Pollinators and Other Creatures in the *Medicago* Nurseries

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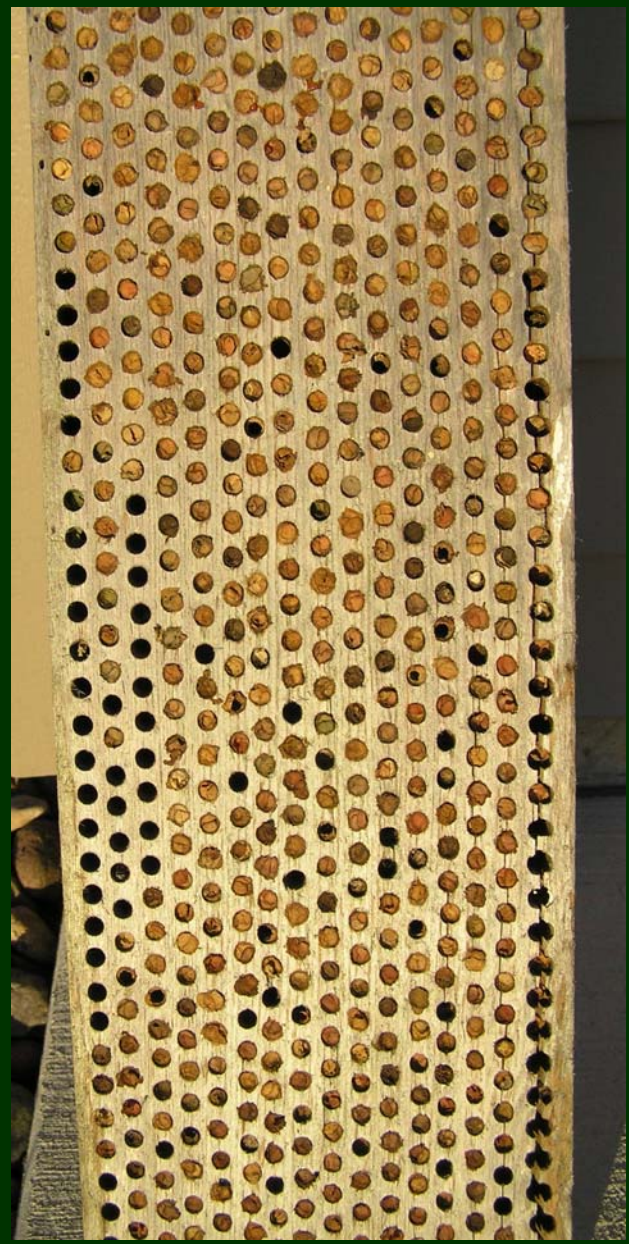
INTRODUCTION:

This report grew from taking general pictures of the *Medicago* nurseries. When looking at the pictures, it was apparent to us that they illustrated flowers, plants and management features of the nurseries. *Medicago* plants include *M. arborea*, *M. sativa* (alfalfa or lucerne), *M. falcata* (WISFAL), and segregates of *M. sativa-arborea* hybrids.

Leaf cutter bee and a bee board filled during August, 2006. We began in 1968 with a gallon of cells from Idaho, and assume there has been hybridization with Wisconsin leaf cutter bees over the years.



Bumble bee working light yellow flowers of an F2 of *M. sativa-arborea.*

Honey bee working variegated flowers of an F2.

Honey bee visiting alfalfa flowers.

Unknown bee working alfalfa flowers.

Unknown bee feeding on an alfalfa flower.

Moth visiting alfalfa flowers.

Moth sucking nectar from an alfalfa flower.

Moth visiting purple velvet flowers of an F2.

Moth feeding on flowers of an F2 segregate that has many aborted flowers.

Monarch butterfly in the air between plants. We observed the monarch collecting nectar. Hence, monarchs do not always feed on milkweed.

Monarch feeding on clone M8gms that has cream-colored flowers. The light yellow-flowers on the left side are a different plant.

Ladybug (Ladybird), probably hunting thrips on an F2 with light yellow flowers.

