

What's to Do When School Is Out?

On the first day that my two grandchildren (5 and 10 yrs. old) arrived, we went for a nature walk. Equipped with a capture jar, we found a caterpillar egg case (forest tent caterpillars), many Woolly Bear caterpillars and several cocoons from unknown insect species. These were initially placed in the capture jar and back home they were put in individual jars that would act as terrariums. We also cut willow branches and these were placed in jars of water. They quickly root and sprout leaves within 5 days. Be sure to take many photos!

Within a few days, the caterpillars hatched. They are seen here on a wild cherry tree limb.



The willow leaves provided a ready source of food for these new born caterpillars.



In another jar, the Woolly Bear caterpillars climbed the available limbs and soon attached and hung as they prepared to pupate. (Cocoon) See diagram below.



We also had found some pupae from an unknown insect. See diagram above. These can be seen behind the Woolly Bear caterpillar.

Unintentionally we had collected insects that exhibited 3 over-wintering strategies. One spent the winter in an egg state, one as a caterpillar, and one was in a pupal state.



My 5 yr old grandchild drew this picture showing the Woolly Bear caterpillar at the top of the stick, the pupae (she coloured it yellow), and the moth (coloured purple in her diagram). That shows an understanding of the life cycle of a moth.

Maye our next project will see us starting an Earth Day Cleanup of the ditch that leads to the creek behind my house.

Dave Gervais

STAO Safety Chair