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**EASTERN RANGE EXTENSION FOR *OARISMA POWESHEIK*
PARKER (LEPIDOPTERA: HESPERIIDAE)**

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According to Klotz (1951), the range of *Oarisma powesheik* Parker (Figs. 1, 2) extends from Montana east to Iowa, Wisconsin, Northern Illinois, and Michigan. The first Michigan record was in Kent County made in 1893 by Wolcott who found it at Lamberton Lake. Later *powesheik* was collected by Newcomb in 1930, McAlpine in 1937 and 1963, Nielsen (1970) in 1963 and 1964, and Warczynski in 1968 at the same area. It was also taken at nearby Button Lake which flows into Lamberton Lake. In his list of Michigan Butterflies, Moore (1960) gave the flight period as July 9-12, although, on the basis of present knowledge, 4-20 might be more accurate.

Oarisma powesheik has been considered rare in Michigan and limited to the Lamberton Lake Area which is now completely urbanized by the City of Grand Rapids. The continued persistence of the skipper in the small remaining undisturbed habitat in this area is doubtful as no specimens were located there either in 1969, 1970, or 1971.

Fortunately, I am able to report additional localities which are of interest because they represent range extensions considerably to the east of Lamberton Lake.

On July 5, 1970 I discovered a Michigan colony in Rose Township, Oakland County—105 miles east of Lamberton Lake. On July 15, the same year, Mogens C. Nielsen found an additional colony in Hartland Township, Livingston County, which is ten miles southwest of the Oakland County location.

When I first found the Oakland County colony, I was engaged in photography of various plants. I noticed skippers, but thought they were *Thymelicus lineola* (Ochsenheimer) as I had never seen live *powesheik* before, and, after all, I was over 100 miles east of the only known Michigan colony of that species. However, it soon became apparent that I was mistaken, for a close look and a bare-hands capture of a specimen revealed that the skippers were actually *powesheik*. I returned to my car for a net and subsequently captured eight immaculate males.

Unless resting, *Oarisma powesheik* was either feeding on flowers or making short flights from one blade of grass to another. The preferred flower was a Pale-spike Lobelia, *Lobelia spicata*, with occasional specimens on the flowers of Black-eyed Susan, *Rudbeckia hirta*. Other flowers in bloom at the time, but evidently not visited, were the Common Milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*; Butterflyweed, *Asclepias tuberosa*; Colicroot, *Alettris farinosa*; and Common Elderberry, *Sambucus canadensis*.

The flight, in general, was slow and easily followed as the skippers skimmed over the grasses. Not very wary, they could usually be approached to within two feet. While in a resting or feeding position, the wings were always closed.

Observations on July 5 were made during the period, 3 to 5 PM. The day was perfect, a clear blue sky, temperature in the low 80s, fahrenheit, and the wind was gusting to ten miles per hour. Other butterflies observed in the same area were *Speyeria cybele*, *Phyciodes tharos*, *Boloria selene myrina*, *Harkenclenus titus*, *Lethe eurydice*, and *Lycæna dorcas*.

On July 6, I arrived in the late afternoon and observed the area from 6 to 8:45 PM. The activity of the skipper was similar to that of July 5. As the sun dropped into the horizon, *powesheik* became less interested in flowers and seems more prone to make more short flights above the grasses. After sunset, the skipper was found resting among the tops of grasses and other vegetation.

On July 8 and 12 the weather was generally poor. An afternoon shower and cool temperatures on the 8th reduced activity to short flights and rare flower visits. On July 12 wet and cloudy weather with low temperatures during the same period resulted in similar reduced activity. The first female was observed on July 12. Observations were made between 5 and 7 PM.



Fig. 1. A male *Oarisma powesheik* in a typical rest position.

On July 18 overcast skies prevailed after some sun earlier in the day. Individuals were noticeably worn and had an average flight speed much greater than previously seen. A few females were observed visiting flowers although only one was witnessed actually to oviposit. She flew slowly among the grasses and alighted on a single blade of Spike-Rush, *Eleocharis elliptica*. After a few seconds a single egg was deposited. The female then flew to a nearby Black-eyed Susan flower and remained there for five minutes before darting out of sight. No other active females were seen during one hour of observation from 11 AM to 12 Noon. Other Spike-Rushes in the immediate surroundings of the deposited eggs were examined and identical appearing eggs were located.

