



# Wisconsin Entomological Society Newsletter

Volume 27, Number 3

November 2000



## Summer Insect Highlights

by Phil Pellitteri



As in any year, there were lots of surprises. I saw my first Monarch on May 14<sup>th</sup>. Then the rains came and the butterflies seemed to have a bad early summer. I did see a Buckeye in the flowerbed, but could not get the camera out fast enough. The large Lep invasion came after the big early July storm up north. I heard about the six inches of rain and wind, but Monday morning when I got into the office there were numerous calls about sides of buildings covered with moths in Stevens Point, Green Bay, New Berlin, and other cities. There was a Forest Tent Caterpillar outbreak in the far north in June and the storm front blew millions of moths into the central part of the state. We expect one more year of outbreak up north, but now I wonder about where the windblown moths laid eggs.

Seems it was a very good year for Imperial Moths (*Eacles imperialis*). I received a number of calls about this southern silkworm being seen and collected in southern counties and in August, people were finding larvae crawling around. The Monarch numbers picked up in July, and I have seen reports of this being a very strong season for that species in the Midwest.

The biggest find in the state was the presence of the Asian Soybean Aphid (*Aphis glycines*). This insect has never been seen in the U.S. but it exploded in the southern half of the state. We did not

have any serious soybean insects until now. The most important predator from Asia is our friend the Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle (*Harmontia axyridis*). They were very common in the fields and helped knock the aphid populations down by late summer. Now we have huge populations of the fall friend. Aside from being common indoors, this coccinellid is biting people, and feeding on apples, grapes, raspberries, plums, and other fruit. We think it is because they have run out of food, but we have never seen anything like this before.

The oddest call came from an emergency room in Delavan. Seems a person had ordered a computer from California. When they opened it up they got "stung". Upon inspection they found a live *Centruroides Scorpion*—a strange type of computer bug! After a night of observation in the hospital, they sent the person home.

Gypsy Moth and Japanese Beetles keep expanding their range in the state. When I saw the beetle adults in my own yard feeding on my flowers and bushes I was very disappointed. It was a great year for June beetles, with numerous reports of flocks of adults defoliating birch and oak trees. There were lots of Clover Mites this spring, unusually high numbers of Dogday Cicadas and the Yellow Jackets have been bad since early September. It all adds up to another insect season in the books. I will not use my "we

### WES Annual Meeting and Photo Salon December 9, 2000

The next meeting of the Wisconsin Entomological Society will be held on Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at Russell Labs in Madison (map and directions appear on page 8). The meeting will begin at 1:00 P.M.

The program will include brief presentations of insect activity this past summer, as well as the *Annual Photo Salon*. Members having slides of entomological subjects are encouraged to participate in this event. Each entrant may submit up to five slides, labeled with the subject and name of the photographer. The slides will be evaluated by the audience, which will vote to select the winning entries. A print of the first place slide is awarded to the winner and is also added to the display in the Entomology Department office. The photographer's name is added to the William E. Sieker Memorial Plaque. Also on the agenda is the election of officers for 2001. Nominations are welcome and can be made at the meeting. ☺

*moved the state to Missouri theory,"* because I did not see many Catalpa Worms or other southern critters, but it has been an interesting year all the same. ☺

*Phil Pellitteri is president of WES and the District Outreach Specialist at the College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, Dept. of Entomology, UW-Madison, WI.*

The Wisconsin Entomological Society Newsletter is published three times a year, at irregular intervals. It is provided to encourage and facilitate the exchange of information by the membership, and to keep the members informed of the activities of the organization. Members are strongly encouraged to contribute items for inclusion in the newsletter. Please send all news items, notes, new or interesting insect records, season summaries, and research requests to the editor:

Janice Stiefel, 2125 Grove Road, Bailey's Harbor, WI 54202, e-mail: jstiefel@itol.com

NOTE: Please report any address changes to Les Ferge, 7119 Hubbard Ave., Middleton, WI 53562. e-mail: ferge@chorus.net

It was 11:30 P.M., Sept. 6, 2000, the eve of our 43<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary. My husband, John, and I had just finished watching one of those romantic "old time" movies, so we were retiring for the night later than normal. Even though it was late, I still had to

check out my moth visitors under our one outside light. Living off the grid (we receive our power from the sun, batteries or generator) limits the amount of electricity we can afford to use frivolously. That outside light is one of my luxuries. As I casually checked the exterior walls of the house close to the light, I noticed an unfamiliar underwing moth. So, like I have done hundreds of times in the past, I captured it in a jar and took it into my research area to identify. My husband said he'd warm up the bed while I checked this one out.

