

AGRICULTURE

European Weevil Found In U.S. for First Time

➤ A EUROPEAN WEEVIL has been reported in the United States for the first time.

The insect, called *Pachytychius haematocephalus*, was found by a homeowner last summer in Albany County, New York. Not only is the species new to this country, but also the genus.

The weevil, found in certain clover-like plants called birdsfoot-trefoil, in the lawn around the home, is both a new genus and species in this country.

Experts believe that discovery of this weevil in the United States is of little cause for concern because birdsfoot-trefoil is not an important crop.

Weevils are generally assumed to be injurious to crops. However, only a few species cause harm.

These insects are actually beetles that have heads prolonged into beaks or snouts. They are usually smaller than other types of beetles and are always vegetarians.

• Science News Letter, 87:63 January 23, 1965

Nature Note

Lichens

➤ AS white snows and grey mists of winter swirl through a land now devoid of bright colors, the beautiful designs and subtle grey-greens of a strange circular plant are noticed clinging to tree trunks and barren rocks.

For eons, these lichens have been silently dissolving the surface of rocks on this planet earth, making a more habitable place for other plants to take root.

One of the first land plants to creep from the seas in the evolution of life on earth, these primitive lichens still look and act somewhat as they did millions of years ago. Growing in thin circular patches with wavy or ruffled edges, they stretch groping fingers of filaments into cracks and crevices of rocks, pushing and growing, breaking off minute pieces of stone and dissolving the minerals into its own system. When these plants die, they become a rich nursery bed of organic and mineral material, suitable home for the mosses, those plants next higher in the plant kingdom.

This scaly flat plant is actually not one plant but two—a combination of tiny blue-green or green algae and pale threadlike fungi which exist in a wonderfully mutual partnership called symbiosis, a Greek word meaning "living together."

The tiny one-celled algae provide food and energy by using sunlight to synthesize carbohydrates and proteins, and the fungi provide minerals and water by breaking down the material upon which they grow and by catching and storing moisture from the air.

The slender hyphae of the fungus intertwine to form a protective mesh for the more fragile algae against the cold weather, drought and high winds.

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