

## Chapter IV

Alternative Traps   SNAKE!   End of the Road   Hanging Dog   Blacklighting

We are nothing if not smart monkeys. Yesterday went amazingly well, the blacklights were modified to fit our bulbs, and while we didn't have proper containers to collect the specimens in, that's nothing some duct tape and a ziplock won't fix (although we are dangerously low on gallon sized bags), Erin got cups and bait at the supermarket allowing for the construction and deployment of her pitfalls, and the sheet blacklight went up and worked without a hitch.

So today is a day for more improvisation. The saddest part of losing the luggage was the loss of the Flight Intercept Traps (FITs for short). I made the damn things, and, while not technologically rigorous, there is a lot of cutting, sewing, measuring, etc. involved. I broke two needs in my sewing machine making this batch and I was looking forward to using these again in the Smokies this coming fall (this past spring I was looking forward to using those FITs in Taiwan, but all but



Trail with a View



Slightly better than absolute utter failure

one was destroyed by bears, so back to the sewing machine). However, there is another passive technique for collecting flying and litter dwelling insects; a YELLOW pan trap. For some reason day flying insects tend to be attracted to yellow (while night flying insects are usually NOT attracted to yellow lights, weird). So if you put out a YELLOW pan with some preservative in it stuff will fly along, crash into it, and you have your specimens. Additionally any trap near the ground tends to pick up insects that hop, spring, run, or crawl through and over the

leaf litter. So, in the spirit of a YELLOW pan trap, Chris got the closest thing he could at the supermarket: a PINK pan trap. And not even a good pink, kind of a lazy, bordering on regurgitated strawberries and cream pink.

So it fell to me to make these PINK pan traps work, or at least try to achieve something slightly better than absolute utter failure. I haven't mentioned the rain much, but it's been raining, mostly in the afternoon, but sometimes it likes to sneak in a little drizzle in the morning, or around lunch, or just before bed time, or over night. Luckily the rain doesn't make me any wetter, I'm a veritable fountain in this balmy clime, so preventative measures such as a jacket or even an umbrella are laughably ineffective. I mention rain, because a plate left out on the forest floor with a little drizzle of antifreeze is poorly adapted in the areas of keeping rain out and keeping the preservative and specimens in.

But this is nothing a smart monkey can't handle. Andy and Arno tagged along as we slogged up the trail we went yesterday. Using a quart bag, an odd shaped bag Arno had, duct tap, and some sticks, we were able to make a makeshift FIT/Pan Trap that was rain proof. Hurray! Will they work? Who knows, but at least they look good. We set up 5 along the trail.



**Green Viper**

Matt, Chris, and Erin had continued on up the trail to collect anything that had come into the bait traps over night. After we got our traps deployed, Andy, Arno, and I started on up the trail to meet up with the other group. When we came to the last bait cup they were nowhere to be found. Chris had mentioned earlier that he had never been to the end of this particular trail, so I surmised this was his plan. We walked for what seemed like hours, and shortly after decrying that we would only walk for 5 more minutes before abandoning this wild goose chase, we met them just on the other side of another broken bridge. Just as we saw them, someone yelled "Snake!"

Snakes are usually hard to



come by, being predators and weary means that they are usually not in large numbers and usually well hidden. This turned out to be a beautiful green viper. Matt had been molesting some toad when he spied the snake resting peacefully under a frond. We all gathered around and took turns getting as close as possible for a photograph, while others commented that we'd be bitten fo' sho'.



**Picture of a Pre-Picture**

Continuing up the trail I was able to get a few more damselfly. I checked my book last night, these are *Psolodesmus*

*mandarinus mandarinus* a subspecies found in Northeastern Taiwan and mainland

China. Personal space is much smaller to approaching nonexistent in Taiwan, so Andy almost got hit a few times when I went after a damselfly and we was standing too close!

We finally made it, well, not to the end of the trail, but as far as we were going to go. The trail proper faltered at a wooden (somewhat rotten and squeaky) platform on the edge of a shear drop off into a raging torrent one hundred feet below. I convinced everyone to "gather 'round" and took a picture of the crew and the view. How far the water hose when up and where it gathered its water, was anybody's guess.

We stopped for some reason on the hike back down, and Matt pointed out a very boring brown bodied, clear winged damselfly that instantly sent heart pumping. I said "OH, OH!" which means, "get the hell out of my way," but Erin was slow, so I shoved her back, not quite off the trail and over the edge, but nearly so, luckily Matt was there to break her fall, and I lunged in for the catch. In Thailand I collected only one of two specimens of a damselfly that looks almost exactly like this that belongs to the small family Megapodagrionidae. It turns out what I collected was *Rhipidolestes aculeatus*, the only member of this family in Taiwan.



**Hanging Dog Trap**

After lunch it was time for more improvisations. I mentioned earlier looking for some sort of fish net bags, and eventually having to purchase real fishnet bags. I also got a few BIG, 20 gallons I think, Ziplock bags. The idea is to create what I am calling a “disturbance trap”. I gather up some dead wood, put in into the fishnet bag, encase all this in a sealed ziplock bag, pour some preservative in the bottom of the ziplock, and hang the whole affair in the sun.

The bugs abandon their hold for cooler places, and plop, into the preservative they go. Matt helped with the final design which incorporated a fill/drain spout in the bottom. We hung the affair from a tree limb on the edge of a



**Sharp cliff, windy road, and rolling hills.**

shear cliff that dropped about 100 feet to the road below. No need to walk far to check this one, it was about 30 paces from where we were staying! When we got it set up it looked more like we’d hung a Scottish Terrier than some dead logs, so the affair became affectionately known as a “hanging dog trap”.



**Coollest moth of the night**

Another rainy night, but the gazebo allows for rain free blacklighting. Still not very good for beetles, lots of moths though. If we could get a clear rainless night, then maybe we’d get more proper bugs.