

**Doon Watch Nature Series for Dehradun Live Hindustan Times**  
**by Sanjay Sondhi**

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"Owls" in the house

I often tell myself, that my job is to bring nature to people's doorsteps , through my writing. Obviously, someone out there in nature is reading my articles, because, quite often, nature doesn't only come to our doorstep, but into our house! A few nights ago, I watched as our pet cat, Tiger, chased something in our bedroom. Getting up to check what she was after, I found a large brown moth on the floor.

An Owl Moth *Erebus hieroglyphica* had entered our house! A comical scene ensued, with both Tiger and I chasing the moth-Tiger attempting to eat it, while I tried to rescue it! Under the bed, over the bed, onto the curtains-a merry chase followed. Finally, instead of catching the moth, I caught Tiger and evicted her from the room, allowing me to catch the moth and release it outside!



The very next day, my son, Yash came to me and said "Dad, didn't you set the Owl moth free?". To which I replied in the affirmative. "Well, he said, there is yet another owl moth in room downstairs!". Checking the moth I found that it was not the one I had released, but yet another Owl moth. Once I again, I got to work to catch and release the moth, before Tiger got to it. Clearly nature was trying very hard to bring itself to my doorstep!

Owl moths belong to a family of moths called Noctuids and are active at night. Owl moths have large eye-like markings on their wings; the moths hope that these "eyes" make them appear larger than they actually are, to potential predators, thereby scaring them away. Owl moths love to feed on rotting fruit, sugar syrup and even wine. The long tube-like proboscis (mouth parts) of owl moths are sharp tipped and have many small spines. With this, the moths can actually pierce fruit to feed on its juice. On occasion, I have dipped natural ropes in sugary wine syrup and hung it out; sure enough, the first moths to arrive are Owl moths; they like their wine as much as I do! On many occasions, a cluster of owl moth will congregate to feed on rotting fruit. The Owl moths are very wary, and will fly away as soon as you approach it. Being cryptically coloured, the moth are well camouflaged on tree trunks, or within the foliage, where they often sit.

Wanna watch some moths; take a glass of wine, mix 4 or 5 table spoons of sugar in it. Dip a cotton cloth into this syrup and hang it out in your garden at night. You might just be the lucky one to have the owl moths visit you, making your wine sacrifice worth its while!

Feedback on this column is welcome at [sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com](mailto:sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com)

Making a difference: Do little things to help nature. If a moth or a butterfly gets trapped in your house, make sure you catch it in a jar and set it free, allowing it to get on with its life cycle.

Photograph caption: An Owl Moth on the window

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