

Large and unusual Insects Found in Virginia

By Eric Day, Entomology Department, Virginia Tech

Several different insects are found in Virginia that cause concern due to their large size and coloration. They are for the most part harmless and just curiosities of nature.



Dobsonflies, *Corydalus cornutus*, are found near rivers and streams and are attracted to lights at night. The immature stage of this insect is called the hellgrammite and is a favorite for fish bait. The wingspan is 2 to 4 inches and the males have large but harmless mandibles that extend forward. The females have smaller mandibles that can give a painful bite. Image Citation: Kansas Department of Agriculture Archive, Bugwood.org



Eastern Hercules beetles, *Dynastes tityus*, are found near lights as well and can be over 2 inches long. The males have projections on the head and thorax that are used to knock other

males off of trees but are harmless otherwise. The female beetle lacks the horns. The immature stage is a large white grub found inside oak and locust trees with heart-rot. Image Citation: Allen Bridgman, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Bugwood.org



Luna moths, *Actias luna*, are large green moths that are found near houses, often on a screen or wall near a porch light. The moth can have a wingspan of up to 4 inches. The immature stage,

which is a large caterpillar, is found on a variety of hardwood trees feeding on leaves. Moth image Citation: Arnold T. Drooz, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org and Larva image Citation: Lance S. Risley, William Paterson University, Bugwood.org



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Cecropia moths, *Hyalophora cecropia*, are also large like the Luna moth with a wingspan of up to 4 inches. Also attracted to porch lights, they are often found the next morning. The larvae, caterpillars, feed on hardwood trees leaves. Image Citation: Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Forestry Archive, Bugwood.org, larva Image Citation: North Carolina Forest Service Archive, Bugwood.org



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Eyed click beetles, *Alaus oculatus*, have a pattern on their thorax that resembles eyespots and is thought to be a defense from birds. The grub stage lives in rotting trees and is harmless. Image Citation: Whitney Cranshaw, Bugwood.org



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Dragonflies can have a wingspan of 3-4 inches and are found near water mostly, but can also at times be found in fields and woods. Adults feed on insects they capture in flight and males fight for the best sites near a pond. Also known in folklore as "snake doctors". Image Citation: Mohammed El Damir, Pest Management, Bugwood.org

For more unusual insects, see also the Virginia Cooperative Extension fact sheets on Velvet Ants, Giant Resin Bee, and the Wheel Bug.



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