

# Lifestyles of the Scaled and Beautiful: Gray Hairstreak

by Berry Nall

**Gray Hairstreaks** are resident, and often common, from southern Canada through all of the continental United States south through Central and South America. One reason they are able to occupy such a large territory is the diversity of caterpillar foodplants they can use. According to David Wagner's *Caterpillars of Eastern North America*, Gray Hairstreak caterpillars have been recorded using more than

20 plant families. That is an incredible spectrum of hosts, given that caterpillars of some species of butterfly use only one species or genus of plant for food.

My first experience raising a Gray Hairstreak came when I saw a female laying eggs on Buffpetal (*Rhynchosida physocalyx*). In south Texas, where I live, this plant is a common weed that flowers abundantly in the spring. The



Above left: An egg on Buffpetal. Apr 4, 2009. Right: A one day old caterpillar. Apr 5, 2009.

Below: This Gray Hairstreak caterpillar, tended by an ant, proved to be parasitized. May 6, 2009.



A female Gray Hairstreak laying eggs on Buffpetal. March 31, 2009.

