

# Pest Gazette

Brought to you by **Vulcan Termite & Pest Control, Inc**



## House Centipedes

There is one pest that elicits more screams and scares than any other. No, it's not a cockroach, or silverfish, and it's not even a spider. What could it be? Most people don't know what it's called, but have no difficulty in describing it. What "it" is, is the house centipede; a super-fast, 30-legged, carnivorous invertebrate that terrorizes households across the country. Although these critters aren't too large, checking in at an inch to inch and half in length, each leg is longer than the entire body. This, plus the presence of a pair of long antennae, makes the house centipede appear much larger than it is. House centipedes are tan with a black stripe running lengthwise down the top of their body and have striped legs. Centipedes are invertebrates famous for having 100 legs, but that is rarely the case. The actual number ranges from 10 to over 100 depending on species, but the defining characteristic is that each body segment has 1 pair of legs. On a similar note, millipedes don't actually have 1,000 legs, but each body segment has 2 pairs of legs.

House centipedes (*Scutigera coleoptrata*) are fierce looking creatures, especially up close. Centipedes stun and kill prey with a venomous bite, but fortunately for us, their jaws usually can't penetrate our skin in the rare instances when they do bite people. Those that have been bitten have reported minor swelling and pain, similar to a bee sting. The house centipede is found throughout the United States and can live inside and out ... though probably only one of those environments concerns most people! These centipedes prefer to be near water, so they are commonly found in basements, bathrooms, and areas with clutter. House centipedes hunt for insects and spiders, so you might see one running furiously across a floor or ceiling throughout your house. If you are finding house centipedes in your house, that could be an indication that there are other insects present. Give us a call so we can track down their food source, prevent them from finding their way inside, and eliminate the scare-inducing centipedes in the process.

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## Weatherproof your home

Fall is right around the corner, and it's time to ready your home against overwintering pests who seek harborage from the cold by nesting in wall voids of homes and other structures.

- **Inspect your home, inside and out.** Start by inspecting for cracks and crevices along window and door frames, building corners, etc.
- **Look high and low.** Grab a ladder to view attic vents and soffits. Any light or air currents penetrating the inside of the attic need to be sealed or screened. An extendable mirror is a great tool for viewing hard-to-see places.
- **Check around all utility boxes, pipes, and wires.** Any "hole" on the outside of a building

is susceptible to pest entry, especially those larger than the width of a pencil.

- **Silicone caulk or sealants** work great for closing up minor gaps, especially around AC lines. Do not use expandable foam because it can degrade over time and it is easy for mice and other rodents to gnaw right through it.
- **Hardware mesh**, like the kind used on door and window screens, can be nailed or stapled in place behind vent openings or covers to prevent pest entry.

We can help you with preventative treatments. Call us for an appointment today!

## Bats 101

The fluttering of wings in the dark. A brief glimpse of a darkened figure darting about the sky. Bats! Before you run and hide under the dining room table, let's break down the facts. Bats make up a diverse group of mammals that are found in almost every conceivable environment in the world. It may seem hard to believe, but bats are the second-largest group of mammals by the number of species with over 1,200! Bats are highly varied in both appearance; the smallest bats on earth are just over one inch long, while the largest weigh 4 pounds and have wingspans of nearly 6 feet! Bats hold a special place in their ecosystem and are incredibly important in limiting the populations of mosquitoes and other annoying insects. At night, bats emerge from their roosts and descend

upon their environment, using a highly complex prey-locating system called echolocation to find insects in the dark.

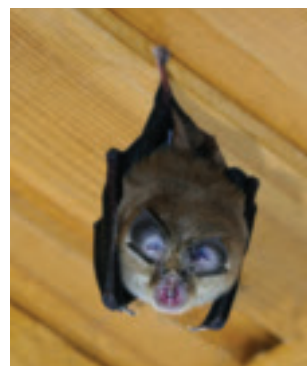
There are about 40 species of bats that live in North America, and it is true that some of them may take up residence in your house or on your property. Bats can penetrate a structure using a gap less than 1/2" in width, and use your attic as a roost. Bats have a seasonal behavior cycle, an attribute that leaves opportunity for us to get control of the situation. During the spring, summer, and fall, mature bats leave their roosts nightly to hunt for food. However, as winter approaches, most species of bats leave their roosts in homes to either migrate or hibernate in caves, mines, and even on cliff faces. Once bats have left for the winter, we can

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## Bats 101 (continued from page 1)



**BATS IN YOUR BELFRY?** Bats can carry rabies and, to be safe, bats should never be approached or handled. If you have bats in your belfry, call us immediately.

swoop in and seal up entry points, install special material to prevent re-infestation, and clean up the newly abandoned roosts.

Bats can carry rabies, a very serious viral infection that is life-threatening without proper treatment, but it is believed that less than 1% of bats are infected. Rabies-infected bats are more likely to be found during daylight, as they are often disoriented and unable to fly. To be safe, bats should never be approached or handled. If you were bitten by a bat, or suspect you may have been, seek out a public health professional.

