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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTHERN LEPIDOPTERISTS' SOCIETY, ORGANIZED TO PROMOTE SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AND KNOWLEDGE RELATED TO UNDERSTANDING THE LEPIDOPTERA FAUNA OF THE SOUTHERN REGION OF THE UNITED STATES.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TROPICAL COLLECTING IN FLORIDA

Each spring, usually in April and May, many out-of-staters feel the urge to do some sampling in the tropical portion of Florida, where many choice butterflies and moths are to be found. May has long been considered prime time by many, but a lot of folks will find it interesting to visit during late October or early November, when the fall peak of activity is reached, and in terms of general collecting prospects, greater numbers and diversity of species will be available. Those interested in blacklighting will also find the fall to be more productive, especially if the trip is wisely planned around darker phases of the moon.

While many butterflies can be found at blossoms of low-growing shrubs such as Lantana or on the ever-popular Spanish Needles (Bidens pilosa), visitors to the tropics will be wise to carry an extension net capable of prodding branches of many flowering trees. Those interested in hairstreaks can often find sudden bonanzas in this manner, especially those trees with small white or pink flowers. In recent years, a strong association with tropical legumes has been established for several choice hairstreaks, such as Chlorostrymon maesites and Tmolus azia, and through these associations has it become possible to learn the host plant relationships of these species here. Recent observations and collections of Eunica monima have also been facilitated by the use of extension nets, as the butterfly often is observed high in the treetops at the edge of hammocks, and gentle prodding of branches often aids in discovery of their presence.

Fruit groves are abundant in the Homestead-Florida City area, and are excellent spots for general collecting; it is wise to inquire and obtain permission before visiting groves, however. Edge areas of groves often have abundant wildflowers, and rotting fruit also seems to attract some species, such as Siproeta stelenes, although the association in this case often can be linked to profuse mats of the host plant, Blechum brownei, which grow in the shade of the fruit trees in groves. Knowledge of host plants and the habitat will greatly aid a successful trip ; you probably won't see things like Strymon acis bartrami or Anaea floridalis unless you are in dry habitat (such as the interior of Big Pine Key) where the host plant, Croton linearis, grows. Likewise, your chances for Strymon martialis, Strymon columella, and Brephidium isophthalma will be enhanced if you know where to find Bay Cedar,

Florida Trema, or Glasswort. Marpesia petreus will be most easily located if you know places to find groves or hammock areas where fig trees grow.

Disturbed areas such as roadsides, clearings, or ditches often offer good general collecting, but specialized knowledge of the specific host plants will enhance your prospects greatly. While travelling about in the daytime, note spots where morning glories, moonflowers, or Lantana grows, as these spots usually attract numbers of Sphingids at dusk and dawn. Often, collecting over these flowers at the times noted will be more productive than collecting with light sources. Checks of convenience store lights are also productive in the keys.

A word of caution should be made with regard to tropical collecting, especially in the spring season, and moreso in years in which there has been ample rainfall. Collectors will be wise to make themselves familiar with tropical poisonous plants found in south Florida, especially poisonwood (Metopium toxiferum) and manchineel (Hippomane mancinella), when simple contact with leaves, branches, or especially the sap can result in emergency treatment or even hospitalization. Both plants have highly toxic skin irritants, and produce reactions much more severe than any case of poison ivy! In hammock areas it's wise to stick to trails unless you know how to recognize these plants; poisonwood also grows prolificly in the dry interior of Big Pine Key. Precautions should also be made to protect yourself from the bites of insects; rainy seasons usually mean hordes of salt marsh mosquitoes, and also usually result in above-normal levels of chiggers and ticks. You'll want a good repellant (one with better than 50% DEET, such as the locally available Repel brand). A good dusting of the lower legs and shoes with powdered sulfur will also lessen the likelihood of a good infestation with "redbugs" and the associated misery which will last a good week or more. One other caution is in store, and this is to be aware of the fact that there are poisonous snakes in south Florida; the Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake is present as far south as Big Pine Key, and both this and the Cottonmouth Moccasin are quite common on the mainland in south Florida. It is unlikely that you will encounter them, and they'll generally leave you alone if you leave them alone, but if by some stroke of bad luck you do happen to put your foot down in the wrong spot and get bitten, follow these instructions: first and foremost, try to compose yourself and get a good look at the snake for identification purposes. Second, try to get your companions to get you to the hospital as soon as possible. DO NOT, under any circumstances, use one of the commercially available snake-bite kits which require use of a tourniquet after cutting open the bite marks - the method is far more hazardous than the bite itself, and often will result in permanent disability. The poisonous toxins injected by the snake almost immediately bond to tissue proteins and cannot be removed by suction cups, as many of you have probably been led to believe. Also, do not ice down the bite area unless in the company of medical personnel, as gangrene often results. After you arrive at the hospital, the doctor will begin to administer shots of antivenin, and will continue to do so until the snakebite symptoms subside. The only thing you should EVER do if you happen to get bitten by a snake is to get help and get to the hospital as soon as possible. Identification of the snake is essential for proper antivenin - take the snake with you if you don't know what it is. It may be of some comfort to realize that in about 50% of all snakebites, the snake does not inject venom at all. While of less serious consequences than the above, it might also be a good idea to make use of a good sun screen to prevent sunburn, especially if you are not used to the hot Florida sun and are down on a visit from Michigan, for example. The higher the number on the sunscreen lotion, the better the protection. Grade 15 is the best sun protector; being fair-skinned and having had two surgical bouts with skin cancer myself, I realize the consequences of sunburn more readily than most of you. Ask any dermitologist in Florida what they think of a "good tan". Hopefully, these suggestions will prove beneficial on your next trip to south Florida.

