

Moth gift: Winner of an eBay auction thanks his mother by naming a new species after her

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Adult of the new moth species *Givira delindae* resting on a branch of frosted mint, a common shrub in the dunes. Credit: Eric H. Metzler

Winner of an eBay auction Steve Mix received the opportunity to pick the name for a new species of satiny-white winged moth collected from the white gypsum dunes of the White Sands National Monument, New Mexico. A fan of butterflies and moths himself, he chose to honor his supportive and encouraging mother Delinda Mix, so the moth is now formally listed under the species name *delindae*. It is described in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

Having spent 10 years studying the [moth](#) fauna at the White Sands National Monument, Eric H. Metzler, curator at the Michigan State University, but also research collaborator at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, and research associate at the University of New Mexico and the University of Florida, discovered the moth during the first year of the study, in 2007. Back then, he spotted a curious small white moth with a satiny appearance, which immediately drew his attention.

Already assigned to the genus *Givira* to the family commonly known as carpenter millers, the moth was yet to be identified as a [species](#). While most of its North American 'relatives' are either dark-colored, or have substantial dark smudges on the forewings, there are only four of them, including the [new species](#), which are substantially white with few or no dark markings.

Further hindrance occurred when the researcher tried to study the specimens, as pinned moths turned out greased due to their abdomens being full of fatty tissue. However, the specialist managed to degrease them by carefully brushing their scales, and, having compared them to related species, confirmed them as representatives of a species new to science.



Type locality of the new moth species *Givira delindae*, White Sands National Monument, New Mexico, USA. Credit: Eric H. Metzler

Then, Eric joined the fundraising event, organized by the Western National Parks Association (WNPA), a non-profit education partner of the US National Park Service. The highest bidder in the eBay auction would receive the chance to pick the scientific name for the satiny-looking moth, and thus, become part of history. Having won the opportunity, Steve Mix, who himself had once been interested in studying butterflies and moths, and has been maintaining his fondness of them ever since, decided to name the species after his mother Delinda Mix, in gratitude for "the support and encouragement she gave to her

son".

"Steve Mix submitted the winning bid, and he chose to have the moth named after his mother because of the lasting nature of this naming opportunity", shares Eric. "I received no remuneration in this fundraising venture, and by volunteering my personal money, time, expertise, and experience I was able to help WNPA gain world-wide positive publicity while raising some much needed cash. The rewards to me were being able to help WNPA and Steve Mix honor his mother, which is just so very sentimental".

"WNPA is so pleased that we were able to work with Eric and we are grateful to Steve. This project is a shining example of working together towards the common good of our parks with the added value of providing a priceless experience for everyone involved", says Amy Reichgott, Development Manager at the Western National Parks Association.

More information: Eric H. Metzler, The Lepidoptera of White Sands National Monument, Otero County, New Mexico, USA 9. A new species of *Givira* Walker (Cossidae, Hypoptinae) dedicated to Delinda Mix, including a list of species of Cossidae recorded from the Monument, *ZooKeys* (2017). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.655.11339](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.655.11339)

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