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*Obedient Plant (Physostegia virginiana) A. Fraser*

October 2022

**SEEDLINGS**

# Wild Ones|Kalamazoo Area Chapter

What more substantial service to conservation than to practice it on one's own land?--Aldo Leopold



*Stiff Goldenrod (Solidago rigida) M. Luna*

Dear \*|FNAME|\*,

Autumn is considered a season of transformation. Yet as Quyen illuminates in her piece on raising Silk Moths, the natural world is in a near-constant state of metamorphosis. We celebrate this theme, echoed in our [October program](#) (not to be missed!) about the transformation of common yards into biodiverse landscapes.

With another season of growth behind us, I have the sense that many of you have stories to tell. How have you been promoting the use of natives in your communities? Our movement is strong, and our reach is wide - let's connect across organizations and neighborhoods to learn, share, empower and support one another! Tell me what you've been up to [here](#).

The results from the recent member survey are in! Thank you to everyone who participated and provided your valuable feedback. As an organization, we are always striving to serve you better.

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Elections are coming up in November! There are several openings as long-standing leaders begin to transition into more passive roles. If you, your friends, or family members are passionate about our mission please consider joining a committee. A membership coordinator is especially needed - it is you? [More info](#)

Enjoy these golden days,

**Mel Luna**

*Editor*

*Preying Mantis hidden among the  
Hoary Vervain (*Verbena strica*). M. Luna*



## **Panel Presentation:**

### **A Wealth of Experience Within KAWO**

**October 26, 7:00pm**

**Ruth Caputo, Mike Weiss, Marie Johnson**

Ever wonder how to defend new plants from critters? Or how to garden with a disability? Please [join us](#) as our panelists share their experiences gardening with natives. You will be given the opportunity to ask questions and add comments about your own experience as well. This is a new format for KAWO, and we hope you will enjoy it! Read more about the three panelists [here](#).



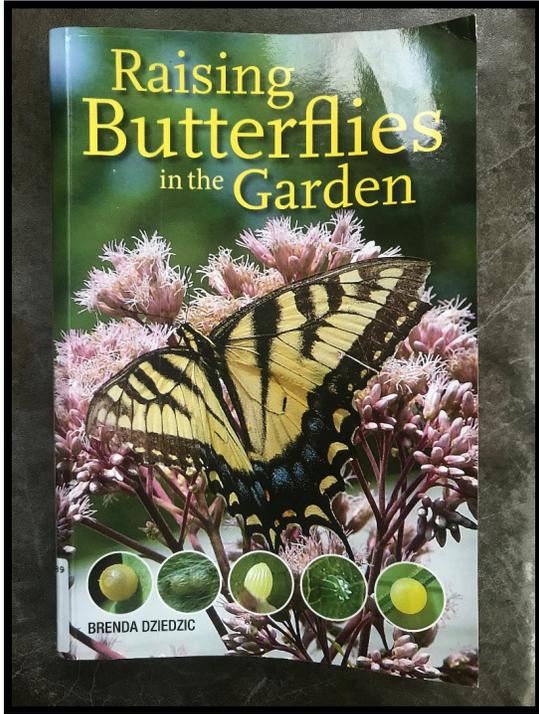
*Established Native Plant Garden A. Fraser*

## **A Silk Moth Story**

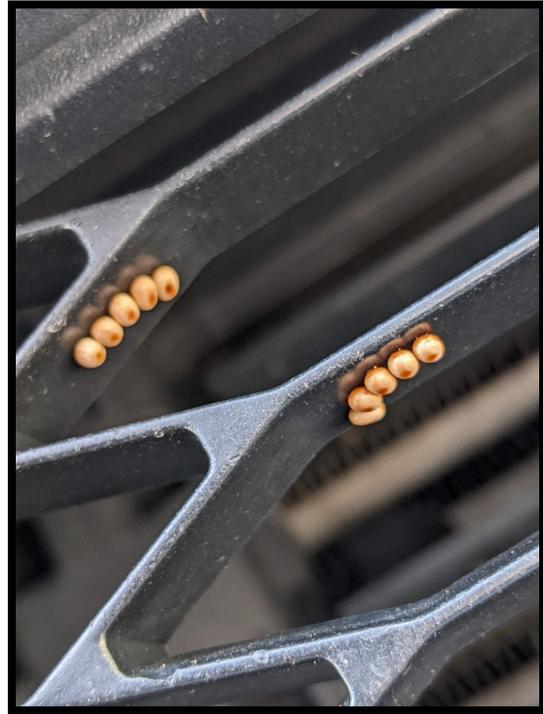
**Quyen Edwards**

I started raising caterpillars in 2018 after hearing Ilse Gebhard give a talk about monarchs at the Portage District Library. I was fascinated with the idea of host plants - that an adult butterfly or moth was looking for a specific plant to lay their eggs on for their caterpillars to eat.

