

GREY BRUCE – OWEN SOUND HEALTH UNIT  
MOSQUITO IDENTIFICATION AND VIRAL TESTING  
SUMMARY REPORT  
2017

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sporometrics performed mosquito identification and laboratory analysis for the Grey Bruce-Owen Sound Health Unit (GBOHU) for the 2017 West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV) mosquito surveillance program. Traps were received by Sporometrics from August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 (week 32) to September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 (week 37). In total 18 traps were sent, with approximately 3 traps sent every week for 6 weeks.

Mosquitoes were identified to a maximum of 150 per trap. Three pools (maximum 50 mosquitoes per pool) were tested for WNV and/or EEEV in accordance with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) directive. The insects were homogenized and processed through RNA extraction which was used as a template for qRT-PCR reactions. Only female mosquitoes of vector species were tested using the molecular assay.

The WNV testing priority in descending order was *Cx. pipiens / restuans*, *Cx. salinarius*, *Oc. japonicas*, *Cx. tarsalis*, *Ae. vexans vexans*, *Oc. triseriatus*, *An. punctipennis*, *Oc. trivittatus*, *An. walkeri* and *Oc. stimulans*. The EEEV testing priority in descending order was *Cs. melanura*, *Oc. canadensis*, *Cq. perturbans* and *Ae. vexans vexans*.

Throughout the season 961 mosquitoes were collected and 700 were identified. A total of 44 molecular tests were performed. Of these, 28 pools comprising 120 specimens were tested for WNV and 16 pools with specimens were tested for EEEV. There were no positive pools for either virus.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sporometrics Inc. (Sporometrics) is pleased to provide the Grey Bruce-Owen Sound Health Unit (GBOHU) with this Summary Report on the 2017 Mosquito Identification and Viral Testing program.

The 2017 Mosquito Identification and Viral Testing program included data management and reporting, accurate mosquito sorting, identification to the species level and viral testing of identified mosquito pools by qRT-PCR with generic and envelope TaqMan PCR assays. These viral testing protocols conformed to, and in some cases exceeded, the requirements of the National Steering Committee on West Nile virus Surveillance and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's (MOHLTC) Gold Standard. Weekly results were submitted to the GBOHU and the MOHLTC in the form of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

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## 2.0 BACKGROUND

West Nile Virus (WNV; family *Flaviviridae*, genus *Flavivirus*) is an arthropod-borne virus or arbovirus that was originally isolated in the West Nile region of Uganda in 1937 (Smithburn et al. 1940). Since then, it has spread around the globe, sparing only Antarctica (Weaver et al. 2004, Kramer et al. 2008). It is still unknown how the virus came to North America, but WNV first appeared in New York City in 1999 (Lanciotti et al. 1999; Nash et al. 2001). Soon after, the virus spread to the rest of the continent (Weaver et al. 2004). WNV is maintained in a cycle involving mosquitoes and birds: virus-naïve mosquitoes feed on WNV-infected birds and become vectors for the virus, capable of continuing the cycle by biting other birds or acting as bridge vectors by biting incidental hosts such as humans and horses (Go et al. 2014).

Approximately 80% of all cases of human WNV infections are asymptomatic. The remaining 20% may develop fever, head and body aches, skin rash, generalized weakness, chills, joint pain, and/or painful eyes (Gray et al. 2014; Mostashari et al. 2001; Solomon 2004; Hubalek et al. 2001). The virus can cross the blood-brain barrier in less than 1% of cases, leading to meningitis, encephalitis, or flaccid paralysis (Kramer 2007).

