

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
GRANT PROGRAM
FY01 WILDLIFE PRESERVATION FUND

Grant Agreement # 01-023W

**A Survey for *Catocala whitneyi*
(Lepidoptera: Noctuidae)
in Winnebago County, Illinois**

James R. Wiker
August, 2001

PRELIMINARY REPORT

This is a short summary for the *C. whitneyi* project with the formal report to follow. Five areas were surveyed, two were deemed inappropriate for lack of sufficient larval food plant and were promptly disregarded as possibilities. Two sites Harlem Hills N.P., and the northern end of Colored Sands Forest Preserve, were surveyed and considered to be well suited to support populations of *C. whitneyi*. Also, a site not considered when this project was initiated, Green River State Wildlife Area, Lee County Illinois was surveyed. The Lee County site was an afterthought on the way home from Winnebago County, however, GRSWA is within only a few miles of the original Type locality of *C. whitneyi* and after surveying that area and noting the abundance of larval food plant (*Amorpha canescens*) it was thought prudent to add it to the survey.

Two days in July of 2000 were spent at the above Winnebago County sites searching the areas and looking for the larval host. Two nights were also spent with blacklights and bucket traps searching for adults. In May/June of 2001 five days and nights were spent looking for larvae and host plant areas by myself and Vernon LaGessee. Good numbers of larvae were found in two Winnebago County sites and also at GRSWA, Lee County, and several from each site were brought back to the lab and reared to adults which took until the early part of July. The larvae of *C. whitneyi* is practically indistinguishable from the larvae of its closest relative, *Catocala abbreviatella* so the results of this project could not be positively known until all larvae had been reared to adults. *C. abbreviatella* is noted by the author to be much more common and widespread in Illinois and its entire range than *C. whitneyi*. It was difficult to reach the scheduled dates of the grant because of the inability to positively identify the moths without the hatched adults.

The project as a whole was a success. *C. whitneyi* was found in the two Winnebago County sites with good growth of *Amorpha canescens* and, more importantly to this author, they were found in large numbers at GRSWA. This is important due to the

fact they were originally described from Ohio, Illinois in Bureau County. The GRSWA is within only a few miles of Ohio, Illinois and is most likely the closest area left to the original type locality of this species. I have not yet researched to find whether or not the original Type specimens still exist, but whether they do or not the specimens in this area are very important scientifically should the original Types not exist or are ever destroyed.

A full report with photos and maps will follow shortly. I ask for a little more time to put all this data together in formal report form. I also ask now for payment of Grant Number 01-023W and will have the full formal report in the hands of the Department no later than August 31, 2001.

James R. Wiker
August 10, 2001