

Bug of the Month

by Jim Revell / June 2017

Eight-spotted Forester

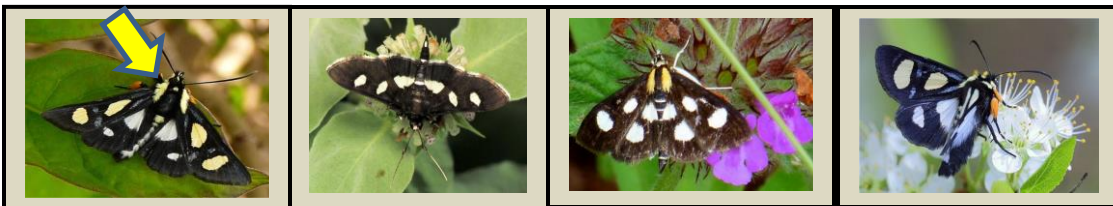
Eight-spotted Forester	
Class:	Insecta (Insects)
Order:	Lepidoptera
Family:	Noctuidae (Owlet moths)
Genus:	<i>Alypia</i>
Species:	<i>A. octomaculata</i> (Eight-spotted Forester)



This month's article comes by way of the Bedford Area Master Gardener Association's annual plant sale held this past April. Around 2 PM on that Friday (set-up day), several of our Master Gardeners stood outside near the college's entrance waiting for the second trailer load of plants to arrive. As we were talking, this attractive "butterfly" began flitting around our group and landed on one of our MG trainees. He had his cell phone handy and tried to get a picture, only to find the insect was camera shy. Fortunately, it stayed around long enough that I could get a good look at its markings (but not at the ends of its antennae). Based on this, I started my initial search thinking it was a butterfly. After no luck, I turned to moths, and after looking at a lot of Lepidopteras, I found the Eight-spotted Forester fit the bill – and it is one of few day-time moths.

Another clue to identifying the correct moth was its black wings. There are only a handful of moth species in the U.S. with black wings; most are gray and/or brown. There is a moth with black wings and white spots, the Grape Leafroller moth, and it is sometimes confused with the Forester moths. Two differences are the Grape Leafroller has very slender wings, and it doesn't have the white shoulder pads that the Forester has. That said, a moth called the White-spotted Sable does have the shoulder pads, but neither it nor the Grape Leafroller has orange tufts on its legs.

These orange tufts were very visible on our visitor at the MG plant sale. Note these differences in the photos below: Left to Right, the Eight-spotted Forester (arrow pointing to shoulder pads), the Grape Leafroller, White-spotted Sable, and the Eight-spotted Forester with visible orange tufts. So - - after comparing my notes, I do believe our visitor was the Eight-spotted Forester.



Adults have a total of eight spots or patches on black wings and two large yellow or cream-colored shoulder patches ("shoulder pads"); legs with prominent orange tufts. Larvae are up to 3 cm long. Immature larvae are orange with areas of light gray; mature larvae are a mix of orange, black and white. At the base of each segment, a thick black-spotted orange band and, following along, several thin black bands interspersed with thin white bands. On the dorsal surface, there are long sparse hairs.

Other notes of interest:

- 1) Ranges from TX to MN to ME to FL; lives in open areas near woodlands where host plants grow.
- 2) Larvae feed on grape, Peppervine and Virginia Creeper. Adults feed on nectar from flowers of herbaceous plants.
- 3) Adults emerge in early Spring and lay eggs in May-June on host plants. There is one generation per year in the north, two in the south. They over-winter in the soil or crevices of old wood as a pupa.

- 4) Eight-spotted Foresters are often mistaken for butterflies as they visit flowers during the day.
- 5) Larvae are known to quickly regurgitate an orange, mostly clear fluid when disturbed.
- 6) Other Foresters include Wittfeld's, Langton's and MacCulloch's.

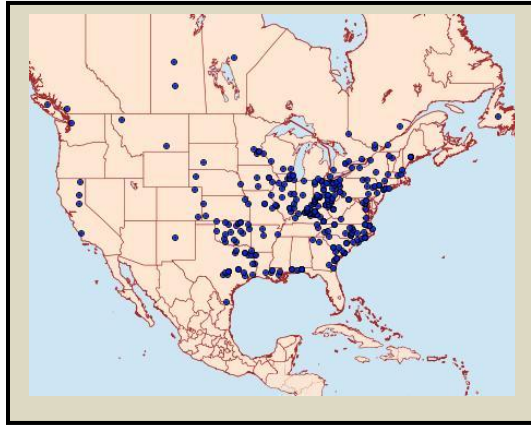


Photo References:

A. octomaculata larva: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/9d/Alypia2.JPG/200px-Alypia2.JPG>
Rick Miller, New Bern, NC, 04/2017, A. octomaculata (moth): <http://bugguide.net/node/view/1358175>
Ladd & Petra Hockey, Port O'Connor, TX, 2007, A. octomaculata (moth): <http://texasento.net/octomaculata3.jpg>
Jennifer Forman Orth, Framingham, MA, 08/2016, Grape Leafroller: <http://bugguide.net/node/view/1273791>
Victoria LeFevers, Tucker co., WV, 07/2011, White-spotted Sable: <http://bugguide.net/node/view/1029757>
Mary Moore, Austin, TX, 2003 (A. octomaculata with flower): <http://texasento.net/octomaculata2.jpg>
Map / Bugguide.net: <http://mothphotographersgroup.msstate.edu/species.php?hodges=9314>

Research References / Resources:

"The Daily Entomologist," 07/23/2012, by Blake Newton, UK Extension: <http://ukyentomology.blogspot.com/2012/07/moth-1-national-moth-week.html>
"Caterpillars in Your Yard and Garden," University of Missouri Extension: <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/IPM1019-14>
BugGuide.net: <http://bugguide.net/node/view/485>
Princeton Field Guide's *Caterpillars of Eastern North America*, by David L. Wagner

Jim Revell is a Bedford Extension Master Gardener Volunteer
Read more of his articles on the "Jims Bugs" page @ www.BedfordMasterGardeners.org