

# Kentucky Lepidopterist

Newsletter of the Society of Kentucky Lepidopterists

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## THE SOCIETY OF KENTUCKY LEPIDOPTERISTS

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Richard Henderson - 2011\*  
James Adams - 2012\*  
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#### THE SOCIETY OF KENTUCKY

LEPIDOPTERISTS is open to anyone with an interest in the Lepidoptera of the State of Kentucky. Membership dues are annual: \$12.00. Dues sent to the Treasurer: Les Ferge, 7119 Hubbard Avenue, Middleton, WI 53562

## Western Kentucky Field Trip 10-12 Sept. 2010

Our annual September field meeting has a new home this year! Bill and Nancy Black's son David has offered the use of his hunting lodge in Ballard County (directions below) as the headquarters for this year's meeting. The activities will start Friday night at the lodge with dinner provided at 6:30 pm CDT. Anyone wishing to set out light traps or bait traps before the festivities can do so anywhere on the nearby Ballard County WMA (no permit required). There will be a charge of \$45 per person per night at this beautiful lodge, and breakfast will be provided on both Saturday and Sunday. It is requested that attendees notify Gerald Burnett, [gdburnett@brtc.net](mailto:gdburnett@brtc.net) or call 270-559-8214 as soon as possible to let us know exactly how many to expect at the lodge. The lodge can be viewed online by going to [www.thefowlerfarm.com](http://www.thefowlerfarm.com). The Fowler Farm accommodates up to 16 duck and goose hunters in sleeping rooms with bunk beds, divided among (4) bunk rooms and (4) bathrooms.

Saturday morning, we will meet at the lodge at 8:00 am CDT for breakfast and depart for the field at 9:00 am. Plan on sack lunches or snacks during the day. We will spend some time on the Ballard WMA collecting butterflies and tapping trees for Catocala. The rest of the day will be spent looking for butterflies and suitable light trap locations in the surrounding counties. We will stop on the road for an evening meal before heading back to the lodge for the night.

Sunday morning we will meet at the lodge again at the same times, and after breakfast the group will collect and sort through their light traps before ultimately ending up in Fulton County downstream from the city of Hickman to check the Red-Spotted Purple/Viceroy Hybridization Hot Spot next to the Bunge Corporation on the Mississippi River. A number of bait traps and bait pots will be set out several days prior to the meeting. As of this writing, it has been a great year for butterflies, especially Red Spotted Purple (*Limenitis arthemis astyanax*) and Viceroy's (*Limenitis archippus*). We may get lucky and find a hybrid this year.

Below are the directions to the Lodge and a map is enclosed. The map is from Pages 58/59 of the DeLOMRE Kentucky Gazetteer. Also, if you use a Garmin, it will take you to the Lodge on a different set of roads. The directions below will be marked with the Society Logo and arrows to point the way. If you get lost, contact Gerald Burnett: Cell: 270-559-8214.

### Directions to The Fowler Farm:

- 1.) Turn left at bottom of ramp.
- 2.) Continue on Route # 305 until reaching the "Y" at Pugh's Midway.
- 3.) Take right Y on Route # 358.
- 4.) Continue to stop sign in Grahamville.
- 5.) Turn right at stop sign.
- 6.) Turn left on next road (still Route # 358).
- 7.) Travel approximately 10 miles to stop sign (careful of the curves).
- 8.) Go straight at stop sign (toward big transmitter tower).
- 9.) After passing tower go through 2 curves.
- 10.) New Hope Church Lane will be on the left. Turn left.
- 11.) Go past church through gate to lodge.

