

# Nature's color display is dazzling

ONE OF the most striking and fascinating features of the natural world is the diversity of color and patterns which they form. Spring warblers have some very impressive colors and patterns, as well as the variety of butterflies that can be seen in summer.

Colors in nature result from either pigments or from the physical structure of a part of the body. Pigments such as melanin produce the blacks and browns we see in animals. Chlorophyll is the pigment which makes plants green and the insects that eat them green.



nature  
**Timothy Nowicki**

Small inchworms dangling from overhead branches get their green coloration from eating the leaves of plants. But the green of a hummingbird is produced by the structure of the feathers themselves.

The ultimate in coloration of animals is iridescence. It is caused by small striations in the structure of a feather or the shell of an insect. When sunlight hits the throat of a ruby-throated hummingbird it may look fiery orange or ruby red. If the sun is not shining on those feathers, they look black.

BIRDS LIKE grackles and hum-

mingbirds are not the only animals which exhibit iridescence. Insects display iridescence in several species. While walking the trail at Independence Oaks County Park, I came upon a divergent metallic wood boring beetle.

This beetle was about three-eighths of an inch wide and 1 1/4 inches long. From above it did not look very interesting, but when I flipped it over onto its back a shiny copper metallic coloration was revealed.

In more open areas where dogbane and milkweed grow, one can find the dogbane beetle. One a bright sunny day this inch long rounded

beetle is a rainbow of colors. As the sunlight is diffracted by as many as 1,400 small striations per millimeter it is reflected back to our eye as green, blue, red, and yellow. Half of the hard rounded shell not in the sunlight appears black.

Tortoise beetles and some butterflies exhibit a spectacular iridescence also. In order to observe this though, one has to look closely for some of the often unseen natural features.

The writer is a naturalist at Independence Oaks Park in Oakland County.

## Discuss these safety tips with youngsters

With summer here, Consumers Power Company is asking parents to discuss tips on having a safe summer with their youngsters. The utility suggests the following safety pointers for children:

- Never hitch-hike.
- If you are approached by a stranger, go for help.
- If you're home alone when you answer the phone, tell them your mom and dad are busy and can't talk now.
- Never get into a car with someone you don't know, no matter what they say.
- Be aware of suspicious-looking people.
- If you think you're being followed, run to where there are more people around and yell for help.

• Travel in groups, never alone.

• If the door bell rings, look to see who it is. If you don't know who it is, don't open the door.

The utility advises parents to remind their children that any time they need help to look for the Eyes and Ears decal on its blue and white vehicles. According to R. K. Drueke, district manager for Consumers Power Metro Region, employees who operate these vehicles have a direct line to the nearest law enforcement agency.

Consumers Power Company Metro Region serves over 700,000 customers in Oakland, Macomb and parts of Wayne and Livingston Counties.

## Students sample college in special OCC program

A special program to encourage high school juniors to sample college-level work began June 27 at Oakland Community College's Auburn Hills Campus.

Funding for the program has been provided by the Detroit Edison Foundation at the request of the OCC Foundation.

The \$8,500 program proposal covers tuition and textbook expenses for 31 students whose grade point averages range from 2.0 (C) to 2.8 (B minus). The group is composed of 15 young women and 16 young men drawn from Pontiac's two high schools. It includes 22 black, three Hispanic and six white students.

"The Oakland Technology Park and other developments in the Pontiac area will provide many employ-

ment opportunities for young people who have chosen to continue their schooling," said OCC Chancellor R. Stephen Nicholson.

OCC project coordinators will meet regularly with the students to discuss college and career plans. The coordinators will later meet with Pontiac school officials to evaluate the impact on the students' performance during their senior year.

Students are enrolled in two college-credit courses at OCC — a mandatory class in college "survival" techniques covering such topics as time management, study skills and note-taking — and an elective class chosen from the regular lineup of introductory college offerings.

For their electives, the juniors have signed up in 15 different classes

including psychology, English, business and computer-assisted design.

"As a permanent corporate citizen of this community, we place the highest priority on this type of project," said Maurice L. Vermuelen, manager of Detroit Edison's Oakland Division.

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## Car seats for rent

The Easter Seal Society of Oakland County has infant and toddler car seats available for rent to Oakland County residents. An appointment must be made to obtain a seat. For more information about this and other quality programs, call Easter Seals at 338-3030 (Voice and TDD).

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