



Wandering the Woods with Matt

Pine tube moth
(*Argyrotaenia pinatubana*)

Observed 4/19/2020 on a conservation easement in Price Township

and

Azure butterfly
(*Celastrina sp.*)

Observed 4/7/2020 at Kurmes Nature Preserve

To be outdoors this time of year is a great joy. The weather is often not too hot and not too cold, and annoying insects are absent, allowing our attention to be focused on all the other insects we come across.

The observation this week is a pine tube moth (*Argyrotaenia pinatubana*) seen at a conservation easement in Price Township on April 19th, 2020 and an azure butterfly (*Celastrina sp.*) seen at Kurmes Nature Preserve on April 7th, 2020.

Moth and butterflies form the insect order lepidoptera. Many people believe that moths only come out at night and butterflies during the day, and while many moths are found only at night, this is an oversimplification. Actually, this time of year, when I am in the woods, I notice many more moths than butterflies. Some of them are quite beautiful, like this pine tube moth.

Two other ways to distinguish moths from butterflies:

1) Look at how the insect holds its wings. Are they pressed together above the insect's back? If so, it is more likely to be a butterfly. When at rest, moths tend to "tent" their wings, or hold them at an angle (like shown in the photo).

2) If you can get close enough, take a look at the antennae. Butterflies usually have clubbed antennae, with the last antennae segments larger than all the others. Moths have unclubbed antennae (like the pine tube moth) and many moths have feathery antennae.

Pine tube moths are found throughout eastern North America. The larvae use silk to bind white pine needles together to form a tube. This tube shelters the developing larvae as well as providing their food source. Like Hansel and Gretel, but without the mean old witch.

Azure butterflies of the genus *Celastrina* comprise a widespread and beautiful group of delicate blue-winged butterflies (blue on the upper surfaces of the wings). The genus includes 30+ species found across most of North America, Europe and Southeast Asia. Species of the genus are difficult to identify and until recently, several species were lumped together. The individual seen at Kurmes is either *Celastrina ladon* or *Celastrina lucia*.

One is a moth, and one is a butterfly.

Can you now tell which is which?