When I opened my moth book and compared my specimen to the pictures contained therein, quite quickly I made



**THE GIFT!**  
*A COINCIDENCE OR...?*

by Janice Stiefel

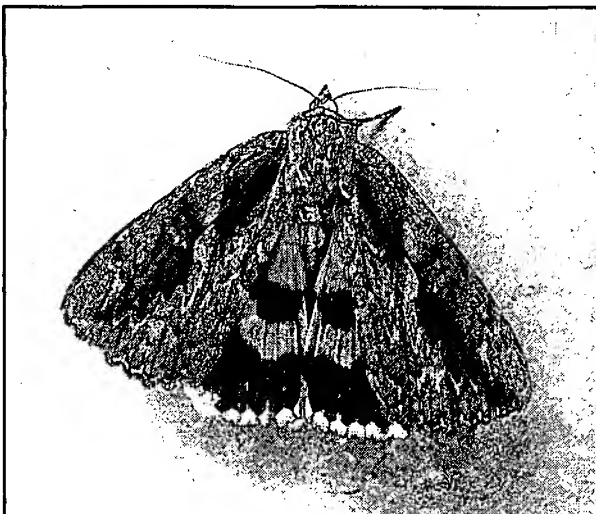
an identification. Only this time, I thought my mind was playing tricks. I had been watching a romantic movie, it was the eve of our wedding anniversary. Surely I wasn't

seeing what I thought I saw.

When I joined my husband, I said "You won't believe what the name of that underwing is? Of course, he'd never guess in a thousand years; he's not necessarily into identifying underwings, or even moths for that matter. He has always shared my enthusiasm, however, whenever I find something exciting. When I revealed that the name of the moth was The Sweetheart Underwing (*Catocala amatrix*), there was a moment of silence. He was undoubtedly questioning my sanity. Now if I

thought, even for a moment, that my husband (who never heard of The Sweetheart Underwing until that moment) could have arranged for its visit...! Honestly, it was the first time I had encountered this species. There are 52 moths of the *Catocala* genus listed in the *Checklist of Wisconsin Moths*. With names like: The Old Maid, The Penitent, The Betrothed, The Widow (yikes!), The Oldwife, The Girlfriend, The Tearful, The Married, and even Clinton's Underwing.

Was The Sweetheart a coincidence or was it a gift? We can only speculate, and probably will be doing just that for many years to come. ☺



*Catocala amatrix*: Wingspan 3¼ in.  
Photo: Janice Stiefel

Forewing is grayish to purplish brown with wavy black lines. The am. line is usually connected by short lines to a subreniform spot. It may have a broken black shade line from the base to outer margin. The hindwing is pinkish red with black bands and a wide creamy fringe. The larva of this species eats

Willows (*Salix spp.*), seeming to prefer Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and Black Willow (*Salix nigra*). In the *Peterson Field Guide to the Moths of Eastern North America*, by Charles V. Covell, Jr., it states that they hide by day in caves and other protected places. They are listed as locally common to rare.

**Wisconsin Entomological Society Dues for 2001**

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To determine your membership status, please check the label on this newsletter. Be sure to notify us of any address changes when you send in your dues.

**Milwaukee Public Museum CONTRIBUTIONS in Biology and Geology**



**CHECKLIST OF WISCONSIN MOTHS**

by Leslie A. Ferge and George J. Balogh

This publication is priced at \$6.00 and may be obtained by writing to the Museum Shop, Milwaukee Public Museum, 800 West Wells St., Milwaukee, WI 53233. Orders must include \$3.00 for shipping and handling (\$4.00 for foreign destinations) and must be accompanied by a money order or check drawn on a U.S. bank. Money orders or checks should be made payable to:

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## Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> Was Our Lucky Day

by Paul Burton

**I**t was a near thing... maybe if it had been Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, we wouldn't have seen what we saw. But on the morning of July 14<sup>th</sup> a dragonfly workshop group from Door County's Ridges Sanctuary saw more Hine's Emerald Dragonflies (*Somatochlora hineana*) than most anyone on the planet.



