

Bonus episode #109 - The lovebugs

Episode description

In this episode, Andrew discusses the recent lovebug outbreak in Seoul. He describes these insects, explains their unusual name, and talks about his experience dealing with them this summer. Andrew also explores the bigger topic of how people approach killing insects, and shares his own opinion about this issue.

BONUS EPISODE #109 THE LOVEBUGS



Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello, everybody. It's Andrew here from the Culips English Podcast. How's it going? This is bonus episode 109. And what I do here in the bonus episode series is I just tell you some stories from my everyday life. And we'll get to my story in just a moment. But before we do, I want to ask you a question. And the question may, **on the surface**, at first, seem rather bizarre. OK, the question is: What is your personal philosophy around killing bugs? Kind of **out of the blue**, right? But it's going to connect to this week's story. So, don't worry, OK? I want to know, are you the kind of person who feels no guilt or remorse whatsoever when killing bugs, and you just don't even **think twice** about it? Or are you one of these people who believes that all life on earth is precious and that it should be protected, and you really have a difficult time killing bugs? OK, I want to know what kind of person you are.

And we'll get to that question and why I'm asking you this question in just a moment. But I want to tell you, first of all, that there is a 100% free interactive transcript and vocabulary glossary to accompany this episode. You can find that just by clicking the link in the description for this episode. And I hope you'll check those tools out because they are very helpful for learning English. And I think that's why you're here, right? Is that you want to practice English listening and improve your English communication skills. And if you are a Culips member, then we'll also include a comprehension quiz. So, the transcript and the glossary, that's available to everyone. But the comprehension quiz is only for Culips members.

And finally, I wanted to tell you about this week's small-group conversation discussion sessions. We have three of them happening this week, one hosted by Alina, one hosted by Indiana, and one hosted by me. You can see the full schedule on our website displayed in your time zone. So, you can just select your time zone and see the schedule when they will be happening. Of course, they'll be happening on Zoom. And if you're a Culips

member, then we would love to have you join us. The sessions so far have been fantastic. I've really been enjoying talking with so many of our Culips members who have been participating. And I hope we will have even more people participate in the future. We'd love to have you join us. And they'll be happening on Zoom. So, you can just easily join from your computer or your phone. And they're pretty casual, guys. You don't have to stress out and feel bad about your English skill. All levels and all abilities are welcome. And the topic for this week is going to be "School discipline and punishment." So, we'll leave the link to the schedule in the description for this episode. And if you have some time and you are looking to improve your English-speaking skills, then I hope I'll see you on this week's small-group discussion session.

So, I think those are all of the announcements and news that I wanted to get out of the way here at the top of the show. Now let's get started with this week's episode. And you'll see why I asked you that random question about bugs and killing bugs just a moment ago. So yeah, let's jump into it. Here's this week's story, everyone. Enjoy.

Let's talk about bugs. Yeah, let's talk about bugs. That is the topic for this week's story. And I guess maybe the first thing we should start with is a definition, because you may be asking yourself what exactly is a bug? Well, bug, B-U-G, that's a very **colloquial term** that we can use to describe any kind of **creepy crawly** that we see outside. Or if you're unlucky, maybe you'll even see it inside your house. And we'll get to that a little bit later because I am going to talk about that today. But yeah, so a bug, any, like I said, creepy crawly that you see outside. A spider could be classified as a bug. A mosquito is a bug. A bee is a bug. Even a centipede, one of those long skinny bugs with 100 legs. I think they have 100 legs. "Centi" means 100. So, I think they have 100 legs. And there's also a millipede. A millipede, "Milli" means 1000. So, a millipede, I guess, has 1000 legs. I'll have to Google and see if that's true later, but I think that's a fact. And you know, as a runner, wow, I have a hard time with two legs. But if I had 1000 legs, I could probably run much, much faster. So, a little bit jealous of those little guys.

But anyways, that's not what I'm going to talk about today. I wanted to start with this definition, because some people might be confused about what is the difference between a bug and an insect. An insect is a more precise scientific term that describes a kind of animal that has a body that's made into three parts. So, it's got a head, it's got a thorax in the middle, and then it's got an end section as well, which is called the abdomen. And it also has just three sets of legs. So that's a more precise definition, an insect, it's not as **all-encompassing** as the word bug. So, you know, a spider, for example, isn't an insect. So, we'll stick with the word bug today because I'm not really a scientist. And I don't know all of the different vocabulary to talk about all of the different kind of creepy crawlies that I'm going to talk about in today's story. But I am going to focus on bugs just in general.

