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from the CCIA Conservation Committee

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True, bugs were having their day

Jo Walker

One morning I discovered several south facing windows had dozens of small bugs on them — inside and out.

I sprayed, which didn't seem to do much good. I used the fly swatter, but couldn't reach the high windows.

In desperation, I got out the portable vacuum cleaner with extension wand, and vacuumed bugs and bugs and bugs.

That worked pretty good, but then what do you do with the vacuum cleaner bag? I hoped the plastic garbage sack with twisty would contain them. Fine, but a few hours later the windows were full of bugs again! I kept vacuuming, swatting and spraying.

Finally I thought to call the Arizona Commission of Agriculture and Horticulture, which transferred me to its entomology laboratory.

Of course, my description over the telephone of "a little black bug with orange racing stripes" didn't help them much so they asked me to send them some representative samples.

They ask that they be padded with cardboard, or larger bugs be sent in a box. The post office doesn't want them straying out, so I placed them in a zip-lock plastic bag, taped that up, wrapped it in some thin foam sheets, and mailed it off to the Entomology Laboratory, 1688 W. Adams, Phoenix, 85007.

Once the weekend was over, (everything always happens on a weekend, doesn't it?), a cordial phone call informed me that we had a "true bug," a close relative of the box elder bug, which would suck sap from plants but not hurt us, and that we are evidently in their migration path and will simply have to wait it out for two weeks or more, while trying to seal off any possible entry routes, (fireplace, windows, vents, etc.).

The phone call was followed by an official report identifying our "true bug" as Lygreus lateralis. The lateralis must be for that orange racing stripe?

Another phone call told me that our bug is of the order hemiptera, meaning half-winged. They have short wings that are membraned at the end; and suck juices.

Checking several library books tells me that our insect being a "true bug" separates it from beetles, butterflies, grasshoppers, thrips, gnats, fleas, wasps, ants, termites, and other assorted insects.

Other Arthropods that are not insects include ticks, mites, spiders, pill bugs, centipedes and millipods, as well as scorpions, crabs and lobsters.

Arthropods are invertebrate animals with bodies divided into segments, from most of which arise pairs of jointed appendages such as fangs, spinnerets, antennae, pincers and legs.

Arthropods which are insects typically have bodies divided into three parts, three pair of legs, a pair of antennae, and usually wings. Of these, the true bugs have all of the above plus the short wings with membranous ends and a sucking mouth.

So we have an invertebrate of the phylum Arthropod, grouped with insects under the order hemiptera or true bugs, and called a Lygreus lateralis.