

A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF ECTOPARASITIC MITES (ACARI) OF THE HOUSE SPARROW AND MOCKINGBIRD IN FLORIDA¹

W. A. PHILLIS III AND H. L. CROMROY²

Department of Entomology-Nematology,
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32601

ABSTRACT

Three species of ectoparasitic mites were collected from the nests of the house sparrow and mockingbird in Gainesville, Florida. The predominant species collected was *Pellonyssus passeri* Clark and Yunker.

A preliminary survey was undertaken to determine the nest-dwelling acarine ectoparasites of 2 common Florida birds, the house sparrow, *Passer domesticus*, and the mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*. Ten house sparrow nests and 5 nests of the mockingbird were collected in Gainesville, Florida on the University of Florida campus. The nests were collected when the immature birds left the nest since the peak in ectoparasitic populations occurs at this time (Phillis 1972). The ectoparasitic mites were extracted from the nests by using the Tullgren modification of the Berlese funnel (Krantz 1970).

The only acarine ectoparasites inhabiting the nests belonged to the family Macronyssidae (Mesostigmata). Two genera and 3 species of macronyssid mites were found. The most common mite found was *Pellonyssus passeri* Clark and Yunker, which was collected in large numbers from every nest. Two species of the genus *Ornithonyssus*, *O. bursa* (Berlese) and *O. sylvarum* (Canestrini and Fanzago), were also found in one of the mockingbird nests.

It has been hypothesized by many authors that wild bird nests serve as a source of mite infestation for domestic fowl and human habitations. This would mean that birds like the house sparrow and mockingbird that nest in close proximity to man may be of importance as a source of possible infestation. Most control practices are aimed at the species *Dermanyssus gallinae* (Degeer) (Mesostigmata: Dermanyssidae) the so-called chicken mite and the genus *Ornithonyssus*. This would suggest that many of the "chicken mites" in Florida may be *Pellonyssus passeri* at least during the post-nesting phase of the wild bird's yearly cycle, and that more research should be done to verify this.

LITERATURE CITED

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- Phillis, W. A. 1972. Seasonal abundance of *Dermanyssus hirundinis* and *D. americanus* (Mesostigmata: Dermanyssidae) in nests of the house sparrow. J. Med. Entomol. 9:111-2.

The Florida Entomologist 55(4) 1972

¹Florida Agricultural Experiment Stations Journal Series No. 4504.

²This investigation was supported by Public Health Service Grant No. T01-AI00383-03 from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.