

Lepidoptera on the Rogue River Preserve

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The moths shown here come from a place I believe to be magical, science or no science! (See sidebar.)

Black Witch Moth
(*Ascalapha odorata* of the Erebididae family)

In August 2016, Thomas Craig, caretaker at Rogue River Preserve (RRP), had a rare encounter with a Black Witch Moth, which flew into his home through a kitchen window. At first he thought it was another bat, but when it landed on the kitchen sink he saw that it was a moth as big as his hand (see photo). He posted a photo of the moth on Facebook, where I saw it and immediately knew it was a Black Witch. I did some research and sent the information and photos to Corvallis entomologist Dana Ross, who confirmed the identification as a rare moth for our area. In checking the records, he found that this moth was the first reported sighting to be recorded in Jackson County and only the eighth sighting recorded in the state of Oregon.

The Black Witch is unmistakable with its seven-inch wingspread and resemblance to a bat. It is blackish to brownish in color with patterned lines and spots. The moth is tropical from Central to South America and is known year-round in south Florida and south Texas. It is also reported as breeding in San Diego County. Larval host plants in these areas are woody species of cassia and catclaw.

In the Pacific Northwest, the moth is a rare occurrence as a stray migrant; it is not a breeding resident. Most commonly found in western Oregon and eastern Washington, it has been known

to migrate up to Anchorage, Alaska.

The Black Witch comes with much folklore and legends. The one I like is if the moth lands on you or your door, you will come into money or win the lottery. Thomas's kitchen sink in the caretaker's cabin sounds close enough for that.

Clio Tiger Moth
(*Ectypia clio* of the Erebididae family)

Another rarely seen moth in the Pacific Northwest is the Clio Tiger Moth, whose range is western and southwestern states. It has a localized range in the Pacific Northwest; most of the recorded sightings are in Jackson County. It is a beautiful white moth with black lines marking the wings and is medium-sized at three-quarters of an inch in length.

Annette Trujillo, an artist and photographer from Medford, observed a Clio Tiger Moth ovipositing on narrowleaf milkweed at the Table Rocks area in July 2016 (see photo).

At nearby RRP about a month later, in August 2016, I discovered some eggs in the oak woodlands on narrowleaf milkweed. After I researched and contacted two of my entomologist friends, David James and Dana Ross, Dana identified the Clio Tiger Moth from photos of eggs and caterpillars. Dana had seen the moth years ago in northern California. Dana and I will try to rear the moth to its complete cycle to further confirm this.



Black Witch Moth (above) taken by Thomas Craig at Rogue River Preserve;

Adult Clio Tiger Moth (right) taken by Annette Trujillo at Table Rocks.



I brought the eggs home, and they hatched and grew into hairy little caterpillars. They began to skeletonize the leaves of the milkweed in much the same way a painted lady butterfly does to the many host plants it uses. The larvae have not grown much, but are now in a diapause or hibernation state. From my research, it appears as though few people have reared Clio Tiger Moths, and little is known about their life history.

The host plant is Apocynaceae, also known as the dogbane family. Some dogbanes occur in southern Oregon, but the moth also uses milkweed, a relative in the plant family that grows well here, and spreading dogbane, although I have not seen it myself.

Finding these rare moths is just one reason that makes the untouched RRP so special. I will be sure to watch for these moths as I go about my observations in Lepidoptera at the RRP next summer.

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Linda earned a naturalist certification from Siskiyou Field Institute and hosts butterfly courses there.

About Rogue River Preserve

Kristi Mergenthaler, with Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, describes the "magical" RRP: Rogue River Preserve is a 352-acre property located north of Eagle Point that features two miles of riverfront, an amazing and diverse floodplain property with forests, oak woodlands, meadows, and vernal pools. It supports 29 species of plants and animals that are rare and declining, such as coho salmon (spawning and rearing habitat), wood duck, common king snake, and large-flowered meadow-foam. Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, a local land trust that works cooperatively with people to preserve land, is in the process of raising funds to buy this wild valley-floor property for long-term conservation. For more information or to make a donation, visit landconserve.org/heartoftherogue.



Clio Tiger Moth eggs on narrowleaf milkweed. Photo by Linda Kappen.



Clio Tiger Moth caterpillars reared from eggs found at RRP. Photo by Linda Kappen.

Contact information to volunteer

- Applegate Community Church: Vicky, 541-846-6100
- Applegate ACCESS Pantry: Charlotte Knott, 541-899-8381
- Boys and Girls Club: begreat4kids.com or 541-479-1923
- Brookdale senior living communities: brookdale.com
- Gospel Rescue Mission: gospelrescuemission.org or 541-476-0082
- Kids Unlimited: kuoregon.org or 541-774-3900
- Meals on Wheels: Rogue Valley Council of Governments website at rvcog.org or 541-734-9505 x4 for Jackson County and 541-955-8839 for Josephine County
- RiverSong Sanctuary: 541-761-0188
- ROC Food Pantry, Grants Pass: rochome.org (select "volunteer") or 541-476-3344
- St. Vincent de Paul, Medford: 541-772-3828, ext. 7
- Salvation Army, Grants Pass food pantry: 541-955-1017
- Salvation Army bell ringer: volunteer.usawest.org
- Sanctuary One: sanctuaryone.org or 541-899-8627
- Veterans Benefits Assistance for Josephine County: 541-474-5454

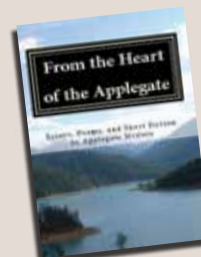
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