Io Moth

Automeris io

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Biology

The **Io Moth** is a medium-sized (2 - 3 inches in wingspan) saturniid moth found in North and Central America. The caterpillars spend their early stages in groups, while older caterpillars are usually found alone. They are characterized by “stinging” spines, which serve as protection from predators. The sting feels like that of a bee and is usually harmless. Caterpillars take 60 - 100 days to mature; when ready to pupate, they spin a thin cocoon. Adult moths do not feed and females emerge from the cocoons with 250 - 350 fully formed eggs, which they lay in groups of 10 - 20 on a variety of host plants. In north central Florida, the **Io Moth** undergoes two reproductive cycles a year.

Host Plants

Common name	Scientific name
• Sugarberry Tree	• *Celtis laevigata*
• Coastal Plain Willow	• *Salix caroliniana*
• Redbud Trees	• *Cercis* spp.
• Blackberries and Dewberries	• *Rubus* spp.
• Oak Trees	• *Quercus* spp.
• Plum and Cherry Trees	• *Prunus* spp.

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Monarch

Danaus plexippus

UF

UF NATL Natural Area Teaching Laboratory

Viceroy

Limenitis archippus

Biology

The **Monarch** butterfly is best known for its incredible migratory abilities. In the fall, they travel from North America to Central Mexico. They spend the winter in colonies located in the forested mountains of Michoacán. The same butterflies start heading north in march. Not all of the populations migrate: Central and South American populations, as well as some in North America, are non-migratory. **Monarchs** are also found as far as Hawaii and Australia. They depend on the milkweed genus *Asclepias*), from which the larvae derive their chemical protection (toxicity), which is then passed on to the adults. The development from egg to adult takes about a month.

Host Plants

Milkweed	*Asclepias* spp.
Milkvines	*Metalea* spp.
Climbing Milkweed	*Sarcostema* spp.

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Biology

The **Viceroy** is sometimes mistaken for the **Monarch** due to its similar color pattern. The species is distributed throughout North America and Central Mexico. Females lay eggs one by one near the tip of host plant leaves from which the caterpillars sequester salicin (similar to aspirin) for chemical protection. In north Florida, young larvae overwinter in shelters constructed out of dry leaves (→). Both, larvae and pupae, are cryptically colored, with the larvae resembling a bird dropping. Adult **Viceroys** and **Monarchs** form a Müllerian mimicry complex, in which both chemically-defended butterflies work together to instill unpleasant memories of their wing pattern in predators.

Host Plants

Willows	*Salix* spp.
Poplars and Cottonwoods	*Populus* spp.

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White M Hairstreak

Parrhasius m-album

Biology

The **White M Hairstreak** is a conspicuous butterfly due to its iridescent blue dorsal coloration. It is the only member of the genus *Parrhasius* in the United States, with most *Parrhasius* species occurring in South America. This species is found throughout Florida (with the exception of the Keys), and the eastern half of the United States all the way north to Ontario, Canada. Adult **White M Hairstreaks** feed on nectar from a variety of plants, whereas the caterpillars only feed on leaves of oaks. The butterfly lays flat, white eggs. The caterpillars are reddish-brown and blend well with the young foliage on which they feed. In Florida, the **White M Hairstreak** has 3 - 4 reproductive cycles a year and is known to overwinter as pupae. It differs from the **Gray Hairstreak** by the characteristic white M-shaped line found on the underside of the wing near the tail (→).

Host Plants

Sand Live Oak	*Quercus germinata*
Water Oak	*Quercus nigra*
Live Oak	*Quecus virginiana*

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Gray Hairstreak

Strymon melinus

Biology

Despite often being confused with the **White M Hairstreak,** due to their similar underside coloration pattern, the **Gray Hairstreak** has a dark upperside, with an underside that is more silvery, with less of an M-shaped line than the **White M Hairstreak**. This butterfly is also very common throughout Florida and the eastern United States. Its caterpillars differ significantly from those of the **White M Hairstreak**, being variable in color and ranging from yellow to green to red with conspicuous markings. The caterpillars feed on leaves, flowers, and fruit and are potentially damaging to bean and cotton crops. Both species can be observed feeding together on white clover.

