

Familiar Insects of America

By JOHN HOCHMANN

Some are pesky to man; many more are useful to him; all are colorful creatures, as you'll see in these beautiful true-to-life illustrations

ONE WAY TO LEARN about insects is to follow the example of the man from Hickory, N.C., who acquired a \$1,000 bill. For safe-keeping, he put it in a metal box which he hid away. One day when he wanted to show the bill to friends, he opened the lid and found that its value had been cut by 50 percent—the inflationary work of moths!

A far pleasanter way to learn about insects is through the fine color illustrations reproduced here from Will Barker's forthcoming book, *Familiar Insects of America*. Scientists recognize more than one million varieties of insects and catalogue five to six thousand new ones each year. These prints, with their variety, bright colors, and scientific accuracy, reveal some of the more common species.

Butterflies and Moths. Taken together, butterflies and moths are known scientifically as *lepidoptera*, that is, scale-winged, because their wings are covered with tiny scales, no thicker than a human hair, which come off as dust when you touch them. To tell them apart, remember that butterflies prefer daylight, moths darkness; also, butterflies hold their wings vertically when at rest, while moths hold theirs horizontally or folded.

Beetles. Besides being the most numerous order of insects (250,000 varieties), beetles do man the most harm. Their chief characteristic is well-developed jaws adapted to such functions as chewing, crack-

ing seeds, boring, and catching prey. Another characteristic is the hard, thick forewing which covers most of the body, giving it protective armor. Beetles abound everywhere, and almost every important farm crop has its beetle enemy.

Ants, Wasps, and Bees. This class of insects numbers about 60,000 and is distinguished by membranous wings and by their adaptation to a highly social form of colony life which has been compared (sometimes favorably) to man's. Many forms have a stinger, pincer, or saw on the abdomen, as countless picnickers can testify.

Of all insects, ants have the most highly developed societies. They all live in colonies, either in soil, trees, lumber, or nests which they skillfully build themselves.

Bees also live in colonies, their hives. Studied by scientists since Aristotle, bees have a remarkable homing instinct as well as a little-known ability to "count," that is, to recognize nectar-bearing flowers at a distance by the number of petals. Directly useful to man, bees produce 242 million pounds of honey and 4½ million pounds of beeswax annually, besides pollinating scores of agricultural plants.

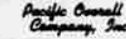
Closely resembling bees, wasps build nests of paper and wood and live in colonies, too. As their victims know, wasps are meat-eating insects; yet their sting is indirectly beneficial to man since wasps kill many harmful insects in their search for food.

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