NATUREWATCH

Two Heads are Better than One

By Jim and Lynne Weber

Hairstreaks are mainly small butterflies, most with threadlike tails on their hindwings. They typically fly rapidly, fitting from side to side or in circles, before sticking a landing. Most perch with their wings closed, and reveal their upper surface only in flight. Males and females can look quite similar, but the males will often be the more vibrantly colored of the two.

In central Texas we have three common hairstreak butterflies. The largest, as indicated by its name, is the Great Purple Hairstreak (Atlides halesus). Dusky purplish-black below and brilliant blue above with red spots near the base of the wings and a bright orange abdomen, this butterfly flies spring through fall. It tends to stay well above the ground, and males will sit on trees on hill summits or flat plains to await females, mostly in the afternoon. Its larval foodplant, or plant upon which the female lays her eggs, is mistletoe species in the genus Phoradendron.

Another commonly encountered hairstreak is the Gray Hairstreak (Strymon melinus). It has only one tail on the hindwing and an upperside that is blue-gray with a large reddish-orange spot near the tail. The male’s abdomen is orange and the female’s is gray. In the spring and fall its underside is dark gray, and paler gray in the summer, but it always has a dashed white line, parallel and inset from the wing’s edge, bordered with orange. It flies from February to November and is the most widespread hairstreak in North America. Males perch all afternoon and into evening on small trees and shrubs to seek receptive females, who lay eggs one at a time on a wide variety of plants including peas.

One of our most beautiful hairstreaks is the Juniper Hairstreak (Callophrys gryneus), belonging to a group called Evergreen Hairstreaks, which are widespread and variable. The upperside of the male is dark brown with an olive-colored sheen, and the female is blackish brown. Their underside is a vibrant green with two white spots near the base of the forewing and an irregular white line edged inwardly with a reddish-brown. Males perch on host trees, those in the genus Juniperus like our native Ashe Juniper, awaiting females. They perch with their wings closed and blend into the junipers so well that they may not be noticed.

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until moving branches cause them to fly.
When it comes to survival, hairstreaks have developed an interesting adaptation, much of which has to do with their tails. Often having distinct markings or spots near these tails, together they form what is known as a 'false head' with the tails looking like antennae. The illusion is carried further when the hairstreak performs a back-and-forth 'sawing' motion with the hindwings when resting. This motion can distract would be predators such as spiders, causing them to attack the wrong end of the butterfly, leaving the vital structures intact.
Missing tails and part of the lower portion of the hindwings does not hinder flight, and the butterfly lives to carry on another day. So it really is true that two heads are better than one!

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How’s your “brisketiquette?”

With the summer vacation in full swing, the kids out of school, and noodles floating in the pool, it’s no doubt the grill is staying fired up. But…before you kick off the flip-flops, here are a few barbecue etiquette tips to ensure your grill fest goes down as the best on the block. Wait. Barbecue etiquette, you say? Yes, it exists.

1. If you’re invited to a barbecue party thrown by an individual/family, avoid showing up empty-handed. A side of coleslaw, apple pie, or pitcher of lemonade will do the trick.

2. A barbecue is an informal affair – no need to worry about which fork and knife to use. Go ahead and use your fingers in lieu of utensils. Larger pieces of food, however, should be cut with a knife and fork. No need to get medieval on us.

3. If you’re like many people who wonder what is the proper way to squeeze a lemon slice and a lemon wedge? Well, here is the answer: if it is a slice, don’t squeeze it-just drop it in the glass. If it is a wedge, cup your hand over it to prevent squirting, and squeeze it into the glass. Who likes lemon pulp in the eye? Not me.

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4. Corn on the cob vs. man. For most people, eating corn on the cob is one of life’s biggest challenges. Okay, well, maybe it’s just a challenge. The best way to approach a hot cob: simply, butter a few rows of corn at a time, hold the corn firmly by the ends with two hands (or use corn skewers), and eat a few rows at a time from left to right. If you prefer to skip the bite-off-the-cob approach, you may also cut kernels off of the cob with a knife, cutting in a vertical, downward manner.

5. Similar to corn on the cob, ribs are meant to be eaten with your hands. Given their messy nature, however, it’s important to have napkins on hand. For this barbecue favorite, bibs are not necessary.

6. Sauce is boss, unless it isn’t offered. While Texans are usually proud of their barbecue sauce, some barbecue purists prefer no sauce to appreciate the natural, smoked flavor of the meat. Ask for sauce only when you know it’s available, or if your child requests it.

