

GLOVER'S SILKMOTH, *HYALOPHORA GLOVERI*
(STRECKER)(LEPIDOPTERA: SATURNIIDAE), NEW TO BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Two rather common species of giant silkmoths of the subfamily Saturniinae (Lepidoptera: Saturniidae) occur in southern British Columbia. Both species, the Polyphemus Moth (*Antheraea polyphemus* [Cramer]) and the Ceanothus Silkmoth (*Hyalophora euryalis* [Boisduval]) are large and spectacular, and evoke comment from anyone who sees them. Both range northwards to at least the central Cariboo region. Three other striking species of the subfamily occur in the Peace River district of Alberta, but these moths, the Cecropia Moth (*Hyalophora cecropia* [Linnaeus]), the Columbia Silkmoth (*H. columbia* [S.I. Smith]), and Glover's Silkmoth (*H. gloveri* [Strecker]) have never been reported from British Columbia. Therefore, it was a surprise when a specimen of *H. gloveri* was recently captured and sent to us from the Peace River district of the province.

A female *H. gloveri* (Fig. 1) was discovered by Carolyn and Terry Wood and their family on the northeast shore of Charlie Lake near Fort St. John. The moth was clinging to a branch of a small aspen tree (*Populus tremuloides* Michx.) about 2.5 m from the water's edge on 22 May 1989 at 20:00 h (MDT). The moth's wings were expanded, but the insect had evidently only recently emerged; there were fluid stains on the branch below the moth and its red colour faded to brown as it dried. The cocoon from which the insect had emerged was not found, although a second, intact one was attached to the branch near the perching moth. This cocoon is 5 x 2.5 x 2.5 cm. According to Carolyn Wood (*in litt.* 26 May 1989) none of the local residents, when questioned, had ever seen a similar moth in the area before.

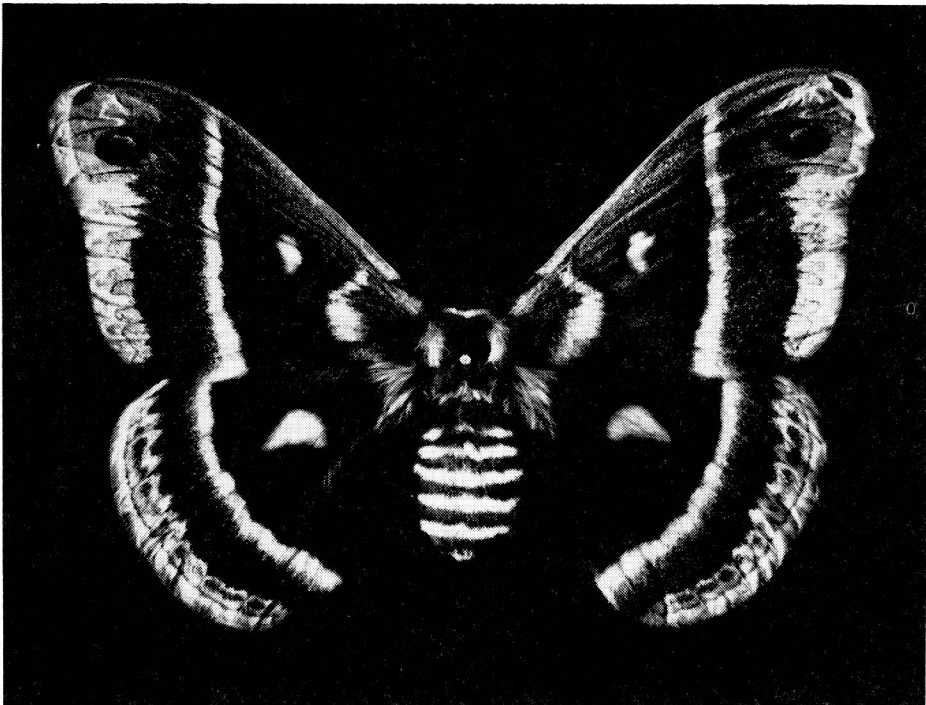


Figure 1. *Hyalophora gloveri* (Strecker), female. Charlie Lake, Fort St. John, B.C., 22 May 1989.

H. gloveri larvae have been recorded feeding on silverberry (*Eleagnus argentea* Pursh) and willows (*Salix* spp.) in Canada. In the United States the species has been reared on willows, alder (*Alnus* spp.) wild currant (*Ribes* spp.), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana* L.), and buffaloberry (*Shepherdia* spp.) (Ferguson 1972). The details of larval coloration are apparently geographically variable (Ferguson 1972), but in general the mature larvae are very large, hairless, green caterpillars. Along both sides of the back the larva has prominent yellow tubercles with black bristles, and along the sides there are rows of white tubercles with black bristles. The legs and prolegs are yellow (Packard 1914, plates 8-9).

H. gloveri occurs from the United States-Mexican border north along the Rocky Mountains to Alberta, and east through southern Saskatchewan to Manitoba (Ferguson 1972). There is a specimen in the Canadian National Collection (Agriculture Canada, Ottawa) from Hay River, NWT (D. Lafontaine, pers. comm.). Ferguson (1972) gives the northern limits of the range in Alberta as about 60 miles northwest of Edmonton, but both *H. gloveri* and *H. columbia* have been collected in the Peace River district of Alberta by E.M. Pike (pers. comm.). In addition, *H. cecropia* has been collected at Beaverlodge in the same area (Ferguson 1972). Further investigation in the Peace River district of British Columbia might reveal populations of *H. columbia* and *H. cecropia*. The former feeds on eastern larch or tamarack (*Larix laricina* [Du Roi] K. Koch); the latter eats various broadleaved plants such as Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo* L.), wild cherries (*Prunus* spp.), and willows (*Salix* spp.). Discovery of these two moths in British Columbia, in addition to the present report of *H. gloveri*, would raise the province's silkmoth fauna to five species.

The specimen of *H. gloveri* is deposited in the collection of the Royal B.C. Museum, Victoria.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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