collections that have been promised plus the results of many collecting trips this past summer form the core of the growing herbarium. Several persons have expressed an interest in volunteering in the herbarium.

The current collection contains printed, digital, and video material about plants (bryophytes and tracheophytes), fungi and lichens, and animals (nothing yet on kingdoms Protocista or Monera), plus geology, astronomy, and ecology. Although material from this library will not circulate, individuals who wish to visit the library are encouraged to do so.

For more information about the institute, contact:

Tom Vining  
V.F. Thomas Co.  
Delta Institute of Natural History  
219 Dead River Road  
Bowdoin, ME 04287  
(207) 266-5748  
<http://www.vfthomas.com/deltahome.htm>



## Entomology Courses at Eagle Hill

There are many natural history seminars scheduled for 2004 at the Humboldt Institute at Eagle Hill including:

May 30 - June 5. Damselflies and Dragonflies: Systematics and Biomonitoring. Fred SaintOurs.

June 6 - 12. Macrolepidoptera: Identification and Systematics. Brian Scholtens.

June 20 - 26. The EPT Taxa: Systematics and Biomonitoring: Ephemeroptera, Plecoptera, and Trichoptera. Steven Burian.

June 26 - July 2. Beetles. Donald Chandler.

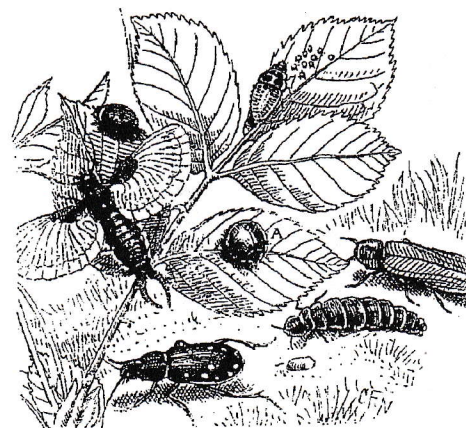
July 11 - 17. Chironomids: Systematics and Biomonitoring. Leonard Ferrington.

For more information, please contact:

Humboldt Institute,  
PO Box 9  
Steuben, ME 04680-0009.  
Phone: (207) 546-2821  
Fax: (207) 546-3042.

E-mail: [office@eaglehill.us](mailto:office@eaglehill.us)

Online registration and information at <http://www.eaglehill.us>



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## MES Field Trip Schedule for 2004

Preliminary plans are coming together now for a number of MES field trips from late spring through the fall of 2004. Be sure to mark your calendars!

**May 22.** Two trips are occurring on this date. The first collecting trip will occur in York County. Possible collecting sites include South Berwick or the Kennebunk Plains in west Kennebunk. The group will meet at the Walmart on Route 109 in Sanford at 9 am. Contact Dick Dearborn at (207) 293-2288 or [modear@prexar.com](mailto:modear@prexar.com) or Chuck Lubelczyk at (207) 324-2849 or [naturbuf@zwi.net](mailto:naturbuf@zwi.net) for more information or preferences for collecting.

For those members in a more easterly portion of the state, Cassie Gibbs is offering the option of a guided visit to the Tomah Stream area in Eastern Maine to see the Tomah mayfly in its immature stages. She states that this is one of the best times to visit this area and see it's unique diversity. If you are interested in this trip you should contact Cassie directly at (207) 862-3578 or [kelizabethgibbs@aol.com](mailto:kelizabethgibbs@aol.com).

**June 12-14.** The MES will be joining forces with lepidopterists and biologists from Acadia National Park to conduct our first Maine Lepidoptera Blitz. This intensive survey will focus on the butterflies and moths of the Park and will be based at the National Park Service's new Schoodic Education and Research Center, located at the former Navy Base campus in the Schoodic Peninsula District of Acadia National Park.

The Blitz itself will run from 3pm Saturday, June 12, to 3pm Sunday, June 13. An additional work session may be held on Monday, June 14th. The National Park Service has a limited amount of housing available at the Schoodic Education and Research Center for participants. For more information please contact Charlene Donahue (207) 287-3244 or [charlene.donahue@maine.gov](mailto:charlene.donahue@maine.gov) or Dick Dearborn. MES members are encouraged to support this exciting event. Please register in advance.

**June 26.** Gail Everett will be hosting a butterfly count beginning at 10 am. Meet at her house at 19 Pulp Mill Lane in Waterford at 9:30 am. Call (207) 743-2840 for more information.