Host Plants

Clover	*Trifolium* spp.
Jointvetches	*Aeschynomene* spp.
Woodland Poppymallow	*Callirhoe papaver*

Lilac-banded Longtail

Urbanus dorantes

Long-tailed Skipper

Urbanus proteus

Biology

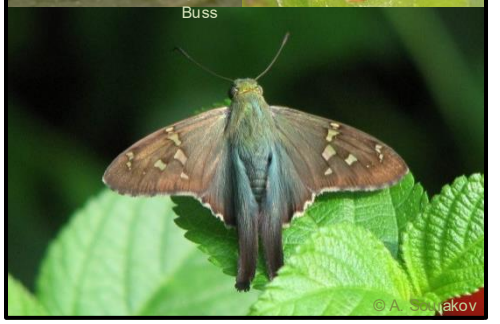
The Lilac-banded Longtail is a common butterfly in southern and central Florida. It is distributed from Argentina to Central America and in the southern United States. Adults have an approximate wingspan of 1.5 - 2 inches. Its brown upper wing surface lacks the iridescent coloration of a similar species, the **Long-tailed Skipper**. The **Lilac-banded Longtail** feeds on the nectar of various plants such as lantana and bougainvillea. Females lay single, greenish eggs on the leaves and the flower stalks of the host plant. The caterpillars have a dark line on the back and are covered with short hairs. They range in color from brown with yellow markings to green with white markings. The head is conspicuously darker than the body and has few spines. In Florida, the **Lilac-banded Longtail** go through three to four reproductive cycles per year.

Host Plants

Florida Beggarweed
Desmodium tortuosum

Tick Clover
Desmodium incanum

Fun Fact:
Characteristic leaf roll made by the **Long-tailed Skipper**. Try and see if you can find one!



Host Plants

Spurred Butterfly Pea
Centrosema virginianum

Florida Beggarweed
Desmodium tortuosum

Downy Milkpea
Galactia regularis

Eastern Milkpea
Galactia volubilis

Biology

The **Long-tailed Skipper** is very similar to the **Lilac-banded Longtail** except that the base of its wings is an iridescent blue-green color. It is a common skipper that is distributed throughout South and Central America and in the southern United States, occasionally straying into Connecticut and Illinois. Adults are slightly larger than adult **Lilac-banded Longtail** (~1.5 - 2.5 inches). Females lay eggs in clusters on the underside of host plant leaves. Caterpillars emerge and feed on the host. When not feeding they retreat to shelters created by rolling up leaves, this feature gives them the nickname **bean leafrollers**. They pupate inside this shelter. This species can be a pest to farmers growing beans and peanuts. In Florida, the **Long-tailed Skipper** undergoes at least three reproductive cycles per year and is known to migrate south in the late summer/early fall and north in the spring.

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Red-spotted Purple

Limenitis arthemis astyanax

© P. Backstrom

Biology

The **Red-spotted Purple** is a common forest butterfly that is distributed throughout the eastern United States. It is thought to be involved in mimicry rings with the Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*), in which both species work together to gain protection from predators. Adult wingspan is approximately 3.5 inches. They like to feed on decomposing organic matter and dung but occasionally also visit flowers to feed on nectar. Females lay single green eggs on the tip of leaves. Young larvae feed on the softer tissue of the leaf, leaving the midrib intact and returning to it to rest. The caterpillars resemble bird droppings, which is thought to be a form of camouflage. They have two thick branched projections on the prothorax and several small humps on the back. Caterpillars overwinter in a shelter attached by silk to the stem of the host plant. The pupae, too, are cryptically colored. In Florida, the **Red-spotted Purple** go through two reproductive cycles per year.

Host Plants

Deerberry
Vaccinium stamineum

Black Cherry
Prunus serotina

Coastal Plain Willow
Salix caroliniana

Fun Fact: In nature, the **Red-spotted Purple** butterfly mates with White Admiral and Viceroy butterflies to create hybrids!

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Red-spotted Purple X White Admiral

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Red-spotted Purple X Viceroy

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Bella Moth

Utetheisa ornatrix

Biology

The **Bella Moth** is a colorful moth distributed throughout North and South America. Adults are approximately 1.5 inches in wingspan. They lay clusters of eggs on rattlepod plants (*Crotalaria* spp.), from which larvae derive alkaloids. The alkaloids serve as chemical protection from predators such as bats, and also are used as precursors of pheromones. Larvae emerge from eggs in four days. Initially larvae feed on the leaves of the host plant, and at later stages, they feed on the seeds, which contain more alkaloids. In northern regions, the **Bella Moth** undergoes two reproductive cycles, whereas in the south, it can reproduce continuously throughout the year.