Hine's Emerald Male (side view)  
Photo: Paul Burton

There just aren't many Hine's Emeralds. These emerald-eyed aerial predators are on the Federal List of Endangered Species, and they occur at only a few small sites. Door County is blessed with the largest

breeding population anywhere. There are small sites in upper Michigan, one in Illinois, and one in Missouri, but the pure, calcium-rich water in the swales in Door County appear to be ideal breeding places for this remarkable insect.

At the moment, the search is on for other breeding populations, but you'd never know they were endangered if you had been with the twelve of us on July 14<sup>th</sup>—our lucky day. On a hike along Lake Michigan to Pickerel Pond, a tiny wetlands pond, we stumbled onto a feeding swarm\* dining on small insects flying along the shoreline.

We were surrounded by Hine's Emerald Dragonflies flying along the shore and above the sedges next to the nearby tree line. What a treat... all of us were completely enthralled with their aerobatics and the way they maneuvered around us, feeding all the while. How many were there in the area? Certainly several hundreds... maybe more.

By the way, we also saw the Brush-Tipped Emerald (*S. walshii*), Chalk-Fronted Corporals (*Ladona julia*), Widow Skimmers (*Libellula luctuosa*), the Four-Spotted Skimmer (*Libellula quadrimaculata*), lots of Twelve-Spotted Skimmers (*Libellula pulchella*), a Black Saddlebags (*Tramea lacerata*), a couple of Wandering Gliders (*Pantala flavescens*), several Teneral Meadowhawks (*Sympetrum*), and numerous Damselflies.

Wanta hear about *Somatochlora hineana* again??? Twelve of us would like to relive the experience. ☺

*Paul Burton received his doctorate in zoology at the U. of North Carolina. Although he has a rich background in invertebrate zoology, he ultimately became a cell biologist and spent almost 30 years at the U. of Kansas as a teacher/researcher. He is a Professor Emeritus from that university, and since his retirement he devotes his time to writing books (with his wife) on area history, and studying dragonflies. He lives in Ephraim, WI.*

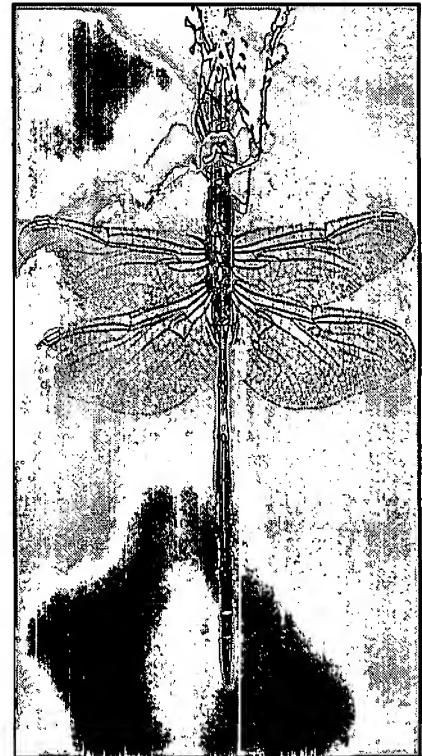
\*Feeding swarm is the phrase used by odontologists to describe what we saw.

Color Guide to  
COMMON  
DRAGONFLIES  
of WISCONSIN  
*Revised Edition 1998*  
by Karl & Dorothy Legler  
Dave Westover

This well-organized, colorful and informational book on Wisconsin dragonflies is a must for all Odonata enthusiasts. It contains 76 species, 167 color photos and drawings, 64 line illustrations.

