



The glowworm



6 September 2004

Volume XII No. 9

The *Gloworm* has featured a number of things while it has been in existence and in this issue we will embark on a new idea. Some time ago I stated that if readers would send me a piece, we'd print it. In this issue we will feature a short story by Ms Patricia Wiseman, of Union county, MS. Patricia has been a regular at 4-H Entomology camp and is an active 'bug chaser.' Her short story is called 'Luna and the Tick.' I hope you enjoy it! The warm days of August have merged into September and we can all begin to anticipate FALL. It's time to begin harvest – we can also plan on harvesting many insects at this time of year. Most insects will be storing up food, either by getting fat or by collecting food reserves in other ways, to prepare for over-wintering survival. Some will lay eggs or egg masses which will hatch next spring. Others will dig deep into the ground to sleep the cold times away as a grub or pupae. Most of the adult insects we see this fall will complete their life cycle and die as cold weather arrives, only a few hibernate as adults. Remember, September and October are generally the best time of year to collect.

In preparation for the fall Fair season please remember first year collections MUST have at least 50 insects with 10 ORDERS. That is the minimum requirements for exhibiting collections in Mississippi. Most 4-H collections, even 1st year collections, should have 75 to 100 insects and 12 to 14 Orders. When you prepare your collection be sure the date and locality labels are placed on the pins first then the common name. Do not place duplicate insects in the display box. Specialty collections featuring one Order should have family names placed in the box much like one would place Order names for the general collection. We will only accept a specialty collection if a general collection is also submitted. All collections should have the exhibitor's name, club, number of specimens and number of Orders written on a piece of white tape and placed on the top left rim of the box.

I have had calls from a number of people about the saddlebacked caterpillar. There are a lot of these around this fall.



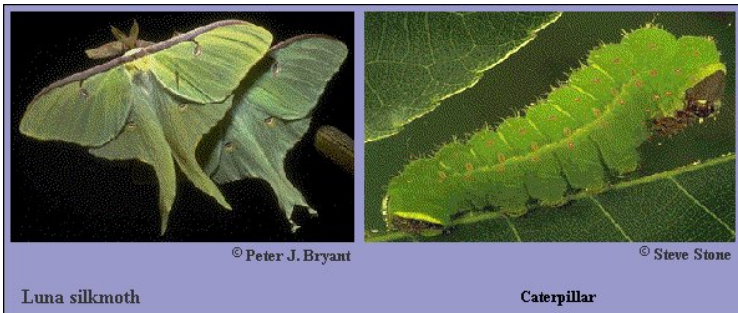
This is one of the more common 'slug caterpillars.' The full-grown caterpillar is about 1 inch long. The anterior and posterior

areas of the body are dark brown with prominent brown "horns" that bear numerous spines. The middle of the body is green. The green area has a white or cream margin and a large oval to oblong



dark brown spot in the center, also with white margin. The appearance is that of a saddle and blanket, thus the common name. Small clumps of spines occur in a row along the lower margin of the green area and at the rear of the caterpillar. Common tree hosts are apple, basswood, cherry, dogwood, elm, maple, oak, and plum, but it can often be found on many trees or shrubs. It is most often encountered in late summer and fall. The sting of the saddleback is the most severe of the slug caterpillars.

Luna and the Tick by Patricia Wiseman



There once was a luna moth named Luna and a tick named Bruce. Luna and Bruce have nothing in common except they happen to be lost in the Everglades.

Bruce is a very independent tick and loves adventure and blood, of course!

Luna, however, loves fashion and dreams of returning home to her owner,

Holly Jolly. Together they must lay their differences aside and try to get to Holly and her family.

Holly is a snobby girl and cares about nothing but fashion and her `precious' Luna. In fact, she treats Luna like she is a human. Her parents are rich, and they often spoil her. It all started when Holly was going to summer camp in the Everglades. She had to do something besides sit on the sofa and watch TV all day during the summer. She didn't like Camp Swamp one bit; so she took Luna with her.