Host Plants

Rattlepod

Crotalaria spp.

Fun Fact: Bella Moth adults release a defensive substance when disturbed (→). This substance is made up mainly with alkaloids (see text).

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Cloudless Sulphur

Phoebis sennae

Biology

The **Cloudless Sulphur** is a very common butterfly in the southern United States. Sometimes it is found in Colorado, Illinois and New Jersey and also can be found throughout Central and South America. Adults are large with an approximate wingspan of 2-2.5 inches. Males are uniformly yellow; the female forewing has a black margin and a black spot in the middle. Eggs are orange and oval. Larvae are green with a yellow lateral line and blue spots. Pupae change color as they mature, transitioning from a pale green to a bright red. During late summer and fall, millions of **Cloudless Sulphur** butterflies migrate southward to Florida, leaving favorable summer reproduction sites where the climate is too harsh during winter time.

Host Plants

Sicklepod	*Senna obtusifolia*
Coffee Senna	*Senna occidentalis*
Sensitive Pea	*Chamaecrista nictitans*
Partridge Pea	*Chamaecrista fasciculata*

Orange-barred Sulphur

Phoebis philea

Biology

The **Orange-barred Sulphur** can be found in the south of Florida and from Texas to Brazil, where it frequents upland forest edges and gardens. It is similar to the **Cloudless Sulphur**, but larger in size, and the males have an orange bar on the forewing and an orange hindwing margin. Eggs are slender and yellow and are laid singly; larvae can be green or yellow depending on their diet (leaves vs. flowers) with black and yellow bands; pupae are green or pink. The **Orange-barred Sulphur** undergoes at least three reproductive cycles per year.

Host Plants

Coffee Senna	*Senna occidentalis*

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Giant Swallowtail

Heraclides cresphontes

© B. Reynolds

Biology

The **Giant Swallowtail** is a large and common butterfly that is distributed from Canada to Panama. This butterfly is attracted to plants in butterfly gardens, and can be frequently found feeding on thistles in pastures and on roadsides. Females are commonly observed around citrus trees, where they lay cream-orange eggs on new growth. Young larvae feed on the new growth and rest on the upper surface of the leaves, whereas mature larvae rest on the branches. Larvae of all stages resembles bird droppings, which helps them to escape predation. Cryptically-colored pupae can be found on the vertical twigs of the host plant. Adult **Giant Swallowtails** undergo at least three reproductive cycles per year. In the Florida Keys, there are two similar species that fly together with the **Giant Swallowtail**: the federally endangered Schaus' Swallowtail (*Heraclides aristodemus ponceanus*) and the Bahamian Swallowtail (*Heraclides andraemon*). In Mexico and the Neotropics, there are a number of other similar species, such as the Thoas Swallowtail (*Heraclides thoas*).

Host Plants

Sour Orange
Citrus x aurantium

Toothache Tree
Zanthoxylum clava-herculis

Fun fact:
Giant Swallowtail larvae, like all other swallowtails, display their osmeteria when disturbed. These are fleshy glandular projections (→) that emit a nasty odor, repellant to predators.

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Palamedes Swallowtail

Pterourus palamedes

© P. Backstrom

Host Plants

Red Bay	Swamp Bay
Persea borbonia	*Persea palustris*

Sad fact:
Laurel wilt disease has been greatly reducing the available host plants for the **Palamedes Swallowtail**. This disease is caused by the fungus *Raffaelea lauricola* and transmitted by the invasive redbay ambrosia beetle, *Xyleborus glabratus*.

Biology

The Palamedes or **Laurel Swallowtail,** is a large butterfly that can be recognized by its dark coloration and yellow markings along the forewing and hindwing margins. It is distributed across the southeastern United States, upward to Virginia and west to Texas. In Florida, it is a common butterfly except in the Florida Keys. The eggs are slender and green and are laid on new growth of the host plant. Larvae are green with gray, black, white and blue markings and present a pair of conspicuous eyespots at each side of the slightly humped thorax. Mature larvae change color to a pale yellow and pupate away from the host plant. In the northernmost part of its range, **Palamedes Swallowtail** undergoes two reproductive cycles per year whereas in Florida it undergoes three.