WNV was first detected in Ontario in 2001 in birds, and in the following year, 395 confirmed and probable human cases were recorded (PHO 2012 report; PHO 2013 guide). The prevalence of human cases has fluctuated from 4 in 2009 to 269 in 2012 to 52 in 2013 (PHO 2012 report; NBPS 2014 report). Since the virus' appearance in Ontario, public health units have begun to trap mosquitoes in order to evaluate WNV risk based on the tendency of positive pools to occur in specific areas. In Ontario, more than 20 mosquito species have been found to be WNV-positive, despite the fact that *Culex pipiens* and *Cx. restuans* mosquitoes are the primary bridge vectors transmitting WNV to humans (PHO 2012 report; PHO 2008 preparedness plan). The weekly monitoring of these carriers is a high priority for public health officers, and rapid and accurate detection of carrier and vector identification is needed. Additional testing may be required if positive vectors attain unusual levels in any geographic areas within the region monitored.

Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV; family Togaviridae, genus Alphavirus) is also a mosquito-borne virus. It was first isolated in a horse in 1933 in New Jersey and Virginia (Hanson 1957; Scott et al. 1989). Like WNV, EEEV is maintained in a cycle between birds and mosquitoes, with bridge vectors transmitting the virus to incidental hosts like humans and horses (Go et al. 2014). Only a handful of human EEEV infections per year have been recorded since the 1960s (Go et al. 2014). While some cases are asymptomatic, EEEV is a health concern given that symptomatic patients usually develop severe encephalitis (Go et al. 2014). Not only is the fatality rate high (30 to 75%), EEEV survivors often develop neurological sequelae such as paralysis, brain dysfunction, and seizures (EEE report; Deresiewicz et al. 1997).

In Ontario, EEEV was first identified in mosquitoes in 2009 in a First Nations community within the Simcoe Muskoka District, but to date, no human infections have been identified (Parry Sound Report). The EEEV surveillance program began in 2010, focusing on *Cs. melanura*, *Oc. canadensis*, *Cq. perturbans* and *Ae. vexans vexans*, the vectors of EEEV (EEE 2014 report). The first Ontario public health unit to test EEEV-positive mosquitoes was the North Bay Parry Sound District in 2010 (EEE 2014 report; NBPS report). Between 2008 and 2013 inclusive, 14 equine cases and 16 EEEV-positive pools were reported in Ontario (EEE 2014 report). Monitoring for EEEV in bridge vectors has been mandated as a proactive approach to assessing the distribution of this emerging virus.

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## 3.0 SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work for this project was based on the GBOHU Mosquito Identification and Viral Testing Program 2017 scope of work.

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### 3.1 Overall Tasks

Trap receipt and sample reporting was conducted in accordance to Sporometrics standard operating procedures (SOPs) and ISO/IEC 17025:2005 practices. Data were collected on mosquito identification and abundance, and viral testing results for taxon pools as determined by MOHLTC guidelines. These data were compiled in a report data sheet, compatible with the MOHLTC and HNHU's software requirements, following Sporometrics SOPs for sample reporting. Sporometrics reported the data to the HNHU and MOHLTC each Monday following the receipt of the traps.

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### 3.2 Mosquito Species Identification

Mosquitoes were pre-sorted by species and sex, and retained in pools of not more than 50 conspecific specimens at  $-80\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  prior to molecular analysis. Species identification was performed morphologically on the day the samples were received in the laboratory and according to accepted methods using standard references.

### ***Sex differentiation***

Males are readily differentiable from females of most mosquito species by the more elaborately ornamented, plumose morphology of their antennae. Compared to males, females also tend to have very short maxillary palpi relative to the proboscis. In males, the maxillary palpi tend to be longer than the proboscis.

### ***Genus- and species-level identification***

Identification of the adult mosquito is accomplished by examination of the insect by stereoscopic microscopy at magnifications up to 50x. Using stereomicroscopy alone, most of the important vectors of WNV / EEEV can be identified confidently to the level of species or species-complex by an experienced entomological technician using appropriate taxonomic references.

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## 3.3 Viral Testing

### ***Chain of custody***

Sample receipt and reporting was conducted in accordance to Sporometrics SOPs and ISO/IEC 17025:2005 practices. Samples were either immediately processed for total RNA extraction and qRT-PCR analysis or stored at –80 °C until processing.

