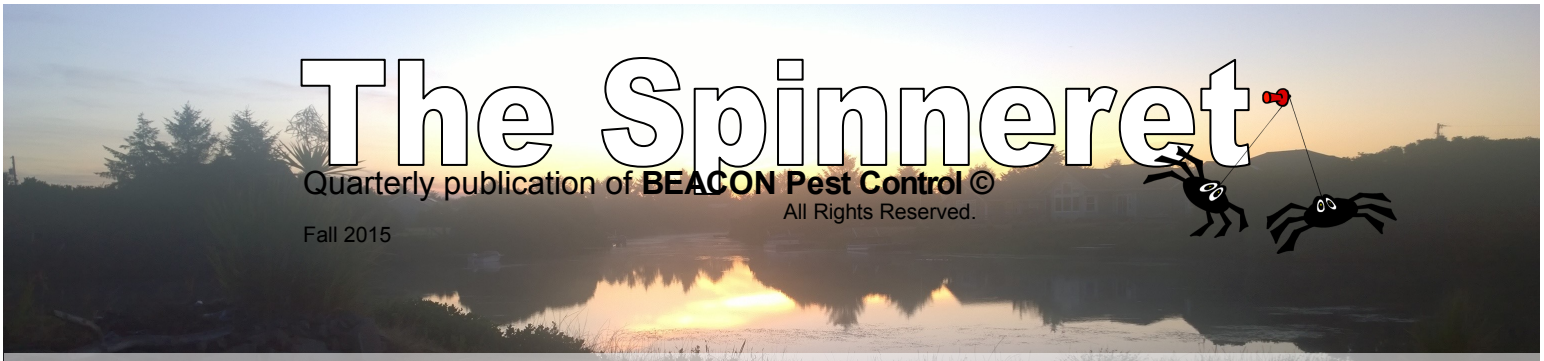


The Spinneret

Quarterly publication of **BEACON Pest Control ©**

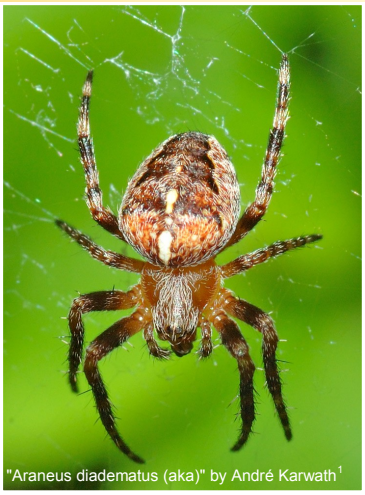
Fall 2015

Wow! That was a summer to remember! Every evening since May has been filled with barbecued something and a tall cold beverage and in spite of the drought conditions no one lit the town on fire.

This quarters header photo was shot from my back deck just before setting down to commit words to paper. With any luck there will be enough of these sunrises left this fall to take at least one long motorcycle ride down the coast to visit family in California and restock the wine cabinet for winter. - Ed.■

Spiders

Araneus_diadematus, also known as the European Garden Spider is one of the most common spiders to decorate our homes and gardens each fall.



"Araneus diadematus (aka)" by André Karwath[1]

Their eggs hatch from silk wrapped clutches in late spring. In May and June spiderlings can be seen clustered together in masses resembling brown and yellow bird droppings that scatter in all directions along almost invisible webs at the slightest disturbance.

On warm spring days these miniature spiders can be found ballooning on long silken strands carried on the wind.

This “ballooning” activity disperses them to great distances and heights making them the bane of home owners and boat owners alike.

In addition to dispersing in spring, small spiders will use ballooning to seek better habitat. Adult spiders are forced to walk or swing down from trees on long strands of web. Both of these activities can leave long strands of web draped on bushes and structures.

Once a spider finds suitable habitat it can be very industrious and persistent about maintaining a web. These spiders have been known to span great distances to get at flying insects. (I once encountered a web suspended from a power line).

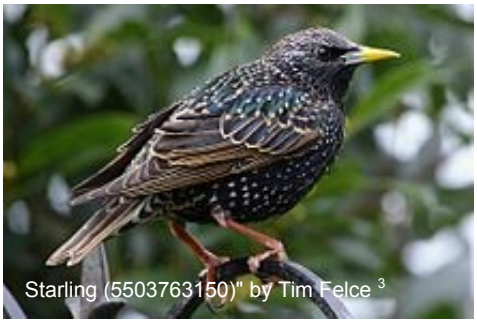
Spider web is amazing stuff. Consisting of cross linked chains of plastic like polymers, a typical strand of spider silk is 10 to 100 times thinner than a human hair and so light that a single strand reaching around the world would weigh less than a pound. Yet, despite its diaphanous character spider silk has 5 times the tensile strength of steel and is almost as resilient as rubber.

Spider venom is just as amazing, not just because it helps the spider get dinner, but also because many of the compounds in the venom have properties that may revolutionize medicine and pest control.

Continued...

Honey Do

Time to deal with the attic guests.



Starling (5503763150)" by Tim Felce [3]

Many of us have had birds living in our soffits since early spring. Once they go south for the winter those openings need to be screened or sealed to prevent their return.

