

Other Insects: residents and visitors

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In Part I of this set on Cockscomb *Celosia argentea*, as a host plant we briefly described the behaviour of seven large wasp species. In Part II we extend the list of clients to include, bees, beetles, a fly, a sap sucking bug and three visiting predators.

Visitors

Honey bees arrive on these flowers occasionally. We find three species: *Apis dorsata* (the giant honey bee), the smaller *Apis florea* and the Asian honey bee *Apis cerana*. These bees, land, look, and leave in quick succession. They are not featured here because their arrival seems to be accidental: they prefer richer pickings.



There is a 6 mm Dwarf Carpenter bee *Ceratina collusor* that does forage on these flowers. Solitary carpenter bees don't make honey but they do act as a pollinators. This one inhabits SE Asia, from Myanmar, throughout Thailand and Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

A leaf-cutter bee

Two views of a compact orange and black leaf-cutter bee (*Megachilidae*) foraging on our Cockscomb.



Images of this (or an almost identical species) are on the web from India and Singapore. Leaf cutters make up a large family with more than 1500 species worldwide. Females dig a slender hole in the ground, line it with cut leaves and lay down a single line of cells in which they deposit eggs, one per cell, and paralysed insects as food for their larvae.

Foraging flies

Some flies are bee mimics: they forage for nectar like bees and some look like bees. We do not find the specialists (bee flies) on these flowers and there are very few of the many local species of hover fly. The exception is a large Syrphidae: *Eristalinus quinquestriatus*, (or a very closely related species).

