



## “Bugs That Bug Us” Part II

### “DADDY-LONGLEGS ARE ONE OF THE MOST POISONOUS SPIDERS BUT THEIR FANGS ARE TOO SHORT TO BITE HUMANS” True or False?

This belief has been around for years. I first heard it from my junior high school English teacher who mentioned it to the class one day. Much to my regret, I believed it until the day I was leading a trivia game for the seniors in an Assisted Living Community. As I mentioned it to them in passing conversation between trivia questions, I was corrected by a gentleman who was a retired rocket scientist from NASA. (Yes, I know all the rocket scientist jokes!) This gentleman gave me the facts that I share with you below. Of course I researched these facts and they turned out to be true.

“Most folks who retell this tale have no idea that they are referring to two completely separate groups of animals: daddy-longlegs and daddy-longlegs spiders. They do not have venom glands, fangs, or any other mechanism for chemically subduing their food. Therefore, they do not have poison and, by the powers of logic, cannot be poisonous from venom,” he said.

He went on to say, “Some have defensive secretions that might be poisonous to small animals if ingested. So, for these daddy-long-legs, the tale is clearly false.” So, thank you Leo for setting me straight after my teacher warped my mind for the past 28 years.

Now, on to another, hopefully fascinating, critter in your yard, the **Snail**. Did you know that a typical garden snail is both a male and a female? Did you know that as the snail grows, the part of the shell the baby snail was born with ends up in the middle of the spiral? Did you know that pond snails can be eaten? I have had escargot (snails), and they actually were pretty good. Tasted like chicken!

But doesn’t everything?

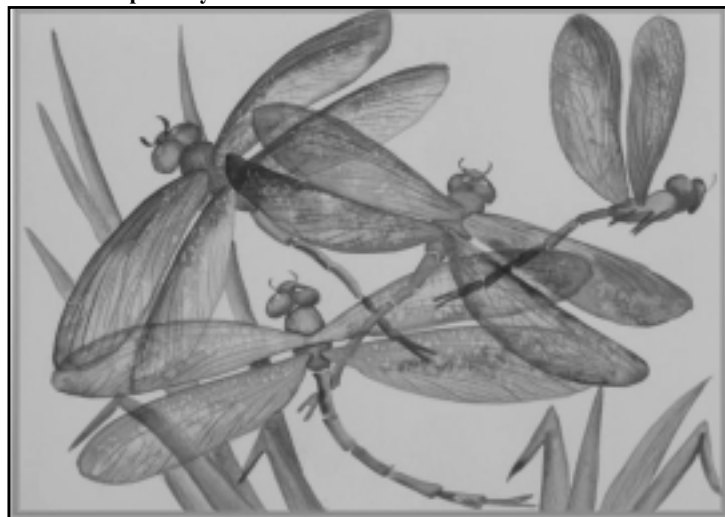
**Centipedes vs. Millipedes:** Centipedes usually occur in small numbers and, in spite of their fearful appearance, they are considered harmless to humans. Most in the United States do not bite humans, but a few tropical species will bite and can inflict painful wounds. The jaws of young centipedes are usually not strong enough to cause more than a slight pinch when biting. On the other hand, millipedes do not bite humans or damage structures, household possessions, or foods. They can give off a disagreeable odor and if crushed, leave an unsightly mess. The body structure of the two is very different, but the main difference is how they get their names! Centipedes have 100 legs whereas millipedes have 1000 legs.

**Gnats, No-Seeum’s, Punkies, and Mosquitoes,** are just a few of the pests we have to deal with during the warmer months. Gnats and Punkies are the same little pest; usually less than a quarter of an inch long; they have no purpose in life other than to pester humans. No-seeum’s are typically found near the ocean and around rivers, lakes, and swamps. Also known as biting midges, these tiny bugs also can be as small as a Gnat. It is the female that inflicts the nasty bite because she needs blood to complete her egg laying process.

And then there is the ever famous, Mosquito. Mosquitoes can make life miserable. Many recreational and work activities



Garden snail photo by: Scott M. Anna



Tissue Paper Dragonfly by: Scott M. Anna

have been ruined by the constant annoyance and irritation caused by their bites. Also, some species can transmit serious diseases such as Encephalitis and West Nile Virus. While more than 50 mosquito species can be found in the United States, only a few are a significant nuisance and/or public health threat.

***Did you know that only the female mosquito can bite?*** For the same reason that the female Gnat does!

Things you can do to help in controlling Mosquitoes: • Dispose of unwanted tin cans and tires, anything that can retain a pool of water from rain. • Clean clogged roof gutters and drain flat roofs. • Stock ornamental pools with fish. The fish love them! • Change water in bird-baths, fountains, and troughs twice a week. • Clean and chlorinate swimming pools; when not regularly used, they should be emptied. • Cover containers tightly with window screen or plastic when storing rainwater for garden use during drought periods.

Even though we are constantly bugged by bugs during the warmer months, don’t let them win, enjoy life in our beautiful area. According to Consumers Report (June, 2006), Off Deep Woods for Sportsmen I is the most effective insect repellant (not to be confused with Sportmens IV).

Before I close, let me share with you that the first bear of the season has visited my cabin. I will tell you more about her in next week’s column. Be sure and share your bear stories with me. Send them to my email address: scottan59@yahoo.com

*As a footnote, in last week’s column, under the “Ladybug” paintings it was labeled “Paintings by: Scott M. Anna”. The paintings were done by Alzheimer’s victims under my instruction.*