Occurrence of a Spittlebug in Annoying Abundance

Observations were made in late 1953 and in 1954 regarding the occurrence of small brown spittlebugs on Fisher Island, Miami Beach, Florida. These insects, identified as Clastoptera undulata Uhler (Homoptera, Cercopidae) by Thomas E. Moore, State Natural History Survey, Urbana, Illinois, were found in abundance during December, 1953, and January and May, 1954.

Clastoptera undulata Uhler has been reported previously as occurring in Cuba upon Casuarina spp. and various species of Malvaceae. This is its first reported occurrence in the United States and constitutes a verification of the primary host record and the addition of varieties of cultivated Hibiscus as secondary hosts.

The nymphs of the species have been observed most frequently in frothy masses of spittle on the Australian pine (Casuarina equisetifolia L.) and to a lesser extent on certain varieties of cultivated Hibiscus. The adults are active fliers, but when observed resting they were found principally upon the tender twigs of the Australian pine.

Heavy infestations of this insect occurred in December and January; however, by mid-January they had decreased in number until it was difficult to collect even a small series of specimens. Their population increased in April and reached a peak during May. From early June to the present time (September 1954) their numbers have decreased, until the population is as light as that of February and March.

The damage caused by both nymphs and adults feeding on their host plants appears negligible. However, the adults constitute a considerable nuisance by resting or crawling in large numbers on persons who enter the infested area. The adults are often transported in this manner into offices, homes, and automobiles, where their presence is also annoying.

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