For me here in the northern hemisphere, it is the summertime. And I know many of our listeners also live in the northern hemisphere. So, you guys are probably dealing with a lot of bugs in your neck of the woods as well. Our listeners in the south, maybe it's winter for you. So, there aren't as many bugs these days that you have to deal with. But summer is really the bugs **time to shine**, isn't it? They really come out in the summer. They're active in the summer and then in the winter and in the fall, and in the spring, not as much. But here in the middle of the summer now, there are a lot of them. And I don't know if you've heard on the news at all, but here in Seoul, where I live, we have a very unique bug that is **proliferating** and taking over. And for the last two or three weeks, they have been everywhere. Now, it's kind of good news that I haven't seen as many over the last few days. So, I'm wondering if this, I don't want to call it a plague exactly. A "plague" is when you have a massive outbreak of something, maybe a massive outbreak of like locusts that destroy crops and farms. Or you could have a plague like in Europe during the Middle Ages, there was the Black Death. And that was a disease that killed so many people. OK, that is a plague. So, we don't quite have a plague here in Seoul. But just, you know, when you're talking with your friends and you're joking around, you could say it's like a plague because it is a serious problem. And it's something that many people are a little bit annoyed with and disgusted with and grossed out with. And that's what I'm going to tell you about today.

Now, this plague that we're facing in Seoul these days, has a rather cute name, because the bug that is proliferating and spreading and living everywhere is called the lovebug. lovebug. Now, that is its nickname. That is not its scientific name. It does have a different scientific name. Maybe I'll put it in the episode description for all of you bug geeks out there if you want to check it out and see exactly the species that we're talking about. But everybody calls them the lovebug. Even Koreans, they use that kind of English, borrowed expression, the lovebug, to talk about this bug. So why do they call it the lovebug? And why is it a problem in Seoul? Well, let me break it down and tell you about it.

It's called the lovebug because this bug is almost always seen as a pair. So, the male and the female of the species, they're almost always, like I have seen them from time to time on their own as individuals. And of course, I have no idea which one is the male, which one is the female. When I see them on their own, I think they all look the same. Even when I see them together, they all look the same. So impossible for just the uneducated person like me to tell. But they're called the lovebug because they're almost always attached together at the, I guess like their butt, the butt part of the bug, right at the very end part of the insect. They're always attached together. So, you'll see the male and the female flying around connected together. And that's why they call them the lovebug. And when I did a little bit more research into this bug, I found out that they're often connected because, well, as you may have guessed by how they are connected and by their name, it's because they are mating. And they have a rather long mating **window**, I guess I could say. They apparently mate for about three days, which is quite a long time. Very impressive for a little bug. So that's why we call them the lovebug. It's because they're always traveling around in pairs, male and female. And probably when we see them around connected like that, they are in the midst of some romantic passion, shall we say.

So, it's kind of a problem though, the lovebug. What does it look like? Let me try to describe the appearance. As far as I know, it is a member of the fly family. So, it's related to the common house fly. And I think everybody knows what a house fly looks like. Except it's a little bit longer. So, it's got a little bit of a longer look to it. But when you do look at

them closely, they do resemble just a regular house fly. But I would say with a longer, narrower body, compared to a house fly that's a little rounder. But their wings look pretty similar. And you can tell just by looking at them like, "Oh yeah, I could see that you are maybe the cousin of a house fly or something." But again, they have that really unique characteristic that they're almost always together, . That's what we say in English. We have this expression, "attached at the hip." And that's just an idiom that means that you are very close to another person. So, like, maybe you could say, "Oh, when I was in grade school, me and my best friend, we were attached at the hip." And that just means you are very close. Now, of course, the lovebugs are very close. They're not necessarily attached at the hip. Like I said, it's more like they're attached at the butt. But just to be a little more polite, we could say that they are attached at the hip as well. They are a very romantic bug indeed.