After the first frost we can close openings that have been letting bats in with little fear of trapping animals in the attic. Draping plastic over the main entry at least 18 inches long to create a one way flap can allow stragglers to leave but not return. After 48 hours you can be sure there are no animals left and can seal the last opening. ■

Honey Bees

The first thing to realize about honey bees is that they are not native to the Americas. They have almost always been a commercial enterprise imported to pollinate crops around the world.

"Honey bee (Apis mellifera)" [2]

Honey bees have been on a path to industrialization almost since their arrival in America. Our fore fathers quickly recognized that honey bees are such efficient pollinators of crops that they could make a living by just insuring that farmers had access to them. The honey produced as a by product was just icing on the cake, so to speak.

For the last ten years we’ve been hearing reports of the demise of the honey bee and dire predictions of what that means to humanity.

In a strange twist of reality it appears bee keepers may have been the unknowing accomplices in what has come to be referred to as “colony collapse disorder”.

Recent research has exposed that a common practice among commercial bee keepers may be weakening bee stocks.

Continued...

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Spiders ...continued

Even though spiders have all these amazing adaptations to help them survive it's a little hard to have much admiration for them while you're wiping a web out of your hair, wondering where the spider is.

Spiders, webs, egg cases, and droppings can add up to a lot of mess. Often washing and scrubbing won't remove all the residue without painting over it.

There are some effective things you can do to reduce spider activity on your home.

The first involves light management. Most of us are familiar with the fact that flying insects are attracted to light. Well, spiders are attracted to flying insects. So, when we build our homes the first thing we add to the exterior is an irresistible home for spiders.

A better approach would be to put lighting in the yard, away from the house and shine it back on the house from a distance. This would actually attract flying insects as well as spiders away from the house.

Short of moving the lights, adding a motion detector to exterior lights will reduce the amount of time they are on.

Also, switching to yellow bulbs makes the light less attractive to flying insects.

If you are a night owl, those lights on inside will attract insects and spiders to the windows. Closing drapes at night can help.

The second involves landscape management. Reducing habitat for spiders near the outside of your home will reduce the number of spiders close to the house. Fewer shrubs means fewer spiders.

These spiders rely on flying insects for food so they seldom come inside except on accident. Keeping door seals in good repair will reduce the likelihood of an indoor encounter.

Whether or not to treat for spiders is a very personal decision that hinges on your tolerance for them and their mess.

In the end, every home will have some level of spider activity on the exterior. On some homes you can choose to do nothing but on others that won't be an option unless you're willing to carry a broom with you every time you enter or leave the house. ■

Honey Bees ...continued

In the past, bee keepers would leave enough honey in their colonies to support the bees through winter, but that practice changed in the 1970's. With the price of honey reaching record levels commercial bee keepers were seduced into ending that practice by a really cheap food source.

Corn is the basis for a huge segment of our economy. It is safe to say that much of the success of America is built on corn and one of the by-products of corn is cheap high fructose corn syrup.

Honey is also a high fructose syrup that contains additional ingredients, some imparted by the plants the bees collect from and some imparted by the bees themselves. Somewhere along the line, some enterprising individual figured out you could take all of the honey produced in a hive if you gave the bees corn syrup. This appeared to have no visible impact on the bees and the practice spread throughout the industry.

About ten years ago, bee keepers started noticing that bees were flying out to forage for pollen and nectar and simply not returning. While there are predators, parasites, fungus, and a host of diseases that afflict bees these tend to leave clues, including dead bees, in the hive. With very few dead or sick bees to study researchers are hard pressed to determine the cause.

Two recent studies strongly suggest that the practice of forcing the bees to eat corn syrup may be a significant contributor to collapse disorder.

Among the natural contaminants in honey of course is the pollen bees spread while collecting nectar. The plant shell that covers grains of pollen apparently stimulates an immune response in bees that helps them fight off parasites and disease. That response also helps them resist the effects of exposure to pesticides and other naturally occurring toxins. By removing pollen and other plant contaminants from their diet, it is believed the bees are simply not healthy enough to survive the rigors of bee life.

Additional research has revealed that heating can produce toxins in corn syrup which would amplify the effects of a weakened immune system.

Another practice that has come under scrutiny is the pollination of monoculture crops. Commercial bee keepers have developed whole brands based on this practice. Clover for instance or black berries, apple, etc. If the bees aren't exposed to a variety of plants they run the risk of missing key ingredients needed for survival.

In truth there is no single practice, toxin, or pathogen that has been identified as the definitive cause of colony collapse but it is becoming clearer that the bees diet may hold the cure. ■

Service Targets:

This years bare ground services for driveways has been a resounding success thanks to a hand from Mother Nature. At this point, if you have new growth be sure to call and a technician will be dispatched promptly. Driveway services will be suspended at the end of September in preparation for winter.

Spiders are our primary targets thru October and as always, if you encounter little black ants raiding the kitchen please don't spray them. Call us immediately and we will come take care of them.

Several species of ant and termite swarm in the fall. They are harmless but if they actually appear to be coming from your home call for a consultation. ■