

Central American locust (*Schistocerca piceifrons piceifrons* Walker, 1870)



Adult Central American locust



Transiens congregans and gregarious Central American locust nymphs

The Central American locust *Schistocerca piceifrons* (Walker 1870) is a long-standing pest widely distributed in the area. Historically countries got organized to take measures to control the pest and mitigate damage, which is frequently associated with famine. *Schistocerca piceifrons piceifrons* was declared a national pest by Mexico in 1924 and by El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica in 1955. It is in 1946 and in this region where the CIPA (Permanent Inter-American Acridian Committee) was created. This Committee became CICLA (International Committee for the Fight Against Locusts) in 1947 and, eventually, OIRSA in 1953, which is currently in charge of phytozoosanitary and animal movement issues.

Regarding the Central American region, outbreaks have been reported in Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua and, recently, in Guatemala as well as in Belize and Honduras on a smaller scale.

The main habitat where locusts develop is pastures in areas of rangelands or grasslands (primary communities) combined with secondary plants, mainly dicotyledons (Poot-Pech et al. 2017; 2018). They can also be found in areas with crops such as maize, beans and sugarcane.



Primary locust community (preferred biotopes IFI): buffel (Nicaragua) and guinea pastures (Yucatán)

Since there are locust outbreaks in the region, OIRSA has developed a number of strategies based on pest mitigation and monitoring activities. It has provided training, produced documents and outreach material, and it has also provided inputs for effective pest management.

In July 2020 OIRSA issued a phytosanitary alert due to the risk of outbreaks in the region. This made it possible to do preventive management and prevent risks, controlling various patches of the first brood in six countries in the region.

The locust presents two broods per year. The first one is shorter, with an approximate duration of four months, while the second one is eight months long, with an imaginal diapause as solitaires adult from January to May in the outbreak region (Cullen et al. 2017).

Table. Biology of the Central American locust throughout the year.

BROOD	Months											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
FIRST BROOD						NYMPHS						
								ADULTS				
								MATING				
								EGG-LAYING				
								SWARMS (NE)				
SECOND BROOD										NYMPHS		
	ADULTS											A
				MATING								
				EGG-LAYING								
	SWARMS SW											M

Note: the different stages may happen earlier or later depending on environmental conditions.

References:

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