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REPEATED INTERGENERIC ATTRACTION BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND EUROPEAN SILKMOTHS (SATURNIIDAE)

Attraction of one species of saturniid by another in the same genus is well-known, particularly with regard to the various members of *Hyalophora*, *Callosamia*, and *Samia*. Kershaw (1953, Ent. Rec. J. Var. 65: 219-220) reports an intergeneric attraction of *Phragmatobia fuliginosa* L. males to a *Panaxia dominula* L. female, both British arctiids. Dominick (1974, J. Lepid. Soc. 28: 176) even records an interfamilial attraction involving *Amphion nessus* (Cramer) (Sphingidae) males and an *Anisota virginienis pellucida* (J. E. Smith) (Citheroniidae) female. However, the purpose of this note is to record an intergeneric attraction between two saturniids which do not normally meet in nature.

For several years I have been rearing *Saturnia pyri* Denis & Schiffermuller, from France, for study purposes. Since these moths normally emerge during the first half of May in this area, a time when most of our native saturniids are still in hibernation, I was quite surprised to discover several large moths trying to gain entrance to our screened porch on 8 May 1976, at 0130 EST. Upon allowing one to enter and discovering that it was a male *Antheraea polyphemus* Cramer, I felt certain it would seek out a female of the same species, which I had somehow failed to notice. Instead, it flew directly to a transmitting female *pyri* and tried unsuccessfully to effect copulation. Since that first experience, I have had numerous wild *polyphemus* males attracted to other transmitting *pyri* females each year. The males are determined in their efforts to mate and the females quietly submit to the incessant scratching and poking of the males for as long as 20 min before one or the other breaks off contact. None of these encounters has produced a successful union since the male *polyphemus* seems unable to clasp the abdomen of the female *pyri*.

As the male *polyphemus* attempts copulation, the female *pyri* retracts her ovipositor, making the end of her abdomen smooth with no protrusions on which to get a grip. The male's abdomen repeatedly slides from side to side without being able to "lock on." Visually, male *pyri* claspers appear to be larger than male *polyphemus* claspers. It's possible that a male *pyri* may be able to clasp the last segment of the female's abdomen and by applying pressure, force the female to extrude her ovipositor. The male *polyphemus*, on the other hand, with smaller claspers and inability to grip the female's abdomen, cannot apply pressure and mating attempts must necessarily fail.

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