

WINTER STONEFLIES

by Milton G. Savos, Extension Entomologist

Stoneflies are a small group of insects whose immature forms, or nymphs, usually live under stones in streams or along rocky lake shores. Although they are of little direct importance to man, indirectly they are of great importance as natural fish food and as biological indicators of unpolluted waters.

Adult stoneflies are terrestrial and generally go unnoticed except when they emerge from the water after completing their immature development. Although this usually occurs in the spring and summer, a few species come out of the water during the winter and are called, not surprisingly, winter stoneflies. Most of them are about $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in length and blackish in color.

After emergence they often congregate in great numbers on the foundation, siding, windows and doors of homes and a few may get inside. Some adults may also collect on other vertical surfaces and even on trees. The places where they are found are usually near the water from where they emerged because the adults are poor fliers. Understandably, the presence of large numbers of strange insects during the winter often causes great concern to the householders involved.

Records I have maintained over the last ten years show that emergence flights occurred from mid-November to early April with the greatest number taking place in March, followed by January and then February.

Fortunately, adult stoneflies are harmless to man. They usually leave the places where they have congregated within a couple of days so that no control measures of any kind are required. Since they are poor fliers, those that enter homes can be easily captured and disposed of with a fly swatter or tissue paper.

