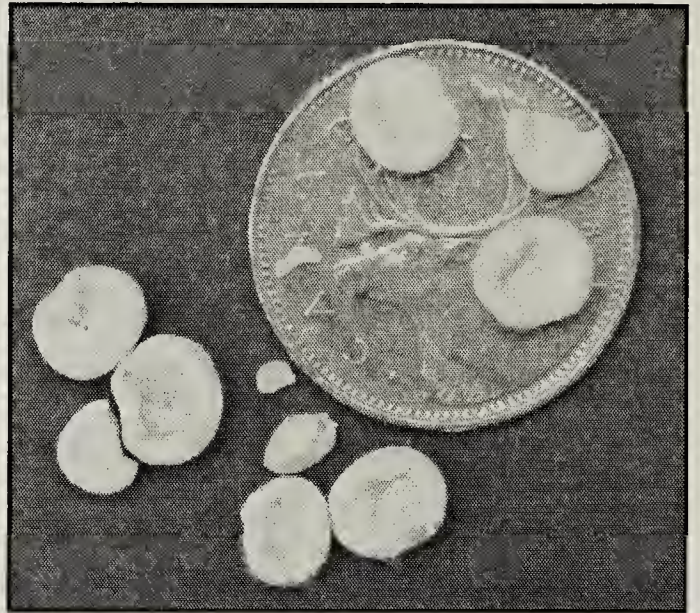


MYSTERY PHOTO

JUNE 2006 MYSTERY PHOTO

These bone-hard, smooth, white disks were found on the shore of Last Mountain Lake in close proximity to bits and pieces of a crayfish. What are they and what put them there?



ANSWER TO THE MARCH 2006 MYSTERY PHOTO

The mystery object is an empty pupal case of a Glover's Silkmoth, *Hyalophora columbia gloveri*. The cocoon, nearly 6 cm long, was attached to a short Wolf Willow (*Elaeagnus commutata*) stem in a small patch of shrubs that included Western

Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*) in the Excel PFRA pasture near Ormiston, SK. The moth, found by Camille Pouteaux, had climbed a different stem near the patch fringe (Figure 1).



Glover's Silkmoth cocoon case
Ross Dickson



Figure 1. The Glover's Silkmoth clinging to the Wolf Willow stem, 14 May 2005.
Ross Dickson

Just emerged from its cocoon, the moth was slowly spreading its wings (Figure 2). The long feather-like antennae that identify it as a male, can detect a pheromone emitted by a receptive female from several kilometres away. Its wingspan was about 15 cm. The adult has no mouth parts and does not eat. Silkmoths are somewhat cold-tolerant, a useful trait since they need to be active at night. The usual peak of adult sightings in western Canada is late May to mid-June.

Glover's Silkmoth is the western subspecies of Columbia Silkmoth (*H.c. columbia*) and has a wide range extending from northern Alberta to northern Mexico, but may be rare in some areas. Glover's large caterpillar (Figure 3) feeds primarily on Wolf Willow in shrubby areas of the southern portion of the Prairie Provinces. The dull,

waxy green caterpillar, with short, pale yellow and white tubercles on each body segment, grows to 5-6 cm long. Columbia Silkmoth caterpillars eat Tamarack (*Larix laricina*) in boreal regions.

The similar Cecropia Silkmoth (*Hyalophora cecropia*) has a pinkish-red subterminal band on its wings that Glover's lacks. It is now very rare (with no recent records in Alberta and Saskatchewan) in the northern part of its range. This status contrasts with the 1930s and 1940s when its caterpillars denuded Manitoba Maples (*Acer negundo*) in farm shelterbelts (Ron Hooper, pers. comm.).