7. Grilled shrimp can be easy to eat or take a little work, depending on how it is served. As a general rule of thumb, if the shrimp has the tail on, you can use your fingers. Tails off, use a fork!

8. When hosting a large group, be sure to have a wide variety of food options for vegetarians and children.

9. To pick or not to pick? Your teeth that is. Often times, meat can be tricky to eat and require some dental maintenance. At every expense, avoid removing food from your teeth in public. Toothpicks may be used, but only in private. So what should you do if you notice someone else in the same predicament? Be discreet, but do tell.

10. Last and not least, respect the griller’s domain. If the host/griller has samples to offer, he/she will do so. Never assume you may help yourself to try what “smells good.”

Now that the fundamentals are covered, what’s for lunch?

This article was contributed by the National League of Junior Cotillions – Travis County, a contemporary etiquette, social skills and dance training program that serves 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in Austin. A parent informational session will be held at Barton Creek Country Club on Wednesday, August 13th at 7:30 p.m., and at the Lakeway Resort & Spa on Thursday, August 14th at 7:30 p.m. To RSVP for the informational session or learn more about the program, contact Directors, Marisol Foster or Courtney Duncan at 512.369.8302, or duncan.foster@nljc.com. Class enrollment is limited, but registration is now available online at www.nljc-austin.com.
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*Source: Texas DFPS, Watch Kids Around Water

LAYERS OF PROTECTION CAN PREVENT DROWNING

CONSTANT VISUAL SUPERVISION
LEARN TO SWIM
WEAR LIFE JACKETS
MULTIPLE BARRIERS AROUND WATER
KEEP BACKYARDS & BATHROOMS SAFER

CHECK POOL & HOT TUB FIRST
STAY AWAY FROM DRAINS
BE SAFER AT THE BEACH
LEARN CPR & REFRESH SKILLS YEARLY
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The Modern Game: The Backhand Approach Shot

In previous newsletters, I offered tips on how to execute the basic strokes for players who are just beginning to play tennis or who want to resume playing. I am now offering suggestions on how to play the “modern” game mostly geared towards players who are happy with hitting the ball over the net and controlling the point with consistency. These players may be already playing for leagues or in tournaments and are looking for more “weapons” on the court.

In this issue, I will offer instructions on how to execute the Top Backhand Approach Shot. This shot is used when an opponent hits a soft shot that has bounced high over the net. The player will take advantage and will charge to the net, thus hitting with top spin high over the net and hit with power. When the ball hits the court, it will take a big hop, forcing the opponent to fall back close to the fence, or to hit the ball on the rise. This shot can be used as a “winner” or as an “approach shot.”

In the illustrations, Kaylen Combs, one of the top players of the Grey Rock Tennis Academy, shows the proper technique to execute this stroke. Kaylen is coached by the Director of the Tennis Academy, Darin Pleasant, who is showing her the proper point of contact on step 2. Kaylen plays with her left hand.

Step 1: The Back Swing: When Kaylen sees the opportunity, she makes a quick turn of her upper body and takes the racket high and back. The head of the racket is now at shoulder height, her shoulders are turned, the right hand gripping the racket and her left hand relaxed. Her weight is on the front foot as her momentum carries her forward to attack the ball. Her right wrist is “laid back” to allow maximum point of contact.

Step 2: The Point of Contact: The success of a top spin shot is keeping the ball on the strings going from low to high in a 30 degree angle and accelerating the racket head around the outside of the ball. Kaylyn started the swing high and “looped” it to allow the head of the racket to drop down. She will be brushing around the outside of the ball as she makes contact with it. Her left shoulder is almost opening and her weight has is moving through the shot.

Step 3: The Follow Through: In order to get maximum control and power, Kaylen is keeping her right arm extended through the shot. She has “snapped” her right wrist and has the head of the racket facing down. Her weight is going forward.

Step 4: The Finish: Kaylen’s upper body acceleration forced the head of the racket to “wrap around” her left ear, thus creating the most power and topspin on the ball. Her legs are already in position to move forward the net for a volley. Her right foot should naturally move forward due to her momentum and racket speed. From her looks, she apparently hit a very wide cross court approach shot for a defensive return.

Step 5: The Volley Winner: Once Kaylen hit, she moved to the net for a “winner”. By the smile on her face, her backhand approach shot was successful and she won the point with a backhand volley.

Look in the next Newsletter for: “The Modern Game: The Swinging Forehand Approach Shot”
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