

The Statelike Sphinx Moth

By CARL V. JARRELL

During August, 1930, I undertook the study of the Sphinx Moth, this scintillating nocturnal having some days previously deposited her eggs upon an ivy vine which grew over the sides of my residence. Just how she knew about it and selected this particular vine as serving her purpose and how she knew her offspring, which she would never see, would feed readily from its leaves is something that has always intrigued the student of the insect world. Her parents in turn had traveled the long trail the summer before and therefore had imparted no information concerning these things.

We first observed this child of the air and night as a beautiful egg, hatching into a green caterpillar which began almost immediately to feed upon the tender leaves which their mother had selected as suitable food when she deposited her eggs. We watched the growth of the caterpillar from the egg to maturity. We saw them wax fat and shed their skins, with always a new and brighter skin underneath.

Knowing that the inexorable law that governs these actions and determines their destinies was operating, I knew that the time of the miraculous change from the caterpillar to the larval stage or chrysalis was approaching.

So we decided that the green creatures are now ready to begin their journey to their long winter home, having by this time grown to a size of about a man's thumb in diameter and about four inches long, changing in color somewhat to a rich golden brown.

We were determined to find out, if possible, just the process of this transmigration, so accordingly there was prepared a box of suitable size into which was placed earth about six inches deep, knowing this particular moth preferred the dark caverns of the ground to the branches of the trees or other places above.

The dirt in the box was leveled off and pressed down perfectly smooth, and we were going to detect just where and how they entered. Over the top of the box was placed a fine wire screen. A caterpillar was placed inside with some ivy

vine leaves for food, tacking down the cover so escape would be impossible. After the second night the caterpillar had disappeared, with no sign of exit, nor was there any trace or indication of

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Bluebonnet Rhapsody

By M. E. FOSTER

The wild flowers made the landscape a glow of color no artist could ever put on canvas. There were great patches of bluebonnets, wild verbenas, yellow daisies, red winecups and pink and white primroses. Never have the bluebonnets grown so luxuriantly. In the distance we could see artists with paint and palette trying to put the picture on canvas. Impossible. How could one convey an idea of a symphony in blue amidst a background of every shade of green? Onderdonk did it to the best of any artist's ability, but even the beautiful paintings he left the world do not portray the picture. Words cannot tell the story of those fields of bluebonnets. They are flowers that should not be picked and cannot be painted. Their coloring is elusive and changeable, all depending upon cloud effects, the rays of light that fall upon them and the background of trees and waving grass. Sometimes there are acres of them on broad prairies, and occasionally a splash of blue on the hill-sides.

We drove for miles and miles, for the farther we went the more beautiful did nature's adornment of the land appear to our eyes. On one side of the road there would be acres of blue flowers, nodding their beautiful little bonnets; across the way there would be purple verbenas, and then would come a stretch of yellow daisies. The red winecups, the pink and white and yellow primroses, the phlox and other wild flowers frequently would be intermingled.

Those glorious wild things combine the shade of the clear sky and the turquoise, and seem to give a color that lingers between green and violet. Is that a blue, or is it just a bluebonnet?

Birds of Old Houston

By BUD A. RANDOLPH

On November 3rd, 1871, wild geese, duck, swan, brant and many other migratory game birds were flying south over 1214 Washington Avenue. Among them was a stork who dropped down into the bedroom and presented by parents with a nine-pounder. Yours truly let out a yell announcing that he would watch for the annual flight of the feathered folk for the next sixty years.

My father at an early date began to teach me natural history, for which I am still an enthusiast.

I will now point out where game of all kind abounded in the city limits as late as 1880.

Where the Southern Pacific freight depot is located was a pond of four or five acres which abounded with aquatic birds of all kinds.

At Washington and Houston Avenue I have trapped coons and opossums, shot quail, squirrels and rabbits. Houston Heights gave you deer, bear, turkeys, quail, and all fur-bearing animals indigenous to this section of Texas, including wildcats, puma, mink and otter.

Where Montrose Addition stands was a series of sloughs and ponds and was a favorite shooting ground for snipe and ducks. On the prairies near Camp Logan wild geese, curlew, sand hills and whooping cranes, plover, were in abundance.

