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TO PROMOTE SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AND KNOWLEDGE RELATED TO UNDERSTANDING
THE LEPIDOPTERA FAUNA OF THE SOUTHERN REGION OF THE UNITED STATES.

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THE "BIG THICKET" OF TEXAS

Many people from outside the state of Texas have probably never heard of the "Big Thicket", or else may have misconceptions about it, based on some of the descriptions given in popular literature. The Big Thicket is located in SE Texas and the boundaries differ depending on the interpretations of the various authors on the subject. In general, however, it lies between the west fork of the San Jacinto River and the Neches River, extending in the south to just north of Humble and Beaumont, in the north to Huntsville, and east to Jasper.

Within this area are a number of distinctive plant communities ranging from densely forested floodplains, acid bogs, and terraces and ravines next to streams, to grassy savannah, sandy uplands, and pine flatwoods. In most of these communities one to three species of pines are present, along with a great variety of other plants and shrubs. In wetter areas and on hillsides Beech, Chinkapin, Tupelo, White & Swamp Chesnut, Willow & other Oaks, Black Walnut, Magnolia, Sugar Maple, Sweet Gum, and many other trees. Along the rivers and streams, Bald Cypress, Willows, Cottonwood, Sycamore, and Elms are common. In the drier areas, Red & Post Oaks, Hickories, and Persimmon occurs. Although the Big Thicket is often described as "Jungle-like", "Impenetrable", and the "Biological Crossroads of America", it really is not very different from similar areas in the deep south, especially in Louisiana and Mississippi. Although there is some incursion of western biota, the actual diversity of the plant and animal communities is less than that seen in areas of similar forest in northern Florida.

The Lepidoptera of the Big Thicket has not been well investigated, and collections have been made from relatively few localities and nowhere on a year-round basis. In spite of this, a large number of species is known from this area. Much work on the butterflies has been done by various former and present Texas collectors, including Kendall, Rickard, Hedges, Vernon, Doyle, and others. The moths have been investigated primarily by Blanchard, and more recently, myself.

About 130 spp. of butterflies inhabit the Big Thicket, with perhaps about 20 or so only occasionally straying in from adjacent surroundings. Some of the more interesting established species include : Poanes yehl, Euphyes dukesi, Amblyscirtes aesculapius, Eurytides marcellus, Feniseca tarquinius, Satyrium kingi, Incisalia irus hadra, I. henrici turneri, Calephelis virginiensis, Enodia creola, and Neonympha areolata. Of probable occurrence, but still poorly documented or at least very rarely taken are Hesperia metea, H. attalus, Problema byssus, Poanes zabulon, Amblyscirtes alternata, Satyrium edwardsii, Glaucopsyche lygdamus, Polygonia comma, and Anthanassa texana seminole.

I have not yet attempted to compile a full listing of the moths presently known to occur in the Big Thicket, but would conservatively estimate the total number to probably exceed 1500 species. The area is very rich in microlepidoptera, with about 170 spp. of Tortricids alone, for example. Among the larger moths, records are presently lacking for such species as Callosamia securifera, Citheronia sepulchralis, Sphinx franckii, S. kalmiae, D. versicolor, Lapara coniferarum, and Paonias astylus, even though the known food plants are present in portions of the area encompassed by the Thicket. The genus Catocala is well-represented by about 45 species at present, and other species such as Judith, nebulosa, miranda, and possibly grisatra might eventually be found here. Recent collecting (1985-6) in the Big Thicket region has turned up no less than 50 species of moths which were not previously known to occur in Texas, an indication of the need for more extensive collecting here.

As in most of Texas, the majority of land area encompassed by the Big Thicket is privately owned, and therefore one must obtain permission from owners to collect. The Big Thicket National Preserve consists of 12 more-or-less widely separated tracts totalling about 85,000 acres. However, I have not yet collected these areas, but would expect that permits could be obtained fairly easily. Three state parks also are found more-or-less in the Big Thicket : Huntsville, Lake Livingston, and Martin Dies, Jr. Permits must be obtained to collect on Texas parks, as in most state nowadays, and can be obtained from Texas Parks & Wildlife in Austin.