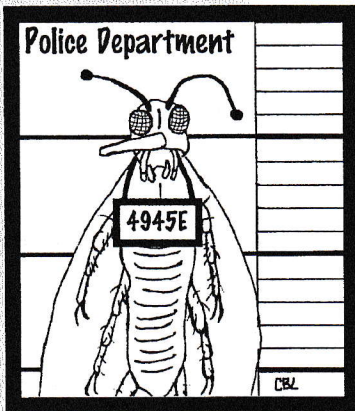
**July 24-25.** Joint meeting with the Vermont Entomological Society in Groton, VT. MES members Contact Dick Dearborn for details. Please notify Dick if you plan to attend. Further details will be given in the May newsletter.

**August.** Possible trips are planned to the downeast area, New Harbor in the midcoast region, or a trip to the Brewer area. Details will be forthcoming in the May newsletter.

**September 18.** New date for the annual meeting. This potluck cookout event will be held at Chuck Peters' home in New Gloucester.

**September 23.** 'Bug Maine-ia' at the Maine State Museum in Augusta. This event is strictly for school groups arranged by their teachers through Marion Smith at the Museum. To reserve groups call (207) 287-2301. MES members who would like to have a table display or help out should contact Dick Dearborn for more information.





## The Bug Mug Shot: The Seaside or Maritime Earwig

Order: Dermaptera (Earwigs)

There are roughly 22 species in North America and 1500 worldwide in this primarily tropical order of insects. Three of the six N.A. families are represented in Maine by five species, all of which have been introduced. Adults are elongate, slender and somewhat flattened and have been said to resemble rove beetles with forceps-like cerci, the pinchers. Nearly all species prefer high moisture conditions.

Family: Carcinophoridae

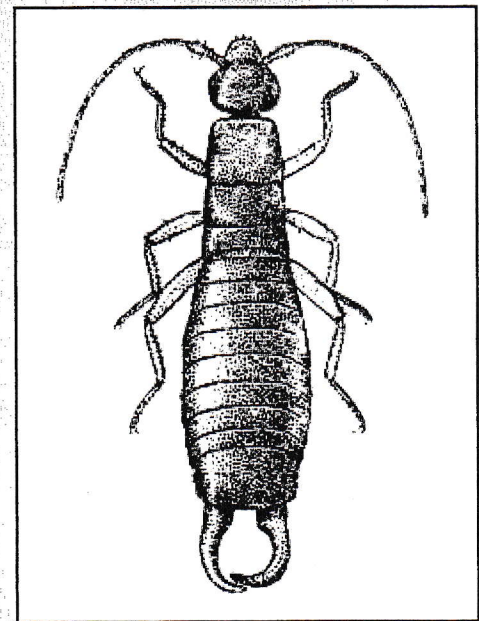
Species: *Anisolabis maritima* (Bonelli). This is one of two species in the family in Maine and our largest earwig. The other much smaller species, *Euborellia annulipes* (Lucas) - The ring-legged or banded earwig, has been reported locally in several locations associated with agricultural operations such as poultry in Turner.

Description: Adults of the seaside earwig have no functional wings, are 20 to 25 mm in length, dark brown in color and have the longest antennae of any of our species with 20 to 24 segments. The right cercus of the male is more strongly curved than the left. Specimens collected from muddy areas may appear to be muddy-grey.

Primary Habitat: Strictly coastal. This species is now probably cosmopolitan. It is very local and has not yet been observed in Maine east of Penobscot Bay. Nymphs and adults have been found beneath seaweed mats and debris in sandy and muddy areas at or slightly above the high tide mark.

Life History: Earwigs undergo a simple metamorphosis from egg to nymph to adult. The large eggs are laid in clusters in a nest and are defended by the highly aggressive female. Female earwigs are strongly thigmotactic (contact loving) and are often observed licking and rolling the eggs and touching the young which often cluster together until nearly full grown. Seaside earwig eggs are probably laid in the spring in decaying vegetation and may disperse at a younger stage than other species. This species apparently feeds on other arthropods, dead or alive. It has reportedly been seen to enter the water and swim freely.

