

THE NAMING OF MOTHS by Peter Taylor
(with apologies to T.S. Eliot)

The naming of moths is a serious matter,
It's not just biologists playing word games.
Though a moth is a flighty, ephemeral critter,
Each one has no fewer than three different names.

First of all there's a common name we can use daily,
Like Io or Luna or Buck Moth or Dart.
Clearwing and Cobbler and Tulip-Tree Beauty
Are all simple forms of the moth-naming art.

There are fancier names in the moth guide-book index,
Pistachio Emerald and False-windowed Sphinx,
Goldenrod Stowaway, Angulose Prominent –
Remarkable names for an insect, methinks.

Then there's great Polyphemus and cousin Promethea,
Four-winged behemoths that pass in the night,
Once-married Underwing, Brown-hooded Owlet,
And hundreds of others that swarm at the light.

The moth's second name is a matter for science,
A name recognizable all 'round the world,
Such as *Eosphoropteryx thyatyroides*,
A tough one 'round which to get tongue and lips curled.

Agrotis, *Oruza*, *Ozarba*, *Magusa*,
Mysterious names for the night-flying host,
And *Sthenopsis argenteomaculatus* –
A tongue-twisting title for Silver-Spot Ghost.

The third name by far is above all the others,
The subtlest of scents on a summer-night breeze,
The chemical call to moth fathers from mothers,
Adrift over river and meadow and trees.

What is it that floats from one moth to another,
The signal that binds it to more of the same?
It's the moth's own particular, monomolecular,
Pheromone compound, unique and quite singular NAME.

MYSTERY PHOTO



DECEMBER 2007 MYSTERY PHOTO

These marks on the snow tell a tale. Can you guess what happened here? This photograph was taken from a kitchen window about 20 km east of Saskatoon on 11 January 2007, the morning after a major blizzard that closed roads and the University of Saskatchewan. The hole in the snow is about the size of a chicken's egg.

ANSWER TO THE SEPTEMBER 2007 MYSTERY PHOTO

The nets in the September issue mystery photo are constructed by caddisfly larvae. The larvae feed on the material caught in the net and may also live inside the net. John Kozial from Bjorkdale writes, "I've found and examined these green, slimy structures in the past and have found caddis-like larvae in the silken nets." The longest net in the photo resembles that of a trumpet-net caddisfly (family Polycentropodidae) and in this group, the larva lives in a tube inside the net.

There are several families of caddisflies that make nets that filter material from passing water. Hydropsychidea is another family with common species in Saskatchewan.

The editors would like to thank Ken Pivnick for the excellent photograph of these intriguing sacks, and Doug Smith and John Kozial for information about the mystery object.



Silken nets made by caddisflies, Paull River, SK
Ken Pivnick