When I returned once again to the locality on July 31, no specimens of *powesheik* were seen.

The same Oakland County site was visited the following year on July 7 and 20, 1971. The activity of *powesheik* was similar to that of 1970 except for an approximately one week earlier flight period and a greater interest in flowers. In fact, every flower species in the area had at least one specimen visiting it, in contrast to 1970 when *Lobelia spicata* was the preferred blossom.

On July 7, 1971, I twice witnessed ova being deposited on an unidentified sedge in the same manner as observed July 18, 1970. Unfortunately circumstances again did not allow study of the larva.

Of prime interest in 1971 was the discovery of three additional colonies, two and seven miles southeast of the original Oakland County site and one and one-half miles south of the Livingston County site. All known Michigan localities for *powesheik* (Kent,

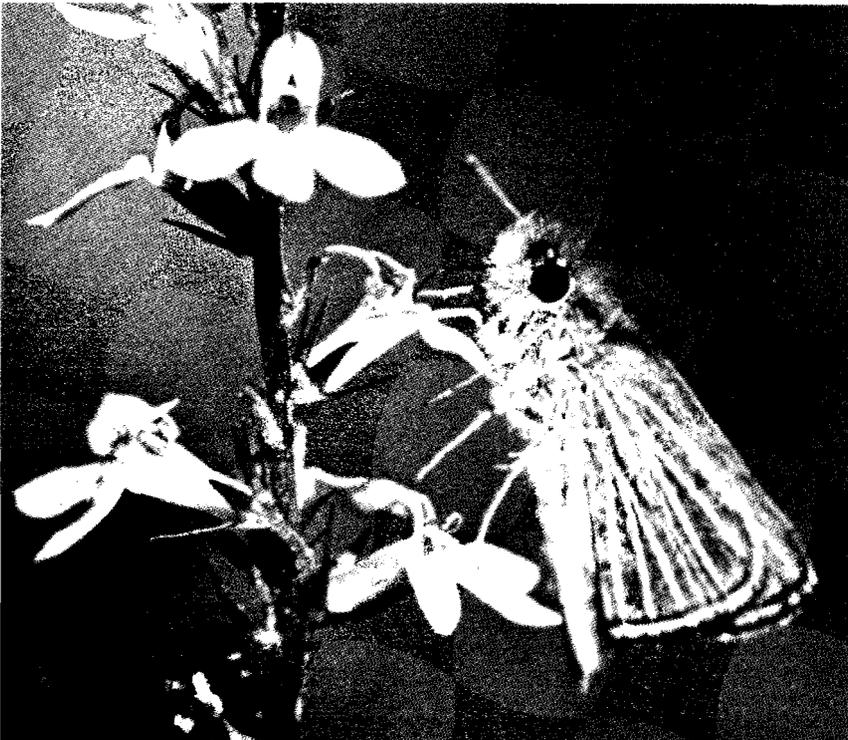


Fig. 2. A male *Oarisma powesheik* feeding on *Lobelia spicata*.

Livingston, and Oakland) are similar in that they are wet, marshy meadows with such dominant plants as Shrubby Cinquefoil, *Potentilla fruticosa*; Black-eyed Susan, *Rudbeckia hirta*; and Red Osier, *Cornus stolonifera*. A number of characteristic grasses, sedges, and rushes are present, giving the habitat the appearance of a wet prairie. *Powesheik* seemed to be restricted to this type of habitat as no specimens were found outside any particular flight area.

Five colonies of *O. powesheik* are now known in Eastern Michigan. Continued search may increase the number. An important question is how safe are these sites from urbanization? It is fortunate that the first Oakland County site is one of 26 nature sanctuaries across Michigan owned by the Michigan Nature Association. The other sites are less likely to remain inviolate as housing developments are very close because of the proximity of Detroit. Will the fate of these colonies be the same as at Lamberton Lake?

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