

LUNA MOTH



1. **Luna Moth**, *Actias luna*, EastView, Middlebury, VT
© Dick Harlow

The Luna Moth is considered the United States' most beautiful moth. Its likeness was put on a first-class United States postage stamp issued in 1987.

An interesting note on its family name of Saturniidae; the name refers to Saturn. The intriguing aspect of the planet Saturn is that it has concentric rings around the planet. The eyespots on this group of moths appear to humans like the moons around Saturn!

Luna moths are considered to be near-arctic species, meaning they can live and reproduce from areas that are cold to areas that are quite warm.

The Luna moth is found in Canada from Saskatchewan east to Quebec and in the United States east of the Mississippi River.

Fascinating that these images of the Luna Moth were taken here at EastView, when this moth is usually found in forested areas rather than a new open suburban development where trees are widely spaced.

MARCH 15 – 31, 2021 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow



2. **Luna Moth**, *Actias luna*, EastView, Middlebury, VT
© Dick Harlow

Stretched out the wing from wing tip to wing tip of an adult ranges from 2.9 to 4.4 inches, or 75 to 105 mm. As one can see from the two images there are discal eyespots on the forewing, hindwing and tail. Here in Vermont we see only one generation of the Luna Moth. One generation is characteristic of Luna Moths that are found north of a line from Michigan to the eastern seaboard. However, it has been found that this moth has two generations in the Ohio Valley and three generations south of Ohio, especially in Louisiana and Florida.

Here's how to tell whether you are observing a male or female: Males have a yellowish-green look to them as opposed to females that look more blue-green (Packard 1914).

All life needs to reproduce to sustain its species. Therefore when moths evolve from egg to larva to adult there has to be a means by which the male and female can find each other. Various night flying insects have various means of finding each other and determining sex. Adult moths are strongly attracted to UV wavelengths which is characteristic of silk moths. An adult female releases a sex-attractant pheromone. Since adult Luna Moths have only vestigial mouthparts, (thus they can't feed), for the survival of the species they must be able to find each other to mate. And once mated the female has to lay its eggs within a few days of mating.



Luna Moth, *Actias luna*, by Tatum Daly

The tree that northern females will search for tend to be White Birch, *Betula papyrifera*, as the primary host tree.

MARCH 15 – 31, 2021 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

PROMETHEA MOTH

Another Giant Silkworm Moth one might see early in the year is a **Promethea Moth**, *Callosamia promethea*, which was attached to our window in this image.



Promethea moth, female, *Callosamia promethea*.
© Dick Harlow

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

- Coywolves
- Possible Weasel
- Red Fox
- Gray Fox
- Gray Squirrel
- Meadow Vole, abundant number!

Month of MARCH 01-31, 2021

[*All Measurements taken at solar noon \(1230 EST\).*](#)

PRECIPITATION

Average March Precipitation for Vermont = 2.2 inches.

Total precipitation for March was 15.8. mm or 0.62 inches. This is a 1.58-inch deficit for the month.

Overcast Days: We had 12 days, one week and five days of overcast skies. Of those overcast skies 4 days produced some form of precipitation. Believe it or not the woods and fields are very dry and open to fires. Be careful. The month of March definitely added to the draught we are in even though it may not feel like it did.