

## HOOKED AT DAVIS COVE

BY

HOWARD GRISHAM

Wednesday, April 28, 2004, the bullets and fires at the office were flying by and burning in usual fashion. Clients were happy; adversaries were unhappy—I was doing my job properly. However, two hot contracts needed reviewing, and there were five and seven matters set for various court hearings on Thursday the 29<sup>th</sup> and Friday the 30<sup>th</sup>, respectively. Trouble was, the end of April/first of May is prime season for the front-end of the *Poanes hobomok monofascies* flight here in north Alabama, and the weather geeks on all three local TV stations were screaming rain for the whole weekend. The only sunny day, per the geeks, would be April 29.

What to do? There was only one sane choice—I took the day off and went bug hunting. The practice of law would have to wait and properly assume its posture of taking a back seat to this hobby I find myself addicted to. My associate would cover the court hearings; my staff would have to handle Thursday's bullets and fires as best they could.

I arrived at the Davis Cove area at the foot of Bingham Mountain near Hollytree in Jackson County, Alabama, around 8:30 am. A slow meandering was commenced throughout the terrain, through the profuse *Salvia lyrata*, which seems to be the locally preferred nectar source for the *hobomoks*. Dozens and dozens of pesky male *Poanes zabulons* were patrolling the whole area, harassing the other, more peaceful, butterflies and day-flying moths, even taking on the *Erynnis* remnants from earlier this spring. Three nice *Amblyscirtes aesculapius* and several *hegon* were taken, as well as a good bag of whatever those blues are that come out just after the spring flight of *Celastrina ladon* (about twice the area size of the spring *ladon*—a few of which still were hanging around—and with almost solidly silvery-white ventral coloration). Ample quantities of the twenty-five or so commonly encountered “regulars” species were working the general area. Some interesting Hymenoptera and Diptera were taken, as well as a couple of “keeper” scarabs. Nothing out of the ordinary, except that by 11:30 am, only one fresh *monofascies* had been enveloped.

I packed up and headed northeast, to the nearby Skyline Wildlife Management Area, to see what might be out and about other than turkey hunters. Butterflies appeared to be mostly in between flights. Nothing much going on at all, except for a pristine *Atrytonopsis hianna* being harassed by an *Erynnis juvenalis* with an attitude. Anyway, I grabbed the *hianna* and headed back to Davis Cove.

By early afternoon a few remnant *Pieris virginiensis* were fluttering about. I took a tattered *Lyceana phlaeas*. It's neat how several “northern” butterflies seem to find their way to north Alabama. Ample quantities of *Calycopis cecrops* and *Callophrys gryneus* were nectaring (near as I could tell) on Beaked Corn Salad (*Valerianella radiata*), an abundant succulent annual found along roadsides, woodland margins, fields and waste places in the April/May time frame. At 1:15 pm, I stepped into a corner of one of the fields and there it was! Mostly just a silhouette, but too big to be a *cecrops*; too large and light to be a *gryneus*. Nectaring on the *radiata*. Maybe a small *Parrhasius m-album*, but heck if it didn't flap its wings a time or two. A quick grab and look-see and, what an unanticipated surprise, an *Erora laeta*! A well-endowed female, substantially larger than the Kentucky and Vermont examples reposing in my reference collection.

Two more earnest hours of tramping through the wildflowers yielded no more *laeta*, although I did manage one more *monofascies*. The day was topped off at the cabin with a two inch ribeye steak grilled just right and a half bottle of red wine. I hadn't seen a single *Homo sapien* outside of a vehicle the whole trip. Perfect. . . .

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