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## Searching the Mississippi River Bank for Tiger Beetles and Finding a New State Record Moth

by

**Loran Gibson & Gerald Burnett**

In late June of 2009, Gerald Burnett collected one individual of the Ghost Tiger Beetle (Coleoptera, Cicindelidae) *Ellipsoptera lepida* (Dejean) in his "freezer light trap", an amazing apparatus that was located on the porch of a building on the Doug Travis Wildlife Management Area in Carlisle County, KY. This was the second known occurrence of this species from Kentucky, the first was reported from Henderson County in the 1920s! Charles Wright identified the specimen for Gerald during the Society of Kentucky Lepidopterists' September field trip to western KY last year. Those of us who maintain an interest in tiger beetles were excited about Gerald's find and agreed to meet along the Mississippi River in June of 2010 to search for more Ghost Tiger Beetles.

The Kentucky Cicindelists, as we have been calling ourselves, is an off shoot group of the Society of

Kentucky Lepidopterists. Our interests in tiger beetles emerged a few years ago out of a need to better understand the tiger beetle fauna of Kentucky. Charles Wright has been collecting and studying Kentucky beetles for many years. Ellis Lauder milk has a professional interest as the Invertebrate Specialist for the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission. The remaining enthusiasts, Bill Black, Gerald Burnett, Tony Merkle and I have a general interest in all insects and have been lucky enough to collect tiger beetle data over the years pertinent to a statewide survey of the group. Members Richard Henderson and Jonathan Smith are also Cicindelophiles.

Currently, 22 species of tiger beetles are known from Kentucky. Four of these, including Gerald's record above are recent finds which will be reported in an up-coming issue of the scientific journal *Cicindela*. We continue to discover and record new county records for many of our 22 species and we are maintaining collections and creating data files for the family.

One frustrating aspect of our survey has been finding modern records of species recorded from Kentucky in the past. Through November of 2009 we had succeeded in collecting specimens or locating museum specimens of 19 of the 22 species attributed to Kentucky. Valid records for the Common Claybank Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela limbalis*), the Ant-like Tiger Beetle (*Cylindera cursitans*) and the Sandy Stream Tiger Beetle (*Ellipsoptera macra*) have remained illusive. Amazingly, during the November meeting of the Society of Kentucky Lepidopterists at University of Kentucky last year, Charles Wright opened a Schmidt Box of unidentified insects and found two Hopkins County, KY specimens of the Ant-like Tiger Beetle, collected in June, 1974. Here were specimens of a rare species, historically attributed to Kentucky, that we had not been able to locate. This was an exciting discovery!

Later that winter, I found a website on the World Wide Web entitled *Beetles in the Bush*, authored by Ted MacCrae, a professional entomologist in Missouri. Ted provided information on his website about the discovery of the Ant-like Tiger Beetle in Mississippi County, Missouri. This site is just a river's width away from Kentucky! He included a description of the habitat, which sounded just like an area in Carlisle County, KY known as Sandy Branch. Here was another reason to visit the Mississippi River bank in June of 2010.

Coordinating a field trip for a group of busy people during June was not easy, but we were finally able to agree that our tiger beetle hunt would begin on Monday, 28 June 2010. Ellis Lauder milk and Gerald Burnett were first to arrive, so Gerald provided the following report on the first day's activities.

The date was 28 June 2010 and the first meeting of the Mississippi River Tiger Beetle Hunt was about to get underway with Ellis Lauder milk of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission meeting me (Gerald Burnett) on Fish Lake Road in Carlisle County, Kentucky. We were starting a day earlier than the rest of the participants since most could not make it until 29 June.

Ellis wanted to photograph a couple of rare species of dragonflies, the Stillwater Clubtail (*Arigomphus lentulus*) and the Bayou Clubtail (*A. maxwelli*). He was also after a third closely related species, the Jade Clubtail (*A. submedianus*), but this species is more common and less wary than the other two species. Even so, it was still hard to approach without making it fly. Ellis met me at Fish Lake Bridge and we were both disappointed to find water higher than we expected. This changed the whole dynamic of where to look for the dragonflies so we just wandered up and down the road keeping our eyes out for them. We did see several suspect insects and Ellis was even able to photograph a few but in a recent e-mail he stated it is safe to say that we saw plenty of Jade Clubtails and leave it at that.