So, OK. Now, why am I talking about the lovebug? Well, I think starting, I recall maybe a year ago or two years ago, during the summer, the lovebug started to be a problem in Seoul. And I'm not exactly sure why this is. I think a lot of scientists have some guesses about why they're showing up these days more and more in Seoul. I think maybe it's mostly environmental is one of the main reasons. But I also heard that this bug is somehow, and I'm not exactly sure where I heard this. So, if my information is wrong, please just fact check me on this and tell me I'm wrong. And I will make a correction next episode. But I heard that this bug is somehow attracted to the exhaust that comes from cars. So of course, Seoul is a mega city and there's lots of traffic and a lot of cars and they're putting out exhaust. And that's also an attractive thing to these lovebugs. So, it might be a little bit of the climate, some environmental issues, which have made this bug just go crazy. And there are many, many, many, many of them in Seoul these days.

Now it's not the whole country. It's not all of Korea. It's mostly just the northern part of the city. And I live in the northern part of the city, but I don't live in like the extreme north. I'm pretty close to the central area. So, it's not too bad around my house, but I've heard up, you know, another maybe 10 kilometers north of where I live is quite crazy. And I've seen

some videos online. One of the premier mountains in Seoul is called Bukhansan. It's this big mountain. It's actually a national park just north of the city. And I saw some YouTube videos of some hikers on the mountain. And it was insane. Like the whole mountain was just covered in lovebugs, like hundreds and thousands of them. It's really quite disgusting. Thankfully here where I live in my neighborhood, there aren't too many of them, but I've been battling lovebugs every day and killing a lot of them.

OK, so I wanted to ask you this question. This is a good point leading into this question. The question is, what is your personal policy for killing bugs? What is your personal policy for killing bugs? I know some people don't even think twice about it. It's just like any old bug, they feel fine with killing. On the other hand, some people are very sensitive about this. And they think that all living creatures deserve respect and that we shouldn't kill them. And that is just a terrible thing to do is to kill bugs. I guess I could say my answer to this question is that I'm somewhere in the middle. I do usually feel bad for killing bugs, even if it's like a mosquito or even if it's a fly or something that's like a very small little bug. And it is interesting that the bigger the bug, usually the worse we feel when we kill it, right? I don't know. It's weird how that works. It's like the smaller the thing, the less we care about it. But I guess I'm a little bit sensitive when it comes to that. Like even when I have to kill a mosquito or kill a lovebug, then I do sort of feel bad, you know, but I still do it.

Here's my personal rule. Here's my answer to that question. The dividing line for me is my house and my yard. If a bug comes into my house, to me, that's like it's intruding into my territory. Now, I don't go into the bugs house and hang out and, you know, chill, and bother them. So, if they do that to me, then it's like it's game over. **It's on** and I'll go and kill the bug and make sure that it's out of my house. And of course, yeah, that just makes sense, right? We want to keep our home clean, and we don't want to have bugs finding a cool place to make a home and procreate and lay eggs and have babies and gross. So yeah, it's very, very sensible, I think, to kill bugs when they come into our homes. And depending on the bug, you know, like it's interesting too... a mosquito, of course, like they're terrible, right? They cause us pain and discomfort and an unpleasant itching sensation on our skin

if we get bit by them. So, mosquitoes, game over. I kill them. It's done. But some other bugs are beneficial, like spiders. Spiders eat mosquitoes. And although many people find spiders disgusting and gross, personally, I kind of think they're cool. So, if I see a spider in my house, then usually, if possible, it's not always possible, but, if possible, then I'll try and trap the spider and take it outside and let it go. And then I hope, like maybe in the garden, it will make a web and then catch mosquitoes and eat the mosquitoes. We can kind of work together. We have a kind of **symbiotic relationship** in that way, where like I help the spider and the spider helps me.

So, it depends on the kind of bug. But my philosophy in general is if it comes into my house, then it's game over for the bug and I'm going to kill it. I guess also my yard. And again, it depends on the kind of bug. We do have a small yard in my house and my wife and I, we were out there hanging out the other day in our yard and it was nighttime. And when we were just like sitting, chilling, chatting, we saw this cockroach run under our front gate. So, it came from the street, and it came into our yard and my wife freaked out like, "Oh my God, it's a big cockroach." So, I killed it and took care of it because it was affecting my quality of life. It was making my wife feel gross. And to be honest, it made me feel gross as well. And that's not the kind of thing that you want. Again, like finding its way into your house and it's gross. So, you have to get rid of that kind of bug. Although I do have to say that the cockroach was bigger than like a mosquito and you do sort of kind of feel bad a little bit, at least about taking its life. I know if I were the cockroach, I wouldn't have wanted to be killed the way that I killed that cockroach, even though it was a quick and hopefully painless death. Still, it's just not a nice way to go. So, I'm curious about you. What is your philosophy? Are you similar to me? Maybe you have a stricter rule than me. Maybe, for example, you don't kill any of the bugs that come into your house. Maybe you just catch them and take them outside and release them. I'm not sure.

