

A NIGHT'S COLLECTING FOR MOTHS AT MEECH LAKE, QUE.*

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On the invitation of Mr. C. H. Young, I paid a visit to the above charming place on the evening of the 14th of August last. Leaving Ottawa on the evening train I was met at Chelsea by Mr. Young, and after a lovely drive of half an hour or so, we reached his cottage on the west shore of Meech Lake. As it was my first visit to this delightful, uncrowded, summer resort, I enjoyed the outing immensely and only regretted that I could not spare the time to stay longer.

After we had attended to the inner man, we immediately began to arrange our poison bottles and other collecting apparatus. This done, we started out to "sugar" a number of trees, which had already been used by Mr. Young for that purpose. The term "sugar" has a special entomological meaning; the "sugar" itself is a mixture of molasses and sour beer, which is smeared on to the trunks of trees, fence posts, etc., at dusk, for the purpose of attracting moths belonging chiefly to the family Noctuidæ. Some collectors thin the molasses by adding a small quantity of rum or brandy, but the sour beer is just as good, and is cheaper. This method of collecting moths will be found to give the best results on warm, moist, cloudy nights. As soon as we had sugared about thirty trees, and placed our poison bottles in convenient pockets, we started out on the first round. When two are sugaring it is always best for one to hold the dark lantern, while the other does the bottling, or catching. Care must be taken not to direct the light too strongly, or too suddenly, upon the tree bearing the mixture; if this is done many of the moths will be frightened away. It is also well to have several good poison bottles on hand, to be used alternately after four or five specimens have been caught.

On completing our first round, we emptied our catch into a large poison bottle and were then ready to make the trip again. After having gone the rounds about five times and deposited our

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specimens in a safe place, we fixed up a large acetylene lamp, which we use specially for attracting night-flying moths, and proceeded up the lake about half a mile from Mr. Young's cottage. Having reached our destination, an unoccupied cottage on the slope of the mountain, we placed the lamp on the southern edge of the verandah, so that the rays would illuminate the front portion of the house. The reason this cottage was decided upon was because it had been painted white, and with the light from the lamp directly along the front of the verandah from which it was reflected, much greater attraction was thus extended to insects flying in the immediate vicinity. During good evenings we have collected large numbers of specimens by this method. On the night in question we netted some very acceptable things in the couple of hours spent at this pleasant work.

There is no doubt, however, that sugaring is the most productive way to collect moths. If one wants large numbers of specimens there is no reason why, in a good season, several hundred specimens could not be taken during any favorable evening. On the other hand, however, all night-flying moths will not come to sugar, but many of these may be attracted by lights. Around cities and towns, particularly in the outskirts, the electric light furnishes a splendid hunting ground for many species which one never meets with at sugar. Noctuid moths of many kinds frequent flowers in early evening attracted by the rich nectar, and while there is still natural light, specimens may be captured quite easily.

As to the specimens collected at sugar, *Noctua normaniana*, Grt., and *Trigonophora periculosa*, Gn., with its variety *v-brunneum*, Grt., were extremely plentiful and in perfect condition. Luckily, I had previously never met with either of these species at all commonly, so I took a good series of each. Some of the other very common noctuids were *Hadena dubitans*, Walk., *Feltia subgothica*, Haw., and *Noctua smithii*, Snel. The latter species could have been taken by the hundred. Every now and then one of the large *Catocala* moths would be seen eagerly sipping up the sugar. All the moths of this genus are beautiful creatures, the larger species being particularly striking in appearance. As many as six different kinds of these attractive insects were flying, viz., *Catocala*

briseis, Edw., *unijuga*, Walk., *concombens*, Walk., *cerogama*, Gn., *ultronia*, Hbn., and *ilia*, Cram. The latter is a new record for the Ottawa district. Only one specimen was seen and this was collected by Mr. Young. Among the more interesting species taken at sugar mention may be made of *Rhynchagrotis alternata*, Grt., *Mamestra vicini*, Grt., *Ulolonche modesta*, Morr., *Noctua rubifera*, Grt., *Ipimorpha pleonectusa*, Grt., *Caradrina multifera*, Walk., and *Tricholita signata*, Walk. At light we netted a few nice examples of *Arctia caia*, L., var. *americana*, Harr., *Apantesis pyrrhenice*, Kirby, *Autographa selecta*, Walk., *Achatodes zeae*, Harr., *Eueretagrotis perattenta*, Grt., some interesting varieties of *Mamestra olivacea*, Harr., as well as several other acceptable species, including some uncommon geometers. *Polystæchotes punctatus*, Fab., a well known neuropterous insect, was fairly plentiful.

The following morning we pinned our captures and I found that my share numbered over 200 specimens, all in good condition. On the afternoon of the 15th we took a tramp up the mountain towards Kingsmere, our object being chiefly to collect larvæ. As the late Dr. Riley said: "The careful entomologist who prides himself on the appearance of his specimens, will rely largely on collecting the early stages and on rearing the insects, for his material." Our chief plan for collecting larvæ was by beating the foliage, holding in one hand a beating net so as to catch any larvæ which might fall. In this way we collected caterpillars of *Schizura ipomæae*, Dbl., *Pyrrhia umbra*, Hufn., *Automeris io*, Fab. (from basswood), *Heterocampa manteo*, Dbl., *Autographa biloba*, Steph., etc. Feeding within the stems of the common dock, *Rumex occidentalis*, S. Wats., we found nearly full grown larvæ of *Papaipema cerussata*, G. & R., the mature insect of which is a very beautiful moth of a rich brown color with purplish and reddish areas and conspicuous whitish spots on the fore-wings. An interesting form of this species, which lacked the white spots on the primaries, was reared by Mr. Young.

The Raspberry Clearwing, *Bembecia marginata*, Harr., seemed to be very plentiful, as I secured, from different plants, six specimens within half an hour. These little wasp-like moths delight in exposing themselves to the full heat of the sun, being

found resting on the upper surface of the leaves. The larvæ are often very destructive, and as little can be done to prevent the damage, canes infested invariably die.

Meech Lake is a most interesting locality from an entomological standpoint. Mr. Young during his two summers' sojourn there, has collected many insects new to the Ottawa district. Doubtless others also will find the place a most profitable one to explore.

CELEBRATION OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE OTTAWA FIELD- NATURALISTS' CLUB.

(Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club founded March 22nd, 1879.)

The first of this year's soirées was held in the Normal School Hall on December 15th, 1903. In place of the usual conversazione it was thought best to celebrate at that time the 25th anniversary of the organization of the Club, and to bring together as many of the original members as possible. A very enjoyable time was spent at this meeting in recalling interesting facts relating to the early years of the Club.

The Principal of the Normal School, Mr. J. F. White, gave an address of welcome, in which he spoke of his appreciation of the work the Club was doing and of the assistance being rendered to students of the Normal School by its members. The President's address, which was published in the February number of *THE NATURALIST*, followed, after which five members of the original Council of the Club made short addresses. The first President of the Club, Lieut.-Col. W. White, C.M.G., spoke on "The Study of Natural History at Ottawa before the formation of the Club." The following is part of what he said: "When, in 1865, the seat of government was transferred from Quebec to Ottawa those of us who had been members of the Natural History Society of Quebec were most agreeably surprised to find that in the new Capital there was not only a Mechanics' Institute, with the nucleus of a museum, but also a Natural History Society in good working order with a number of very active members, amongst whom may be mentioned Dr., now Sir James Grant, Professor Webster, the Rev. T. D. Phillips, Dr. Van Courtlandt, Mr. James



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