We were interrupted by a brief downpour of rain and by a few of the local residents traveling up and down the road, so we decided to search for suitable spots to put out light traps for tiger beetles. Ellis was looking for the Ghost Tiger Beetle (*Ellipsoptera lepida*) and the Sandy Stream Tiger Beetle (*E. macra*) to come to his light traps and also for suitable habitat to locate the flightless Ant-like Tiger Beetle (*Cylindera cursitans*). We were mainly searching for spots in the Sandy Branch area of Burkley Bottoms close to the Doug Travis WMA. We did manage to see individuals of the Bronzed Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela repanda*), the Punctured Tiger Beetle (*C. punctulata punctulata*), and the Coppery Tiger Beetle (*Ellipsoptera cuprascens*) although none of these were observed in great numbers. A chance meeting with the manager of the Doug Travis WMA led us to the spot where we would explore the next day for the Ant-like

Tiger Beetle which coincidentally happened to be the exact locale that Loran Gibson had already mentioned as habitat that he thought would be suitable for this insect. Just a note here for the lepidopterists, Ellis and I found and he photographed several groups of mud-puddling Zebra Swallowtails in this location which contained the largest numbers of this species I had ever seen (about 30-40 individuals).

It was about 4:30 CDST when we finally decided to set out light traps. We settled on the old Laketon boat ramp in Carlisle County which is no longer in use and is overgrown with vegetation for the first trap. We traveled south of the Doug Travis WMA into Hickman County to place the second trap on Drew Road overlooking the flooded Mississippi River Flood plains. Ellis was excited about this location since we could virtually see for miles from this bluff. We were both tired and hungry at this point and decided to end our day with a short trip to Arlington to try Luke's Restaurant, but it was not to be. They are closed on Mondays, so Luke's would have to wait one more day. We then decided to go our separate ways and meet up the following morning.

On Tuesday morning, 29 June, Ellis, Gerald, Bill Black, Charles Wright and I (Loran Gibson) met at the Days Inn in Paducah. We then drove to Laketon in Carlisle County to collect Ellis's light trap. From there, Ellis continued on to Drew Road to collect his second light trap while the remaining four continued on to Sandy Branch to search for the tiny, flightless, Ant-like Tiger Beetle.

Sandy Branch is an intermittent stream that flows west from the loess bluffs above the Mississippi River flood plain. Copious amounts of sand have been deposited along the course of the mostly dry streambed and during recent flooding, sand was deposited more widely in the under story of the flood plain. The river bottom forest that covers much of the flood plain west of Sandy Branch has many large Cottonwood, Silver Maple and Black Willow trees and the forest floor during the recent past was open, with little herbaceous plant growth. The under story plant layer was sparse and consisted mostly of Trumpet Creeper and Poison Ivy and was very similar to the Ant-like Tiger Beetle habitat described by Ted MacCrae for Mississippi County, Missouri. Unfortunately for us, ice storms during the winter of 2008 devastated the canopy of many forests in western KY, including this one.