To obtain a copy, please contact:

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(608) 643-4926  
E-mail: karlindot@bankpds.com



Hine's Emerald Male (top view)  
Photo: Paul Burton

**Editor's Note:** I was fortunate to be one of those twelve who witnessed the feeding swarm. Paul is not exaggerating the count of Hine's Emeralds we observed that morning. If anything, he has underestimated the count. It was a sight to behold. JS



## My Sweetheart and His Swallowtails

by Pat Seawell

It was a good idea. A gracious proposal...an offer I couldn't refuse. So, I moved my four-foot potted grapefruit tree from the patio into the living room. I would be gone. I wouldn't be able to provide the labor-intensive care required to raise this second batch of babies—the fall babies—that the Giant Swallowtails (*Papilio Heraclides cresphontes*) had deposited on my tree. But my sweetheart had volunteered to care for them. "All you have to do is bring the whole tree in!" The man's a genius! Why hadn't I thought of that?

The previous spring (1999) I had raised my first Giant Swallowtails. When the butterflies laid eggs on the tender, new leaves of the grapefruit tree, I cut off the egg-bearing shoots, put them in a jar of water, brought them into my study, and placed them in my protective custody cage. Within four days, the eggs hatched and eight tiny yellow caterpillars emerged. For the next two weeks I maintained moisture in the cage with damp sponges and periodic mistings, and kept the caterpillars supplied with fresh shoots from the grapefruit tree. And I watched those caterpillars! Watched as they crawled out of their first skins and revealed their astonishing new "don't bother me, I'm just a bird dropping" camouflage. Watched as they grew into plump little creatures the size of my thumb. Watched as they moved down from their grapefruit shoots and made chrysalises on the insides of the cage. Finally, they emerged and unfurled their large black and yellow wings, and I watched as they circled high above our yard when I released them.

The whole process took a bit over three weeks and taught me some differences between Giant Swallowtails and Eastern Black Swallowtails. Giants glide; Blacks crawl. Giants often rest away from

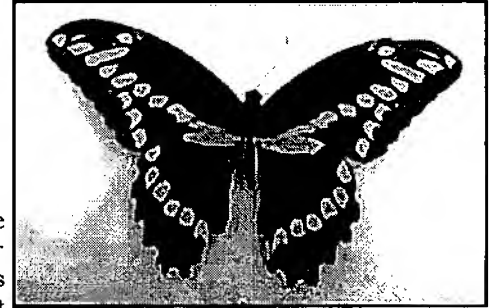
their food; Blacks never leave theirs. Giants noisily crunch their stiff grapefruit leaves; Blacks munch their soft parsley without making a sound. And, perhaps because bird droppings never move and Giants don't want to blow their elaborate cover, Giants prefer feeding at night and on cloudy mornings; Blacks graze voraciously throughout the brightest of days.

Now, here it was the last week of September. I had fourteen more Giant caterpillars and a trip to take. But my husband's idea was working. The Giants were thriving in our living room. A few days later I departed, confidently leaving my husband in charge. Predictably, he did a great job of misting—twice a day, on time and on schedule. It's just that he didn't notice when the caterpillars crawled away from the grapefruit tree and made chrysalises all over our living room.

When I got home, I searched for, found, and retrieved thirteen of the fourteen chrysalises and put them in the protective custody cage. But I couldn't reach #14. It had traveled across the living room and the foyer and had climbed the 20 foot wall to the right of our front door. Its chrysalis rested about two inches from the ceiling.

Poor #14. It had climbed too high, journeyed too far, risen too recklessly. I couldn't reach to mist it. It couldn't live without moisture. The thirteen other caterpillars emerged in glory while I grieved for that sad, desiccated, little #14 for the next twenty weeks.

Our Valentine's Day was bright, sunny, and very warm. Around noon my sweetheart found a Giant fluttering around in the living room. Oh, happy day! Assumptions of #14's death had been impetuously premature! We took that very gorgeous, very lively butterfly outside and watched as it circled high above our yard. No, mid-February isn't ideal for butterflies. But this IS San



**Giant Swallowtail Butterfly**  
(*Papilio cresphontes*)  
Everglades National Park website

Antonio, Texas. Several of the Salvias were blooming and some of the Acacias were beginning to bud. Our Giant Swallowtails usually begin their flight in March, so #14 may have been lonely for a couple of weeks, but it had the warmth and the food necessary to survive.

