

THE PRIONIDAS CRISTATUS OR
WHEEL BUG AN ENEMY
TO THE BEE.

OFFICE OF MISSOURI STATE BOARD OF
AGRICULTURE, COLUMBIA, MO.
PROGRESSIVE BEE KEEPER

Higginsville, Mo.

Gentlemen:—

Mr. W. A. Ditson, of Hutton Valley, Mo., forwarded to this office a large and beautiful specimen of a bug which he had that day discovered eating his bees, and asks that its habits and history be reported through the PROGRESSIVE.

This state having no entomologist, and not being familiar with "bugology" myself, I forwarded the specimen to Miss Mary Murtfeldt, of Kirkwood, Mo., who is authority on these subjects, and who has kindly furnished me the enclosed answer for your paper.

Very respectfully,

J. K. RIPPET, Sec'y.

KIRKWOOD, Mo., Aug. 9, 1894.

Mr. J. K. RIPPET,

Sec'y State Board of Agriculture.

DEAR SIR:—

Yours of the 8th, accompanied by letter and specimen from Mr. Ditson, is received.

The large and formidable insect, said to be killing bees, is the Wheel Bug, (*prionidas cristatus*) so called from the semi-circular, cog wheel-like excrescence on the top of the thorax.

It is a distinctively southern species, and though quite common in the southeastern states, is, as yet somewhat rare in Missouri. This bug (for it is a true bug) is fiercely predacious and cannibalistic, and it is therefore probable that under certain circumstances it would attack even the honey bee. The case reported by Mr. Ditson is, I believe, the first observation of the kind, as the wheel bug has always been regarded as a valuable species from the

fact that it destroyed so many of our leaf feeding pests.

It does not eat its victims, but impales them on its stout beak, and unless they are very large and heavy, holds them up in the air and slowly sucks out the vital fluids. It should be handled with some care as a thrust of its beak inflicts a painful wound.

Yours truly,

MARY E. MURTFELDT.

Linwood Letter.

THE SEASON AND ITS LESSONS.

A. BOOMER.

The spring opened very promisingly for both bee-keepers and farmers. But a cold spell of some three weeks duration in the latter part of May and early part of June disturbed our calculations very much. When the weather cleared when we could examine our bees, many of them including some very strong colonies were found in a starving condition and had to be fed. The latter part of June being fine, swarming became profuse but no extracting until the 30th of June, and very little then. On the second of July a heavy rain fell which was followed by a week of such cold weather that little or no honey was gathered, this was the best week of the clover bloom but could not be utilized. On the 11th of July, the bees left the clover and went to the basswood and gathered freely from this source until the 20th, since which owing to the severe drought so very generally prevailing, there has been no honey brought in and we do not now expect any more this season.

My returns are about 65lb per colony, and an increase of 60%, this falls fully 35% below last year, and is somewhat discouraging.