Many tree limbs were found to be down and walking through the once open forest was now nearly impossible! With the canopy more open, we found that herbaceous plant growth, especially Stinging Nettle and Jewellweed was now proliferating on the forest floor! We made the assumption that changes in the forest under story would not impair the beetle we were searching for, if it occurred there, but tree limb debris and new herbaceous plant growth severely limited open areas where we could carry out a search. A couple of unproductive hours of searching there in June heat and humidity led us to abandon the forest to find food and drink. After lunch we began searching the under story of a Sycamore tree plantation on the north side of Sandy Branch. The trees were old enough to provide shade and the forest floor was open and sandy. On the most open areas were plants of Trumpet Creeper and Poison Ivy. This seemed ideal for the beetle, but another hour of searching went by without success. By 1:30 p.m. Charles, Gerald and I were out exploring along the sandy road through the flood plain. As we walked back toward where Bill and Ellis were searching in the Sycamores, a little insect ran across the road in front of us and stopped under some small plants. We looked closer and found that we peering at our quarry! The little beetle was even smaller than I had expected. After recognizing it I attempted to capture it by covering it with a killing jar. I was very surprised at how quickly it eluded me. The object of our substantial efforts was seen and now had disappeared! Charles stayed behind to continue watching for the one that got away while Gerald and I went to relate the news to Bill and Ellis. When I told them that they were searching in the "wrong spot", they replied that the "wrong spot" had just produced an Ant-like Tiger Beetle and they had succeeded in capturing theirs! I was a bit embarrassed! Then the good natured controversy began as to who had discovered the first one! Ha! Soon another was discovered, but much additional searching produced no more.

Later in the afternoon, we began to make plans for night collecting. Light traps were set out on sandy areas of the Mississippi River bank. The water level of the river was high, so much of the sand we had hoped to sample was submerged. A couple of light traps were set on sand west of the Doug Travis Wildlife Management Area in hope of finding Ghost Tiger Beetles. I set another trap along the road to the field at Sandy Branch. We also set one light trap on the top of the loess bluff hoping to capture a *Catocala atocala*. Bill Black had captured one in a bait trap just a few days prior to our visit. Bill returned to

that location to set out bait traps again on this night. Charles drove south into Hickman County to set his trap.