Notes: The name earwig comes from an old superstition that says that they enter people's ears but this is entirely without a foundation. Earwigs are primarily nocturnal and they do tend to enter dark cracks and crevices to hide or nest but reports of them entering human ear canals are just not there. And although the "pinchers" on some male earwigs are notable they do not have enough strength to do more than just that - pinch. Other earwigs found in Maine are our second largest species; the extremely common and pestiferous European Earwig, *Forficula auricularia* L., the smaller Brown Earwig, *Matava atachidis* (Yersin), often found with *E. annulipes*, and our smallest and less often seen Little Earwig, *Labia minor* (L.).



*Anisolabis maritima*.  
Image courtesy of CSIRO.



## What to Look For

**FEBRUARY** - While it may still be winter, this is a good time to look for **winter stoneflies** which emerge in numbers from streams and lakes on sunny days. At times the snow around thin cracks in the ice is black with them. Smaller numbers can be found some distance from where they emerge. We have as many as six species of winter stoneflies in Maine which vary in size and breeding habitat. On warmer days you may also find tiny red or black **springtails**, or snowfleas as they are called, blanketing the snow or pools of snow melt. **Wingless crane flies** and **scorpionflies** are still active as are a variety of **spiders** and an occasional **insect larva** or **Dusky Firefly Beetle**.

**MARCH** - As if to rush the spring and be the first to emerge, the small, pretty, bright orange and brown, butterfly-like, **First-born**, a geometrid moth may be seen on warm days cruising over the melting snow in birch and aspen stands. A number of **noctuids** can also be seen on mild evenings and love to hang around sap buckets or tree wounds oozing sap along with the ever present **Dusky Firefly Beetle** and a number of small, but colorfully marked, **sap beetles** and **assorted flies**. **Ticks** may also be out as the snow melts and temperatures get above 40°F.

**APRIL** - The first of the small, pretty blue **Spring Azure butterflies** add color as they flit over the remaining patches of snow from late April through May. Overwintering **bumblebee** and **vespid queens** begin to emerge late this month in southern Maine to look for nest building sites. Other less conspicuous insects also begin to appear late in the month in southern and central Maine and these early season species may turn out to be most interesting to collectors.

**MAY** - Natural communities come alive as the final patches of snow disappear and plant buds break. The migrant **American Lady**, **Painted Lady**, and **Red Admiral butterflies** appear as do several rare or rarely noticed early **hairstreaks** (Juniper and the endangered Hessel's) and **elfins** (Bog, Eastern & Western Pine, Hoary, Henry's and Brown). The earliest dragonflies can now be found on the wing including the **Baskettails** (*Epitheca* spp.), the **White-faces** (*Leucorrhinia* spp.), the first migrant **Common Green Darners**, and the elusive **Boghaunters** (*Williamsonia* spp.). And of course there are the perennial early **mosquitoes** and **black flies** to plague gardeners and fishermen. By late May, many species of insects have begun to appear and it is a great time for collectors and observers alike. Take a moment to observe the six-legged theme park in your back yard. Look a little closer - insects are sure interesting. And be ready for June!

## Kids Craft:

### Make a Clothespin Butterfly

Materials needed: colored tissue paper, glue, pipe cleaners, clothespins, markers, string or magnet (optional).

1. Cut tissue paper into six inch squares. Take two squares of tissue paper, (different colors), and gather them along the center to make the wings of the butterfly. Glue the gathered center into the clothespin.

