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Invertebrate of the Month

January 2009



***Carthaea saturnioides* Walker (Lepidoptera: Carthaeidae)**

The exquisite dryandra moth is endemic to the southwest of WA. It is the only representative in the genus *Carthaea* and the family Carthaeidae, and is closely related to the moth family Saturniidae to which another gorgeous moth (*Opodiphthera helena*) belongs. The distinctive eye-spots are used in defence (probably against bird predation); when disturbed the moth shows its hind wings and rhythmically vibrates them. The larvae also have distinctive eye-spots and feed on various species of plants in the Proteaceae family. Adults come to lights, generally in the later part of the night and early morning and usually fly from October to December. Although this species has been featured in Invertebrate of the Month in the past, I couldn't resist showing this photograph, taken during our recent spring field work. To put what you see in perspective, imagine a fly nearly the size of your torso landing on your back. Perhaps now you will think a bit differently about Australian fly problems.

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Environment and Conservation
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