

Hawk Moth



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flies up to 30 miles per hour

Hawk Moth

Sphingidae spp.

Genus: numerous Family: Sphingidae

Orange and brown/black

35 - 150 mm wingspan

Flight resembles that of a hummingbird

Hawk moths are a very large order of insects, containing over 1200 species. The hawk moth is a fast moving insect; it may resemble a hummingbird at first glance. Hawk moths are able to move at speeds of 30 miles per hour, and hover moving forward and backward like a hummingbird. They have a very long proboscis which allows them to search for nectar deep in flowers without ever landing. They can also fly sideways!

Hawk moths are generally seen late in the evening feeding on flowers which have a strong sweet smell. Hawk moths have been seen at all hours of the day and have also been known to feed at hummingbird feeders.

One of the Sphingidae species known as the Hummingbird Hawk Moth has been studied widely. This species seems to be able to tell the difference between different colors while seeking flowers for nectar. Hawk moths produce at least two broods per year. Pictured on the front of this card is the White Lined Sphinx. This is a very common hawk moth which can be seen from West Indies to Canada, including Montana.

Females can lay up to 500 eggs at one time. Females call in males by secreting a pheromone from a gland at the tip of their tail. Some population explosions have been noted where the ground seems to be moving from the larvae. The larvae dig underground chambers to pupate. The pupae will move close to the top of the soil so that the moth can easily fly free.

Many species of hawk moths are very particular about which plant they will feed on. There are generalists that feed on many types of flowers. The same is true when it comes to the plants that the females choose for laying their eggs.



Hawk moth
larvae