

Family Winter nuisance

HAYS — A home insect “invasion” can happen any time warm temperatures interrupt a cold High Plains winter.

That’s always been true in houses serving as winter shelter for red-marked, black boxelder bugs. Nowadays, however, another insect population can be overwintering indoors, too. In some places these temporary boarders have numbered in the tens or even hundreds of thousands, said J.P. Michaud, entomologist with Kansas State University’s Research Center in Hays.

His concern about these new insects is only partly tied to how much of a nuisance they can be.

Asian lady beetles are related to the U.S. beetles known as ladybugs which Americans fondly copy in black-spotted red pins and other ornaments. In many ways, the alien species is similar.

During fall, however, huge numbers of the Asian beetles tend to congregate on light-colored, sunny buildings. They can look like a literal swarm of small yellow-orange to orange-red insects with varied back markings, ranging from many spots to none.

They might seem to be a meeting of different species except for the four black marks that form a “W” on each one’s thorax, just behind the head.

If they gain access to shelter, these beetles can become even more of a bother during winter. An outdoor warmup can inspire both boxelder bugs and Asian lady beetles to leave hiding places in cracks, crevices, attics and walls. They’ll crawl or fly around their adopted home, roaming from light

fixtures to rugs. The bugs may defecate on curtains. But the beetles can do even worse, the entomologist warned.

Michaud’s bigger worry is that the beetles actually are invaders. They somehow made their way from Asia, showing up in Kansas fields and buildings by the late 1990s. In contrast to their scientific name of “Harmonia,” they’re now proving to be aggressive predators across the country.

“Harmonia axyridis” will feed on all kinds of things — even the larvae of other ladybugs. A big concern in the scientific community now is a seeming decline among our six native lady beetle species,” said Michaud, who is a K-State Research and Extension specialist in integrated pest management.

The Asian beetles have been in Kansas for at least five years, he said. But, their first real population explosion followed the first large infestations of soybean aphids in 2002-03. Evidently, the new aphids are a preferred prey that, when they’re abundant, can lead to large “Harmonia” populations.

That’s also when Kansans learned Asian lady beetles aren’t afraid of humans. They can fly and will land almost anywhere. If they land on bare skin, they can pinch

hard enough that people expect (but don’t get) broken skin. When disturbed, the

beetles also emit yellow-orange blood that smells foul, a defense they evolved to protect themselves against birds.

“If they swarm around your home in winter, this material can stain walls and home furnishings. The more beetles, the more the damage will be and the more intense the bad odor,” Michaud said. “Some people also can develop an allergic reaction to being around Asian lady beetles.”

He advises homeowners to use a vacuum cleaner to collect clusters of the beetles inside buildings. If possible, the vacuum’s sealed bag should go immediately into an outdoor trash container.

“I tell people not to worry about doing that. These insects aren’t protected. And, we already know their pest status can equal or exceed the benefits they provide in crop protection,” Michaud said. “Besides, the mortality inflicted by humans is likely to have no impact on natural populations.”

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Winona welcomes new resident

Joslyn Marie Nichols is the newest resident of Winona. Her parents, Dathan and Sarena Nichols, and brother Nathaniel, are happy she joined their family Friday, Dec. 16, 2005. She was born at Citizens Medical Center in Colby. She weighed 7 pounds, 13 ounces and was 20 1/4 inches long. Jerry and Rhonda Nichols are the paternal grandparents and Lindy and Lola Bretz are paternal great-grandparents. Dave Tarman of Tribune is the maternal grandfather.

Most of the pews were filled in the Winona U.M. Church Sunday when the choir sang a Christmas musical, “A Carol to the King.” It carried a heart-warming, energetic message with some contemporary mixed in with familiar Christmas carols. Dianne Schertz played a piano prelude. Amy Lorenzen sang a lullaby written and accompanied by her mother, Charlene Taylor. Rev. Michael Eurit extended a welcome to visitors and the choir. Rev. Eurit and Art Koster narrated. Tricia Taylor spoke words the virgin Mary might have spoken. Dianne Schertz was the accompanist. Singers were Pastor Mike Eurit, Pat Koster, Pam Lewallen, Art Koster, Amy Lorenzen, Ruth Smith, Charlene Taylor, Donita Goyen, Norma Lee Plummer, Tara Ballentine, Donna Carmichael, Bernard Merica, Tricia Taylor, Sam Smith, LaVonne Baxter, Rachael Smith, Beth Lamb, Shelly Plummer, Shawn Plummer, Denise Shoff, Heather Ballentine, Matt Ballentine, Heather Martin, Joyce Eurit and Maleen Michel. Jean Lowe was director. Refreshments followed the performance.

A pre-Christmas dinner for Mike and Sheryl Kough’s family was held Sunday at their rural Russell Springs home. Stan and Lori Headings, Camry and Riley traveled from Marienthal on the beautiful Christmasy day. Cole and Linsey Mackley, Jace and Dalton of Sharon Springs and Arron Kough completed the family circle. Amy Wilson of Colby was a guest.

All the seats were occupied in the Triplains auditorium Tuesday evening for the annual all-school Christmas program directed by



Jean Lowe

• Winona Correspondent

music teacher Glenda Graham.

The Bob Pfeiff family celebrated Christmas early this year. They met in Salina on Dec. 17, 2005. Attending were Bob and Wilma Pfeiff, Mike and Sandi Margheim, Doug and Jon of Winona, Mike Margheim and Jamie of Burrton, Chris Stout, Kelsea and Wyatt of Princeton, Dennis Pfeiff of Salina, Dennis Pfeiff, Jr., Stephine, DeShawn, Seqcora and Melea of Moundridge, Amber Fields, Zowie and Chase of Hutchinson, Ken and Kristie Pfeiff, Anthony and Tim of Sutherland, Neb., and Brenda Pfeiff of Keller, Texas.

Joyce, Alex, Colin and Sarah Eurit, Sheila Plummer and Heather Ballentine were guests at Son Shine Kids Club Wednesday. Pastor Mike Eurit talked about the birth of Jesus with the kids. They played balloon volleyball, ate pizza and left with treats. There will be no kids club

Wednesday

Usually I am hesitant to write in first person. Having the opportunity of seeing a picturesque view of Russell Springs covered in a blanket of snow, I can’t resist relaying to you its beauty. The tranquillity of the village under the undefiled virgin snow, except for the tracks of winding paths made by cattlemen out early to tend their herds, was breath-taking. Icicles adorned the eaves of Helen Thacker’s house as if carefully placed one by one. Abandoned vehicles were transformed into sculptures as if created by skilled artists. The view from the Butterfield Trail Museum south to the Smoky River was like a Currier and Ives painting. There were expanses of open country, one could imagine, were imploring someone to infringe upon its vastness for a game of fox and geese. By the time I returned to Winona the sun had begun to erase the fantasy world I was caught up in.

Card Shower

Juanita Dawes is celebrating her 85th birthday Tuesday, Jan. 3. For those wanting to send greetings, cards may reach her at: 620 S. Grant, Colby, Kan. 67701.

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