

Beware of the Fuzzy Ones!



My move to the south has opened up a whole new world to me.

Things big and small that I never saw or experienced in the North pop up all time.

My lesson today is about bugs.

The first bug I was introduced to this summer was the Stink Bug. My husband and I started seeing what seemed like GIANT bugs to us. They are about the size of a quarter or maybe even a silver dollar and they kept landing on our balcony. I asked around and was told those are Stink Bugs. Fairly harmless but ugly! They are technically considered poisonous but for the most part, they really don't cause issues unless you have an allergy. I just thought they were gross! You want to keep them out of your house for sure. They do emit a stink if they feel threatened.

The next bug in my lesson on bugs is totally different. It's not big. It's not gross and it doesn't smell but it's insidious!

Little did I know...

We were visiting a cabin in upstate Georgia. I walked out one morning on my way to go shopping and the first thing I saw was a

squirrel about six feet in front of me on a planter bed. He was creeping up on something bright yellow. I realized the yellow thing was moving! The squirrel sniffed it and immediately moved on.

As I got closer, I realized it was a caterpillar.

I'd never seen a yellow caterpillar. Up north, I was used to Woollybear caterpillars. Those are brown and black. They are pretty darn harmless. You can even pet them, and I had done so as a child.

This little yellow guy I videotaped. I had technical problems, so the video is really short but here it is.

I did not try to pick up this beautiful, yellow caterpillar. My husband came out and he checked it out too. He's the one that noticed the black antennae.

Now, that's where the problem arises.

We went off and went shopping and left the bright yellow creature to carry on, but I was so fascinated I decided to do some internet research to see what he was all about. I had surely never seen a bright yellow caterpillar before. There must be a story, I thought.

Well, there is.

Those little buggers are downright dangerous!

Those black spines sticking out of various parts of the beautiful yellow caterpillar pack a poisonous punch!

Here are some details.

He's called an American Dagger Moth Caterpillar. I'll just call

him Dagger. He falls under the category of "puss caterpillars."

Here's what entomologist, David Wagner had to say in USA Today.

Puss caterpillars' spines can cause a "nasty" reaction, Wagner says, causing severe pain and leaving behind a hematoma, a swelling of blood on the skin.

"It's not an instantaneous shock of a hornet or wasp, but it builds for a long time in a frightening way," Wagner tells USA TODAY. "No one expects stings to gain in impact or discomfort, and these will, even up to an hour later. It packs quite a wallop."

He says a puss caterpillar sting can cause joint pain akin to "serious arthritis" long after the pain from the initial contact has subsided.

Some folks have even had to be hospitalized because of their reaction. Considering I'm allergic to bug bites I'm considering myself pretty lucky that I didn't decide to try to get friendly with this little Dagger.

These little guys are said to be rare above the Mason-Dixon line. No wonder I had never seen one.

The things I read say no colorful caterpillar is a harmless caterpillar. (Reminds me of the bright poisonous teeny frogs I saw on display years ago at the Adler Aquarium in Chicago).

So, I learned my lesson the easy way (thank goodness)! Stay away from brightly colored caterpillars and absolutely do not be tempted to pet them!

This is my cautionary tale of Summer 2021.

Cheers,