CRITIQUE OF THE AUDUBON FIELD GUIDE ..... Bryant Mather

Most of you have now seen The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Butterflies, published by Knopf, 1981, and written by Robert M. Pyle. The text seems to me to be arranged backwards, but the parts fall within reasonable order. The departure is said to have been done " because true [sic] butterflies are more familiar to most people." The concept that the Hesperiidae are "untrue" I find at least irritating. The magnificent pictures are presented in a manner that is a disaster; not only is the order without reason, but much worse is the fact that no picture has the butterfly's name with it, only some coined "common name." Did anyone ever hear of the "Gray Marble" or the "Sunrise Skipper" or the "Brigadeer" or the "Reddish Hairstreak" or the "Pale Blue" ? Then, the text, which gives much good information, is marred by the emphacis on common names. We learn, for example, that Mitoura johnsoni is to this author "Johnson's Hairstreak", a.k.a. "Mistletoe Hairstreak", but we are never given its full name, nor that of any other taxon, which is : Mitoura johnsoni (Skinner). Of course, if I were to refer to something as the "Mistletoe Hairstreak", which I wouldn't, it would necessarily be Atlides halesus (Cramer), which Pyle calls the "Great Purple Hairstreak", a.k.a. "Great Blue Hairstreak". Of course, again to me, if there is a Great Purple Hairstreak, it has to be Hypaurotis crysalus (W.H. Edwards), which the book says, in italics, is "deep purple" but which the book calls the "Colorado Hairstreak."

I had looked forward to the availability of this book. Now that I've seen it, twice (first at the bookstore, and then checked out of the library for two weeks), I am deeply disappointed and have not decided to buy it. If someone would take the Miller-Brown Catalogue/Checklist and print the Audubon color pictures in proper order with full and correct names we'd have something. As it is, the Audubon Field Guide will, in my opinion, set lepidopterology back for a half a century, at least.

(Ed. Note : we welcome critiques and commentary on any book or topic of interest to our readers, and always reserve the right to provide both sides of any issue. Anyone wishing to comment on the above will also be given equal time! Of interest with regard to the above, Bob Pyle followed "standard" procedures for all of the Audubon Field Guide series, in part responsible for the somewhat awkward ordering of accounts, this to coincide with the field guide thumb key indices which are designed to give the rankest amateur a ready reference. Common name usage is also a required trademark of all Audubon Guides, and Pyle had to comply with their own publication format. Personally, I think the Guide is a useful beginner's guide to the butterflies, which is primarily what the book is designed to accomplish.)

RESEARCH REQUESTS, ETC. :

DR. JOHN HOLOYDA, 2819 N. Marmora St., Chicago, IL 60634 : I may have to scrap my Sesiidae free-pheromone program for lack of forwarded specimens. If you have taken anything with the pheromones, please write - chances are I won't want most of them. Last year's output was nil, and a lot of time, effort, and money was spent. Please call me collect in the evening (312) 237 0543 if you've had any luck with them.

JIM STEVENSON, Chief Biologist, Div. of Recreation and Parks, Florida DNR, Tallahassee, Florida 32303 : We are requesting assistance in developing a list of all butterflies inhabiting Florida and their host plants. The information will be used to tailor management in some situations to favor increase in butterfly populations on state parks. Please forward lists or information to my attention.