The U.S. Forest Service operates trails and campgrounds in the Sam Houston National Forest, and also in several other National Forests north of the Big Thicket. No permits are needed to collect in these areas. Double Lake Campground near Cold-spring is a very good place to collect and is seldom very crowded. The Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation between Livingston and Woodville is also a good spot, and has a large campground area. Finally, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operate several campground/recreation areas around Lake Steinhagen, near Jasper, where no permits for insect collecting are needed.

Unfortunately, the Big Thicket has suffered from many years of degradation, mainly from the timber industry, which usually practices clear-cutting of large tracts. Nearly all of what remains forested is secondary growth, but there are a few small areas of virgin forest remaining. Long considered a refuge area for such animals as the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, Black Bear, East Texas Panther, and Red Wolf, it now appears that the Big Thicket no longer harbors these creatures. However, there still remains much to delight the eyes and ears and excite even the most jaded Lepidopterist ! I'd be delighted to hear from anyone collecting in the Thicket area, and can provide more information on request.

----- Edward C. Knudson -----

ABOUT YOUR NEW CHAIRMAN MEET JEFF SLOTTEN

For the record, I'm now 31 and a practicing dentist in Jacksonville, FL. I spent the first 9 years growing up in an inner city environment in the Chicago area. My older brother first influenced me regarding lepidoptera - maybe it was the Tiger Swallowtail he brought by to show the kids in the neighborhood, as well as my parents. Or maybe it was the year we had a real invasion of tussock moth caterpillars in the neighborhood and my brother organized a search party and prize for the one who could find the most. Or maybe it was the sight of a huge green caterpillar - a *Cecropia* moth larva - which happened to be crawling in the courtyard where we played as kids. Or possibly it was the Red Admiral that kept landing on my brother's shoulder every afternoon for about a week one summer. Anyway, that was enough, since I was soon happily collecting the usual cabbage butterflies, sulfurs, and the occasional Monarchs. At the age of 10, my family moved to the suburbs, and I saw the first open weedy spots - and nearly went crazy when I saw both my first Black Swallowtail and a Red-Spotted Purple. Since that time, my interests have grown much more serious but my enthusiasm is still growing.

Irwin Leeuw, a collector in Cary, Illinois, helped me greatly and stimulated my interests. He supplied me with my first blacklight and took me on several field trips. He was, and still is, one of the kindest and most generous individuals I've met, and I'll always be thankful for meeting him.

I earned a B.A. degree from Carlton College in Northfield, Minnesota, but I had a tough time with the long, bitter winters there. Longing for warmer climes (and more collecting potential) I came to Gainesville, Florida and began the graduate program in Entomology at the University of Florida. I took several courses there but was not really motivated towards a Masters degree. I began working at the Division of Plant Industry with Dr. Howard Weems and Dr. Lionel Stange in the museum, mainly simply sorting and pinning field caught specimens. The job allowed me access to the facilities and the fantastic collections. As my position was only a one-year temporary job, after a year I had to look again, and I was lucky to find a new job as a respiratory technician at the teaching hospital. There I met people in health professions and became interested in dentistry. I applied and was accepted at the University of Illinois College of Dentistry where I earned my DDS. During the summers I made great use of my bicycle - my sole transportation at the time - to collect lepidoptera around the suburbs of Chicago. This time I took advantage of the interest in *Catocala* that had been nurtured by Rick Gillmore and Dave Baggett, whom I had met and collected often with while in Florida. I managed to get about 20 species in the area, including the rare *C. marmorata*. I also took three trips out west in the summers during breaks, renting a car each time, and saw many beautiful spots in Montana, North & South Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming, Arizona, Nevada, Texas, and even California, and had some great collecting experiences. Presently I enjoy collecting all macrolepidoptera. After Dental School I passed both the Northeast District and the Florida State Boards, and decided to return to Florida. I enjoy working with both Rick Gillmore and Dave Baggett on *Catocala* projects and rearing research, and am also working with Dr. Thomas C. Emmel at the University of Florida with regard to lepidoptera chromosomal research, especially for skippers.