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Spicebush Swallowtail

Pterourus troilus

© B. Bouton

Biology

The **Spicebush Swallowtail** is a large, dark butterfly that is characterized by a single line of light colored markings along the margins of both wings and an iridescent green-blue coloration on the hindwing. It is distributed from Canada to Florida and westward to Texas. Eggs are pale green and are laid singly on new growth. Young larvae resemble bird droppings but change to a green color when mature. Young larvae build nests made of silk in which they rest, whereas mature larvae rest in rolled leaves. Pupae are camouflaged as leaves, they can be green or brown. Adult **Spicebush Swallowtails** are thought to mimic the Pipevine Swallowtail, *Battus philenor*, which is toxic. They are also similar (although smaller) to the dark form of the Tiger Swallowtail, *Papilio glaucus*.

Host Plants

Common name	Scientific name
• Red Bay	• *Persea borbonia*
• Swamp Bay	• *Persea palustris*
• Sassafras	• *Sassafras albidum*
• Camphortree	• *Cinnamomum camphora*

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Phaon Crescent

Phyciodes phaon

© B. Bouton

Biology

The **Phaon Crescent** is a small butterfly, with a wingspan of about one inch. It is commonly found in upland habitats, pastures, and moist open areas throughout the United States, as far north as Iowa and Nebraska. Females lay clusters of greenish eggs on the underside of leaves. The gregarious larvae make silk nests, bear sharp short spines and vary in color from olive green to brown with light and dark bands. The **Phaon Crescent** is chemically protected by iridoid glycosides. Its bright colors, deliberately slow flight and display behavior are meant to instill in predators the unpleasant memories associated with the taste. In Florida, the **Phaon Crescent** undergoes at least three reproductive cycles per year.

Host Plants

Matchweed *Phyla nodiflora*

Fun fact:
There are records of **Phaon Crescent** butterflies displaying wing pattern coloration that differs from the normal pattern. These can be genetically or environmentally induced and are called aberrations.

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Question Mark

Polygonia interrogationis

© K. Kunte

Biology

The **Question Mark** is distributed from southern Canada throughout the southeastern United States to Florida and west to Arizona and Mexico. Although it frequents upland habitats, hammocks, and swamps, it can also be found in urban areas and parks. It is a medium-sized butterfly, with a wingspan of two inches. When closed, its wings resemble dry leaves and are highly variable among individuals. Pale green eggs are laid singly or in stalks on the underside of the leaves. The larvae vary in color from red to orange, sometimes almost black, and are equipped with branched spines. Larvae occasionally construct shelters by folding leaves. In Florida, the **Question Mark** undergoes two reproductive cycles per year. There are seven other similar-looking *Polygonia* species in the United States, but in Gainesville the **Question Mark** is the only member of its genus.

Host Plants

Common name	Scientific name
• Sugarberry	• *Celtis laevigata*
• Winged Elm	• *Ulmus alata*
• American Elm	• *Ulmus americana*

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Common Buckeye

Junonia coenia

© A. Warren

Biology

The **Common Buckeye** is a medium-sized butterfly, with a wingspan of about two inches, and is widely distributed in the United States. It can be found in a variety of habitats, from uplands, scrubs, and savannas to weedy urban sites. Females lay green eggs. Larvae usually hide near the base of the plant and are dark dorsally with white or orange sides and metallic blue/black spines. Adults migrate southward from their summer breeding sites and overwinter in southern Florida, where the species undergoes at least three reproductive cycles per year. Two other very similar species found in Florida are the Mangrove Buckeye (*Junonia evarete*) and the Tropical Buckeye (*Junonia genoveva*). There is evidence of interbreeding among these species in nature.

Host Plants

Common name	Scientific name
• Oblongleaf Twin Flower	• *Dyschoriste oblongifolia*
• Virginia Plantain	• *Plantago virginica*
• Matchweed	• *Phyla nodiflora*
• Canadian Toadflax	• *Linaria canadensis*

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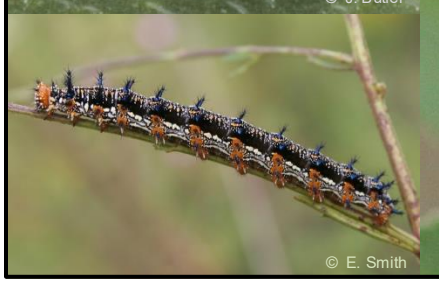

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Hackberry Emperor

Asterocampa celtis

© P. Backstrom

Biology

The **Hackberry Emperor** is common in northern Florida, wherever its host plant is found. It is widely distributed in the eastern United States, reaching westward to Colorado and Arizona. This medium-sized butterfly inhabits uplands and hammocks. The white or pale yellow eggs are laid singly or in clusters on the underside of leaves. Larvae are green with yellow markings and have horns. They rest on the underside of leaves. Larvae turn brown and build shelters by rolling leaves prior to going into their winter diapause. In Florida, the **Hackberry Emperor** undergoes two, possibly three reproductive cycles per year and it overlaps with a similar species, the Tawny Emperor, *Asterocampa clyton*.