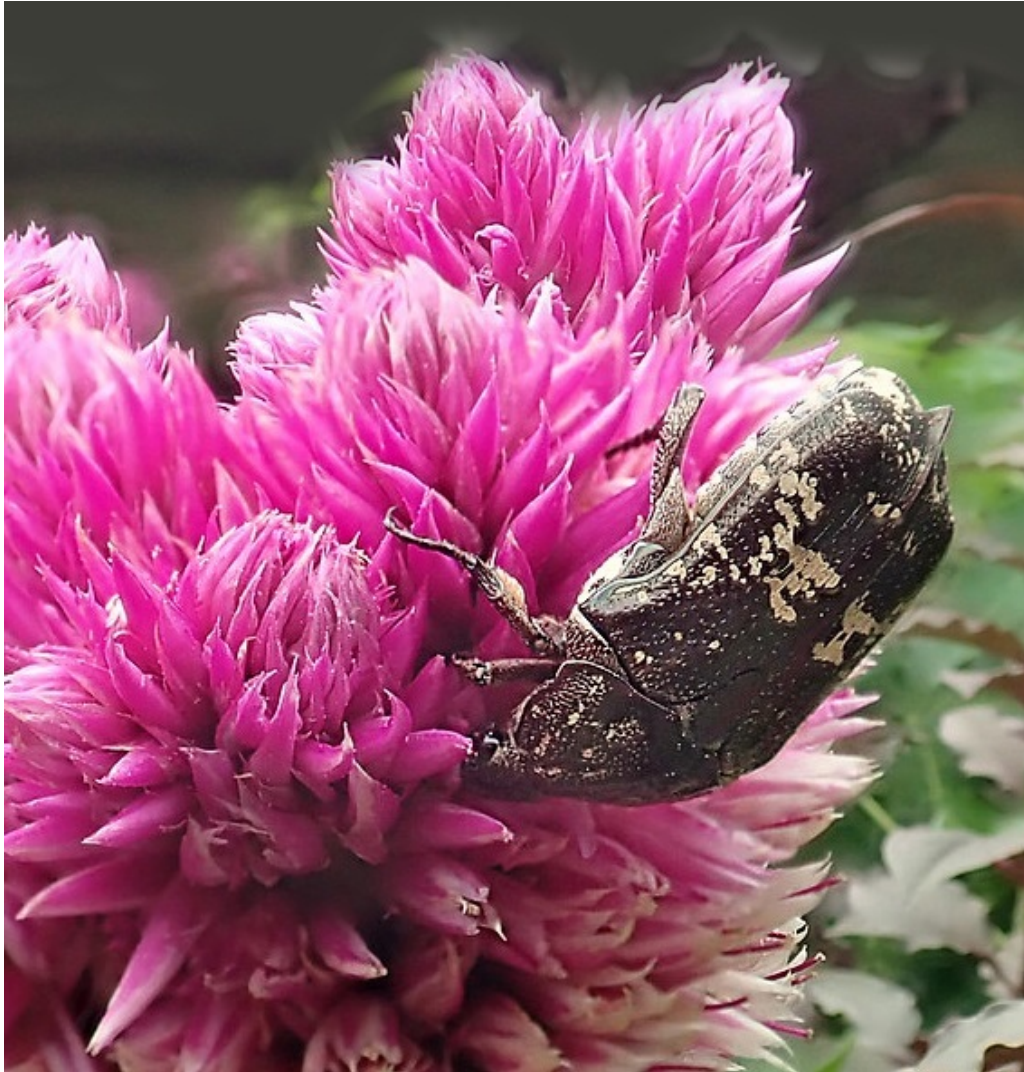


This fly is common, large, slow, and easy to photograph. We find it singly on and around many different plants and flowers. Its presence on the Cockscomb does not indicate preference, just the habit of sitting and foraging a range of different species. It is included in this list of larger insects for completeness.

There are a few very small flies to be included in a subsequent article.

Flower beetles

1. The large common Mango Flower Beetle: *Protaetia acuminata*, is found in many situations, from swaying wildly on Biden's Pilosa to clambering quietly around in a Water Lily. It is not surprising to find it also on Cockscomb.



This beetle's presence on Cockscomb is occasional and indicates a preference for other flowers, perhaps with a more copious supply of nectar and with easier access.

The beetle that follows is exceptional, rarely seen or photographed and may well have a strong preference for *Celosia argentea*.

2. Dad photographed this beetle on cockscomb in a rubber plantation north of Chiang Rai ten years ago and didn't know what it was. We were surprised to find another one foraging on one particular hand of Cockscomb plumes at the house over two days in late October before it vanished. We have not seen one since.



Ripiphoridae Ripiphorus sp. (6 mm) foraging on Cockscomb.
Chiang Rai 9/4/2013. It has the antennae of a female.

Note the vestigial elytra, exposed wings and beetle-like antennae. This is a parasitic beetle that lives as a juvenile in a beehive, pupates, emerges as an adult, leaves the hive for a day or two, feeds, mates, lays eggs in a flower and dies. After hatching the first instar attaches itself to a bee and returns to a hive where it parasitises a bee larva. *Ripiphoridae* are rarely seen or photographed. We were lucky.



Ripiphoridae Ripiphorus sp. a beetle that's parasitic on bees. Small (5-6 mm) foraging on Cockscomb, Pathum Thani, late October 2001. Similar to the Chiang Rai specimen in size and appearance, black and orange, but banded like a bee: possibly a different species.



The same individual from the rear. It stayed on the flower as it was removed and placed against a white background.

Residents

Tiny ants and other minute creatures: mites, thrips and the like, are residents on these plants and in the flowers. We will describe what we find later. For the moment we list just one resident that's always on the stems and on the flowers and is impossible to miss.



Coreid bug: *Cletus trigonus* (the slender rice-bug), adult on the left and a middle instar on the right. They are sap suckers that frequently appear on the flowers from a wandering habit, not foraging for nectar. They act as though they own the neighbourhood. They occur in good numbers year round. Their only regular predators seem to be birds.

Their relatives among the Coreidae are the leaf-footed bugs, mostly larger with fattened hind legs, often with leaf-like extensions. None of the larger local species are found on Cockscomb.

Predators

Two of these are not insects and the insect is an occasional visitor, not a long term resident.



Big eyed bug: *Geocoris* sp. looking for dinner. Normally found on Holy basil nearby these predators stray onto our flowers.



Spiders: both free-ranging lurkers that stake out a flower and wait for prey to come to them. White crab spider on the left and a Lynx spider on the right. Both are frequent temporary residents on the Cockscomb plumes, a productive hunting ground.