ERIC METZLER, program coordinator for this year's Lepidopterists' Society Meeting, to be held in Columbus, Ohio, urges that you proceed with your plans to register for attending the meeting as soon as possible. He feels that this will be one you don't want to miss; from plans I've seen, it looks like it will be one of the better meetings in recent years !

INCLUDED WITH THIS NEWSLETTER : You'll find your ballot for voting for the 1983 John Abbot Award candidates. Please fill in your vote and mail the form back to Tom Neal, 3820 NW 16th. Place, Gainesville, FL 32605. Tom will tally the votes and the winner will be announced with the next newsletter; deadline for accepting ballots will be June 30th.

***** CURRENT ZONE REPORTS *****

ZONE I : TEXAS. Coordinators, Ed Knudson, 804 Woodstock, Bellaire 77401, and Mike Rickard, 6550 Hillcroft #201, Houston, 77081.

Knudson,reporting on spring collecting trips, gave the following records from the Engeling WMA, Anderson Co., on 14-15 March : Butterflies - 15 spp., including Erynnis juvenalis, E. b. brizo, E. baptisiae, E. horatius, T. pylades, Euchloe olympia (abundant), and Incisalia hadros. Moths - Acronycta funeralis, A. vinnula, A. noctivaga, Eutolype electilis, Leuconycta lepidula, Cerma cora, Agrotis manifesta, X. rufago, Sericoglaea signata, Lepipolys perscriptum, Morrisonia distincta, Meliana linita, Orthosia alurina, Zale minerea, Z. calycanthata, and Z. lunata (Noctuids); Euthyatira pudens (Thyatiridae); Drepana arcuata (Drepanidae, apparently a new TX record); Ceratonyx satanaria, Plagodis fervidaria, Euphyia multiferata, and Hethemia pistasciaria (Geometrids, the latter two spp. probable new TX records, and C. satanaria is ALWAYS a good catch !); Griselda gerulae, G. pennsylaniana, Satronia tantilla, Sereda tautana, Gretchena bolliana, Epinotia vertumnana, Norma dietziana, Kundrya finitimana (Tortricids); Telphusa longifasciella (Gelechiid); and Scardia approximatella (Tineid). He took a good series of Copipanolis styracis at Lake Houston, Harris Co. on 30 January, and also paid a visit to Conroe, Montgomery Co. on 13 March, where he collected Glena cribrataria, Tacparia zalissaria, Eupithecia peckorum, Dyspteris abortivaria, and Epimecis hortaria (Geometrids); Cerura scitiscripta (Notodont); and a Decantha sp. (Oecophorid).

ZONE II : ALABAMA, LOUISIANA, MISSISSIPPI, and TENNESSEE. Coordinators, Vernon Brou, Rt. 1, Box 74, Edgard, LA 70049; Bryant Mather, 213 Mt. Salus Drive, Clinton, MS 39056; Charles Watson, 1339 Watauga St., Kingsport, TN 37660; and John Hyatt, 439 Forest Hills Dr., Kingsport, TN 37663.

Practically everybody has moaned about the spring weather, especially the heavy rains hitting MS, LA , and FL this spring. In spite of it all, Vernon mentioned the moths have kept him busy, spreading nearly 4000 specimens through March! A recent shipment back from Dr. Franclemont yielded new Louisiana Lepidoptera Survey records for the following Noctuids : Pyreferra hesperidago, P. indirecta, Lithophane viridipallens, L. laceyi, L. patefacta, L. signosa, and Eupsilia vinulenta. He also reported taking Feralia major in January at his new property in St. Tammany Parish, which is a new county record and an early date for the species. Ed Knudson paid a visit in December, and among material brought by was the Sphingid Sphinx libocedrus achotla, which appears to be a new Texas and U.S. record. Vernon estimated that among the material collected this spring there are probably 30 or more new LA records, once he can get them determined.

ZONE III : GEORGIA. Coordinators, Irving Finkelstein, 425 Springdale Dr. NE, Atlanta 30305; Abner Towers, P.O. Box 127, Powder Springs 30073; and Scott Brown, P.O. Box 207, Homerville 31634.

