Introduction
A conservation success story, Atalas, large and beautiful hairstreaks, have come back from near extirpation by a combination of state government protection and the action of engaged private citizens.

Beginning in the late 19th century, Atalas declined throughout south Florida due to the commercial harvesting of their caterpillar foodplant, Coontie, for the production of arrowroot starch and because of the intensive development of their pine rockland and coastal hammock habitats.

Atala: The Fun
Hairstreak Rides Again

by Gil Pettigrew

Above: An adult Atala, with its brilliant red-orange abdomen and hindwing spot says “don’t try to eat me — I’m dangerous.” May 28, 2000. Delray Beach, Palm Beach Co., FL.

Opposite page: Coontie, a cycad native to south Florida, is the original caterpillar foodplant for Atalas. Here it is growing in rock pineland habitat at Navy Wells, Miami-Dade Co., FL. March 14, 2005.