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THE GREAT LEOPARD MOTH

(*ECPANTHERIA DEFLORATA*, FAB.).

By Arthur Gibson.

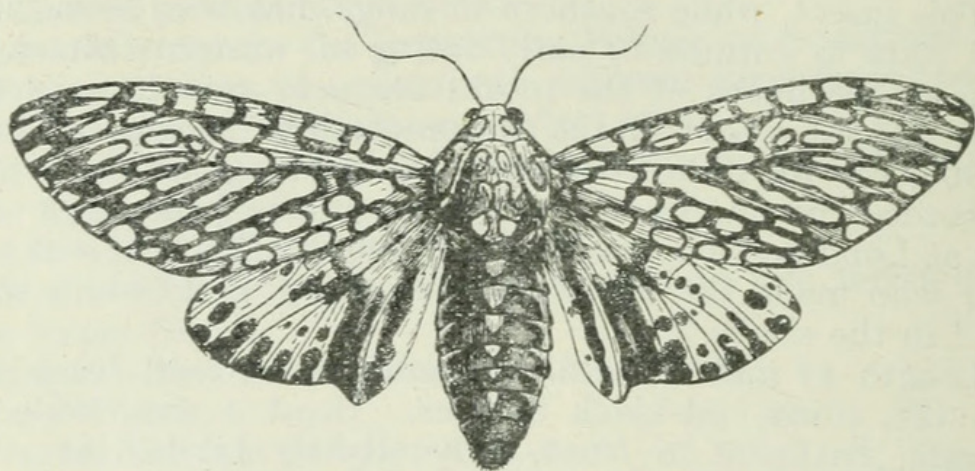
This insect, while southern in range, has been found in the larval state in autumn or early spring in western Ontario, but Canadian specimens of the moths are very rare in collections. In the annual report of the Entomological Society of Ontario for 1903, the Rev. Prof. Bethune published an article in which he recorded the finding of a single specimen of the larva of this moth at London, Ont., on May 6th, 1903. This was sent to the writer who made the following description of it, which was included in the above article:

Length 43 mm. General appearance—a stout, black larva, with stiff, shiny, jet-black bristles. Head 4 mm. wide, subquadrate, flattened in front, only slightly bilobed at vertex; black, shiny, excepting posterior upper part of cheek near segment 2, which is pale; suture and epistoma dull whitish; mandibles slightly reddish; hairs on face mostly black, reddish at tips. Body stout, dull black, with patches and streaks of velvety black on dorsum; distinctly yellowish in the incisures; lower lateral and ventral surface paler. Tubercles large, all black, excepting vi, vii and viii, which are a dark amber colour, each bearing a bunch of stiff, black, barbed bristles; from v, vi, vii and viii many of the bristles are tinged with dark red. Tubercles i, ii and iii are nearly the same size; iv elongate. Spiracles dull orange, anterior and close to, but above, tubercle iv on abdominal segments. All the feet shiny brown tipped with black.

I was very glad indeed to have the opportunity of examining this caterpillar, as I had never before seen a living specimen. At the annual meeting of the above Society, held at Guelph, in October, 1906, Mr. J. B. Williams, one of the Toronto members of the Club, exhibited two living larvæ of this handsome moth,

which had been taken by him, in the latter part of September, at Niagara Glen, Ont. Both of these larvae were different in appearance to the one described above, being distinctly reddish between the segments and almost without any yellow in the incisures. One of the specimens found by Mr. Williams was feeding on violet, which I think is a new food plant for the larva.

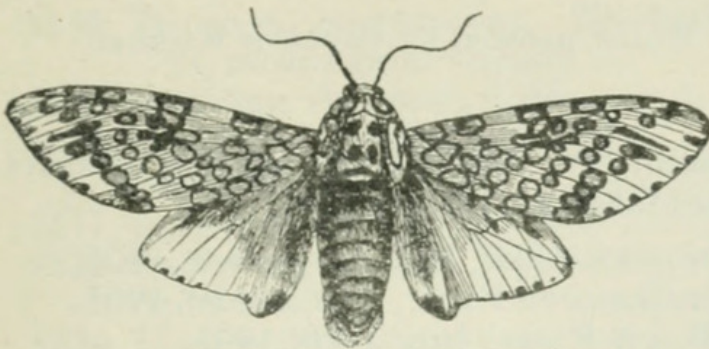
In the *Canadian Entomologist*, June, 1882, Dr. William Saunders says: "The larva of this insect is comparatively abundant in the autumn throughout most of the northern United States and in many parts of Canada." Of late years, however, these caterpillars have not been met with in Canada in any numbers; in fact, the three larvæ mentioned in this article are the only specimens which have been found in Canada, to the writer's knowledge, during the last fifteen years. One of the specimens found by Mr. Williams was given to the writer. It is now inflated and in the Government collection at the Central Experimental Farm.



Female Moth (after Riley).

The Great Leopard Moth is the largest and one of the most beautiful of the moths of the interesting Family Arctiidae; or Tiger Moths. The wings of both sexes are white. The rings and spots on the upper wings are black, or dark brown. Some of the rings near the base are covered with bright, steel-blue scales, and in some specimens the rings are filled in so as to look like black blots. The hind wings of the female, as shown in the figure, have more of the black markings than have those of the male. As is the case with many other arctian moths, the markings on all the wings of this species, however, are variable in number and shape. The abdomen is of a steel-blue colour above, marked, more or less down the middle and along the sides, with yellow or orange. The thorax is white, marked with spots or rings of black, and spots of steel-blue, the latter being in the centre. The head is white above and steel-blue in front. The

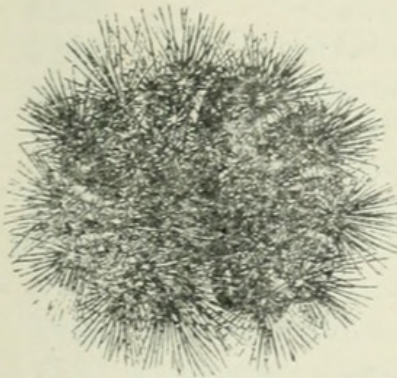
female is much the larger, measuring when the wings are expanded about three inches from tip to tip. A specimen in the collection of the Geological Survey Department is as large as the female shown here. The male differs from the female in being smaller and in having the wings more pointed. When expanded it measures about two and a quarter inches across. The



Male Moth (after Riley).

markings, too, are less distinct.

In the Southern States this insect has sometimes been very abundant and the caterpillar has been given the name "Fever Worm" by the negroes, under the absurd impression that it is the cause of fever and ague.



Larva (after Riley).

The larva becomes full grown in autumn and curls up, passing the winter under logs or any other surface shelter it can find. According to Saunders and Riley, it feeds for the few days in spring, on grass or almost any green, low-growing plant, and then forms a loose cocoon inside of which it changes to a pupa. In this state it remains for from about two to three weeks. The specimen sent to me by the Rev. Prof. Bethune, was found in its winter quarters and had no food whatever after its capture.

On June 30th of the present year, Mr. Paul Hahn, of Toronto, took a freshly emerged specimen of the male moth, at Niagara Glen, Ont.

The food plants of the larvæ are Wild Sunflower (*Helianthus decapetalus*), Plantain, Willow, Poke-berry (*Phytolacca decandra*); Wild Cherry and Persimmon (Smith and Abbott), and violet, as observed by Mr. Williams.



Gibson, Arthur. 1907. "The Great Leopard Moth (*Ecpantheria deflorata* Fab.)." *The Ottawa naturalist* 21(8), 153–155.

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