

An Unusual Occurrence of Walking-sticks

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During the past summer (1913) the woods in the vicinity of Peterson, Iowa, showed walking sticks, *Diaperomera femorata*, in numbers which constituted a veritable pest. The woods are principally oak, with smaller numbers of elm, ash, aspen, linden, hickory and black walnut trees and a heavy undergrowth of hazel. On the 30th of May it was observed that the hazel bushes were quite covered with recently hatched walking-sticks, varying from three or four millimetres to a centimetre in length, in color they were a very pale yellowish green.

By the first of August they had begun to leave the timber and appear in the orchard and around the house. In the orchard they infested particularly one tree of early apples, devouring nearly all the leaves; on a single twig six inches in length I counted sixteen clustered together and they were equally numerous over the entire tree.

The woods had become forbidden ground to us; if one were sufficiently brave to start through them, the walking-sticks fell to the ground from every tree in such numbers as to sound like hail. Through August and September there were seldom fewer than fifty on our screen door each morning. The little chickens were particularly enthusiastic over them and soon learned to appear when we swept them off the doors in the morning. In spite of the long awkward bodies and clinging legs of the insects, they were soon able to devour them quickly and deftly.

By mid-September the timber showed stretches a couple of hundred feet broad and half a mile long where the trees had been completely defoliated. The walking sticks began to cross the road to another piece of timber in which there had been almost none of the insects and every passing carriage or motor crushed them by hundreds. This extremely local character of the infestation was a curious feature. One piece of timber containing about two hundred acres was almost wholly stripped, while a similar piece across the road was scarcely touched. It would appear that no walking-sticks matured there, and the light damage done was by migrants from the other timber. There was an apparent disparity in numbers between the males and the females, though the apparent scarcity of females may be due to their greater sluggishness. During the latter part of the season the females appeared in slightly greater numbers.