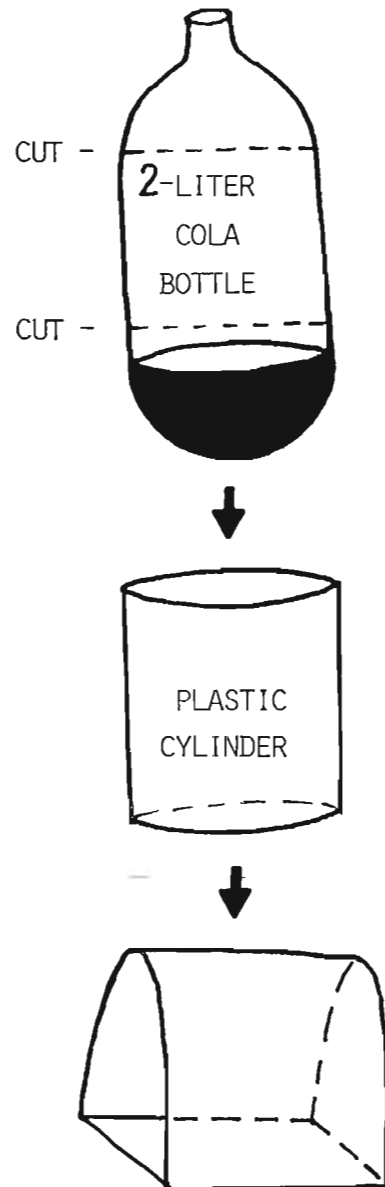
I hope I can translate some of my enthusiasm for lepidoptera to others, and will do the best I can for the group while serving as your present Chairman. I'm looking forward to meeting some of you newer members at the annual meeting, and I think we'll have some good spots to check and some interesting ways to go about it this time.... JRS

EASY-TO-MAKE PHEROMONE TRAPS FOR SESIID

Sesiids are small diurnal moths which strongly mimic various Hymenoptera - some of them so similar that it is virtually impossible to tell them from their respective model while on the wing. In spite of their similarities, many of the Sesiids are still poorly known, except for a few of economic importance, such as the squash vine borer, peach tree borers, and ash borers. Evidence of our lack of knowledge concerning these interesting moths is replete in recent literature concerning new species descriptions (Purrington & Neilsen, 1977; Duckworth & Eichlin, 1977; Brown, Eichlin, & Snow, 1985). One of the things which has spurred new interest in the Sesiidae has been the discovery and synthesis of the sex attractants, or pheromones, for many species (see Tumlinson, et al, 1974.) The major chemical component of the pheromones is (Z,Z)3,13-octadecadien-1-ol acetate, usually abbreviated as ZZ-ODDA, although other (ZE,EE,EZ) isomers and derivatives, especially the alcohols, also have been found to attract additional species. ZZ-ODDA is manufactured by Farchan Division, Storey Chemical Co., Willoughby, OH. One of the best ways to survey an area for these moths is to employ pheromone-baited traps to attract males.