So, let's get back to the lovebug. As I said, there is a lovebug explosion in Seoul. They're proliferating everywhere and I have been killing so many of them. In fact, in our house, we have this special tool that my wife bought, and it looks like a tennis racket, but it's this kind

of high-tech fly swatter. You know, like one of those old school fly swatters that's like made for killing flies that usually has like this piece of plastic at the end and then a long metal neck and then you can just swap, swap, swap and kill flies. OK. It's kind of like that, but this is **a newer take** on it. It looks like I mentioned, like a tennis racket and you actually put a battery inside the handle. And then when you press these two buttons that are on either side of the handle, it puts a little bit of electricity into the racket part. And it's like this metal grating and then you can hit a bug with it, and it eliminates the bug very quickly because it electrocutes it. And so, this was a fantastic purchase because for whatever reason here in my new house, we're getting a lot of these lovebugs actually coming inside. I'm not sure exactly how they're coming inside, but they are, they're finding a way.

And I think it's just because there are so many of them here in Seoul. Like, I don't know, probably I've killed about a hundred this year so far that have come into our house. However, this fly swatter, this high-tech fly swatter, this tennis racket of electricity that I can use to kill the bugs has worked very well. And I think, yeah, it's helped us to take care of the problem. My wife has also **taken to** burning mosquito coils in our yard for a couple of reasons. Have you seen these things, these mosquito coils? I'm not exactly sure what it's made of exactly, but it's like a spiral and you light the spiral on fire, and it just lets out this smoke. It burns very slowly. It's almost like an incense, like in the speed that it burns. But it kind of smells nice. Like when she burns one in the yard, we put it outside, of course, in our yard and we burn them at night, and it helps to keep mosquitoes away. I think maybe as well, it helps to keep the lovebugs away. I'm not so sure, but it also kind of creates like this nice smoky scent and kind of reminds me like I'm camping or something. So, I honestly do like it a little bit when she lights the mosquito coil outside.

And of course, it's very hot here in the summer. So, we have our windows, and our doors open, and we do have screens for the doors and the windows. So that's not where the lovebugs are coming in from. But I think, yeah, you know, just like because there are a lot of them, if you leave the door open for just a few moments and maybe this is one of my bad habits, if I run outside to grab something, I usually just leave the door open while I run

out and then I come back in. And by that time, maybe three or four lovebugs have snuck in the house as well. I don't know. Anyways, yeah, that's the story that I wanted to tell you about is the lovebug takeover of Seoul. As I mentioned earlier, this was pretty intense at the end of June. But now that we're here into the first week or so of July, it has been getting better. And I think we're also starting the rainy season here in Seoul and well, in this part of Asia right now as well. And I think that has probably helped to **keep the population in check** a little bit. And that indeed is a very welcome thing.

Everybody, that was my story for you for this week about the lovebug. I'll try and find some pictures on the internet and put them on to our Instagram. And I'll show them in the YouTube video version of this episode as well if you're watching on YouTube, just so that you can get a visual about what these lovebugs look like. And I'll see if I can find some photos, some of the really disgusting ones of where there were swarms of lovebugs just taking over. Because I did hear lots of stories, like I said, on Bukhan Mountain and some other areas of Seoul where there were tons and tons of these lovebugs all gathering in the same place.

So, I think that's going to bring me to the end of this story and the end of this episode. But I do need to give you a completion code before I leave. And you know, last week I talked about changing coins. And by the way, update on that story, I went to the bank on the designated day, and I had no problems. I changed in my coins, and I even had more coins than I was originally estimating that I had. So, I was very happy with that, and the process went smoothly, and it was actually quite easy and not a big deal at all. I guess the only thing that's a little bit uncomfortable and unfortunate about this process is that you can only do it that one hour a month. So that was a bummer, but I got rid of all my coins and now I don't think, you know, everything is so cashless these days that I don't think I'll have this issue ever again. It may have been the first and last time that I ever exchanged coins for cash here in Korea.

