

APRIL 1 - 14, 2018 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

HOUSE FINCH vs GOLDFINCH



(1) House Finch, *Haemorhous mexicanus*, female,
© Dick Harlow

Finches are an interesting group of birds. In the East we have the House Finch, American Goldfinch and Purple Finch. The Purple Finch will be taken up in a later notes.

During the spring it is easy to tell a Goldfinch from a House Finch; but in the winter when the goldfinch loses its yellow plumage it is more difficult for some people to tell the difference.

Notice that the House Finch female is brown and brown flecked. It does not have black wings with white and is a fairly drab solid brown looking bird.

Both the male and female **winter** plumaged American Goldfinch are somewhat similar to the House Finch picture (1) except the female goldfinch shows no yellow on the throat or elsewhere, but still retains the dark gray-black wings. Whereas the male has black wings with white in varying intensities and shades of very light yellow.

The male House Finch on the other hand is easy to tell apart from the female as seen in picture 2. Notice that the rose wash is lighter over the immediate back.



(2) House Finch, *Haemorhous mexicanus*, male
© Dick Harlow

By color alone you would be able to say that the above photograph is a male House Finch.

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(3) **American Goldfinch**, *Spinus tristis*, male, summer plumage, © Dick Harlow

Both picture 3 and 4 are male American Goldfinch and it can easily be seen in picture 3 that you are looking at a male. However, in picture 4 the yellow plumage is gone. In spring/summer plumage, males are definitely easy to identify. But, come late Fall, goldfinches lose their bright yellow plumage and take on a more mundane look with only a hint of yellow at the throat for males, but retaining the jet-black wings with white markings.



(4) **American Goldfinch**, *Spinus tristis*, male, winter plumage, © Dick Harlow



(5) **American Goldfinch**, *Spinus tristis*, female, summer plumage, © Dick Harlow

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Notice that picture 5 shows little to no yellow, very drab mauve, tan light brown feathering, typical of a breeding female goldfinch.

It can be confusing, but once you get the hang of it, you will be happy!

DRAGONFLIES



Canada Darner, *Aeshna canadensis*, laying eggs under water on stem of Cat-nine-tail at South Pond.
© Dick Harlow

Both Damselflies and Dragonflies have a 3-stage life cycle, also known as incomplete metamorphosis. The three-stage life cycle: Egg-larva-adult. Another way to look at it is that the fertilized egg hatches into a feeding stage known as a nymph, then it molts 15 times growing larger each time before it emerges from the water and breaks its nymph casing and transitions into a flying adult.

Water is needed for the first two stages and that water must have the necessary ingredients: oxygen, plant material and other insects, young fish, or both, that will insure success for the developing and molting nymph.



Dragonfly nymph eating a young frog

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© Gwen Pearson

Dragonfly and Damselfly nymphs are ferocious predators. They will feed on fingerling fish, young amphibians, other large insects such as water beetles, almost anything that moves. Of course, these nymphs will be food for larger fish in the course of time and the food chain.

EastView has two small retention ponds. These ponds are there to collect water laden with toxins in the form of fertilizer, car and truck waste such as grease and oil and any other toxins that are deposited on EastView paths, roadways or lawns. These bodies of water also form a habitat for insects, mammals and frogs. It also provides a source of water for Tree Swallows and other fly catching birds in the summer.



Damselfly: Marsh Bluet, *Enallagma eribium*,

© Dick Harlow

Thankfully, the toxins are mostly, not fully, but mostly, tied up chemically with solids and sediments in the water and therefore settle out and drop to the bottom. The effect of these toxins on the pond life is for another note. Suffice it to say water is water with plants and algae growing in it and therefore certainly satisfactory as far as a female dragonfly or damselfly is concerned.

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

White-tailed Deer
Eastern Cottontail Rabbit

Weather Tidbits

Month of APRIL 1-14, 2018

[*All Measurements taken at solar noon \(1230 EST\).*](#)

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 26.8 mm or 1.05 inches

Overcast Days: 9