### ***Mosquito extraction***

Mosquito pools were selected and prioritized for WNV and/or EEEV testing based on MOHLTC guidelines. Sorted mosquitoes were pooled accordingly into polypropylene tubes and homogenized. The supernatant was used for viral RNA extraction.

### ***WNV and EEEV testing***

For the quantitative assessment of WNV the PCR protocol and cycling conditions followed accepted practices (Lanceotti et al. 2000). Samples were assessed by a qRT-PCR "TaqMan" assay that uses sets of primers and probes directed against the envelope and 3' non-coding region of the WNV genome that are more sensitive than traditional reverse transcriptase RT-PCR to identify WNV from positive mosquito pools (iScript One-Step RT-PCR Kit for Probes from Bio-Rad were used). TaqMan probes were labeled at the 5' end with the reporter dye FAM and at the 3' end with the quencher dye TAMRA (Applied Biosystems, Carlsbad, CA). Testing for EEEV followed the guidelines provided by the National Microbiology Laboratory (Public Health Agency of Canada, Winnipeg).

## 4.0 SUMMARY OF 2017 RESULTS

GBOHU trapped mosquitoes every second week from week 32 to 37 (August 11<sup>th</sup> to September 14<sup>th</sup>) during the season. The following sections summarize the results of the Mosquito Identification and Viral Testing program. A brief overview of the season's statistics is provided below:

Total number of traps	18
Total number of mosquitoes collected	961
Total number of mosquitoes identified	700
Number of pools viral tested for WNV	28
Number of WNV-positive pools	0
Number of pools viral tested for EEEV	16
Number of EEEV-positive pools	0

### 4.1 Vector Abundance

In 2017, the most abundantly captured species was *Ae. vexans vexans*, a WNV and EEEV vector. Of the 700 mosquitoes identified throughout the season, 116 were *Ae. vexans vexans*, representing 16.6% of identified species. The second most abundant species was *Cx. pipiens/restuans*, a WNV vector, which comprised of 10.3% of the total amount of mosquitoes identified (700 mosquitoes). The population of all vector species is provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 – Summary of identified vector species**

Species	Quantity	Percentage (%)	Vector
<i>Cx. pipiens / restuans</i>	72	10.3%	WNV
<i>Cx. salinarius</i>	0	0.00%	WNV
<i>Oc. japonicus</i>	42	6.00%	WNV
<i>Cx. tarsalis</i>	0	0.00%	WNV
<i>Oc. triseriatus</i>	3	0.429%	WNV
<i>An. punctipennis</i>	30	4.29%	WNV
<i>Oc. trivittatus</i>	22	3.14%	WNV
<i>An. walkeri</i>	0	0.00%	WNV
<i>Oc. stimulans</i>	29	4.14%	WNV
<i>An. quadrimaculatus</i>	9	1.29%	WNV
<i>Ae. vexans vexans</i>	116	16.6%	WNV / EEEV
<i>Oc. canadensis</i>	9	1.29%	WNV / EEEV
<i>Cs. melanura</i>	0	0.00%	EEEV
<i>Cq. perturbans</i>	4	0.571%	EEEV
<i>Other</i>	10	1.43%	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>-</b>

Table 1. Summary of vector species abundance and proportion relative to the taxa listed. Vector type for each species is indicated.

*Cx. pipiens / restuans* is a bridge vector and the primary vector for human cases of WNV in Ontario (Ontario mosquito guide). The following graph, Figure 1, illustrates the number of mosquitoes identified by week; the proportion of *Cx. pipiens / restuans*; and the total number of other WNV and EEEV vectors identified per week. *Cx. pipiens / restuans* populations peaked in week 33.