Host Plants

Hackberry Trees *Celtis* spp.

Fun fact:
The **Hackberry Emperor** also is called the Hackberry Butterfly. The latter can be a misleading name since other butterflies also use Hackberry Trees as a host.

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Carolina Satyr

Hermeuptychia sosybius

Biology

What has been known as the **Carolina Satyr** has recently been shown to be a complex of several species that are very similar. All are small butterflies (~ 1.5 inches in wingspan). The **Carolina Satyr** in the strict sense is distributed in the United States, from New Jersey southward to Florida and west to Texas and Mexico. It can be found in grassy fields and uplands. Eggs are white and are laid singly on host plant leaves. Larvae and pupae are green but the latter have dark markings. In Florida, the **Carolina Satyr** undergoes several reproductive cycles per year.

Fun Fact:
In Gainesville, the **Carolina Satyr** flies together with the recently described Intricate Satyr (*Hermeuptychia intricata*). The two species can be distinguished by several characters, such as male genitalia, and DNA.

Host Plants

Woodsgrass
Oplismenus hirtellus (=setarius)

St. Augustine Grass
Stenotaphrum secundatum

Little Wood-Satyr

Megisto cymela

Biology

The **Little Wood-Satyr** is distributed from Nebraska and Colorado to Texas and Florida. It is a small butterfly (~ 1.8 inches in wingspan). The **Little Wood-Satyr** can be distinguished from the **Carolina Satyr** by its larger eyespots located both on the upper and underside of the wings. Adults fly in the understory or forest edge, where they feed on rotten fruit, sap, and nectar. Eggs are white or pale yellow and are laid on blades of grass. Larvae are brown with a dark band along the dorsal surface. In Florida, the **Little Wood-Satyr** undergoes two to three reproductive cycles per year.

Fun Fact:
Most butterfly species hibernate as an egg, a pupa or, sometimes as adults. The **Little Wood-Satyr** hibernates as a fourth-instar larva.

Host Plants

Centipedegrass
Eremochloa ophiuroides

Bermudagrass
Cynodon dactylon

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Great Purple Hairstreak

Atlides halesus

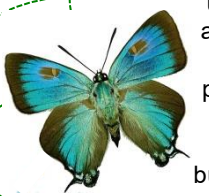
© A. Sourakov

Biology

The **Great Purple Hairstreak** is found from Maryland in the United States to Guatemala. Males are iridescent blue on the upper side and dark purple with red and blue markings on the underside; the upper side of females is less shiny. In Florida, adults frequent woody habitats, and can be found feeding on the nectar of plants such as goldenrods. Eggs are white and are laid singly or in groups on the parasitic mistletoe plant. Larvae are green with yellow bands and covered with thin orange hairs. The pupa is the diapausing stage, in which the metabolism is reduced during harsh environmental conditions. In Florida, the **Great Purple Hairstreak** undergoes three reproductive cycles per year.

Host Plants

Mistletoe *Phoradendron leucarpum*



Fun fact:
Moving tails and bright spots on the underside of the hind wings (→) of this and other species of hairstreaks are called "false head". They deflect attacks by predators by directing attention to this part of the wings, which can be lost akin to lizard's tail without much harm to the butterfly. It has been shown that this pattern is an effective defense against jumping spiders.

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Barred Yellow

Eurema daira

© J. Daniels

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Biology

The **Barred Yellow** is distributed in North, Central and South America. In the United States, it can be found as far north as New York and South Dakota. The **Barred Yellow** frequents pastures, pine lands and open areas. Adult males have black bands on the inner margin of the forewing, while females do not. The **Barred Yellow** has two seasonal forms: the summer form is smaller and its underside is lighter. Eggs are white and are laid singly. Larvae are green. Pupae are pale yellow-brown in color, and camouflaged as leaves. In Gainesville, there are other similar species to the **Barred Yellow**: the Little Yellow, *Eurema lisa* and the Sleepy Orange, *Eurema nicippe*