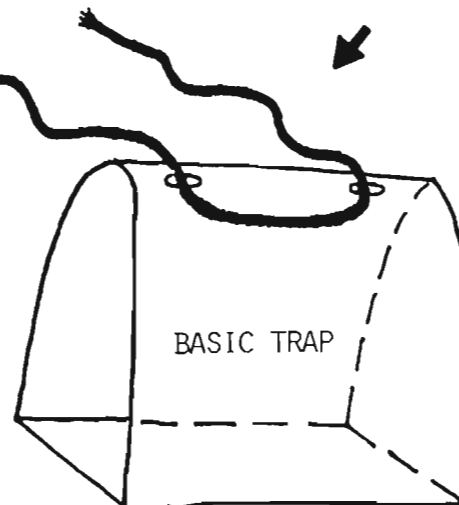
A very simple and inexpensive way to make traps is provided: take an empty 2-liter cola bottle and cut off both ends to make a hollow cylinder open at both ends. Fold and crease the cylinder to form a flat base. Punch two holes at the top, and run about a foot-long piece of twine through them, with the ends coming out the top and used to attach the trap to tree branches. An insert is made from a piece of sheet aluminum or waxed cardboard, cut in rectangular shape to fit the inner base of the trap. The insert is then coated with stickum (see Tangle-Trap adhesive in the Bio-Quip catalog), and a pheromone-impregnated strip of rubber band is stuck on the center of the insert. The insert is held in place in the trap with paper clips. The insert facilitates removal of the trapped specimens, which are carefully lifted out of the stickum and placed in xylene, which quickly and completely dissolves any of the adhesive. The xylene will quickly evaporate after the specimens are removed, and they may then be spread or placed in ordinary rubbing alcohol for storage. Specimens of amazingly good quality can be obtained in this fashion. Collectors in Florida have now recorded over thirty different species of Sesiidae using various pheromones in similar traps. We'll probably have a number of traps ready for use during the field meeting this fall, and may offer a few traps and pheromones as door prizes! This is an unusual and highly interesting way to obtain specimens, and these are really a fascinating group of Lepidoptera to get interested in.

- Dave Baggett



INSERT FOR TRAP BASE W/STICKUM & PHEROMONE STRIP

FOLD & CREASE
TO SHAPE



MEMBER NOTICES, RESEARCH REQUESTS, ETC.

VERNON A. BROU, 137 Jack Loyd Road, Abita Springs, LA 70420 :

FOR SALE : CUSTOM MADE LIGHT TRAPS, unlike anything else you've seen on the market today, perfected through years of personal research, and guaranteed to offer the BEST collecting efficiency yet developed! Send self-addressed, stamped, business size envelope for complete details and specifications. Also for sale : over 5000 Saturniids, 20,000 Sphingids, 5000 butterflies (all in papers with data), in lots of 500 or 1000 only.

SOUTHERN LEPIDOPTERISTS' ANNUAL MEETING : Tentatively we are planning to meet at Torreya State Park at 10:00 AM on Saturday, Sept. 27th., with a rain-check option open for the following weekend in case we have weather problems like we had last year. Hopefully, we can avoid any more hurricanes! Jeff Slotten, 3201 Parental Home Road, Jacksonville, FL 32216 is in the process of preparing information packets for members and in obtaining a group permit for moth collecting for those staying at the park. Daytime activities will be planned outside of the park, where we intend to divide into several groups in a competition for prizes. Each group will be assigned a different area to explore, primarily in the Apalachicola National Forest, to search for new county butterfly/skipper records. Those wanting to share slide shows, offer things for door prizes. We'll try to have more out in either another issue of the newsletter prior to the meeting or will send out a special notice to members in the event of printing lags/delays. Additional information/updates can be obtained by calling Jeff (904) 731-1962 or Rick Gillmore (305) 323-2195 in the interim.

CURRENT ZONE REPORTS

ZONE I - TEXAS. Coordinators : Edward C. Knudson, 808 Woodstock, Bellaire, TX 77401 and Mike Rickard, 6550 Hillcroft #201, Houston, TX 77801.

Frequent collecting trips to eastern Texas were made by Knudson between Feb.-June, with many new TX records obtained. A few of the most interesting records follow : Martin Dies St. Pk., Jasper Co., Feb. 15th.: Ceratomyx satanaria (Geom.); Pyreferra pettiti and Leucania ursula (Noct.); March 5th.: Nemoria elfa, Eupithecia peckorum (Geom.); Zale phaeocapna, Elaphria georgii (Noct.); April 27th.: Talponia plummeriana, Choristoneura pinus, Sparganothis cana (Tort.); Scopula ordinata, Lytrosis unitaria (Geom.); Tolyte minta & notialis (Lasiocampids); Dasychira dominickaria, Orygia definita (Lymantriids); Zanclognatha atrilineella, Catocala texarkana (Noct.); May 8th.: Zelleria retinella (Yponomeutid); Anacamptis tristrigella, Holophysis emblemella (Gelech.); Semiothisa distribuaria (Geom.); Oxycilla mitographa, Parastichtis discivaria, Xanthopastis timais (Noct.)