This led me to the book "Raising Butterflies in the Garden" by Brenda Dziedzic. She lives in Southwest Michigan and has raised many caterpillars. She identifies native butterflies and moths, lists their host plant(s), and has photographed their life cycle from egg to pupation, as well as what their chrysalis or cocoon looks like.



*Brenda Dziedzic's inspiring book. M. Luna*



*Cecropia eggs on vehicle grill. Q. Edwards*

Because of this book, when a friend of mine posted photos on Facebook of a large, orange and brown moth stuck behind the grill of her vehicle, I was able to respond, "That's a cecropia moth!" This was in June of 2021. Unfortunately for mama moth, she was stuck in such a way that we were unable to extract her, but before she passed, she laid over 80 eggs on the grill of the vehicle that each looked like a grain of quinoa. The eggs were gently removed and stored in a tupperware container to see if they were fertilized. Sure enough, after 10 days of waiting, tiny black caterpillars began to appear. This was the beginning of my summer of raising cecropia caterpillars.



All caterpillars go through 5 stages of growth. Each stage is called an instar. First instar cecropia caterpillars start out quite small and blackish. Second instars are yellow with black spikes. Third through fifth instars are a surprising combination of green with red, blue, and yellow protuberances.

*Second instar cecropia caterpillar on Common Lilac (Syringa vulgaris).*



The cecropia caterpillars grew for two months; half ate common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) and half ate pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*). In August, after they became as long and thick as my pointer finger, they started using the dried leaves of their host plant to support a silk cocoon inside which they would make their dark brown pupae and overwinter.

*Third instar cecropia caterpillars on Pagoda Dogwood (Cornus alternifolia). Q. Edwards*



One by one, I asked them, "Are you sure you're ready? No time for one more leaf? It's the last thing you'll ever eat!" Adult cecropia moths have no mouthparts. Their only job in their short life of one to two weeks is to reproduce.

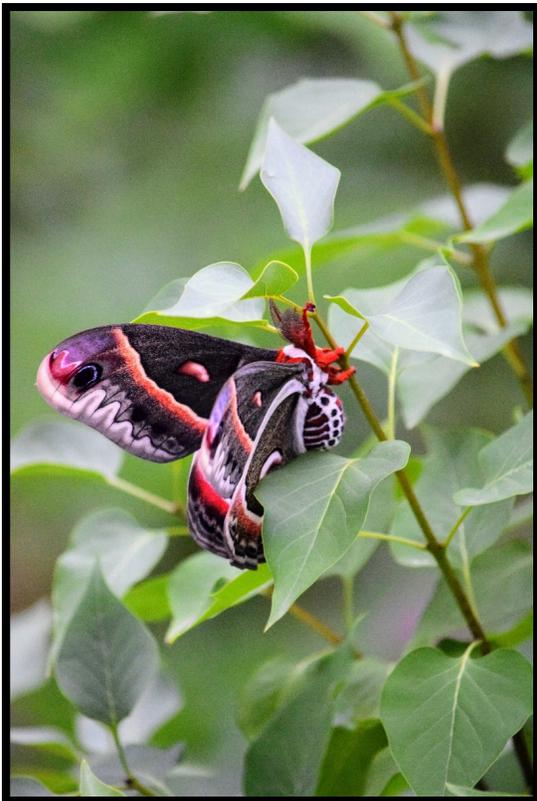
*Fifth instar cecropia caterpillar. Q. Edwards*



The caterpillars spent the fall and winter in their cocoons. By spring, I was eagerly looking in their enclosures waiting for the adult moths to emerge. They kept me waiting until June 2022, well after the 40 weeks it takes a human baby to grow in utero.