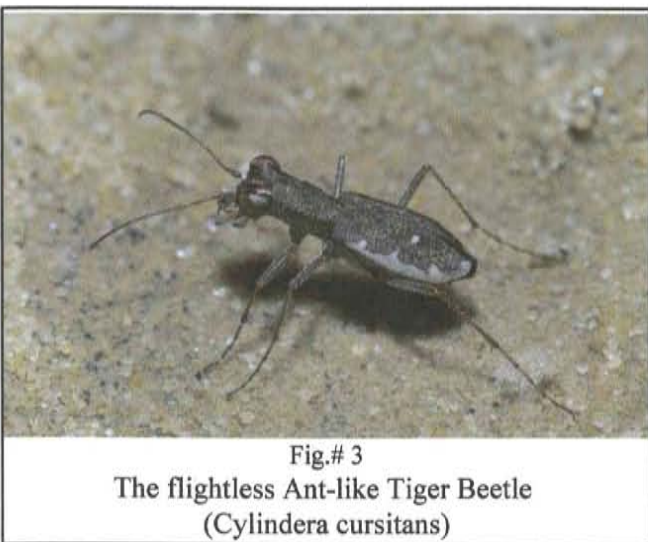
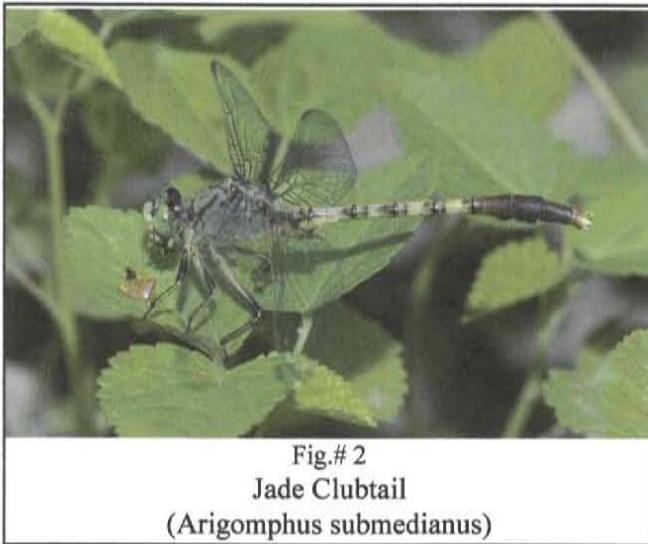
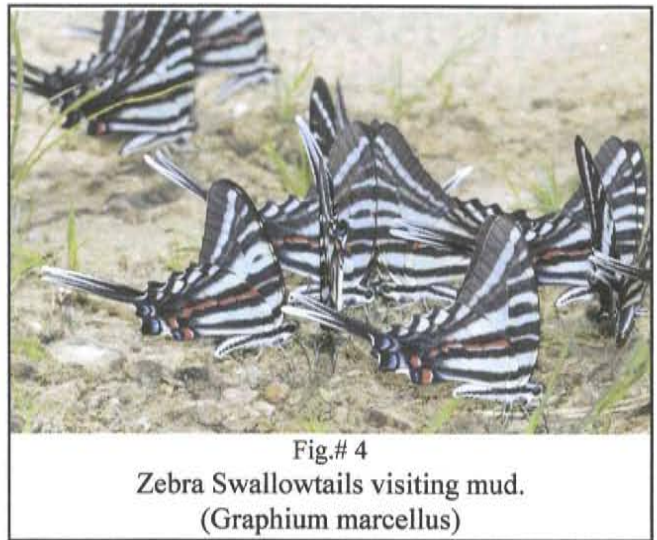
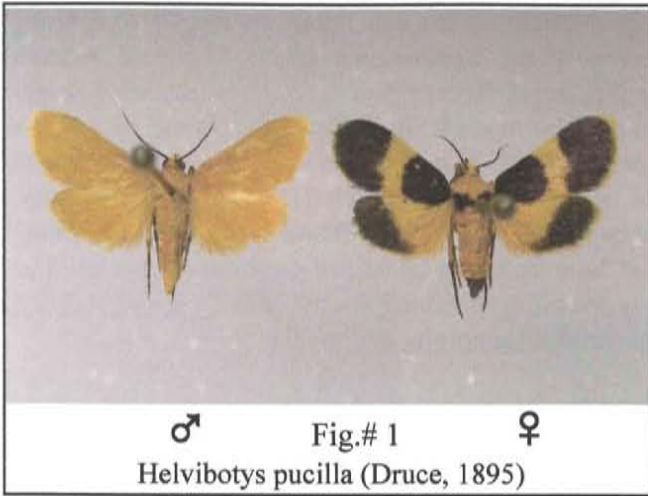
We agreed to meet for dinner at Luke's Restaurant in Arlington, KY. The place has become a tradition with us due to the luscious, inexpensive food, especially the catfish dinners and homemade pies! We stuffed ourselves once again!

On Wednesday morning, 30 June, we fanned out across Carlisle and Hickman Counties to pick up our traps. The river bank traps were searched eagerly for Ghost Tiger Beetles but none were found! All of the river bank traps had individuals of *Ellipsoptera cupracens*, a common riverbank tiger beetle, but no other species. No *Catocala atocala* were captured on the bluffs in light traps or bait traps.

Moths were well represented in the river bank traps. The diversity of Crambidae was remarkable. One trap west of the Doug Travis WMA had two males and a female of MONA 4984, *Helvibotys pucilla* (Druce, 1895). (Fig. 1) This pretty little dimorphic orange and black moth turned out to be the first known from KY! Sphingids were also found to be present in good diversity. One trap had White-lined Sphinx *Hyles lineata*, Plebian Sphinx *Paratraea plebeja*, Catalpa Sphinx *Ceratomia catalpae*, Waved sphinx *Ceratomia undulosa*, Hog Sphinx *Darapsa myron*, and Tersa Sphinx *Xylophanes tersa*.

Butterflies were very numerous, especially the Swallowtails. Zebra swallowtails *Eurytiders marcellus* were amazingly common and gorgeous with very long tails. *Nathalis iole* was already present in sandy fields. A total of 21 species of butterflies, mostly nymphalids, were recorded.

