



Nov. 11, 2011. Estero Llano Grande State Park, Hidalgo Co., TX.

## White-spotted Satyr (*Manataria hercyna maculata\**) in South Texas — a new United States record

by Richard G. Snider

### The Habitat

Estero Llano Grande State Park opened in 2006. The relatively small, 230 acre park has a variety habitats including newly created shallow ponds and grassland, mesquite cactus scrub, and mature Tamaulipan scrub. Part of Estero Llano Grande park is a former mobile home park dating back to the mid 1900s. The owner of the mobile home park was a horticulturist who introduced many exotic trees and shrubs from around the world including avocado, fig, mango, and loquat. Former residents also planted citrus trees and landscape plants over the years. Many are now recognized as invasive: Butterfly Tree,

Chinaberrytree, Goldenrain Tree, Rubber Vine, Catclawvine, and bamboo to name a few. A recent inventory lists over 80 exotic species. There are also many mature native trees and shrubs including large Texas Ebony and Anaqua, along with large, mature Live Oaks. Most of the mobile homes and cement pads have been removed and guinea grass has filled in the spaces. Texas Parks is in the process of developing a management plan for the area. In the meantime biological succession is taking place. This unique area of Estero, referred to as the "Tropical Zone," is where the White-spotted Satyr appeared.

\*neither the English nor scientific name has yet been reviewed by the NABA Names Committee



Top: Underside of FW, bereft of body due to presumed predation. Nov. 26, 2011.

Bottom: Topside of same FW.

### The Discovery

As one of the host volunteers at the park one duty included leading butterfly walks and maintaining banana bait in the bait logs. The bait logs were located very close to where we lived and so I was able to monitor them morning to night.

The morning of Monday Nov. 11, 2011 was warm, about 75F. There were already butterflies on the bait as I approached it at 9:30 AM. I saw the usual Red Admirals and one other dark butterfly I first thought, from the size and shape, to be an early Mexican Bluewing, but something about it didn't look quite right. Its wings were closed and it looked very dark below, almost black. From a distance of about 2 feet away there was

an outline of two large dark eye spots, but no color was visible in the shaded light. I immediately took photos, then referenced the Mexican books confirming it was a White-spotted Satyr, *Manataria hercyna*. I put out the call to butterfly enthusiasts and then rushed out the door to get more photos.

As I approached the log it flew. The flight was bouncy, a bit like its smaller satyr cousins. I watched it fly around for about a minute before it landed on the trunk of an Anaqua tree only ten feet from the bait log. It was a mature Anaqua, with a trunk more than a foot in diameter, and like typical Anaqua the trunk had long deep vertical recesses. The satyr perched in a recess about one inch wide and close to an inch deep. It was about three feet above the ground.

In the next hour 29 people arrived to see and photograph the butterfly as it sat in this spot. After about a hour, and well after all the camera flashes ceased, it flew again. It circled around, staying fairly low, and landed, face down, on the other side of the same Anaqua tree, again about three feet above the ground. In all we watched it for most of the morning before it flew and we lost track of it.

### More Sightings

The butterfly visited the log the next day, Tuesday, Nov. 22, at 7:15 AM but stayed only 10 minutes. Tuesday was a warm morning, approximately 75° F. Wednesday morning was cooler, about 50° F and it was not seen on the bait in the morning. It warmed up to 80° F in the afternoon and the satyr came at 4:30 PM and stayed for an hour. It was not seen Thursday or Friday.

On morning of Saturday Nov. 26 I found one forewing of the satyr on the concrete pad of our site. Butterfly predation by birds, dragonflies, and praying mantises is fairly common and we sometimes see them stripping wings from butterflies. This suggests the satyr was a victim of predation. After photographing both sides of the wing it was collected and now resides in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Lepidoptera collection.

### Range and Habits

In Mexico, White-spotted Satyr is primarily a low to moderate elevation species, found in both seasonal and evergreen tropical woodland. It appears to be absent from the Mexican central highlands, but occurs throughout lowland Mexico, from Tamaulipas in the east and Sonora in the west, south through Central America, with other subspecies ranging throughout much of South America.

As far as I am aware, the previous closest records to the United States are from the Gomez Farias area in Tamaulipas (see photo) and from the Barranca area in the state of Sonora. Both localities are approximately 200 miles from the U.S. border and so it is possible that this species will eventually stray to southeastern Arizona. However, in the East, other, more northerly areas in Tamaulipas, such as the Sierra San Carlos, are very poorly known, and it is entirely possible that White-spotted Satyr is resident there, approximately 100 miles from the United States border, or even farther north.

This species is reported to undertake migratory movements in Costa Rica and, although such movements are unreported from Mexico, it is possible that the species has a propensity to undertake large scale movements.

Most reported caterpillar foodplants are bamboos, but there is at least one report of a non-bamboo grass. 

*Top right: A Google Earth image of extreme southeastern Texas and northeastern Mexico.*

*Bottom right: A White-spotted Satyr photographed at Gomez Farias, Tamaulipas, Mexico on Dec. 14, 1999.*



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