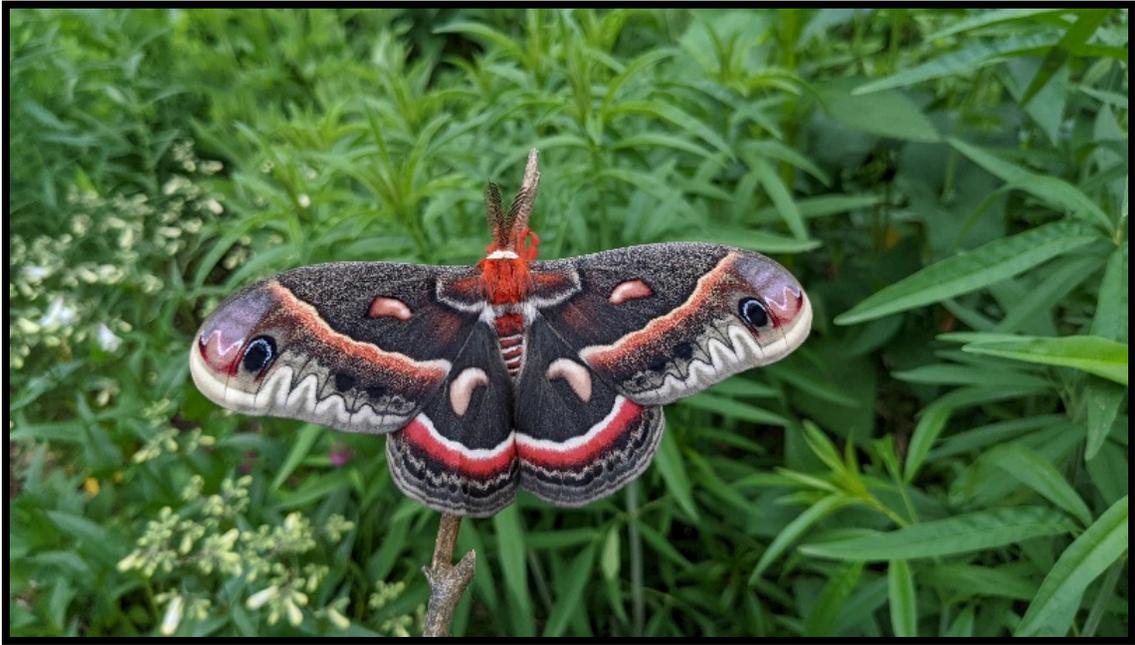
*Cecropia cocoon made of coarse silk, utilizing branches and host plant leaves for construction. Q. Edwards*

*If we are mowing and blowing and sending all the leaves away, how many moths are we destroying in the process?*



It was worth the wait. The largest moths in North America are stunning with a 5 to 7 inch wingspan. Because they are nocturnal and their lifespan is so short, we don't often get the pleasure of seeing them in the wild. Consider the amount of time these moths need to pupate in a safe and protected place. In the wild, the silk cocoons would drop from the trees in the fall and they would spend the winter and spring in the leaf litter. If we are mowing and blowing and sending all the leaves away, how many moths are we destroying in the process? If you can, please leave the leaves where they fall or gently rake them into a designated 'wild' area of your property.

*Adult Cecropia Moths (Left and Below) Q. Edwards*



## **A Success-Fall Plant Exchange**

Mel Luna

A round of applause to the generous members who donated so many healthy and varied native plants this year! Special thanks to the volunteers who answered my call for assistance to get things dug up and potted in anticipation of this event, to Jessie & Bill for hosting, and for the time and expertise of several of our executive committee members. Thanks also to the more than fifty households who came out to gather and disseminate those young plants to new ecosystems across the region.

I enjoyed talking with each one of you and hearing stories about your involvement with the native plant community and movement. From native trees in the Vine neighborhood, to pollinator gardens in schools, your commitment and activism inspires me! The plants left at the end of the day were donated to [The Victorian Bakery](#) to establish a native garden behind their current location.



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## **Multicolored Asian Lady Beetles: Good or Bad?**

**Ilse Gebhard**

A sure sign that winter is coming is when large numbers of Multicolored Asian Lady Beetles (*Harmonia axyridis*) congregate outside houses, sheds, and other buildings in search of overwintering sites. One fall, a large number of them found a small crack through which they entered into the walls of our house. They do no harm to the structures inside of which they overwinter and our first clue that they had been there all winter was when instead of exiting by the same crack in spring, they found another crack, this one into the lower level of the house.

Since Multicolored Asian Lady Beetles are not native to the US, I had no qualms going around the house once a day, for several days, sucking up hundreds of them with our vacuum cleaner. Be forewarned that you need to change the vacuum bag afterwards. Not only do they secrete a strong-smelling yellowish liquid from the joints of their legs when disturbed, a bunch of decomposing ones has its own odor problem. Discard bag carefully as exposure to dead lady beetles can cause allergic reactions in some people. Another warning - these lady beetles can bite hard enough to break human skin, causing minor, short-lived discomfort but at least they do not carry diseases.

A native of eastern Asia, the Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle was introduced into the United States during the 1960s through the 1990s by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a biological control agent and is an important predator of aphids and scale insects that can damage agricultural crops. They are also commonly used in nurseries and by home gardeners. Though releases took place in only some states, the beetles have spread to the rest of the US.

Introducing species as biocontrol agents has often been a double-edged sword. Multicolored Asian Lady Beetles are believed to be responsible, at least in part, for the severe decline in the populations of our native lady beetles, of which we have several hundred species. Often larger than our native species, Asian lady beetles not only outcompete the natives for food, they actually prey on them.