While some of us continued to sort through our light traps, Ellis returned to the Sycamore plantation and found a cooperative Ant-like Tiger Beetle to photograph. Securing good photos of this beetle from KY was another of our goals for this trip. Ellis accomplished that admirably! Charles captured one more individual bringing the total collected during the trip to three. We were very happy with our records of Lepidoptera, Odonata, and Coleoptera. Unfortunately, the Ghost Tiger Beetle and the Sandy Stream Tiger Beetle were not found. Maybe there will be another "Mississippi River Tiger Beetle Hunt" next year.



Photograph Credits  
 Fig.#1 by Loran Gibson  
 Fig.# 2, 3, 4, 5 by Ellis laudermilk

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## MEETING & EVENT SCHEDULE FOR 2010

Late Summer Field Meeting, September 10, 11 & 12, 2010 in Western Kentucky. Trip Leaders: Gerald Burnett, Email: [gdburnett@brtc.net](mailto:gdburnett@brtc.net); Tel; 270-559-8214; Bill Black: [black8808@bellsouth.net](mailto:black8808@bellsouth.net); Tel: 270 -442-9578. Details of this field meeting on the front page of this Newsletter.

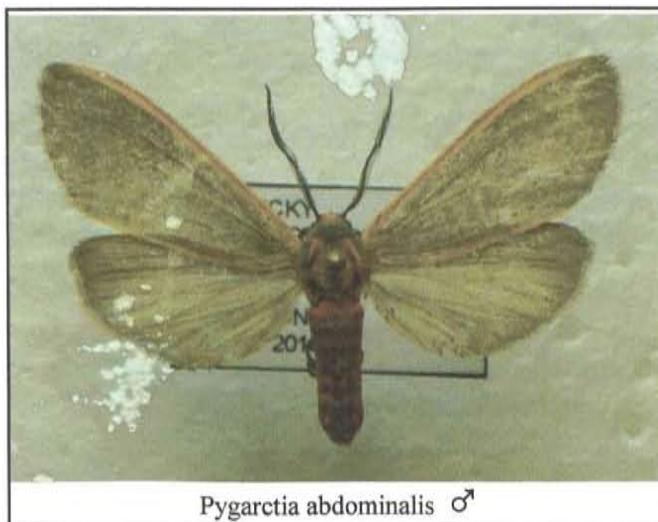
2010 Annual Meeting: November 19 & 20, 2010: University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

The meeting will be at the University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY. Friday and Saturday morning November 19 & 20, we will meet at the Insect Museum in the Animal pathology Building. Saturday afternoon we will use the Lecture Hall in the North Agriculture Building for the presentation of papers and the business meeting. Dr. Larry Gall will be the featured speaker. Dr. Gall will talk on the *Catocala* moths.

Make your plans to attend now. There will be additional information in the next Newsletter.

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## NEW STATE RECORD MOTH ABDOMINALIS PYGARCTIA



*Pygarctia abdominalis* ♂

Robert Oney of ECO Technology Consultants collected a single male of *Pygarctia abdominalis* on 15 May 2010 at Fort Campbell, Trigg County, Kentucky.

ECO Technology Consultants are conducting a year long survey of the Coleoptera on Fort Campbell in both Tennessee and Kentucky. Your Editor provided the Light Traps (Leptraps LLC) used to conduct the survey. As part of the sale I was to receive all the moths collected during the survey from both Tennessee and Kentucky. *Pygarctia abdominalis* was found in the May sampling. The June sampling contained no unusual species. The July sampling contained two males of *Cycnia inopinatus* and several *Eumorpha intermedia*.

I have been invited to participate in the September field work.

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## LEPIDOPTERISTS HUMOR



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## NEW MEMBERS

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## NEWSLETTER UP-DATE

The deadline for the next issue of the Newsletter is 22 September 2010. Do you have any photographs of butterflies and moths. Short articles or notes, or good humor. Send it to the Editor.