Caddo Lake St. Pk., Harrison Co., April 6th.: Scythris eboracensis (Scythridid); Argyresthia austerella (Argyresthiid); Salebriaria atratella, Psorosina fergusonella (Pyrilids); Semiothisa quadrinotaria, Metarranthis duaria, Anticlea multiferata (Geom.); Isoparce cupressi (Sphingid); Zale duplicata, Balsa labecula (Noctuids).

At Double Lake Recreation Area, San Jacinto Co., May 18th. : Zale aeruginosa, Catocala orba, C. louiseae, C. gracilis, and C. andromedae tristis (all Noct.); on May 29th.: Acrobasis kearfottella, A. ostryella, Tulsa finitella (Pyrалids), Petrova comstockiana, Cydia toreuta (Tortricids), Nepytia semiclusaria (Geom.), the same Catocalas previously mentioned, and on June 14th., the Sphingid Sphex-codina abbotti was taken at bait.

Catocala collecting has been excellent this year with at least 30 different spp. recorded for Texas to date. Avery Freeman reported collecting C. texanae in Garland on May 8-9th, and 2 C. dejecta at the same locality. Knudson has taken 28 species, the best being C. innubens (Churchill, May 14), C. violenta (Big Bend National Park, June 4th.), C. arizonae (Ft. Davis, June 5th.), C. fredericki (Big Bend N.P., June 4th.), C. ilia zoe (Big Bend N.P., June 4th.), C. grynea (Shepherd, May 8th.), and C. olivia, Brazos Bend St. Pk., May 11th.

We'd like to extend a BIG TEXAS WELCOME to Steve and Debby Roman, recently moved from Tallahassee, Florida to Waco, TX. Waco should be a real interesting area to collect, Steve, especially for Catocala. Your Coordinator would very much like to hear from some of you other Texans - how about some butterfly reports? I'm pretty much strictly into moths, and you must get tired of reading only about my treks ! (ECK).

ZONE II - ALABAMA, LOUISIANA, MISSISSIPPI, and TENNESSEE. Coordinators : Vernon Brou, 137 Jack Loyd Rd., Abita Springs, LA 70420; Bryant Mather, 213 Mt. Salus Dr., Clinton, MS 39056; John Hyatt, 439 Forest Hills Dr., Kingsport, TN 37663.

Vernon Brou reported unbelievable Catocala collecting in Louisiana this spring. On June 1st., collecting at Kisatchie National Forest, Natchitoches Parish with one of his newly-designed light traps, he took 743 Catocala representing 22 spp. Two weeks earlier at the same spot with the same trap, he caught 1100 Haploas, including colona, reversa, and clymene in a single night! At his home in Abita Springs, he has been getting increasing numbers of Catocala moths, taking around 1000-1500 per night for about 2 weeks straight, and for 3 nights in a row he got 4,000 or more per night! He complained about having to take down his bait traps since they were trapping up to 300 specimens per trap per night. He estimates that he has collected about 3000 Sphingids thus far in 1986 in Louisiana.

In May on one trip to the Kisatchie N.F. Vernon also caught Lyctrosis unitaria, L. sinuosa, and L. heitzmanorum (Geomtridae). Several of the Catocala species taken in 1986 to date will represent new state records; the Editor suggests that others interested in the Catocala/Sphingid details write to Vernon for more info.