I first came across the eggs of Multicolored Asian Lady Beetles when monitoring milkweed plants for monarch eggs and larvae. What were those orange eggs on the underside of a milkweed leaf, I wondered. Raising them would hopefully give me the answer. Once some of the eggs had hatched, the tiny larvae started to eat unhatched eggs. This was not a good omen for any monarch eggs or small caterpillars that might be on a milkweed leaf. Clearly predatory, I now suspected them to be lady beetles and supplied them with aphids until they pupated. The resulting adult confirmed the ID.



*Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle Eggs and Just Hatched Larvae*



*Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle Larvae Day 2*



*Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle Larvae Day 6 with Aphids*



*Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle Pupa*



*Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle Adult with Thick "M" or "W" Behind Head R. Schipper*

The Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle is about 1/3 - inch long and ranges in color from yellow to orange to red. It typically has 19 black spots which can vary in appearance from well-defined to no more than faint traces on its wing covers. To confuse things a bit more, it can have fewer than 19 spots or none at all. To clinch the ID you must look for the clear black "M" - shaped marking behind its head that can look thick, thin or even broken. All very good if you can get one to hold still to look at under magnification.

## **Fifteen Years of Site Visits**

**Dave Wedling**

I was putting my basement back in order after doing some remodeling and ran across all my old site visit notes. I realized then that, not counting 2020 due to Covid, Wild Ones had done 15 years of site visits! Before I started coordinating site visits Tom and Nancy Small had done some, but I don't have those numbers.

I tallied up all the visits from 2007 through 2022 and came up with a total of **257 completed visits**. Notable years were 2012 when a record 32 visits were completed. This record held until 2021 when 46 visits were completed.

Over these 15 years of doing site visits, I have witnessed firsthand the growth of the native plant movement. The members requesting site visits are more knowledgeable about native plants and the benefits to our ecosystem. Many have already been to a Wild Ones event, visited a native plant nursery, or read one of Doug Tallamy's books. Some have already completed site prep for a garden and just wanted help picking out suitable native plants for their garden. Beyond this, it's been a privilege meeting so many interesting and talented people.



*My favorite shrub, Ninebark (Physocarpus opulifolius), growing in my backyard. D. Wendling*

There are several Wild Ones that I need to thank for helping me along the way. A special thanks to *Mike and Carol Klug* who did most of the work in 2012. Others who helped are *Ruth Caputo, Harry Bird, Tom Small, Chad Hughson, Lynn Steil, Laura Strehlow, Eleanore Chadderdon, Maggie Ebrite, Paul Olexia, Jonathan Morgan, Gina Frasson Hudson, Mary Ann Menck, Chris Bartley, Rose Norwood, Melody Charlton, Alysia Babcock, and Mel Luna*. Forgive me if I left anyone out.

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## **Community Events of Interest**

**October 1 - 6:30pm:** "In a Landscape: Improvisation with the Sounds of the Kleinstuck Preserve for Cello and Percussion" is part of the Connecting Chords Festival. [Read more.](#)

**October 6 - 10:00am:** A Win-Win for Insects: Nature-Based Climate Solutions Address Both Climate Change and Biodiversity Concerns" [webinar series](#) on Threats and Solutions by the Xerces Society. [Learn more](#) and [register here](#).

**October 8 - 8:00am-10:00am:** World Migratory Bird Day Celebration Hike at Pierce Cedar

Creek Institute. Register [here](#).

**October 13 - 8:00pm** - "Leopold, Phenology, and YOU" a [virtual event](#) through the Aldo Leopold Foundation. Learn how to track the everyday happenings in your yard with Dr. Stan Temple. [Register here](#).

**October 15 - 10:00am-12:00pm** - "Fall Fungal Foray Walk" at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. [More details](#).

**October 17 - 6:30pm-8:30pm** - "Aldo Leopold and Finding a Land Ethic for Our Time" Wild Ones River City Chapter (Grand Rapids) presentation by Martha MacCleery. [More details](#).

**October 26 - 7:00pm** - "Panel Presentation: A Wealth of Experience Within KAWO" with Ruth Caputo, Mike Weiss, and Marie Johnson at the First United Methodist Church, 212 S. Park Street, downtown next to Bronson Park. Hosted by Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones. [Read more](#).

*Editor's note: If you know of any local events pertaining to native plants that you feel may interest our readers, please send them along to us at the address below. Thanks!*

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## **What's Happening at the National Office**

Check out our [National Office web site](#)

To read the most recent reports from the board of directors,

[Log In to the Member Only Area](#).

Thank you for your interest and support of Wild Ones!

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**SEEDLINGS** is edited by Mel Luna. It appears mostly monthly.  
The next regular issue will arrive in November. **Deadline for November issue is October 20.**

[Send Submission](#)

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**To share comments and suggestions, simply reply to this email.**

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

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and [www.Facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes](https://www.Facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes)



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