- Ross Dickson, Box 280 Simpson SK S0G 4M0

John Kozial of Bjorkdale writes: [The mystery photo] appears to be an empty

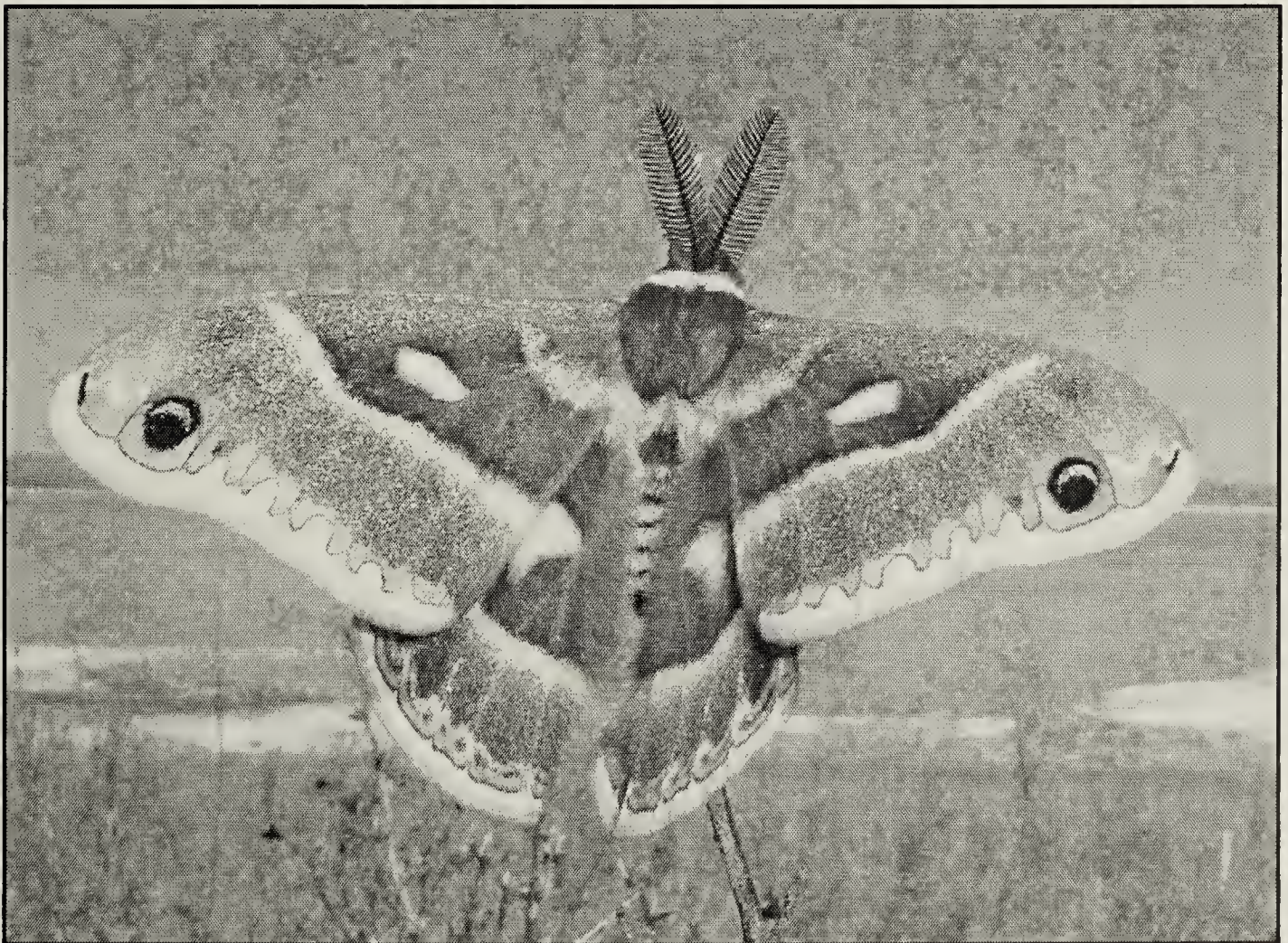


Figure 2. The Glover's Silk Moth showing the wings

Ross Dickson

cocoon of one of our most beautiful and uncommon Giant Silkmoths – Glover’s Silkmoth, (*Hyalophora columbia gloveri*). I have collected about a dozen specimens throughout the years at Bjorkdale. In the early 1980s I found two mature larvae feeding on Wolf Willow just west of Ft. Walsh (former R.C.M. P. horse training land). I brought them home to Bjorkdale and had them pupate and emerge the following June. In the mid-1980s, I reared this species for two years from a female caught in one of my light traps. The larvae were fed Wolf Willow (*Elaeagnus commutata*), which they did best on, and a related species Canada Buffaloberry (*Shepherdia canadensis*), which they survived on, but were not healthy. Interestingly enough, Wolf Willow does not occur in my immediate area and the literature says they may feed on various willow (*Salix*) species. I was given a large cocoon from a lady in Nipawin, SK a number of years ago, from which a beautiful female Glover’s emerged the following June (Nipawin is the farthest north record I have for this species).



Figure 3. Glover’s Silkmoth caterpillar in a small roadside stand of Wolf Willow near Danielson Provincial Park on June 22, 2002. Another Glover’s caterpillar was found on July 20, 2005 in the Wreford PFRA Pasture south of Nokomis.

Kerry Hecker



Announcement: Back issues of *Blue Jay*

All is not lost if you missed the deadline for requesting back issues of Blue Jays (see the first page in the March 2005 issue). Although the giveaway was very successful—issues were supplied to 16 institutions and 41 individuals in 7 provinces and 4 states—there are still thousands of copies left. Myron Barton has kindly offered to share house space with the boxes that remain. IF you are looking for back issues, or IF you have back issues to donate for others, please contact Myron at <myron@inet2000.ca> or Box 7, Macdowall, SK, S0K 2S0 as he is taking over the management the extant collection.

Nature Saskatchewan would like to thank Myron for his help and everyone who contributed to the cause, by helping to pay for shipment or by providing back issues.