2. Fan out the edges of the paper.

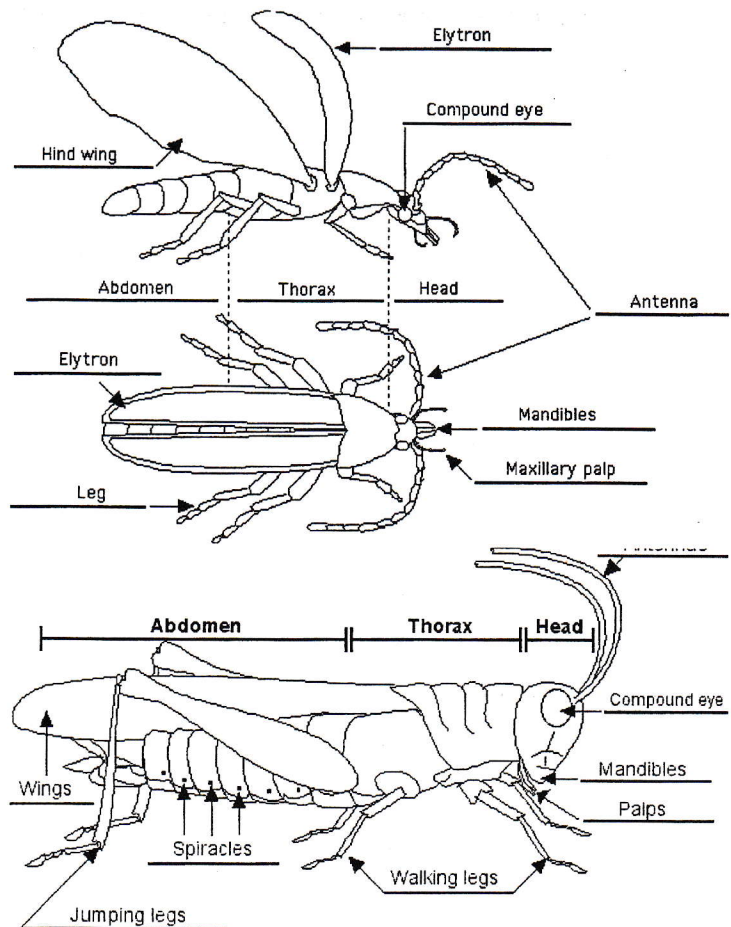
3. Cut a pipe cleaner into two equal pieces. Take one half of the pipe cleaner and fold it in half. Glue the middle of the pipe cleaner to the top of the clothespin to make the antennae. Make small hooks at the ends of the antennae.

4. Use markers to draw eyes.

5. A string can be glued or tied to the butterfly to make an ornament or a magnet could be glued on to the underside of the clothespin to make refrigerator art.

This activity is from the Kentucky Department of Entomology.

## Answers to Beetle and Grasshopper Anatomy Quiz From Last Issue



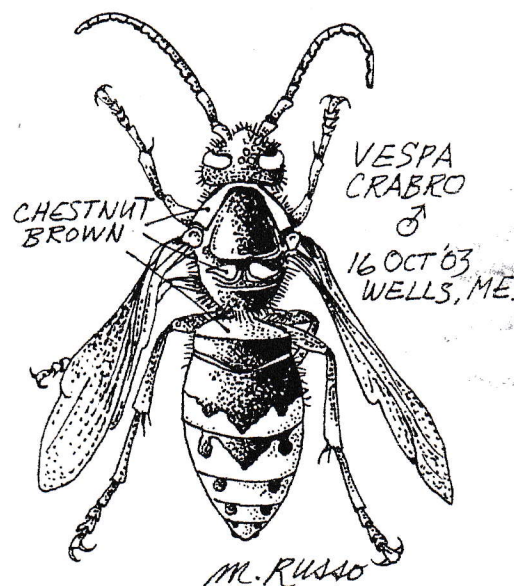
## Vespa crabro Caught in Wells

On October 16, 2003, a specimen of *Vespa crabro*, the huge European hornet, was caught in Wells, along Route 109. A friend who owns a restaurant called and asked if I wanted a big wasp that she had just caught on the screen door. She then saved the specimen in the freezer for me. I went to get it the next day, since her description certainly sounded like a *Vespa crabro*.

It was. The wasp was just over an inch long, with the morphology and markings matching those shown in Akre's Yellowjackets of America North of Mexico, published in 1981. There are the three chestnut-brown hallmarks to look for. One is brown "flying scarf" on the thorax, leading away from the head. There is also a pair of brown blots on the thorax just below the "center" where you would put a pin through. And finally, the first segment of the abdomen has a chestnut-brown band right across it. Easy field marks to look for.

The range map for *Vespa crabro* in Akre's classic guide shows that this big wasp should be found here in Maine, but Dick Dearborn reports that there are no specimens in the Augusta collection. Perhaps this is a first for Maine. This species was introduced to North America in the mid-1880's in the New York area. It is native to Europe and will build its nest in barns, lofts, and inside house walls. It is not supposed to be aggressive but given its large size and suburban inclination, we should be on the lookout for this species. My sincere and enthusiastic thanks go to the restaurant owner Laura, whose keen eye for design and detail led her to contact me about this exciting insect.

-Monica Russo



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Maine Entomological Society  
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Chuck & Laura Lubelczyk  
21 Harding St.  
Sanford, ME 04073

**Please visit our website at [www.colby.edu/MES](http://www.colby.edu/MES)**



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Charlene Donahue  
Insect & Disease Laboratory  
50 Hospital Street  
Augusta, ME 04330