Although Valentine's Day will always be chocolates and flowers, February 2000 holds additional memories for me—memories of a potted grapefruit tree, a roomful of chrysalises, and a spunky little Giant Swallowtail. We called it Valentine #14. ☺

*Pat resides in San Antonio, Texas. She is a member of WES, and a retired high school English teacher. She writes books for children, watches caterpillars graze, and shares her enthusiasm for the insects in her own backyard with the neighborhood children and their parents.*

### In Memory of Katherine Sieker

Katherine Sieker, a long time member and benefactor of the WES, passed away on August 13, 2000. Her husband William E. ("Bill") Sieker, a noted lepidopterist and expert on world Sphingidae, co-founded the WES in 1969. Bill passed away in January, 1982.

The WES Annual Photo Salon is dedicated to his memory. The field trips graciously hosted by Bill and Kate at their farm near Dodgeville in the early years of the WES are fondly remembered by those fortunate to have taken part.

—Les Ferge

Countless frothy masses of tiny white bubbles adorn many small plants throughout the summer, in city and country alike. As common and abundant as they have been for many centuries, relatively little has been known about the actual making of these fascinating "foam homes." For years, many Southerners believed they were the birthplaces of horseflies. Other common beliefs were that the material came from the mouth of either frogs or cuckoos, hence the name "frog spit." Our favorite boyhood name for the actual makers of the pearly little castles was "Spittlebug." And it was quite natural to call the adult—which is capable of both hopping and flying—a "froghopper."

As you might suspect, though, a Spittlebug is not a bug. Neither are Lightning Bugs, Ladybugs nor Junebugs. A Lightning Bug—also referred to as a Firefly (and it's not a fly either—it's a beetle). Ladybugs could more appropriately be called "Ladybird Beetle," whereas Junebugs could be referred to as Junebeetles.

Locate a bubbly mass of the froth and gently squeegee it onto your fingertips. Most likely you will discover its maker to be a small, light-green, soft-bodied creature with six legs and tiny, ruby-red eyes. Some of the Spittlebugs will be brownish. You will be amazed at the texture and viscosity of the "spit"—soapy and gluey, not unlike whipped egg whites. A waxy secretion (an enzyme) plus an alkali added to the consumed plant juices inside the Spittlebug's body combine to form a unique type of natural soap that may remain intact on a plant for a week or more. The substance shelters the Spittlebug's eggs or young offspring undergoing the molting cycle.

The metamorphosis of Spittlebugs is simple as opposed to complete. A butterfly's life cycle is complete, meaning that it includes an egg, caterpillar or larva, a pupa, and finally the adult, which is completely different from the caterpillar stage. When the egg of an insect having a simple metamorphosis—such as a grasshopper, cricket or spittlebug—is

## The Insect Whose Babies Live in a Bubble

by Roy Lukes

hatched, a nymph is produced that resembles the larger adult. It eats, grows, and eventually molts, or literally bursts out of its old skin. It now is slightly larger than before. Stages between the molts are called "instars." There usually are four to eight but as many as 20 instars in the total cycle.

Wings form on the outer layer of the Spittlebug nymph during its last instar. The young adult crawls out of the bubble castle, dries off and flies away. Froghopper is an appropriate name for the adult, because they do resemble a tiny, hopping frog varying in color from gray to green, yellow or chocolate-brown with pale spots. But don't confuse them with leafhoppers. Leafhoppers have two rows of spines on their rear tibia (shinbone), whereas froghoppers have only one or two spines on their rear tibia.

As adults, they will mate and the female will lay eggs in the plant tissue in the axils, where the leaves join the stems. The eggs can withstand sub-zero temperatures and will hatch the following spring. There is only one generation of these creatures per year. Perhaps the most common species is the Meadow Spittlebug. Its Species Name, *spumarius*, refers to spume or spumescence, meaning "frothy or foamy." They are seen on grasses, weeds and many other low plants. The theme song of these nymphs could be, *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles*. Each has a sort of built-in tire pump in the form of a tiny, Y-shaped pocket near its hind end. To

start the action, the nymph penetrates a plant stem with four hair-like, piercing stylets enclosed in a sheath. The instant the stylets pierce a plant, the sheath automatically folds up or back and our of the way. The Spittlebug is nearly always fastened to the plant with its head downward. Spittle secreted from the anus flows downward over the body and mixes with a liquid excreted from glands on the seventh and eighth abdominal segments.

