



Far left: A lighted sheet will attract a variety of moths at night. (Emilie Snell-Rood)

Top: *Nemoria mimosaria*, or white-fringed emerald.

Middle: *Actias luna*, or luna moth.

Left: *Eumorpha pandorus*, or sphinx moth. (all by Marcie O'Connor)

Fly by Night Fans

Birds and butterflies have inspired enthusiastic fans for years, but what about moths? They're winged, patterned, colorful and incredibly diverse, but they've never gotten much attention — until lately. July 20 to 28 has been named National Moth Week this year. Ecologists and wildlife watchers around the globe will be hosting activities to introduce people to the beauty, diversity and strangeness of moths.

Since the celebration was started in

2005 by the Friends of New Brunswick Environmental Commission it has spread worldwide. There is now a website, a Facebook page and several blogs devoted to the celebration and to moth-watching.

One Driftless Area expert is Marcie O'Connor, known as "the moth lady" to her friends. When her family bought a farm in Buffalo County, Wis., years ago, she took up restoring the prairie, started a blog about the process and began learning about the inhabitants of her land.

"First I learned about the birds and butterflies, then I started to learn about the moths," O'Connor recalled. "And that's where I've gotten stuck."

Every summer O'Connor stages "moth nights," in which she invites friends to come over and see what's flying after dark. She sets up a white screen and shines a black-light or mercury vapor light on it after dark. Moths are attracted first to a nearby yard light and then to the screen. It's not hard to attract moths, especially in July, August

and September, she said. The closer you are to wild lands, the more species you'll find. To share her enthusiasm, O'Connor maintains two websites devoted to moths and other insects.

Luna moths, hummingbird moths and sphinx moths are dramatic and easy to recognize. But there are thousands of others, many of which depend on river plants. The caterpillars of two moths — the cattail borer and the American lotus borer — spend part of their lives underwater dining on cattail or lotus roots. O'Connor wants to stage a moth-watch at a river site in late summer.

To find out who's sponsoring events near you, check out the National Moth Week website or call your local park or refuge. Or better yet, organize one yourself. ♪