

APRIL 15 – 30, 2017 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

YELLOW RAIL



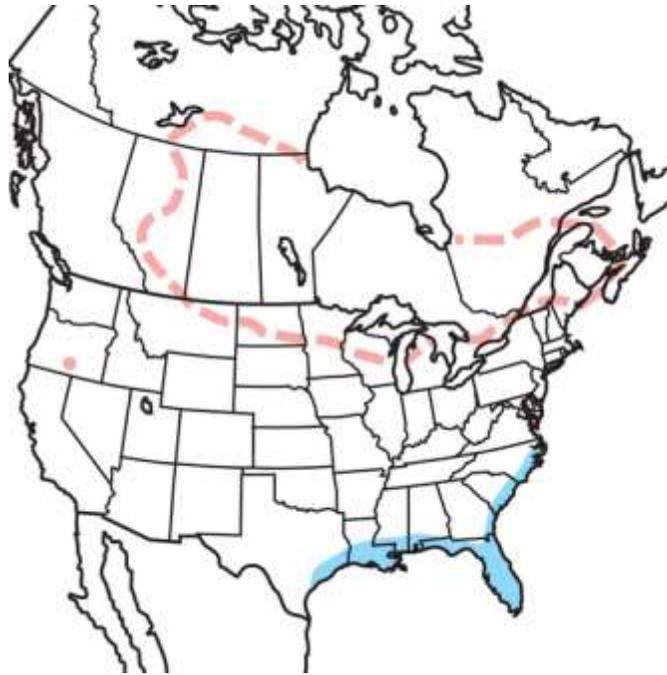
Yellow Rail, *Coturnicops noveboracensis*
© Rick and Nora Bowers/VIREO

The Yellow Rail, *Coturnicops noveboracensis* is a very secretive, small marsh rail part of the family of Rallidae. The only time I could see one was on an organized birding trip at night with a flash light. We both heard and saw the rail at that time and I also heard one on a separate trip. Being able to hear this bird is for many as good as seeing it.

I thought it would be appropriate to write something about this rare Vermont bird that was heard next to EastView property. On the far side of South Pond there are marshy wet meadow areas. From the wet marshy area in-back of the far end of the Deer Meadow Drive cottages on 11 April 2017 a clear loud Tick-Tick, Tick-Tick, Tick-Tick-Tick, Tick-Tick- Tick sound was heard. It continued for about 2 minutes, a pause and again for a minute or two. It kept this up for approximately 5-8 minutes. Investigation of Cornell Ornithology Bird sounds for Yellow Rail revealed that this sound was exactly what was heard. Several other rail sounds were also played for comparison and none came close to the sound that was heard in the marshy area.

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Dotted area birds breeding area and the blue its wintering range. © Audubon Field Guide

I thought this was a rather rare species for Vermont and sent an inquiry to Ron Payne of Otter Creek Audubon. His comments are as follows: "The first accepted record of this species was recorded on 18 July 1887, collected by George H. Ross in Mount Holly. In 1913, another specimen was collected by Richard Marble, (Cindy's Uncle), in Windsor, VT. From there the reports jump forward to a heard only bird at South Bay in Newport on 3 June 1975 and documented by Frank Oatman and Jon Wood, and two years later on 10 September 1977 George O'Shea documented the fourth and last record of this species."

Wow, that was neat that both Cindy and I decided to sit out on our patio in the late afternoon and heard this rail call that turns out to be a rare bird for Vermont and EastView. Obviously, I am delighted that this record will at least be part of the history of EastView birds.

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READY FOR BUTTERFLIES AND HUMMERS?

If you like to see hummingbirds around your garden and butterflies using your flowers for the nectar or to pollinate them, then you might be interested in a few of these flowering plants.



(1) **Weigela shrub**, *Weigela florida*, 'Red Prince'
© Dick Harlow

Picture (1) is a variety of Weigela called 'Red Prince'; both this red flowered variety of Weigela shrub as well as the pink variety are excellent Hummingbird attractants.

Although my records do not have the first Butterfly and "hummer" being observed using this shrub before May 8, it always helps to be focused and prepared.

The hummingbird in picture (2) was perched on a bare stem of this Red Weigela shrub in the beginning of May last year.

