

MACALESTER COLLEGE

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55105

Ordway Bulletin No. 30

■ DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

SUBJECT: WINTER-FLIES at ORDWAY

Not many pests are as pesky as flies and one decided advantage of winter is the absence of these creatures. Therefore it is a puzzling matter when one encounters flies indoors during the winter months. This winter they were particularly numerous at Ordway, cluttering the window ledges with dozens of their dead bodies. My suspicions were raised that these might be the product of some egg reproduction in decaying organic matter about the premises but a little closer scrutiny of the individual insects and a search of the literature shed some light on the matter.

These winged winter denizens are Face Flies (Musca autumnalis) and Cluster Flies (Pollenia rudis) and they are quite different from the Housefly (M. domestica). These creatures literally "come out of the woodwork" for they emerge from soil-deposited eggs in autumn and cluster on the sunny sides of the building, working their way into cracks and window-casements as the weather cools; they become active during warm winter spells, almost always appearing on the sun-facing windows. The Face Flies are indistinguishable from House Flies except by experts; the Cluster Flies have a yellowish cast to their body color. All of them are rather weak fliers and go through rather annoying sluggish flight, often ending on the floor where they spin about as if in some sort of a death agony only to rise and fly again.

17 March 1975

R J CHRISTMAN,
Naturalist,
Katharine Ordway Natural
History Study Area.