During the last morning hike, the campers and counselors rested near the swamp and had a picnic. Holly was the last to reach the swamp. "I hate camp," Holly said to herself. "There are too many bugs and all we do is hike, sing annoying songs, and make lanyards. What's the fun in that?" Holly was so tired that she completely ignored Luna. After the picnic, Tom, The camp director said, "Okay, nature-lovers, it's time to head back to our cabins and pack for home, but first let's sing our `Farwell, Camp Swamp' anthem."

Tom got his guitar and all the campers started singing; that is, except Holly. After singing the anthem, they headed back to the campsite. Each day they walked for a t least a mile.

Luna was asleep when the camp crew left. When she awoke, she started to panic and screamed, "WHERE IS HOLLY?" A voice from nearby said, "She left." "Who was that?" Luna Asked. "Over here in the green patch," said the voice. It was a tick... Luna jumped and squealed! "Hi, my name is Bruce," said the tick. Luna backed away from Bruce. "Get away from me! I know all about ticks, Holly said you things suck the blood of all creatures!"

Bruce looked annoyed. "Do you have to believe every word this Holly says? I work for the Federal Tick Corporation. We use only mammal blood for our electricity in our world. Don't worry; we're harmless to your kind. What can I help you with?"

Luna snorted. "Why trust a tick? Don't worry; I'll be fine I can find my way back home by myself."

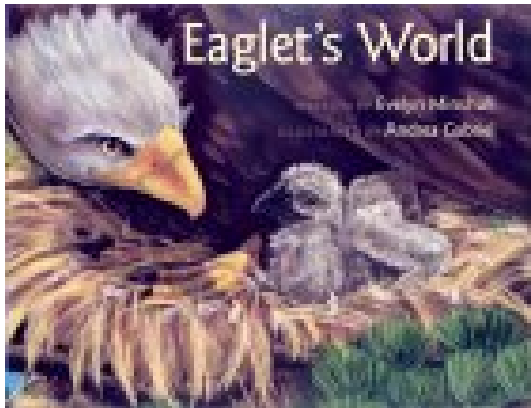
As soon as Luna flew back to the campsite, she found it was empty. No one was there, not even Tom. She didn't realize she was being followed the whole time.

"Wait a second," said the tick. Luna looked down. "Not you again," said Luna. "Thanks to you, I lost her. I've been sweating all for nothing. I even broke a nail on one of the tree branches."

"Luna moths these days," Bruce muttered. Then he said, "How's about I help you get home?" "No thanks," said Luna, uninterested. "Not after that delay. I'm sure I can find my way by myself." "Suit you, then," said Bruce as he turned and left.

During the journey, Luna wasn't sure where she was. She was minding her own business until an eagle came and got her. Luna cried, "HELP!" but no one answered.

The eagle took Luna to her nest and announced to her babies, "Look mommy brought some food, children." The eaglets started arguing to see who got the head. Then the mother broke the argument and said, "The head is mine if you keep it up!"



Suddenly, she felt a bite on her skin. She screamed. The eaglets started crying. It was a tick. Not just any tick; it was Bruce! "Bruce what are you doing here?" asked Luna. "Saving your life," said Bruce. "Now do you want to be eaten by a bunch of eagles or do you want to escape?"

Luna flew away!



Later, Bruce caught up with Luna. "Thanks for saving me, Bruce," said Luna. "No Problem," said Bruce. "By the way, what is your name?" "Luna," she said.

"Well, Luna," said Bruce, "how's about I help you find this Holly girl? I won't be a burden and I promise I won't hurt her."

"Alright," Luna sighed. "Please don't be a little TOO helpful and embarrassing." "I won't, trust me!" said Bruce. So Bruce hopped on Luna's back and they sailed off!

Linnaean Games at Mid-South Fair – The Regional 4-H Linnaean Games are set for September 25 at the Mid-South Fair in Memphis. Mississippi has 6 teams eligible to participate. A number of Arkansas teams have already weighed in for the competition, as well. Tennessee will field one or two teams and both Kentucky and Missouri are eligible to send participants. Opportunity knocks – come and cheer your favorite team on! It'll be great fun.

Happy Buggin'

Michael R. Williams, PhD
Extension Entomologist