**Figure 1 – Summary of identified vector species by week**

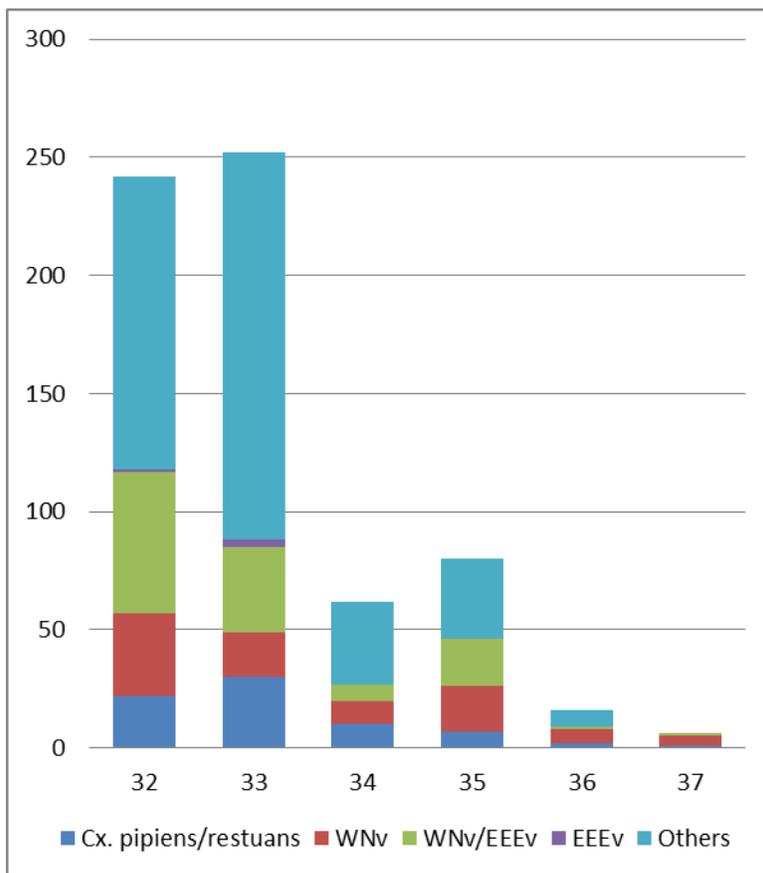


Figure 1. Total identified vector populations from all traps by week. Stacked bar graph displays the total number of mosquitoes identified per week. Y-axis - number of mosquitoes, X-axis - epidemiological week number.

## 4.2 Summary of Traps

Trap “Grey” captured the most mosquitoes in the 2017 season with 662 mosquitoes. Trap “Grey” also had the most WNV and WNV/EEEV vectors collected. Trap “6<sup>th</sup>” had the most EEEV vectors and the highest quantity of *Cx. pipiens/restuans* (36 specimens) over the season. The following figure provides a summary of identified vector species by trap site.