But in that episode, you know, if you listen to last week's episode, it was about exchanging coins and the completion code for that episode was "coin." And after that episode I had

some people email me and message me and say, "Andrew, we knew that the completion code was going to be 'coin' because you mentioned that word like a hundred times during the episode. So, it was just very obvious." And so, I thought, "Yeah, maybe I should try to use a completion code that's not quite so obvious." So, let's say the completion code for today's episode is going to be "tissue." Tissue, OK? Tissue, you know, like Kleenex, something that you would use maybe to blow your nose. Tissue. And the reason that I'm going to go with the word "tissue" is that sometimes if you have a bug in your house that you need to kill, what do you use to kill it? Well, if you don't have one of those fancy electronic fly swatters, bug killers like I have, then maybe you would use "tissue" to kind of squish the bug and get it out of your house.

Yeah. So, let's go with the word "tissue." If you leave this word in the comments, then I know that you completed this episode and our Culips community will know that you completed this episode as well. It's a way just to **flex** and brag and say, "Hey, I did it," and to let me know that you did it. You can just leave the word "tissue" in the comments, or you could leave an example sentence using "tissue." That would be cool as well if you want to push yourself and challenge yourself a little bit more. So yeah, let's go with the completion code "tissue." Leave your comment on our Instagram or YouTube or Discord, whichever one you prefer, and I'll be waiting for your comments there. That's the end for this one, everybody. Thank you for listening. Have a great week up ahead. I hope too many bugs don't bother you. Happy English learning, of course, as always, and I'll catch you in the next episode. Bye-bye.

Glossary

1. **On the surface** means appearing to be true at first glance. Andrew uses this expression to describe how his question about bugs might seem strange initially. *Example: On the surface, learning to juggle might seem useless, but it actually improves hand-eye coordination.*
2. **Out of the blue** means suddenly or unexpectedly. Andrew uses this expression to describe how his question about bugs might seem random. *Example: My old friend called me out of the blue after 10 years of no contact.*

3. **Think twice** means to carefully consider something before acting. Andrew uses this expression to describe people who don't hesitate to kill bugs. *Example: The high price tag made me think twice about buying that expensive jacket.*
4. **Colloquial term** is an informal word or expression used in everyday conversation. Andrew describes "bug" as a colloquial term for various small creatures. *Example: "Grub" is a colloquial term for food in some English-speaking countries.*
5. **Creepy crawly** refers to small creatures that creep and crawl, often insects or spiders. Andrew uses this term to describe bugs in general. *Example: The haunted house was filled with fake creepy crawlies to scare visitors.*
6. **All-encompassing** means including or covering everything. Andrew uses this term to contrast "bug" with the more specific term "insect". *Example: The hotel offers an all-encompassing package that includes meals, activities, and transportation.*
7. **Time to shine** means an opportunity to show one's talents or abilities. Andrew uses this expression to describe how summer is when bugs are most active. *Example: The talent show was Sarah's time to shine and showcase her singing skills.*
8. **Proliferating** means rapidly increasing in number. Andrew uses this word to describe the rapid growth of lovebugs in Seoul. *Example: Social media platforms are proliferating, with new ones appearing every year.*
9. **Window** in this context means a period of time when something can happen. Andrew uses "mating window" to describe the time lovebugs spend mating. *Example: There's a small window of opportunity to buy tickets before they sell out.*
10. **Attached at the hip** means very close or inseparable. Andrew uses this idiom to describe how lovebugs are always together. *Example: Those two best friends are attached at the hip, you never see one without the other.*
11. **It's on** means a challenge or confrontation has begun. Andrew uses this expression to describe his attitude when bugs enter his house. *Example: When the rival team scored first, we knew it was on and we had to fight back.*
12. **Symbiotic relationship** is a mutually beneficial relationship between two different organisms. Andrew uses this term to describe his potential relationship with spiders in his garden. *Example: The clownfish and sea anemone have a symbiotic relationship in the ocean.*
13. **A newer take on [something]** means a modern or updated version of something. Andrew uses this expression to describe his electric fly swatter. *Example: The chef presented a newer take on the classic apple pie by adding exotic spices.*

14. **Taken to** means to have started doing something regularly. Andrew mentions his wife has taken to burning mosquito coils in their yard. *Example: Since retiring, my grandfather has taken to gardening every morning.*
15. **Keep [something] in check** means to control or limit something. Andrew uses this expression to describe how rain might control the lovebug population. *Example: Regular exercise helps keep my weight in check.*
16. **Flex** in this context means to show off or boast. Andrew uses this slang term to describe how leaving a comment shows you've completed the episode. *Example: He posted a picture of his new car on social media just to flex.*

Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima