

Lifestyles of the Scaled and Beautiful:

Tawny Emperor

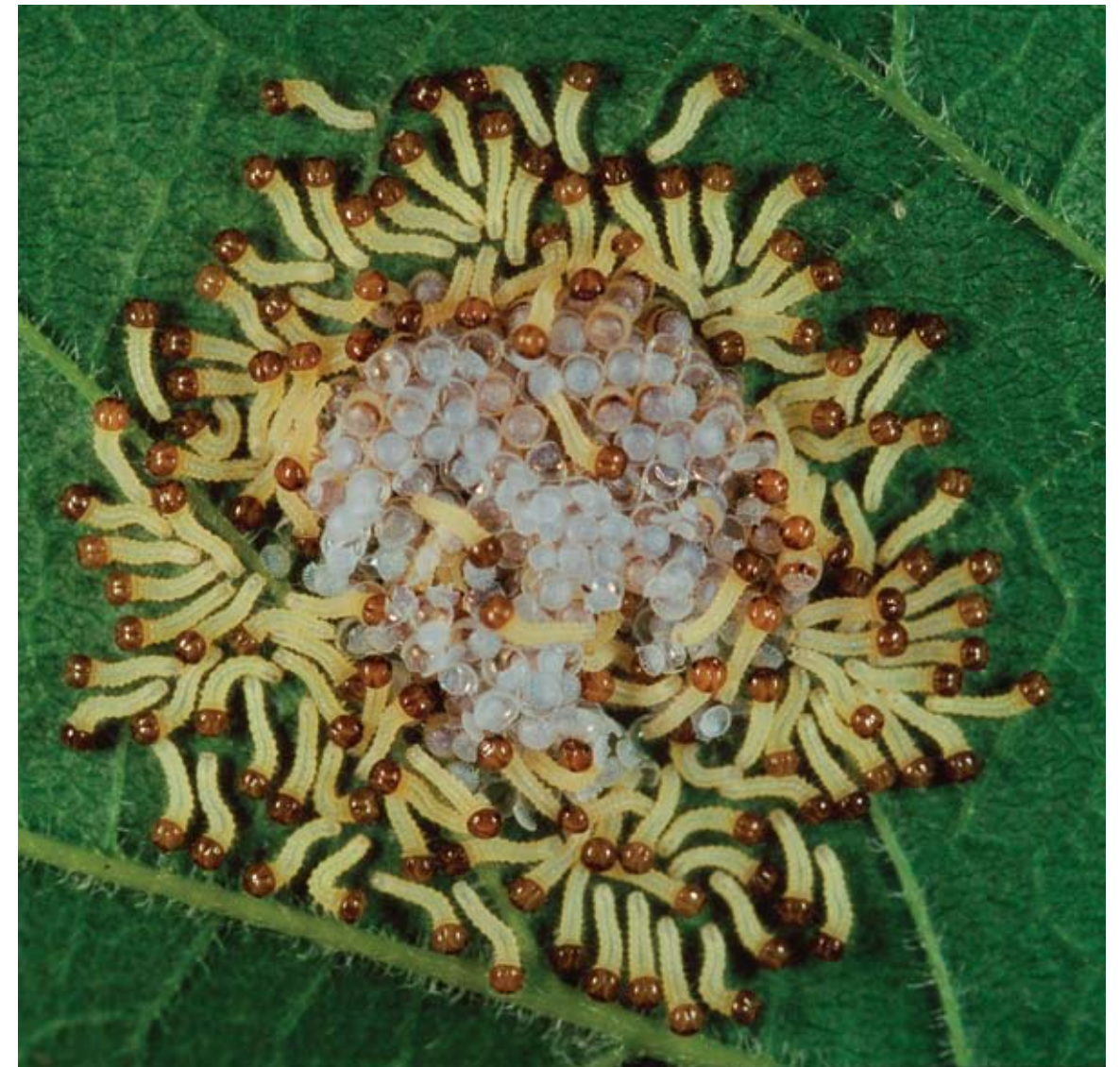
by Patti Murray
and Paula Williams

“Tawny Emperor eggs!” Patti exclaimed during a call from Paula. “Where did you find them? When did you find them?” Patti’s voice came alive, rising above the fog of the extreme jet lag she suffered. She had just arrived back in New Jersey after spending a month half-way around the globe in Indonesia. Paula’s

news was exciting. Patti had seen many butterfly eggs, but not the eggs of the Tawny Emperor, which because the female lays her eggs in clusters of various numbers was of special interest. “I found the perfect cluster for you to photograph,” Paula said. “Some of the eggs are piled on top of one another, but



Tawny Emperor egg clusters are impressive architectural constructions usually consisting of between 100 and 300 eggs. July 28, 2005. New Jersey.



When the egg cluster synchronously hatches, it appears to be one hydra-headed organism. Aug. 1, 2005. New Jersey.

the top layer is even, perfect to photograph to get good depth of field. I’ll bring them over.” Patti didn’t know any remedy for jet lag, other than to let time pass for the body to adjust. She wouldn’t have imagined that Tawny Emperor eggs could effect a partial cure. But when Paula unveiled the treasured jewels on the surface of a hackberry leaf she instantly felt better—at least momentarily. The eggs held their own against orangutans, Komodo dragons, tarsiers, and birds of extreme beauty. What is it about butterflies that takes hold of one’s senses and makes a person always

wanting to see and learn more about them? A beneficial addiction?

On July 24, 2005, Paula and her husband, Chris, visited a new site in northern New Jersey where Paula found many egg clusters. Along a forest path Paula noticed a small fifteen foot scraggly hackberry tree where several Tawny Emperors flew and females were laying eggs. Paula looked up into the tree and saw one shiny egg cluster after another. She couldn’t believe so many eggs had been laid on the tree. It was sparsely leafed and not a good specimen. She knew the tree could not