**Figure 2 – Summary of identified vector species by trap site**

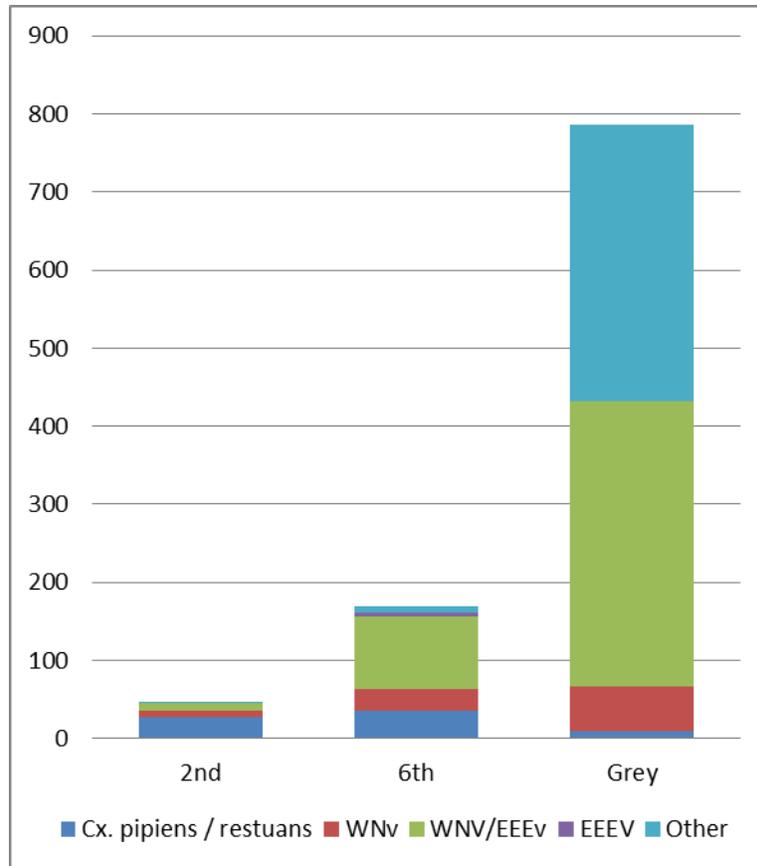


Figure 2. Total identified vector populations by trap. Stacked graph displays the total number of mosquitoes identified per trap site. Y-axis – number of mosquitoes; X-axis – trap site.

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### 4.3 Summary of Viral Testing Pools

A total of 44 viral tests (consisting of 28 tests for WNv and 16 for EEEV) were performed throughout the season. None of the pools tested positive. The following tables provide a detailed overview of the pools tested.

**Table 2a – Summary of WNV testing pools by species**

<b>WNV VT Summary by Species</b>			
<b>Species</b>	<b>Pools</b>	<b>Specimens</b>	<b>Positive Pools</b>
<i>Cx. pipiens/restuans</i>	13	72	0
<i>Cx. salinarius</i>	0	0	0
<i>Oc. japonicus</i>	5	24	0
<i>Cx. tarsalis</i>	0	0	0
<i>Ae. vexans vexans</i>	5	12	0
<i>Oc. triseriatus</i>	1	1	0
<i>An. punctipennis</i>	2	4	0
<i>Oc. trivittatus</i>	2	7	0
<i>An. walkeri</i>	0	0	0
<i>Oc. stimulans</i>	0	0	0
<i>An. quadrimaculatus</i>	0	0	0
<i>Oc. canadensis</i>	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>0</b>

Table 2a. WNV viral testing summary. Includes the number of pools tested, quantity of mosquitoes in the pools and the number of positives by species.

**Table 2b – Summary of EEEV testing pools by species**

<b>EEEV VT Summary by Species</b>			
<b>Species</b>	<b>Pools</b>	<b>Specimens</b>	<b>Positive Pools</b>
<i>Cs. melanura</i>	0	0	0
<i>Oc. canadensis</i>	1	9	0
<i>Cq. perturbans</i>	2	4	0
<i>Ae. vexans vexans</i>	13	116	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>0</b>

Table 2b. EEEV viral testing summary. Includes the number of pools tested, quantity of mosquitoes in the pools and the number of positives by species.

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#### 4.4 Accumulated Degree Days

A degree day is defined as a unit of measurement for temperature (PHO 2013 guide). It is the amount of heat an organism requires to develop through specific stages of their life cycle. A degree day is one day (24 hours) with a temperature below or above a fixed reference temperature. In vector surveillance, degree days are used to track when insects will proliferate. The MOHLTC uses 18.3°C for *Cx. pipiens / restuans*. Accumulated degree days (ADD) are the continuous addition of consecutive degree days from a set starting point.

In Ontario, WNV positive pools can occur as early as 30 ADD, and the number of positive pools can reach double-digit numbers once the ADD exceeds 140 (PHO 2013 guide). The first human cases are detected between 100 and 125 ADD (PHO 2013 guide). As illustrated in Figure 3 below, 30 ADD was reached in week 27, 100 ADD was reached in week 38 and by the end of the trapping season, the ADD had reached 111.4.