Host Plants

Sticky Jointvetch	*Aeschynomene viscidula*
Shyleaf	*Aeschynomene americana*
Sideback Pencilflower	*Stylosanthes biflora*
Hairy Indigo	*Indigofera hirsuta*

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Luna Moth

Actias luna

© D. Hall

© A. Sourakov

Biology

The **Luna Moth** is one of the largest moths found in North America with an approximate wingspan of 4.5 inches. Adults frequent hardwood forests. Female **Luna Moths** lay several eggs on the underside of leaves. Recently emerged larvae are gregarious, but become solitary after the 2nd - 3rd instar. During the summer, the adults emerge after a two week pupation period. The pupa is the overwintering stage, and is protected by a hardy cocoon. Adults live for about a week and do not feed. In Florida, the **Luna Moth** undergoes two to three reproductive cycles per year.

Host Plants

- Persimmon — *Diospyros virginiana*
- Sweetgum — *Liquidambar styraciflua*
- Hickory — *Carya* spp.
- Walnut — *Juglans* spp.
- Sumac — *Rhus* spp.
- Birch — *Betula* spp.
- Willow — *Salix* spp.
- Oak — *Quercus* spp.

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Polyphemus Moth

Antheraea polyphemus

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Biology

The **Polyphemus Moth** is among the largest moths found in North America, with an approximate wingspan of 6 inches. It can be easily distinguished by the large eyespots on its hindwings. Adults frequent hardwood forests, wetlands and urban areas. Female **Polyphemus Moths** lay brown-tan oval eggs singly or in small batches. Larvae are solitary and vary in color. When mature, they spin a thick cocoon made of dark silver silk among the leaves of host plants. Adult moths live for about 4 days and do not feed.

Host Plants

- Oak
- Willow
- Birch
- Maple
- Carolina Basswood
- Elm
- Hickory

- *Quercus* spp.
- *Salix* spp.
- *Betula* spp.
- *Acer* spp.
- *Tilia americana*
- *Ulmus* spp.
- *Carya* spp.

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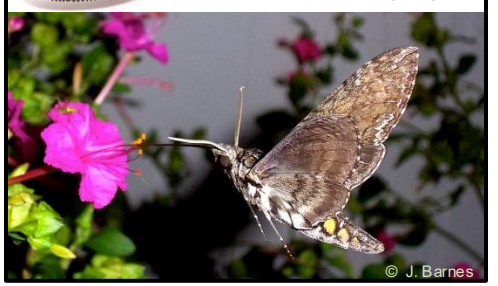
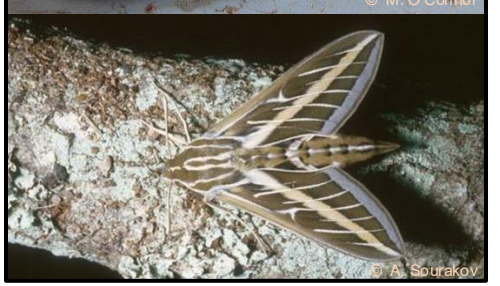
Rustic Sphinx

Manduca rustica

Biology

The **Rustic Sphinx** is a large moth, with a 3.5 - 6 inch wingspan. It is distributed from Virginia southwards and throughout Central and South America. The **Rustic Sphinx** can be observed feeding at dusk, and, like all Sphingidae, does so while hovering over the flower without landing. In Florida, the **Rustic Sphinx** undergoes several reproductive cycles per year.





Host Plants

Jasmine
Jasminum spp.

Bignonia
Bignonia spp.

White Fringetree
Chionanthus virginicus

Fun Fact:
Some Sphinx Moths produce sounds. These range from a squeaky sound made by the Death Head Moth, *Acherontia atropos*, produced by expelling air through the proboscis, to ultrasounds produced by reproductive organs of other Sphingidae species.

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White-lined Sphinx

Hyles lineata

Biology

The **White-lined Sphinx** is distributed throughout the world. It has a wingspan of 2.5 - 4 inches and can be found in a variety of open habitats, from deserts to gardens. Adults feed on nectar from a broad selection of flowers. Unlike most moths, the **White-lined Sphinx** flies during the day and also at night. Larvae, like those of most other Sphingidae, have a horn on the last segment and pupate in soil or under rocks.

Host Plants

Moss Roses
Portulaca spp.

Grapevines
Vitis spp.

Evening Primrose and Suncups
Oenothera spp.

Elm
Ulmus spp.