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(2) Ruby-throated Hummingbird, *Archilochus colubris*,
Female © Dick Harlow



(3) **Scarlet Beebalm**, *Monarda didyma*,
© Dick Harlow

Hummingbirds are attracted to red, purple- red, or pink flowers primarily. They will go to other colored flowers, some for the insects they attract, others for their nectar supplement. Picture (3) is of Beebalm in our garden here at EastView.

For each butterfly, here I have recorded tabulations based on 23 weeks. Since 2013 that tabulation is based on whether the butterflies that are/were present on the EastView campus during the summer. My tabulation is based on at least seeing them once each week that they were observed.

Hummingbirds as well as butterflies are attracted to Beebalm along with other flowers that you might grow in your garden or in your raised bed.

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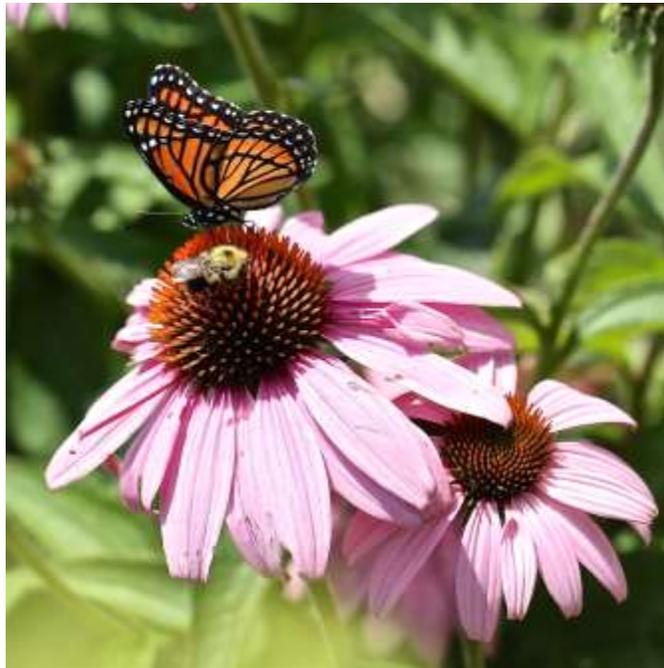
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(4) **White Admiral**, *Limenitis arthemis arthemis*
on Scarlet Beebalm, © Dick Harlow

The White Admiral butterfly is less common here at EastView, appearing in our gardens for 2 weeks out of 23 weeks in the summer.

Therefore, if I observed it one time one week and one time the next week and none after that, it receives the designation of 2 weeks out of 23 weeks. For these designations I am not counting whether or not I saw it multiple times in a particular week.



(5) **Bumblebee & Viceroy**, *Limenitis archippus*,
on Purple Cone Flower, © Dick Harlow

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As you can see in picture 5 we have two pollinators on the flower, a bumblebee and a Viceroy Butterfly. Viceroy's are a constant in the garden. They are here 11 weeks out of 23 weeks in the summer.

In picture 6 we have the Giant Swallowtail Butterfly nectaring and pollinating the flowers of Buddleia. A southern butterfly before 2010, it is a reminder that there are individual southern species that are moving north and that this species has appeared 9 weeks out of 23 weeks in the garden.



(6) **Giant Swallowtail**, *Papilio cresphontes*, on Buddleia, © Dick Harlow

Buddleia is a shrub that is temperamental to cold. Here in Vermont we usually should treat this shrub as an annual although one of four bushes I had in 2015 survived the winter. In southern Massachusetts, it will come back each spring if it is protected.

HUMMINGBIRD NOTE: Due to the warmer than normal weather this spring especially in the south I would recommend that those of you who feed hummingbirds should consider putting your feeders out by May 2nd. Please remember NO red dye, just 4:1, 4 water: 1 table sugar.

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Coyote – yipping, howling
White-tailed Deer – 4 individuals
Gray Squirrel – 3+ individuals
Eastern Chipmunk – 2 individuals,
Eastern Cottontail – track, scat, individual
Meadow Vole – tracks and individual

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AMPHIBIANS

Bull Frog - heard

Gray Tree Frog - heard

Weather Tidbits

Month of APRIL 15-30, 2017

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

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 74.2 mm or 2.9 inches

Overcast Days: 16

TEMPERATURE

Mean Temp: 9.5 C⁰/49.1⁰F

High Temp: 24.9 C⁰/76.8⁰F

Low Temp: -3.2 C⁰/26.2⁰F