

GENERAL NOTES

SPHINX LUSCITOSA (SPHINGIDAE) FEEDING ON DECAYED FISH

On 20 June 1976, I observed a male *Sphinx luscitiosa* Clemens feeding on a decomposing sucker (*Catostomus* sp.) near the bank of the North Branch of the Au Sable River, Otsego Co., Michigan. I was collecting *Euphyes bimacula* (Grote & Robinson) in a stand of narrow-leaf sedges, *Carex stricta* Lam., near the river when I observed the *S. luscitiosa* busily feeding on the fish, which apparently had been tossed into the sedges by a fisherman. The fish measured ca. 8 in. in length, had a pronounced odor of decay, and was nearly covered with flies and maggots. When I detected the odor, my attention was drawn to the fish because of the fluttering movement of the sphinx, which was sitting on the side of the fish with its proboscis inserted into a hole in the skin. It took a few seconds to confirm the identity of the sphinx, because of the fluttering action, before carefully placing my net over the entire fish—flies and all! I thought the sphinx would fly immediately up into my net where it could be bottled easily with a killing jar. Much to my chagrin, the sphinx simply refused to budge from its feeding! I then placed my killing jar over the sphinx and removed it from its feeding site. The incident occurred at 1130 EST under a clear sky, with a temperature of ca. 75° F.

This sphinx is generally considered to be a scarce species throughout the state, although it is taken more often in northern counties. This was the second specimen that I have taken in 20 years of active collecting in Otsego Co. Most previous Michigan records of this sphinx represent specimens collected at night, usually at lights. Warczynski (pers. comm.) reported taking a female *S. luscitiosa* feeding on Common Milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca* L., during the day in Roscommon Co. Newman (pers. comm.) encountered several males buzzing him at 2025 EST on three consecutive days as he finished a bait trail for moths in Oscoda Co. There have been many reports of various species of butterflies feeding on carrion, but few of moths. Payne & King (1969, J. Lepid. Soc. 23: 191–195) report that *Amphion nesus* Cramer was attracted to pig carrion in late afternoon, before sunset, in South Carolina. Their observations indicate that *A. nesus* was a common visitor to pig carrion, some in water and some placed in a tree 4 ft above ground. Fleming (1970, Mich. Ent. 3: 17–23) reports *Sphecodina abbotti* (Swainson) and *A. nesus* feeding on dog carcasses in advanced decay, and he mentioned *S. abbotti* coming to human feces. Remington (1947, Lepid. News 1: 34) cited an observation by V. Nabokov of *Catocala fraxini* (L.) feeding on a dead fish in Russia. Hodges (*in* Dominick et al. 1971, The moths of America north of Mexico, fasc. 21, Sphingoidea) makes no reference of Sphingidae feeding on carrion or other types of foul bait. My field experiences with Michigan Sphingidae indicate a strong preference to various wild nectar sources and, to some degree, fermented fruit-beer-molasses bait.

My observation may have been a chance behavior of this sphinx, or it might indicate that *S. luscitiosa* and possibly other *Sphinx* species, occasionally feed on carrion. This "bait" may be something for other collectors to consider, especially if they are trying to obtain their first *S. luscitiosa*!

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