Air is then mixed into the spittle to produce long-lasting bubbles. Bout one bubble a second can be made. Remember that it is only the nymph and not the adult that makes the spittle. Actually, the Spittlebug is thought to be producing

its own air-conditioned foam home, a microclimate that hides the creature from its predators, guards the nymph from potential parasites and shield it from too much heat and light, thus preventing it from drying out.

Spittlebugs are known to injure certain crops such as clover and alfalfa. They also serve as vectors of plant diseases—that is, they

are capable of carrying and transmitting disease-carrying organisms. For example, Spittlebugs transmit Pierce's Disease of grapevines. Even though they are widespread in the U.S. and Canada, they are considered to be of minor importance as pests.

Take a closer look at the amazing "bubble blower"—the world's smallest air-conditioning expert—and thank your lucky stars for countless marvels and mysteries in nature that help to make life interesting! ☺

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Spittlebug's Foamy House  
Photo: Roy Lukes

Roy has been writing nature columns and books for over 30 years. This essay on the Spittlebug is taken from Roy's fifth book, *Tales of the Wild*, released 11/99. Roy can be reached at Nature-Wise, P. O. Box 105, Egg Harbor, WI 54209, (920) 823-2478 E-mail: lukes@dcwts.com

# How the Hawkmoths Outfoxed the Hunting Spiders

by Babette Kis

My family pays me no mind as I rubber-band a piece of red cellophane to my headlamp. I tell them I'm going to a prairie remnant and that I'll be back in the morning. But they're busy with a board game, and the only acknowledgment I get is a goodbye wave from my youngest.

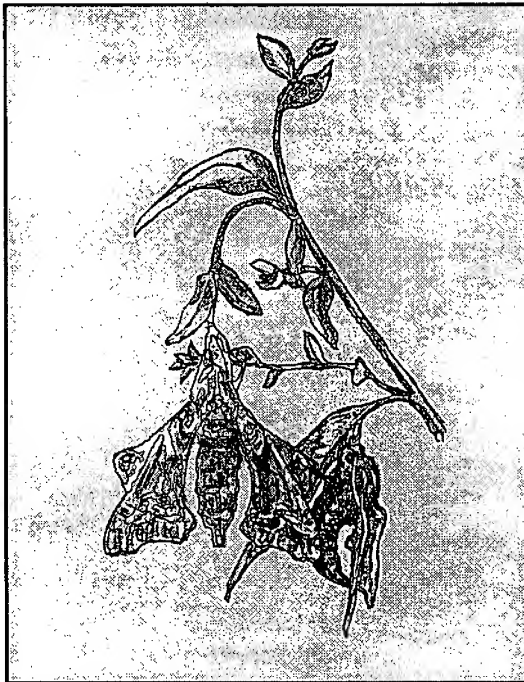
On this warm July evening I will be searching for Pale Hunting Spiders that abound on a ten-acre southeastern Wisconsin prairie remnant. Scurrying swiftly among the stems and leaves of the prairie plants, my quarry will be difficult to follow. But tonight I have a new headlamp bulb, and feel confident that I will be able to ferret a secret or two from these night-hunting spiders.

The sun is almost setting by the time I reach the prairie. After a few minutes of looking among the grasses, I spot a Hunting Spider. I follow closely, but my bright light bulb is not enough to make up for my slow movements, and the spider disappears among the grasses. I follow one spider after another, only to lose sight of them when I move too close or rustle the plants.

As I stand and stretch, the light from my headlamp falls on a Gray Dogwood clone which has scattered brown leaves among its glossy green foliage. Brown leaves in mid-July? I hurry over for a closer look.

Now I see that what appeared to be brown leaves are not leaves at all, but one and a half-inch long hawkmoths. I count ten moths in all, hanging from the terminal leaves of the dogwood branches. Beneath the dogwood, on the edges of Starry Aster leaves, are two more moths. Have these moths climbed here after emerging from their pupas? The

scales on their straight wings appear to be perfect. Are they females, waiting here for mates? I slowly remove the red cellophane from my lamp. In the yellowish lamplight, the moths' eyes glow spring green. Their scales, which appeared brown in the red light, are not brown at all, but an intricate pattern of tan, gold, brown and lavender. An orange spot near the tip of each moth's forewings and a single spot on each of their hind wings tell me that they are Small-eyed Sphinx Moths (*Paonias myops*).



