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Natural Enemies of Prickly Pear

AND THEIR

Introduction into Australia

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None of the 855 midges which were reared could be induced to lay eggs, though they were provided with flowers and fruits of prickly-pear. Some were placed in darkened cages, others in cages exposed to sunlight. Honey-producing flowers were placed in some of the cages in case feeding was necessary to the midges before they could oviposit. Large numbers were also confined in a small space with prickly-pear flowers and fruits in a lamp glass, the top of which was covered with muslin, but this plan was also a failure.

9. SCAVENGING FLIES.

(a) Study in the Field.

Prickly-pear injured by the attacks of boring larvae or by other means forms a favorite breeding ground for numerous kinds of flies whose larvae live in rotting vegetable material. The maggots of these flies considerably increase the injury caused by the primary agent by enlarging the decaying portion of the plant. Those reared from maggots found in such situations in the United States included *Volucella esuriens*, *V. pusilla*, *V. arida*, and *V. fasciata*, whilst unidentified species of *Volucella* were also reared in Argentina. This genus belongs to the family *Syrphidae*, and other flies belonging to the same family reared from similar material included *Copestylum marginatum* and *Neorondania* sp. in the United States, *Temnocera spinigera* and *T. scutellata* in the Argentine, and *Cerioides ornata*, *Eristalis smaragdi*, *E. decorus*, and *Eumerus* sp. in Australia.

Of the family *Stratiomyidae* the following species were reared from maggots found in rotting cacti:—*Hermetia chrysopila* and *H. illucens* in the United States, *Vappo alexanderi* in the Argentine and *Neoexaireta spinigera* in Australia.

Small species of *Drosophila* belonging to the family *Drosophilidae* are also very commonly met with about decaying cacti both in America and in Australia. The maggots of these little flies live in the rotting joints of the pear, and the adults feed freely on the juices from the injured plants.

Pegonortalis barbifera of the family *Ortaliidae* also commonly breeds in rotting pear in Queensland.

(b) Collection and Breeding in America.

Larvae of numerous species were collected in rotting pear found in the open and kept in cages till they could be shipped to Australia. Histerid beetles were often present feeding on the maggots.

(c) Transport to Australia.

Larvae and pupae of *Temnocera spinigera* were brought from Argentina by Dr. Johnston in March, 1921.