In the persimmon swamps all around Houston were rookeries of herons of several varieties. Rails, black mallard and teal ducks spent their summers with us.

The last flight of wild pigeons was in 1878. Their roosting place was in the forests of Houston Heights, where citizens of Houston went in wagons at night and destroyed thousands of them. Most of them were smoked and pickled for winter use.

The invention of the breach loading shotguns, autos, and airplanes have made our feathered friends seek other fields for food, rest and nesting and I presume that in the next century there will only be mounted specimens in museums to show what at one time gave plenty of food for all who cared to spend a few hours in securing enough for their own larders, and without the extermination of all our feathered friends.

The wood duck, the prettiest plumed of all North America ducks, are almost extinct. The last I have observed are on a farm on Cypress Creek and have nested there for years. The owner of the farm protects them and will allow no shooting on his land.

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THE
OUTDOOR NATURE CLUB
OF HOUSTON, TEXAS

Organized, 1923

Affiliated with

National Association of Audubon Societies
Associated Outdoor Clubs of America

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MEMBERSHIP FEES

Annual Member	\$ 2.00
Associate Member	5.00
Life Member	50.00

Correspondence regarding this bulletin may be addressed to J. M. HEISER, JR.

1724 Kipling Street Houston, Texas

Regular meetings of the Club are held in the Public Library at 8 p. m. on the first and third Thursdays of the month. The first meeting is principally for business, committee reports, display of specimens and photographs, and informal discussion. An educational lecture, exhibition of nature films, or some other formal feature is usually planned for the second semi-monthly meeting.

Arrangements for Club outings are announced by the Outing Committee at the meeting preceding the trip, and usually in the newspapers. On special occasions notices are mailed out, but this provision can not always be made. These field trips are open to all members and to visitors who are willing to follow the few simple rules observed on all outings sponsored by the Club.

OBJECTS OF THE CLUB

To make stronger the bond of friendly understanding that exists among all lovers of Nature.

To study our local flora and fauna and work for the preservation of all useful and interesting forms.

To co-operate with other societies throughout the land in the work of conservation and observation.

To encourage Nature study, tree planting, and appreciation and protection of wild life among children and adults.

To encourage hiking and interest in the outdoors as a source of health and inspiration.

The number and character of field trips arranged each season depend upon the enthusiasm and energy of each member interested. In the meantime, hikes and motor trips will be planned at our semi-monthly meetings, according to the wishes of those attending.

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where the earth had been entered. As the other caterpillars grew to maturity they were similarly placed until seven had been hand fed and had disappeared completely.

So after many days of infinite care and toil upon the part of the lowly caterpillar we find its work finished. A marvelous tomb, with a design and finish that challenges the artisans among men. They have builded a sepulcher that is secure against the rigors of winter, and will survive the elements of time, assured that spring will find them with a new body suited to the flowers and to the song birds and the other works of nature that inevitably come forth with them in season.

About September first the box was deposited in the garage, when occasionally during the winter I sprinkled my grave yard to provide the moisture I thought necessary and which would have been provided, had the subjects been left to their own devices outside.

About Christmas time, after the chrysalis were four months old, I dug down into the box to explore the winter home of the occupants, where I found a smooth round hole, wondrously finished, one and one-half inches in diameter, containing a brown looking, inanimate looking object, which was the wax coffin of the once green caterpillar, now silently waiting for the resurrection. I examined the contents of the cocoon and found only a lump of matter, almost colorless and about the consistency of soft putty, and I wondered how, out of this shapeless mass, could evolve the symmetrical form and the variegated colors of the mature moth. I decided this was beyond my powers of analysis, and would justify no further study, except as perhaps a gentle form of mental gymnastics. With this done, the mausoleum was put back in place to await the natural birth this same immutable law had destined to bring forth. No stir or sound was noticed in the quiet tomb until the following May, nearly eight months since the subjects entombed themselves as caterpillars.

Along with the night flowers that were blooming in the darkness, there came out within a few days of each other six beautiful moths, completing their life cycle on schedule time, as had countless others of their kind.

