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DIURNAL NECTARING BY A *CATOCALA* MOTH (NOCTUIDAE)

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At about 1200 h on 4 August 1988, I was surprised to see a *Catocala* moth (Noctuidae) nectaring on Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop.; Asteraceae) at the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment, 8 km south of Lac du Bonnet, Manitoba. The temperature was about 21°C, with a slightly hazy sun and a light north wind. After feeding for a few minutes, the moth flew to rest on the trunk of a cultivated poplar (*Populus* sp.; Salicaceae).

I identified the moth as *C. briseis* W. H. Edwards, based on illustrations in texts by C. V. Covell, Jr. (1984, A field guide to the moths of eastern North America, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 496 pp.), W. J. Holland (1903, The moth book, 1968 reprint by Dover Publications, New York, 479 pp.), and T. D. Sargent (1976, Legion of night: The underwing moths, Univ. of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 222 pp.). The most distinctive features were an irregular whitish band between the postmedian and subterminal lines on the dorsal surface of the mainly blackish forewing, and a smaller whitish patch between this band and the body. The hindwing was boldly banded with black and scarlet above, and more subdued below. The only similar species, *C. grotiana* Bailey, is apparently unknown in Manitoba (D. C. Hawks and R. R. Hooper pers. comm.).

Catocala moths are largely nocturnal, and are usually observed by day only if disturbed (Sargent *op. cit.*). It is possible that this individual had been flushed by a predator, and was subsequently attracted to the thistle flower before finding a new resting place. It may well, however, have initiated feeding behavior without such stimulus. Diurnal feeding has previously been observed in several *Catocala* species at "sugar" patches left over from prior baiting trips (T. D. Sargent pers. comm.).

Although adults of many *Catocala* species visit bait readily (Sargent *op. cit.*), little is known about their natural feeding habits. Sargent cites two species taken while nectaring at night, both by M. C. Nielson in Michigan: *C. unijuga* Walker at milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.; Asclepiadaceae) and joe-pye-weed (*Eupatorium* sp.; Asteraceae), and *C. mira* Grote at wild bergamot (*Monarda* sp.; Lamiaceae). In Manitoba and elsewhere, Canada thistle is a favored nectar source for several butterflies (Opler, P. A. & G. O. Krizek 1984, Butterflies east of the Great Plains, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, Baltimore, 294 pp.).

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