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The Party Animal News

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Will it be a bad pest year?

Every year Punxsutawney Phil makes a predication of a short or long winter. One of my annual discussions with customers is whether the years' winter will be severe enough to kill off pests or will the mild winter mean that it will be a bad pest year. Of course, your perspective defines bad for whom, because when the pests are numerous a pest control company might look at that as a good year for them.

The question of a mild or cold winter is actually a good question. We have to look at the weather carefully at our company. In 2014 Ann started collecting data on temperature outside of our office in North Dallas. In the first 3 months of 2014 there were 21 work-nights below 40 degrees, 2015 had 17 nights, 2016 just 6 nights, 2017 only 3(!) but in 2018 we were up again with 14 nights below 40. I looked at the number of jobs to see if there was a correlation between jobs and the temperature extremes. Unfortunately, I do not see any big difference between the cold winters versus the mild winters.

We did not collect data on the amount of rain but I do believe there is a correlation between the drought and the last few years of maybe typical rainfall. All animals need water, and I have seen in the bug life cycle that they will come to a halt when things get too dry. When I started teaching my firefly classes at the Plano Parks and Rec many years ago we used to have a class in October. When we had a few years of the drought, however, we were lucky to see one firefly in the fall versus the hundreds of firefly catches (and release!) and sighting in the spring. We had to drop the fall class.

As for wet and cold weather during the winter time, this year we have seen a big increase in the number of rodents. The 14 freezing nights did make an impact on the rodent population. For them to survive they had to find a dry warm spot to endure our winter. The big rodent populations are because the rains have allowed all the trees to grow and the nut crops from the acorn and pecan trees have allowed an unlimited amount of food. We have seen customers accidentally allow rats to feed on a large bag of dog food. In these homes we will catch 30 plus rats. When the environment outside provides unlimited food like seen this last fall it will cause a population of rats that will be looking for shelter and moving away from the territory of the dominant rats. One account where we catch rats in outside stations has shown an increase of rat activity during last year by 100%.

So this is my predication for pests this year in honor of Punxsutawney Phil, as we continue to have unbelievable rain in the North Texas area this will promote a lot of insects. In the past the cold temperature did not have a noticeable effect on bug populations because we have to be realistic in North Texas. We really do not have winters or 4 seasons here. The trappers in North America hibernate like their animal friends whereas we are busy all winter long.

Pest of the Quarter:

Squirrels

- Reproduce all year long
- Hole the size of a baseball
- Wake up first thing in the morning and come back to the nest at sundown. These activities are like clockwork everyday
- I have had cases where their nest caused tropical rat mites to drop down into the room because of the squirrel activity



Hopefully the three years of rain will actually give use a clue on how good our termite chemicals are doing. We still have not seen typical termite swarming episodes like we used to see for over a decade and a half. Our termite chemicals are great but the termite swarms are non-existent every year and this is true nationwide.

For an understanding of the complexity of animal life, *Purpose and Desire* by J.Scott Turner is a complicated but interesting read on evolution. An easier yet still informative read is *Zombie Science* by Jonathan Wells. The description of the design of the eyes is fascinating. The many environmental factors that impact animals over time makes me think twice about what an insect or rat will do next.

- David

Bed Bugs

Why do some people end up with bedbugs? Sources are multiple. You might pick up a bedbug at a hotel, a visitor could bring them to your home, a child brings them from college, maybe a caregiver brings them when they come into the home or if you are temporarily living in a rehab facility or nursing home you bring them into the home when you return. If for some reason you believe you have a possible infestation starting, we have monitoring tools that work. Please contact the office for prices.



We VALUE our customers!

If you ever have a possible bug or part of a bug PLEASE save it! That will help us to identify the problem more quickly, target the correct pest and begin treatment sooner.

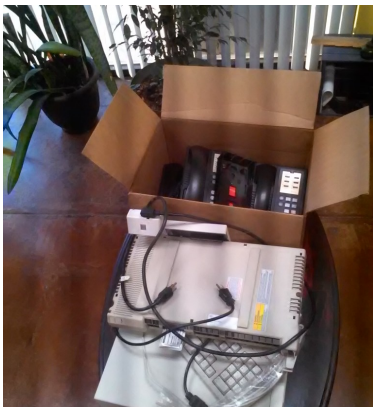
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Old phones and system ready for their next journey

The Battlestar Galactica of Phone Systems

This section has been dedicated to employees and people who have helped A-All over the years. Eighteen years ago when we moved to our current address we had a new phone system installed. It has finally become unrepairable. So, many of you might notice a different procedure for emergency calls and after hour services. At any time you can always send me an e-mail and I usually respond quickly. If you enjoy science fiction, you may know that Battlestar Galactica was an old ship that had an unexpected advantage over the Cylons because Commander Adama would not allow it to be a part of the fleet network. The Cylon cyberattack could not infect the ship. Our old phone system served a useful purpose and it is sad to see it go.



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