As I looked out after viewing these new born children of the air, there was clinging the same creeping vine as the

year before with its new leaves, ready to furnish food as it had for the parents who gave them birth.

So we released the captives to go out into the dusk of the evening. With an abiding faith they winged their way, sipping nectar from the flowers and listening to the love calls and lullabies of their mates.

And while we observed the mechanisms of these chemical laboratories and manufacturing plants, and took notice of their architectural and engineering feats, the processes only served to further impress us with the futility of prying too far, and with the profound mystery surrounding it all—instinct so they say—and we ask where does instinct leave off and intelligence begin?

This brief history of the Sphinx moth is largely the story of all the Lepidoptera family from the egg to the mature moth or butterfly. Some, like the Sphinx, return to mother earth when the summer has ended and others spin silken cocoons which they attach to trees or other suitable places above the ground.

There is always something new and fascinating in the study of this life cycle, the ingenious ways employed in depositing their eggs and in the artful ways of covering and concealing them for protection, and the many different sizes, colors and habits of the caterpillars, the amazing designs and expert workmanship in the construction of their winter homes and finally the miraculous change.

It is perhaps in the quiet-going caterpillar at the end that intrigues the observer most, so sure of where they are going and unafraid are they, so positive that all is well, so oblivious of the passing days. They ask no questions; they seek no advice; but as serene as the flow of the years, without whim or caprice, they go about spinning their silken cocoons, or moulding their wax shroud, having no fear of evil along the way, or doubting the wisdom of their destiny.

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Dr. G. A. Hinnen of Cincinnati, Ohio, was the first member of the Outdoor Nature Club from outside the state of Texas. We continue to hear of his illustrated nature lectures and of the curious animal pets of the Hinnen family. Dr. Hinnen is one of those busy people who, nevertheless, find time to enjoy a fascinating hobby and do useful work beyond the demands of his profession. The Hinnens are good friends of Mrs. M. K. Cox, of Houston, who has entertained the Club with her nature and travel moving pictures on several occasions.

J.M.H.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

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Outing: C. H. Kiefner, 2143 Sul Ross, 428 Esperson Bldg., C. 1696.

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Art: Miss Tillie Schmidt, 2359 Shepherd Drive, H. 6915.

Pictures: Miss Edith James, 3003 Travis, Kress Bldg., H. 0875.

Membership: Miss Erna Giesecke, 1509 Courtlandt, V. 21188.

Field Committee

Bacteriology: Rex D. Frazier, 2602 Isabella, 1 Main Street, H. 6179.

Birds: Miss Mabel Cassell, Public Schools, Great Southern Life Bldg.

Conchology: Mr. Walter Westgate, 1015 Oliver, P. 5846.

Fish: Bud A. Randolph, 24 Waugh Drive, T. 0668.

Astronomy: L. H. Daingerfield, U. S. Weather Bureau, C. 6919.

Geology: Kenneth Hartley, Geological Department of Humble Co., F. 3121.

Taxidermy: Parham Haddon, 1110 Courtlandt, T. 8733.

Flowers: S. J. Mitchell, Brazos Hotel.

Animals: Hans Nagel, Hermann Park Zoo, H. 0568.

Galveston: A calm day, when weary strings of cloud droop and brood over melancholy water, and in the distance, a fairy veil.

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The robin is the symbol of youth. He belongs to the homestead. With the hubbub, the chirps and squeals, there is the same quality of "cher-r-up" and "ske-e-eel."

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The bat is an ill-formed "off-spring of satan," a child of the night, "neither bird nor beast." Like a bad conscience, this little "black shadow of darkness" becomes partly awake before it risks the open. Their high pitched squeaking like filing on slender glass rods, grating on thin sheets of tempered steel or sandpapering fine taut wires, gives a rasping sensation that preys upon sensitive nerves.

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"By sleepy waters—the camp-fire glows—and the world forgot" Chocolate Bayou is a lazy, meandering succession of tranquil charms, an epitome of inconsequent rambling.

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The cry of the young raccoon is weak and pitiful, suggesting the cry of a baby, but the whistle of an old coon is weird and unearthly suggesting the trembly, nerve-wracking call of a screech owl.

