Owl Butterfly

Caligo atreus



Inside



Outside



Chrysalid

REIMAN GARDENS
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Owl Butterfly

Caligo atreus

Order: Lepidoptera
Family: Nymphalidae

Etymology: The genus *Caligo* is Latin for fog, mist or darkness. Atreus in Greek mythology was the king of Mycene.

Wingspan: 5.5 – 6.25 inches (140 – 160 mm)

Habitat: The Owl Butterfly is primarily found in dense rainforest but occasionally they visit plantations to lay their eggs.

Host Plant: The larvae are known to feed on plants in the families Heliconiaceae, Cycanthaceae and Musaceae (Bananas).

Adult Food Source: The adults feed almost exclusively on rotting fruit.

Life History: The Owl Butterflies do the majority of their flying during dawn and dusk. In the evening the males patrol for respective females. Mated females lay their eggs individually or in groups. The caterpillars are very gregarious and usually feed in groups on the host plants.

Flights: Because of the long lifespan of the adult and the multiple generations each year it is possible to find adults throughout most of the year.

Fun Facts: As caterpillars the Owl Butterflies can eat a large amount of host plant leaves and since one of their host plants it banana plants the Owl Butterfly is considered a pest in those areas. They are such a big pest that work is being done with parasitic wasps to find a biological control agent.

Range:

