COURTING AND MATING PERFORMANCES OF AN ASILID FLY (*HETEROPOGON LAUTUS*)

On September 13, 1932, in a mesquite pasture near Spur, Texas, the small robber-fly, *Heteropogon lautus* Loew, was very abundant, numbers perching on the tips of dead twigs of the mesquite five or six feet from the ground and on the barbs of a wire fence enclosing the pasture. They betrayed interest in passing objects by quick movements of their heads, but were not wary and could easily be captured by hand. Several were seen feeding on small winged formicids. But what attracted our attention particularly (Mr. W. C. O'Dowd of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station was with me and together we watched the phenomenon) were their peculiar actions which observation proved to be courtship and mating. Hovering in front of the female at a distance of about an inch, the male would poise, oscillating somewhat from side to side and waving his front tarsi, which are clothed with appressed white hairs, toward the female. He might continue in this position for a period of thirty seconds or more. Often the female appeared to ignore his presence; at other times she watched him eagerly, waving her front tarsi in return and spasmodically half-raising and lowering her wings. The male would then fly over, turn in midair and alight in back of the female, coition then taking place. At other times males were seen to alight in back of the females and press their mystacial bristles against the spines of the cerci surmounting the ovipositor. At such times, the female would half-raise and lower her wings as described before. Frequently the male would then spring to his hovering position in front of the female and the tarsi waving would begin again. In one instance, an additional male was noted hovering in front of a pair in copulation.

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