

# Vero Beachside News

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**KRAUTHAMMER  
FELIX'S PLACE  
FILM: WAR IN  
AFGHANISTAN  
MARINE CLEANUP  
INITIATIVE  
HOT TRAVEL BUYS**



MAY 25, 2011

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## LEARNING HOW TO LIVE WITH LOVEBUGS IN VERO BEACH IS CHALLENGING

The lovebug, *Plecia neartica*, is a seasonally abundant member of a generally unnoticed family of small flies related to gnats and mosquitoes. The males are about 1/4 inch and the females 1/3 inch in length; both are entirely black except for red on top of their thoraxes (middle insect body segment). Other common names for this insect include March flies, double-headed bugs, honeymoon flies, united bugs, and some expletives that are not repeatable according to the University of Florida IFAS Extension Department, which supplied the information here.

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Although they exist over the entire state during these months, they can reach outbreak levels in some areas and be absent in others. They are a nuisance pest, as opposed to destructive or dangerous, in areas where they accumulate in large numbers.

Lovebugs can be identified superficially as swarms of little black flies with red thoraxes that



fly as pairs of males and females in tandem.

Lovebugs are originally from South America but can now be found as far north as coastal communities in the Carolinas.

Female lovebugs are attracted to UV irradiated aldehydes, a major component of automobile exhaust fumes. Heat has also been shown

to attract lovebugs and thus contributes to their abundance on highways. Lovebugs also enjoy collecting on light-colored buildings, especially when freshly painted.

Mating can last almost thirteen hours and is concluded when the pair lands on vegetation.

The body fluids of lovebugs are acidic and can damage the paint on automobiles and trucks if not cleaned within 24 hours. To protect vehicles, car wax should be applied.

Lovebugs do not bite, sting or transmit diseases. They are only active during daylight hours. Due to their abundance and mobility they cannot be effectively con-

trolled with poisons or repellents.

Lovebugs sail from flower to flower much like butterflies. They have become less abundant over the past thirty years but their populations tend to rebound unpredictably.

Newcomers to Florida are much less tolerant of lovebugs until they learn that the insects are not dangerous but only create inconveniences and tickle, rather than threaten human health and the environment. In nature, adults live just long enough to mate, feed, disperse, and deposit a batch of eggs—about 3-4 days. But they do it twice a year. And now is the time. Romance is in the air.

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