Hermann Flaschka offers some interesting comments on indoor rearing : Often it is convenient to use plastic boxes for rearing purposes, especially when one wants to prevent dehydration of food plant cuttings or to maintain a level of high humidity required by certain species in the larval stage. Occasionally, and especially in the fall, winter, or early spring periods when rearings are conducted under artificial lighting to provide warmth and photoperiod requirements, one will notice that the containers often have considerable condensation on the cover or top. Sterile filter paper or paper towels will absorb excess moisture in the bottom of the rearing container, but the problem with the top still remains, as often young larvae are attracted to both the light source and the heat, and frequently become trapped in the moisture droplets and expire by drowning. The reason for this phenomenon is that the light warms the surface area of the countertop, etc. on which the container is placed, and even though the top of the container is in closer proximity to the heat source, the lid is cooled by the circulation of air in the room, which results in condensation on the inner surface of the lid. The remedy is rather simple : you must fashion a supporting grid of some sort on which to place the container. This allows for an even circulation of surrounding air, and the cooling of the container is more evenly distributed on all sides, top, and bottom of the container. The next time you try rearing something indoors and experience a humidity problem, you'll be wise to heed this advice; hats off to Hermann for sharing this info with us!

ZONE IV : FLORIDA. Coordinators, Steve Roman, 117 Masters Blvd., Winter Park, 32792; and Lee Adair, 810 Gascon Place, Temple Terrace 33617.

Florida had no winter to speak of, but the period between late February and late April was a continual disaster for collectors: practically every county set spring rainfall records, and the temperatures have been much below normal. The "normal" timing of nearly all single brooded species has been off, in the case of the spring hairstreaks, by almost a month, and it appears there will be no peak, only a prolonged emergence. South Florida is reported the lushest in terms of vegetation in a number of years, but general collecting efforts also seem down from normal. I've said it before, and I'll say it again : Florida is undoubtedly one of the toughest spots to collect in because of timing. One can develop generalized average emergence times, but do you know of anywhere else that something like Incisalia henrici has been taken from November to May, depending on annual climatic conditions and latitude for any one state ? Adair, on a trip to Liberty Co. 18-19 March, found good general collecting for moths at Torreya St. Pk., notables including Cerma cora, Acronycta lobeliae, A. laetifica, Drasteria graphica, Himella intractata, Eutolype electilis (probable state record), Pyreferra ceromatica, Xylomyges alternans, and Orthodes crenulata (Noctuids); Euphyia multiferata, Venusia comptaria, Bapta glomeraria, Cleoria sublunaria, Phigalia olivacearia, Caripeta aretaria, and Tornos scolopacinarius (Geometrids) among others. He also took Erynnis brizo brizo and E. baptisiae at a mud puddle club along the highway near Bristol. Larry Hill, who had searched for tents of Megathymus cofaqui near his home in Inverness, Citrus Co., managed to find one which produced a fine female, his second ever, although he noted that he had great luck finding tents which had already emerged. Max Salter, a retiree in St. Petersburg, reported two new county records and range extensions for Anaea andria : Brooksville, Hernando Co., and 8 miles west of Floral City, Citrus Co. Hope some of you will take a minute to wish our friend Chuck Zeiger on to full recovery after undergoing bypass heart surgery, during which he suffered a stroke. We look forward to when he can get back in the field with us.

ZONE V : VIRGINIA, NORTH & SOUTH CAROLINA. Coordinators, Ron Gatrelle, 126 Wells Road, Goose Creek, SC 29445; John Coffman, Rt. 1, Box 331, Timberville, VA 22853; and Bob Cavanaugh, P.O. Box 489, Newport, NC 28570.

Leroy Koehn, collecting in Virginia at the end of April , called to say he had collected a female Erora laeta and Amblyscirtes hegon at Ellett Valley, Montgomery Co., and that he had located a fine colony of Incisalia polios near Afton, Augusta Co. Ron Gatrelle commented that the winter in SC had been unusually mild, with Phoebis sennae eubule flying on warm days throughout. He went out looking for Megathymus yuccae, but found only old tents in Aiken Co. We look forward to his updated list of SC butterflies. John Watts, visiting family in Prosperity, Newberry Co., SC on April 1st., reported that he had good luck in the area with spring butterflies, finding Falcapica midea (common), Colias eurytheme f. ariadne, Incisalia niphon, Celestrina ladon, Everes comyntas, Calycopis cecrops, Libytheana bachmanii, Polygonia interrogationis, Euptoieta claudia, Phyciodes tharos, Pterourus glaucus, Epargyreus clarus, and Erynnis juvenalis, most of which will be new SC county records.

The Southern Lepidopterists' News is published four times annually, with membership dues of $3.00. The organization is open to anyone with an interest in the lepidoptera of the southeastern U.S. and Texas. Information about the group may be obtained by writing to the Secretary-Treasurer, Tom Neal, 3820 NW 16th. Place, Gainesville, FL 32605. Information for the newsletter should be sent to the attention of the respective Zone coordinator or forwarded directly to the Editor.

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