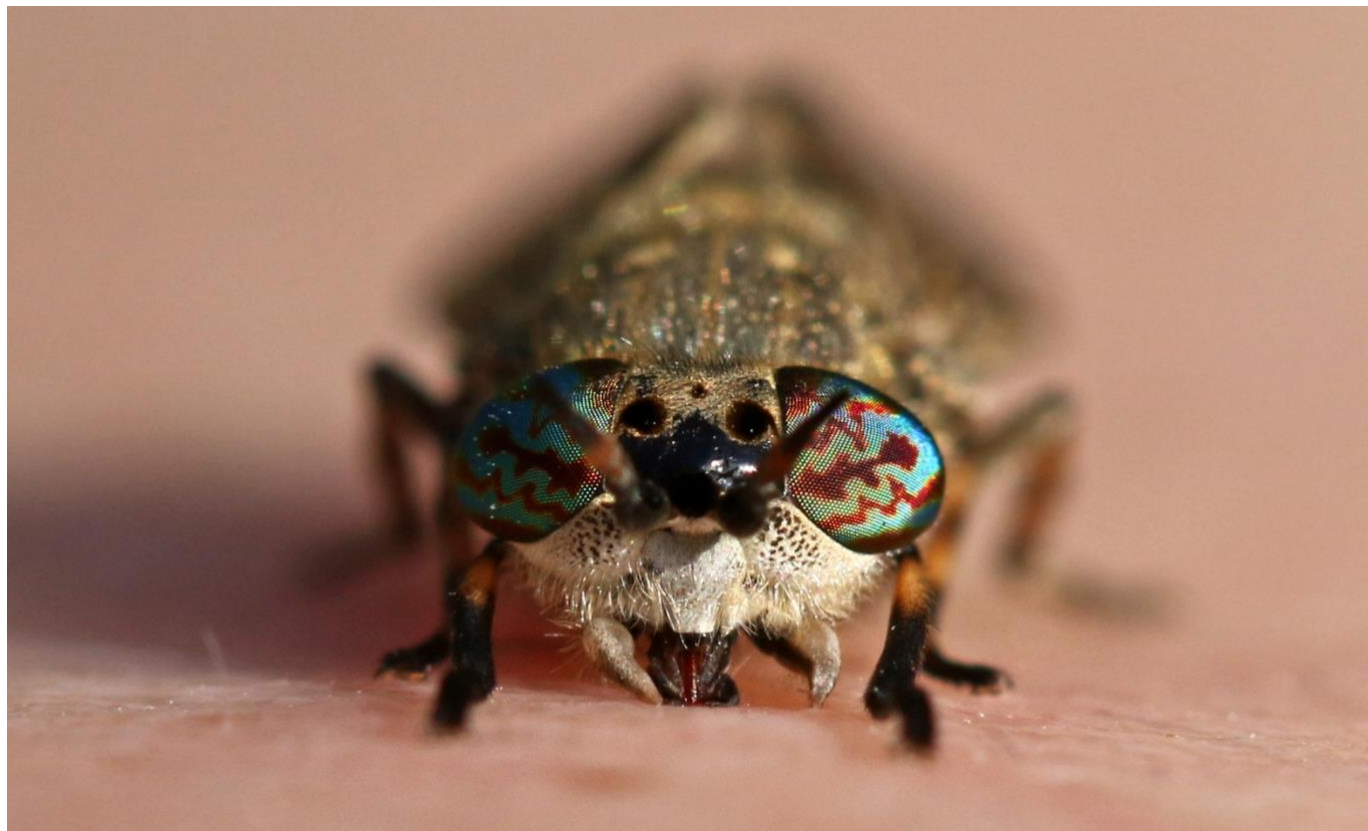


## A Clegsperiment.

Wendy Carter



01. Notch-horned cleg *Haematopota pluvialis* 13June 2021. Wendy Carter

I used to react very badly to horsefly bites until I got more than 35 in a 48hour period (more accurately, I was skewered and drained rather than bitten), since when I get a lump that itches a little but is nothing like the previous reaction. A couple of our more daring Worcestershire Recorders advised me that if I was ever 'attacked' in the future I should let the female do her worst, continue to drain me until she'd had her fill and let go of her own accord. Apparently, the fact that she had been able to seal her own perforation, rather than leaving it open when being brushed off, reduces the irritation.

So when, on a day in mid-June, I accidentally removed a notch-horned cleg *Haematopota pluvialis* when I felt my arm being skewered, I felt I'd simply ignored all their advice. Later, however, I noticed that she'd returned and was feeding on my calf. A split-second decision to leave her there and I realised that I was taking part in my own little experiment (although whether it was for science or art I'm not too sure - she was in the perfect location to get some good photos 01 and 02).

She took several minutes to finish (photo 02 shows just how bloated she became), during which time the skin on my leg started to go speckled and extraordinarily itchy. I nearly didn't let the

experiment run its full course. Once she had finished and taken off (with some effort - she was much heavier than when she'd started), my leg itched and itched. But after about half an hour it completely stopped. I was impressed. I silently thanked my friends who had suggested that I should try this method of escaping itchy lumps.

Yes, I silently thanked those wonderful Worcestershire Recorders who had introduced me to a new way of dealing with horseflies and clegs. Until the following morning when the skewered area was hot, hot, hot and itching like crazy. I should point out that the bite on my leg was nothing compared to what I used to get - it was actually a small lump that periodically drove me mad but it wasn't persistently itchy and it disappeared after a day or two. By contrast, I had no reaction at all where I'd disturbed the feeding cleg on my arm, which was unusual.

So can I conclude anything from this completely unscientific experiment? Only that I'm not sure that I'm brave enough to try it again! I would, however, like to voice my thanks to the Scotts, the Farmers and anyone else who had a hand in persuading me that this was the way to go - without your encouragement, I wouldn't have captured the beauty of this little fly's eyes! (01).



02. Notch-horned cleg *Haematopota pluvialis* 13June 2021. Wendy Carter