

INTRODUCTION

BLOWFLIES¹ are among the most familiar of insects. They are the bright bluebottle or greenbottle flies² of our childhood days. Most of us recall instances in which some of these two-winged insects figured prominently. Such flies have been known to man through the ages,³ but in spite of the ubiquity of the group, it is only within comparatively recent years that fairly complete knowledge of the biologies of a few of the species has been gained.

Blowflies occur in almost every region of the world. Many species are abundant in the tropics throughout the year; others are numerous in the arctic during the short summer season.

This paper presents a systematic account of the species of Calliphoridae⁴ now known to occur in North America⁵. There

¹The term "to blow" in the sense of depositing eggs is of considerable antiquity, and many examples of its use can be found, some dating back into the 16th century. For instance: Chapman, 1816, "Iliads of Homer," 16:23-29,

"I much fear, lest with blows of flies, his brass-inflicted wounds are fil'd." Or Shakespeare's, "to suffer the flesh-fly blow my mouth," "Tempest," Act 3, Sc. 1: or,

"Rather on Nilus mud,
Lay me stark naked and let the water flies
Blow me into abhorring"

"Anthony and Cleopatra," Act 3, Sc. 1;

or again his, "These summer flies have blowne me full of maggot ostentation," "Loves Labor Lost," Act 5, Sc. 2. Samuel Purchase, in his "A Theater of Political Insects," 1657, stated, ". . . as the blotches of the flies are nurished by the flesh wherein they are blowne . . .;" and Wagstaffe, in his "Vindication of King Charles the Martyr," 1692, said,

". . . it is the nature of flies to be ever buzzing and blowing upon anything that is raw."

²It has not been possible to trace the derivation of the term "bottle fly." Melander (*in litt.*) states that "bot" is an old term for a maggot: hence "bottle" means a little maggot. A bluebottle fly literally is a blue fly that produces little maggots. The old Gaelic form is "boiteag," meaning maggot.

³Something of the habits of these flies was known during ancient times. The first published account of such habits appears to be that of Homer in his "Iliad." The actual date of these works has not been established definitely, but the first authoritative text is that by Aristarchus of Samothrace (150 B.C.). While there is no earlier written text, the poems are vastly older. In more recent times, Linnaeus (*Entomologia Faunae Suecae Descriptionibus* 3:470, 1789) stated, *Tres muscae consumunt cadaver equi aequae cito ac leo*," indicating that the great number of offspring produced by only a few individuals within a short time had been observed by him.

⁴Calliphora: from Greek Καλλι, a stem used in compounding words to denote beauty, and φοροχ, a bringing forth (from φέρειν).

⁵Here considered to comprise the mainland from the arctic to and including the Panama Canal Zone, together with the West Indies north of Jamaica.