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What Our Hikers See

Mid-February Spring: A woods misty with Spanish moss—tree tops aglint with yellow jasmine. A flush of red against the gray moss—maples astir, timid catkins stealing out, bits of sky blue mid dead leaves.—Camp Bratton.

Early April and Bluebonnet Time—Rolling fields knee deep in bluebonnets. Woods—looking through them; it might be a Swiss lake lying low in the distance—a bluebonnet field! A road lined with bluebonnets disappearing, blending with the blue of the low hills and sky. The yaupon and haw in blossom. Indian paint brush boldly stalking among the bluebonnets.—Six Miles from Navasota.

October—A winding bayou; following a trail—natural springs—jutting sandstone ledges. Clumps of red lobelia and its less conspicuous relative, the blue ageratum and wild petunia. Sycamore trees streaking the woods with high lights. The brilliant green of the wild peach.—Memorial Park.

Mid December—Many bare trees slightly veiled with swaying moss. Brilliant greens of the giant magnolia, the wild peach, the bay trees—the holly, yaupon and smilax. A bit of coloring—the sweet gum a deep wine color—the red maple, some sumac. The red haw, the lovely lavender of the Spanish mulberry—the fire bush. The ruby crowned kinglet and kingfisher are about—no birds in the heron rookery. Three snakes captured—one a moccasin.—San Jacinto River.

Monthly hikes the first Sunday after the first meeting of the month. For information see Outing Committee.

One of the most practical and effective methods of fostering public interest in roadside beautification and the preservation of scenic assets is that adopted by the Daughters of the American Revolution of Texas. They are urging the passage of a Legislative Act which will make illegal and provide penalties for the removal or destruction of plants or vegetation from any property without the land owner's written consent. Until such a law is secured no owner of outlying acreage is justified in taking measures to protect or enhance the natural beauty of his property. Other states, aware of the value of their roadside scenery, have already enacted such legislation. The Daughters of the American Revolution have the whole-hearted cooperation of the Outdoor Nature Club in this constructive effort.

JmH

"Chick-chick, chuck-chuck, chee-ee-ee-ee-ee, chuck-chee, eke-eke-ee." The black-birds command attention. A wonderful medley of chirps and trills and calls and squawks may be heard above the roar and clatter of the city streets, like a steam calliope in an old-fashioned circus.

* * *

The naturalist is not paid in money. His is a secret and divine compensation—the fascination of his study. For him the skies are a little bluer and the flowers are a little fairer; nature is more opulent and open-handed; intimate knowledge brings an appreciation for delicate shades and elusive tints.

"Limping along in the blistering heat, Where the sand is too hot for the soles of your feet—
A horned toad."

Strange are the adaptations of the "toad-lizard." A flat, dry, horny and spiny toad-like, lizard, entirely harmless, but suggesting some kind of a monster of the dragon type, attains a high place in the folklore and literature of every race of people who have lived in the arid regions of Texas, New Mexico and California.

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Dr. Frank R. Oastler and Alden H. Hadley, of the National Association Audubon Societies, made a brief stop in Houston after a visit to Vingtune Island on June 25th. They were enthusiastic about the merits of Vingtune as a sanctuary for the roseate spoonbills and other interesting species of birds nesting there, and declared that Texans should spare no effort until the area is made into a permanent, inviolate preserve.

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Some lasting recollections of our 1931 activities: The bluebonnet trip in March, acres of glorious wild flowers near Navasota, and the hospitality of Grace Keeland and her folks. Azaleas, and the April bird chorus about "Pine Knot," Beaumont gathering spot of the Hooks' outdoor clan. Hundreds of wing-weary spring migrants of colorful plumage coming in from across the Gulf of Mexico at High Island. Our annual watermelon feast in midsummer on the Second National roof, with J. W. Stiles the master of ceremonies. Um-yum! Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson's visit—his twinkling eyes, reminiscences of interesting experiences and personalities, and energy plus. Moonlight on the bay, viewed from the porch of the Beazley bayshore home or from "Miss Tillie" Schmidt's "Sunny Hut." Hikes in the rain, and in the sleet, bundled up.

JmH