Small-Eyed Sphinx Moths (*Paonias myops*)  
Sketch by Babette Kis—June 20, 1999

I quietly open my sketchbook. Although I'm only a foot away, the moths seem unaware of my presence. Mosquitoes, on the other hand, are very aware of my presence, buzzing over my face and hands as I work. After about ten minutes, one of the moths briefly rubs its head with a foreleg, tempting me to scratch my itchy face. I don't. I'm itchy, but not itchy enough to risk scaring the moths before I finish my sketch.

A Pale Hunting Spider climbs up the Starry Aster stem. It runs out along each branch from the main stem, onto a leaf or two, then back to the main stem. The spider continues the hunt in this fashion, searching leaves as it makes its way up the aster, but never going to the tips of the leaves. It climbs onto the stem the moths are on and runs onto a leaf near one of the moths. An inch and a half from its potential prey, the spider stops, turns around and hurries back to the main stem. When it reaches the top of the aster, it climbs onto an overhanging dogwood leaf.

Some three feet away, a three-quarter-inch long tan moth shivers as it clings to the underside of a leaf, which is about a foot from the end of the branch. The spider heads directly for it. When it reaches the moth, it appears to pounce on it, and I fancy I see the moth twitch before it is still. The spider pulls its meal to the top of the leaf.

More tan hunting spiders come and go. One climbs onto a leaf, which holds two hawkmoths, but, like the spider on the aster, it turns around before reaching the end of the branch. By hanging onto leaves at the ends of branches and keeping still, it appears that these hawkmoths can outfox the hunting spiders.

An inch-long moth lands on a half-inch dogwood stem. It does not appear to be moving but, within several minutes, a hunting spider finds it.

The east sky is turning indigo. As if triggered by the coming of dawn, the hawkmoths take flight. Notebook in hand, I make my way through the dew-covered grasses to my car. I should have just enough time to drive home, take care of my children and get ready for work. ☽

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Babette is a wife and mother of three, full-time project architect at the City of Milwaukee, part-time naturalist, writer, artist, and a former science teacher. On warm summer nights she may be found looking for night-life on southeastern Wisconsin prairies. Babette's manuscript, *Growing on Wild Land*, is currently in acquisition. Look forward to a remarkable, exquisitely illustrated, book when it becomes available.



# Everyone's Favorite Caterpillar— The Woolly Bear

by Janice Stiefel

According to American folklore, the only true "weather worm" is the Black-Ended Bear or Woolly Bear, which is the larva of the Isabella Tiger Moth. The caterpillar has black fur at both ends and a reddish-brown band in the center of its body. Legend says that the weather can be forecast by looking at the width of this fuzzy reddish-brown band. A narrow band means it will be a long, bitterly cold winter, while a wide band indicates a temperate winter.



Woolly Bear Caterpillars,  
one "playing dead"

Many years ago, the American Museum of Natural History compared the Woolly Bear band legend with the forecasts of the best meteorologists, over a period of several years. The Woolly Bear turned out to be more accurate in forecasting winter weather than the professionals. There is a difference of opinion on this subject, however! Other "experts" say the caterpillars change colors as they have successive instars (molts), becoming less black and more reddish as they age. Therefore, the difference in

color only reflects the age difference among caterpillars as they prepare to overwinter and are not a reliable indicator of the severity of winter ahead. The caterpillars overwinter as a caterpillar and pupate in spring and summer by spinning an oval, hairy cocoon around

their pupa.



Isabella Tiger Moth

**Adult Description:** The Isabella Tiger Moth (*Pyrrharctia isabella*) which belongs to the Arctiidae Family of moths, is the adult of the Woolly Bear. It has a wingspan of 1¾ to 2½ in. The wings are orange-yellow to orangish brown. The forewing is pointed and marked with faint brownish am., median and pm. lines. There is a broken black reniform spot and line of st. spots near the apex (top). The hindwing is usually paler and flushed with pinkish orange (in the female). The female is darker than the male.