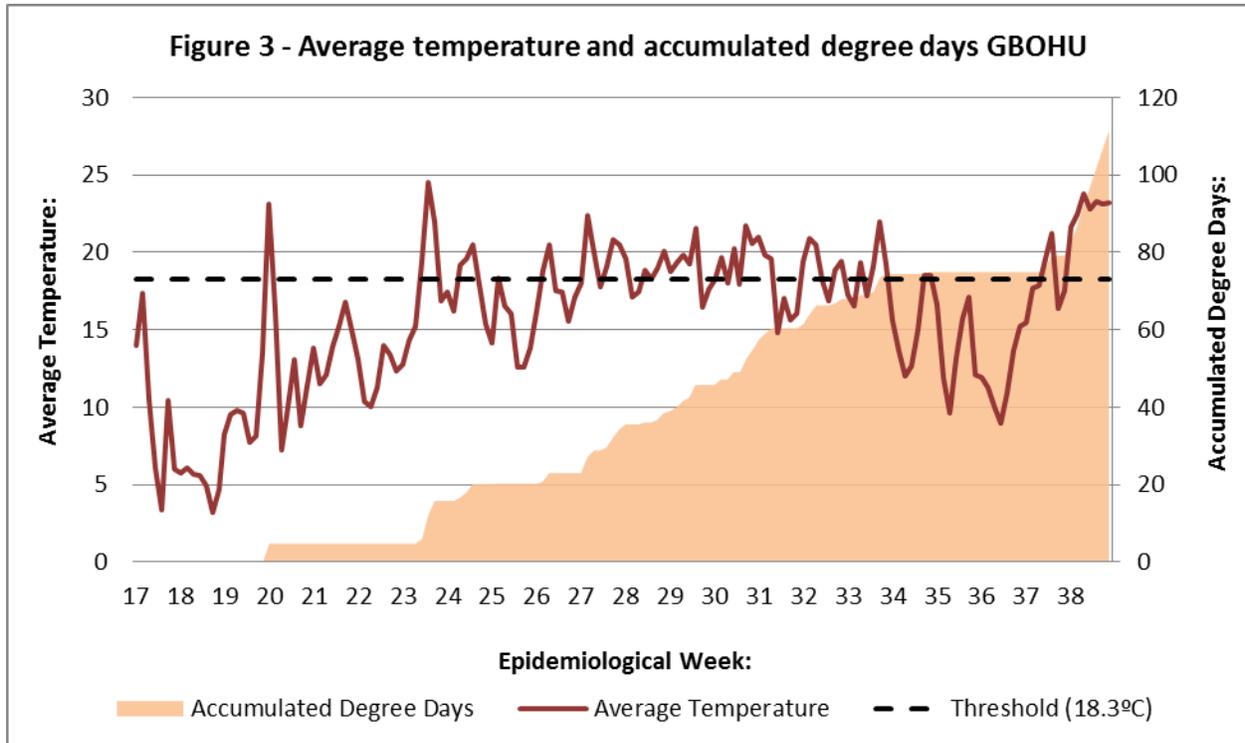


Figure 3. Mean daily temperature and accumulated degree days for HDHU. Y-axis – mean temperature (°C), X-axis – epidemiology week. Red line indicates daily mean temperature. Dashed line represents 18.3°C threshold. Orange shaded area represents accumulated degree days.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

This year, the total number of mosquitoes identified was 700. The most abundantly trapped species was *Ae. vexans vexans* which is a WNV/EEEV vector. *Ae. vexans vexans* was identified in 16.6% of all identified species. *Cx. pipiens/restuans* was identified in 10.3% of all identified species this year.

None of the 44 pools tested positive for either WNV or EEEV. After week 27, the ADD accumulated past 30, which suggests that positive WNV pools could be expected. Human cases may also be expected towards the end of the season as the ADD exceeded 100 in week 38.

The data indicates that no change to the surveillance program is currently warranted.

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## 6.0 CLOSURE

We trust that this summary report is in accordance with your requirements. Should you have any questions or require clarification on any element of this report, please feel free to contact the undersigned at any time.

Yours truly,

### **Sporometrics**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Scott', with a large circular flourish at the end.

James Scott, PhD, ARMCCM  
CEO

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kristine White', with a wavy, horizontal flourish at the end.

Kristine White, B.A.  
Project Manager

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