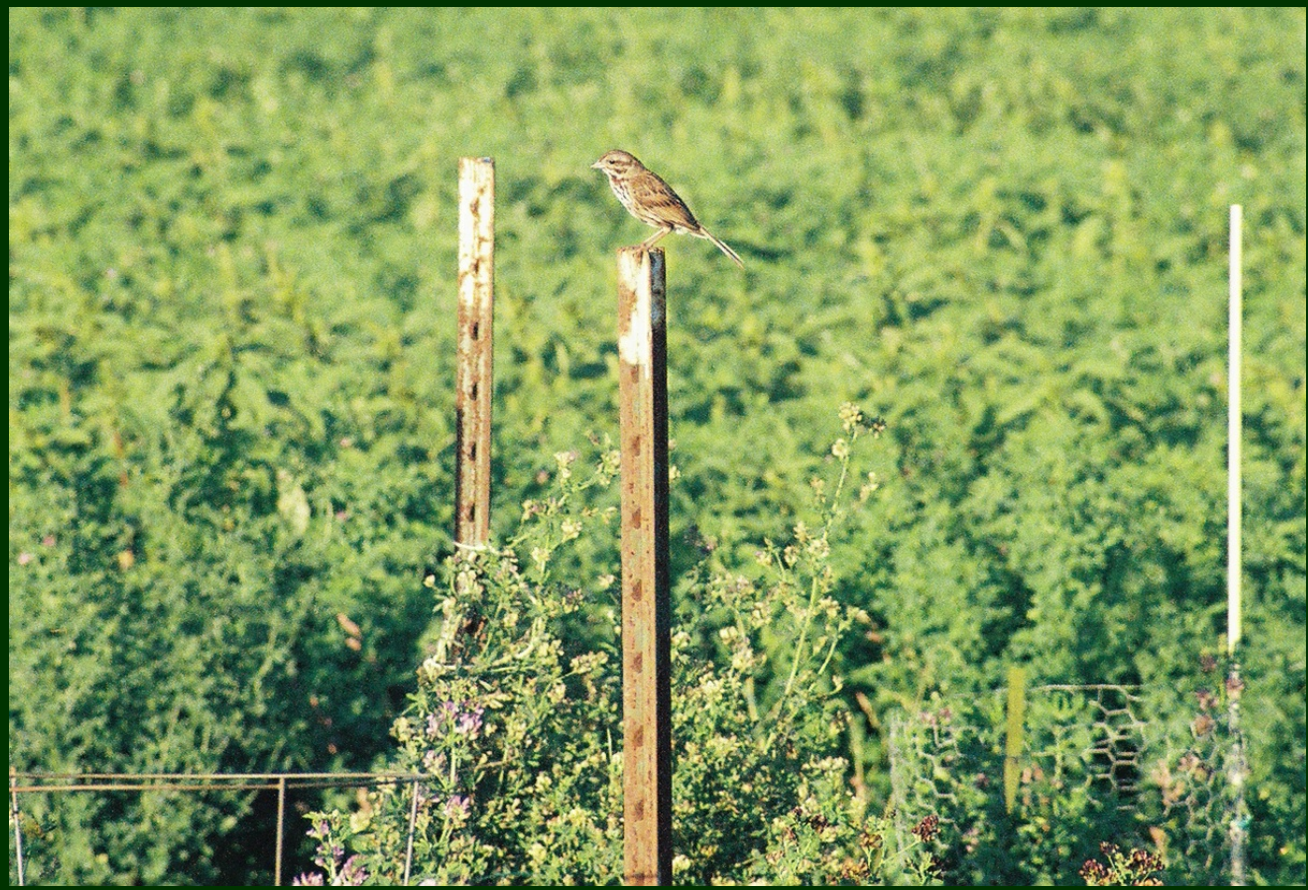
A species that looks like a ladybug.

Unknown insect foraging in an F2 population with an array of flower colors.

Unknown insect foraging on a yellow F2 segregate. Note the cream colored flower below the insect. This is a young flower and shows how yellow takes time to develop.

Unknown insect foraging on variegated flowers.
Is it feeding on nectar or what?

Various insects on *Medicago* foliage.



A bird on a 5’ steel post. We use all available means to support selected plants. Note steel posts, a white fiberglass post, a tomato ring support, and some chicken wire.

Purple martins on a circle of sheep fencing used to discourage rabbits.

Sandhill cranes in a production field of alfalfa immediately above an old nursery of spaced alfalfa plants.

Sandhill cranes walking across an old nursery of spaced alfalfa plants.

Crows feeding on insects in the stubble of a first year stand of alfalfa.

Seagulls feeding on insects in the regrowth of a production field of alfalfa on a misty August morning.

Geese flying over the alfalfa nursery at the West Madison Agricultural Research Station. The geese feed on young alfalfa shoots, but we could not get a picture.

Thirteen lined ground squirrel in the alfalfa nursery. Note the bamboo stake and green twistem nearby.

Groundhog (Woodchuck) in a production field of alfalfa.

This picture shows several things:
A television transmission tower, four plastic greenhouses, a bur oak tree, and two long rows of WISFAL.
Note the chicken wire on the left side to protect a new seeding from rabbits.

The squirrels eat acorns, and do not damage the alfalfa.

Three rows of alfalfa in foreground and a production field of alfalfa in background. Note the leafhopper yellowing of the two rows on the left. The dark green row on the right is WI-643. The cottontail rabbit (insert) is the most damaging creature in the nursery.

These are two *M. arborea* plants that are about two years old, and about one meter tall. *M. arborea* tends to be dormant in the summer, and grows rapidly in the fall. The fall growth seems to be induced to flower, hence we prune the plants very little when we transplant to the greenhouse in late fall. The plants tolerate freezing down to -5 C.

Nancy & Edwin Bingham sitting in a sea of yellow *M. falcata* flowers. Our home is about 1 kilometer from here.