

# There's More to Bastrop County Than Pines...

Over the past couple of weeks I've seen more of Bastrop Co. than I even knew existed, thanks to Brush Freeman. I've mentioned Brush a few times; generally as my "bird guru" (he's the author of the checklist to "Birds of Bastrop, Buescher and Lake Bastrop State Parks"), but few know that he's also a moth and beetle and Odonate (and more) nut. Sort of a kindred spirit, if you will.

About three weeks ago, Brush reported a potential new county record butterfly, a White-M Hairstreak, *Parrhasius m-album*, from his property in Utley. To cap it off, the next day, he reported three Mourning Cloaks, *Nymphalis antiopa*, coming to his banana feeders. So, needing to see/photo the NCR and having not seen a Mourning Cloak since mid-Spring 2005, I arranged to invite myself over for a look-see.

We never did find that hairstreak again but did find lots of other things to keep us busy for most of a day. The worst thing you can do, time-wise, is get two naturalists who've never met before out in the field at the same time. If we'd been indoors, the whole meeting might have taken 10 minutes but get us outside and it's "where did the day go?"

A week or so later we managed to spend another partial day in the field when I contacted him about a grad student who was looking for specific populations of Drummond's Phlox. That day we saw more Great Purple Hairstreaks, *Atides halesus*, up to nine at a time, than either of us had ever seen before and were treated to a few Soapberry Hairstreaks, *Phaeostrymon alcestis*, as a topper (but still no White-M).



A year ago, in mid-May of 2006, Brush, together with April Day, had been birding the Colorado River at McKinney Roughs when they found an active population of Texas Powdered Skippers, *Systasea pulverulenta*, a new county record. Since I'd seen only a couple of these in deep south Texas, and had never gotten a decent photo of one (and needed one for my field guide), I visited the park to see if I could find one.

Turn's out I went to the entirely wrong area, so Brush offered to take me to the exact spot. How could I refuse? We visited there this past Sunday and sure enough found the beasts exactly where they were supposed to be. As you might expect, we also found a bunch of other stuff, some of them unexpected—like the active, breeding population of Mexican Yellows, *Eurema mexicana*, that is not supposed to be here at this time of year (this butterfly is generally a late-summer/early-fall colonist from the south)—and others just plain startling, like the Limacodid "slug" caterpillar with the stinging spines that I'm really glad I didn't touch!

"Something new everyday," that's my motto. And Bastrop County is just the place to do it!

**Photos:** Top: Brush Freeman and April Day discovered a "new" to Bastrop Co. population of Texas Powdered Skippers, *Systasea pulverulenta*, in May 2006. I photo'd this one May 20, 2007. Bottom: Look, but don't touch! This Spiny Oak Slug (*Euclea delphinii*) caterpillar has stinging spines that rival those of nettles.