

11. Locusts, termites, mosquitoes

Insects = small creatures (harmless/harmful), much of the attention they attract is directed towards their destruction ⇔ *imbalance could be destructive*.

Some are beneficial = bees (wild honey). But some of the small creatures are harmful ⇔ they *damage crops and carry disease*:

- a) menace – in the Tropics ⇔ **Why?** lack of frosts allow them to live and breed easily.
- b) problems ⇔ standards of hygiene, water supply and sanitation (health care) are low

Monkeys are the hosts of yellow fever, *green monkeys* in Burundi may have been the source of *acquired immune deficiency syndrome* (AIDS) ⇔ spread by disposable syringes used repeatedly, without sterilisation => transmission from one patient to another (e.g. lorry drivers, soldiers, prostitutes). Bad social conditions have accelerated the diffusion of AIDS.

AIDS destroys the body's natural resistance to diseases, e.g. leprosy, malaria, tuberculosis.
What are main consequences of AIDS diffusion?

Locusts

= traditional plagues of Africa = species of *large grasshoppers* (Figure 1) – occasionally form swarms ⇔ droughts => their food supplies are restricted to small areas.

A grown locust needs to eat its own weight of food every day => e.g. a large swarm, weighing tens of thousands of tonnes, will eat all the green leaves and crops over several square kms – the food supplies of tens of thousands people.

e.g. The Desert Locust

Breeding places = desert margins (from Morocco to Pakistan).

There are some countermeasures,

e.g. spreading of poison dust to kill

the young locusts before they get their wings

Figure 2: Projected movement of desert locusts



Termites

= primitive type of creature related to *cockroaches*

Termites can't stay in solitary state as locusts can, but only in the group. 400 species live in Africa.

= most numerous macroscopic creatures in Africa.

Many of them live in *mounds* (Figure 4), 4-8 m high. Some of the termites (forest species) build their nests in trees.

= consume dead plants and animal remains => like *earthworms* => big importance in savanna ecosystems.

Mosquitoes and malaria

Common form of malaria in Africa is caused by a parasite, which is transmitted by various species of *mosquitoes*. The parasite infect blood cells => very common cause of infant deaths in Africa (cca 1 mil./year). Malaria reduce physical and mental energy => taking of protecting drugs (countermeasure). Malaria can be totally dislodged from towns (e.g. Zambia, Mauritius).

Another example of natural threat = *tsetse-fly* (causes sleeping sickness) = large brown fly, occurs in semi-arid regions and in dense populated regions.

Keywords:

insects, locust swarm, termites, mosquitoes, creature, sanitation, yellow fever, AIDS, disposable syringes, leprosy, cockroaches, termite mounds, earthworms, malaria, tsetse-fly, sleeping sickness

Figure 1: Locusts



Figure 3: Termites



Figure 4: A termite mound