**Observations:** Many of you who have handled the Woolly Bear Caterpillars have probably noticed that they "play dead" when you disturb or touch them. I discovered something else. That characteristic is carried over to the adult stage, as well (see photographs).

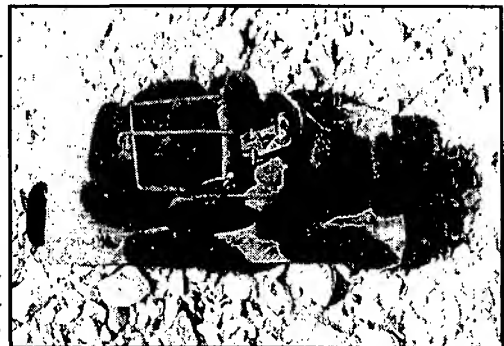
**Larval Food:** The caterpillars like a variety of food including Asters, Clover, Birch, Elm, Maple, Sunflowers, Corn, Dandelion,



Isabella Tiger Moth "playing dead"

Plantain and other low-growing weeds and grasses. I have personally seen them eating Tamarack (*Larix laricina*) and Common Milkweed.

In September 1998, John Fenger of the Town of Mitchell, Sheboygan County, reported that hundreds and hundreds of Woolly Bear Caterpillars were coming into his newly-built garage. They were obviously seeking hibernation places for the winter. When he picked up his boots to put them on, they were filled with Woolly Bears. He also noted that they loved the peanut butter and raisins that he had placed on some mouse traps. They ate all the peanut butter and raisins without tripping the traps.



Woolly Bears eating peanut butter & raisins  
Photo: John Fenger

**Name Origin:** The Genus Name, *Pyrrharctia*, is from the Greek words, pyrrhos, meaning "flame-colored, reddish," and arktos, meaning "a bear." The Species Name, *isabella*, is of unknown origin. ☺

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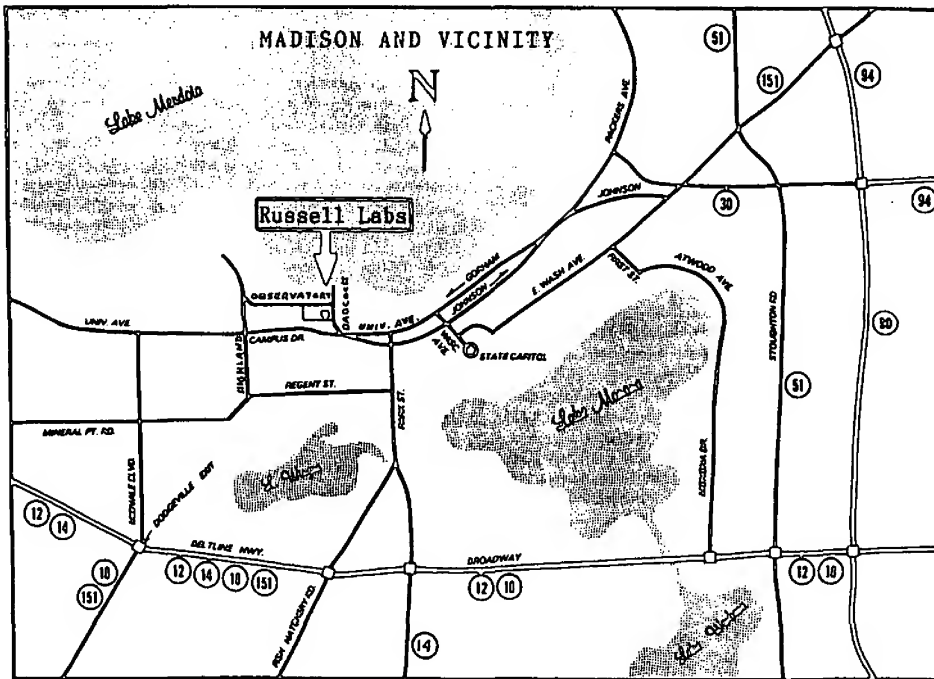
Upper three photos: Janice Stiefel

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