John Hyatt reports that Tennessee is suffering through a real drought year, but he has taken H. titus mopsus, one M. gryneus, P. troilus, B. philenor, P. glaucus, C. pegala, and loads of Speyeria cybele. (Try baiting for Catocala in this dry weather, John! - ED.)

ZONE III - GEORGIA. Coordinator : Scott Brown, P.O. Box 207, Homerville, GA 31634.

John Hyatt, on a return trip from Florida, reported collecting Poanes viator near Darien, April 13th. On May 17th., he collected a series of Euristrymon favonius on Chinkapin trees in bloom at St. Simon's Island, and found Phyciodes phaon very common. How about hearing from some of you Georgians? Is the drought THAT BAD ?? According to Dave Baggett, Hermann Flaschka has been recovering from mononucleosis, but do the rest of you have good excuses ? We know it has been HOT, but

ZONE IV - FLORIDA. Coordinator : Lee Adair, 810 Gascon Place, Temple Terrace, Florida 33617.

Lee Adair and Dave Baggett, collecting at Myakka St. Park on May 2-3rd., and reported the following : Holomelina laeta, L. longa, P. insulata (Arctiids), Dasychira tephra, Orgyia detrita (Lymantriids), R. vitrea, H. orciferalis, Bomolocha palparia, Metalectra tantillus, Isogona tenuis, A. ferraria, P. tapeta (Noctuids), Cerura scitiscrupta, Hyparpax perophoroides (Notodontids), Calledapteryx dryopterata (Epiplemid), Undulambia striatalis, Rupela segregata, R. sejuncta, P. flavifascialis, R. argillaceella, I. humerella (Pyralids), Melilla xanthometata, Itame pustularia, and Eubaphe meridiana (Geometridae) among others.

Newcomer Jack Heinrich of Alva, Florida reported the capture of a single Eunica monima near Belle Glade, Hendry Co. on June 19th, further evidence of this specie's recent establishment and a new county record.

John Hyatt gave records for Mitoura gryneus swadneri as common near Yankeetown, and a pair of Hesperia attalus slossonae on thistles near Ingles, Levy Co. in April.

Your Editor caught several interesting Sesiids in early July using pheromone traps as follows : Paranthrene simulans palmii at ZZ-ODDA (July is LATE for this!); several Vitacea scepsiformis at both ZZ-ODDA and EZ-3-ODDA, and two Squash Vine Borers, M. cucurbitae, at EZ-2-ODDA which may or may not be unusual (it does not seem to be taken regularly yet in traps.)

At Suwannee River State Park on May 21-23rd., Dave Baggett reported new county records for the following butterflies : Euristrymon ontario, Satyrium calanus, and Achalarus lyciades; Jeff Sloten recorded Hesperia meskei here the following week for another new county record. Both reported finding a number of larvae of Anaea andria on wild Croton at the park in May. Tom Neal and Jeff Sloten recorded several additional* new records for Suwannee Co. in May with Ceratomia amyntor and Catocala piatrix (ex. lv. on hickory). Baggett collected Schinia jaguarina at MV, then found this moth in association with Baptisia sp. (Ed. Note : this has previously been a tough one to figure out, and I plan to provide a species sketch of this interesting moth in a future issue.) Also from Suwannee River, Lee Adair took Amphipyra pyramidoides at bait on July 3rd. for another new county record. Other moth records of interest include Catocala orba (May 22nd) and C. minuta (May 21), and Spragueia dama, S. onagrus, & S. leo (July 3rd.) from Suwannee River St. Pk., Baggett & Adair. Catocala collecting with bait was very good at this locality in May.

