

THE AMERICAN BIOLOGY TEACHER



About Our Cover

The giant robber fly (*Promachus hinei*) is often heard before it is seen: it produces a loud buzzing sound that is often mistaken for a bee. This specimen was photographed in Eno River State Park, north of Durham, North Carolina, in August 2013. The area is heavily wooded, and the banks of the river are supported by rhododendron and ferns.

The photographer was observing the moths at first, when the robber fly flew in and caught the moths with its legs. The fly then carried his moth meal to a branch at eye level, allowing for a great opportunity to take this photo.

The giant robber fly is found in 47 states and throughout Mexico. The adults can range in size from 18 to 40 mm. Coloration is usually combinations of brown, black, orange, and ivory, and the lateral portions of the fly are often striped. Robber flies have dense bristles on the head and between the eyes. Their stout legs are used to catch prey while in flight. Robber flies mainly prey on other flying insects, including bees, beetles, wasps, and, as seen here, moths.

This photograph was taken with a Cannon Powershot SX40HS set at f/58, 1/202 sec, ISO 200. The photographer, Christina Donovan, is a native North Carolinian from the Raleigh area and a college freshman. She is studying Environmental Science at Appalachian State University.

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