

Hickory Horned Devil

Regal / Royal Walnut Moth



White Hickory Horned Devil in protective position

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The Hickory Horned Devil is the caterpillar larvae of the Regal/Royal Walnut Moth. Its name arrives from its scary appearance and its main food plant source; and it is the most fascinating of all the larvae.

The eggs are mainly laid by the Regal / Royal Walnut Moth on the spices of the Hickory bush, also the Juglandaceae family bush (Walnut, Butternut or White Walnut) including the variety of the Pecan, Sweet Gum and Sumac bush. The egg laying process starts around mid-summer; late June to early July and it takes the eggs approximately 7 – 10 days to hatch.



*White Hickory
Horned Devil
Stage 3 resting*

The initial color from egg to larvae is a dark brown. The next stage is of a yellowish color, a condition that does not last long: maybe several days. As the growth process continues it starts the shedding of its skin. This takes place 5 to 6 times with each appearance looking different. But on the 6th stage it becomes a powerfully green color with its beautiful vicious head horns tipped with black and red!

The Horned Devil is nocturnal and spends its days sleeping. For protection while sleeping it disguises itself as bird feces by curling up into the shape of a “J.” The strength in the head of the Devil is unbelievable. Although its vivid coloring is a visual attack at predators to warn them off, it uses its head with the horns projected swinging back and forth for protection.

In spite of its appearance the Hickory Horned Devil is not dangerous. It is not to be killed! If it is seen out of its environment it is to be moved to an area of soft soil or mulched area where it can burrow for pupation.

Pupation is known to take sometime: as long as two winters. They will burrow themselves into the soil beneath their food source and will appear the next season on the same bush where they continue to grow and is known to grow up to 4 to 6 inches.

The Horned Devil Larvae can be located in



White Hickory Horned Devil sleeping

any wooded areas that have Hickory, Walnut, Butternut or White Walnut including the variety of the Pecan, Sweet Gum and Sumac bushes around late July through early September timeframe.

To capture the texture of the skin and vivid colors of the larvae a Micro lens; 180mm – 200mm on a tripod is recommended. You do not want to get too close because it uses its horns for protection by swing its head back and forth. If its head hits your equipment it may cause injury to the larvae and can result in its death.

Use an aperture between *f*5.6 - *f*8.0 at shutter speed of 125 - 250 with an ISO 200- 400, depending on the lighting condition. An on camera



White Immature Hickory Horned Devil sleeping

flash or reflection can be used for fill light. A reflector is recommended because an on camera flash has a tendency to disturb the larvae and causes it to move. If you are using digital you can adjust the White Balance according to the lighting conditions.

With the use of film Velvia 50, 100 or 400 ASA or Kodachrome® 100VS is recommended to capture the vivid colors. The same “*f*” and shutter speed, on camera flash or reflector as in digital can be used along with a tripod.

The best time to photograph the larvae is from late morning to early afternoon because it is nocturnal and it sleeps during daylight. You can capture it with little movement and in its protective “J” position. ■



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White Hickory Horned Devil Stage 5 feeding

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