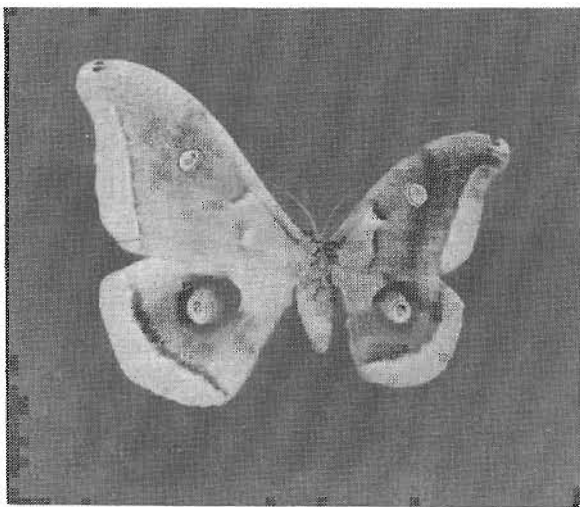
Frank Hedges of Kissimmee, Florida reported the following Sphingids from the Fakahatchee Strand portion of the Everglades, Collier County, on July 12th. : Manduca rustica, Xylophanes tersa, Isoparce cupressi, Darapsa myron, Protambulyx strigilis, Eumorpha achemon, and E. obscura. Humidity was very oppressive and there were lots of beetles present at the lights.

New records for Torreya State Park, Liberty County, were provided by Lee Adair and Dave Baggett as follows : Darapsa versicolor (Sphingidae, at MV), Ascalapha odorata (Noctuidae, at bait), and Synanthedon proxima (Sesiidae, at ZZ-ODDA).

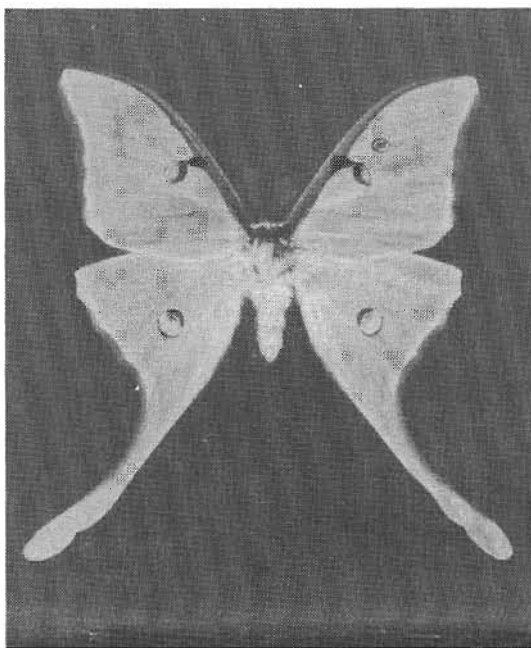
Baggett reported a good visit with Dr. Charles V. Covell and his students on May 18th. on their return trip to the University of Louisville; Covell and his students joined Dave and Rick Gillmore in the Withlacoochee State Forest west of Floral City in Citrus County and enjoyed sampling for hairstreaks and other butterflies - a few S. l. liparops and P. m-album were still around, and Catocala collecting at bait that evening provided a great deal of enjoyment for all of those present.

ZONE V : VIRGINIA, NORTH & SOUTH CAROLINA. Coordinators : Ron Gatrell, 126 Wells Road, Goose Creek, SC 29445; Bo Sullivan, 200 Craven Street, Beaufort, NC 28516; John Coffman, Rt. 1, Box 331, Timberville, VA 22853.

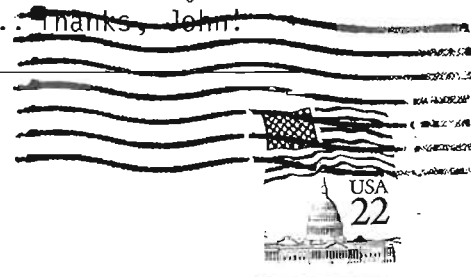
Last time we promised you some unusual photos of several Saturniids sent in by John Coffman in Virginia - here they are. Read 'em and weep - they are FOR REAL! Both are wild-collected specimens.



Male Antheraea polyphemus: one half "grew up", the other half didn't. Markings on right half much more prominent on both uppers & lowers.



The second shot (above right) is a male Actias luna. Look close and you'll do a double-take! The RFW has TWO orbicular spots, folks... thanks, John!



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