Over the last ten years, bed bugs have been making their way all over the country. Well, it turns out that even bats aren't immune! Bed bugs and their close relative bat bugs, are often found in close association with bat roosts. If a group of bats is evicted from a structure, it is possible that bed and bat bugs will be left behind and begin to explore the house in search of blood. These so-called 'secondary infestations' are unpleasant at best, but we know what to look for and will be able to control whatever is left after bats have been evicted and excluded from your house.

There are several potential problems caused by bat droppings (guano). The more serious issue is that guano can harbor a potentially fatal fungus that can cause histoplasmosis. When fungus-containing guano particles dry out, they can become airborne and inhaled. It is especially important to allow a professional to clean up after bats, or you could put yourself in danger! In addition to being dangerous, guano and urine can leave a foul-smelling odor and can even penetrate and stain some surfaces. The other issue with guano is that there are several insects, most notably flies and cockroaches, that use it as a food source and can thrive as long as the bats are present.

This is the time of year when bats will soon fleeing your house, and it's a great time to contact us if you believe you may have bats roosting in your home. We can determine if they are, and devise a targeted exclusion program to put into place this winter. Not only can we keep your house bat-free, but we do it in a way that doesn't harm the bats and will leave them free to eat as many mosquitoes as they can handle next summer! ■

## Plaster Beetles

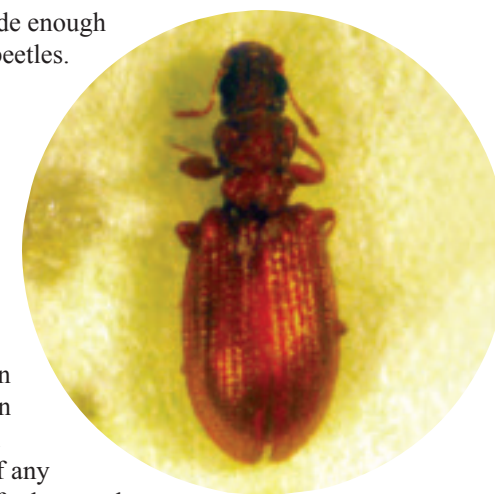
Out of nowhere, tiny beetles may start appearing in your house. What are they, where are they coming from, and how can I stop them? There are literally dozens of kinds of tiny beetles that can surface inside a structure and start causing problems. Most of these pests are feeding on foodstuffs, natural fibers, plant products, and even wood. A certain kind of beetle, called a plaster or fungus beetle, has a very different type of diet and it is a beetle that you can't control by throwing away a box of infested dog food. Plaster beetles only eat the threads and spores of certain types of fungi that grow when heat and moisture are found together. Usually, this happens outside, but some plaster beetles are well-adapted to thriving indoors when the right mold and mildew are found.

Basements, unpainted wood, and relatively new homes are most susceptible to plaster beetle infestations. What causes dampness inside homes? Leaking roofs, plumbing fixtures, and wet plaster top the list. Wet plaster that wasn't allowed time to properly dry, can support mold growth, especially when wallpaper was hung on top of it. The thin lay-

er of dampness remaining can provide enough food for hundreds and hundreds of beetles.

While you may be finding beetles in your living room, they may be coming from above, below, or in hidden structural voids! What they lack in size (1/16 of an inch in length), they make up for in reproductive capability. If conditions are optimal, the entire life cycle can be completed in less than two weeks! Plaster beetles can be tan to red to brown to black in color, and their head is narrower than the last body segment, the abdomen.

If you are finding tiny beetles of any kind, let us know and we will identify them and be able to proceed with a targeted control strategy for whatever it may be. For plaster beetles, we will pinpoint moisture issues, whether they be in attics, wall voids, or any place else, and remedy the problem. Once we eliminate their food source, plaster beetles have no chance in your home! ■



## Daddy longlegs

AKA: Harvestman

A common fixture in and around houses, daddy longlegs are very misunderstood. For one thing, they aren't even true spiders! To the untrained eye, they look very much the part though, since they have a small body and 8 legs. Often called harvestman, these arachnids differ from their spider relatives in a few ways. Notably, harvestman do not have the capability of spinning webs and can't produce venom like spiders can. Harvestman have a varied diet; some are scavengers on dead organisms, fungi and plant matter, while others hunt small insects. This kind of diet actually makes daddy longlegs a beneficial critter to have around. In no way do these arachnids pose any known threat to humans!

Frogs and birds are the primary predators to these gangly, 8-legged organisms. Daddy longlegs don't have a great variety in defensive tactics, but they can release a foul-smelling odor in hopes of repelling would-be threats. Although they are commonly found in fields and forests, especially perched on leaves, harvestman do find their way in and around homes, especially in basements, garages, and barns. If you are finding them inside, contact us and we can locate any potential entry points into your house and seal them up! ■



**HELPFUL, NOT HARMFUL** Daddy longlegs are beneficial critters to have around. They eat dead organisms, plants, fungi small insects which are considered pests.