

MAY 15 – 31, 2019 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

## POLLINATORS OTHER THAN BEES



**Painted Lady** Butterfly feeding on nectar from Buddleia. © Dick Harlow

Agriculture depends on pollinators to maximize crop yields. Home gardens depend on pollinators to produce fruit that we will eat or seed for next year's plants. All wild plants depend on either wind or pollinators for the survival of the plant species!

Who are these pollinators other than bees? Almost all insects in one form or another, on purpose or inadvertently, help in the pollination process. Even a predatory insect or spider may walk over the anthers (male part that produces pollen) of a flower. When it transfers to a different plant of the same species it could also transfer the pollen from its feet, leg or body part to the pistil, (female part of the flower) to begin fertilization and the development of seed.

Interdependency is the name of the game! All organisms are dependent on other organisms for their livelihood. Evolution, change over time, has created life that we see

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and know today. Drastic changes that we introduce today can or will create drastic, deleterious effects.

Pesticides, plastics both on land and in the ocean, and global warming resulting in climate change will be devastating to many organisms that we see regularly today. Science feels we are on the road to seeing many extinctions take place during this century.



Longhorned Beetle. © Dick Harlow

Even Long Horned Beetles and spiders such as the crab spider (although a predator) can aid pollination.

Although wind is helpful in pollinating grasses and some flowers, I have left this pollinating source out so that we can focus on the other organisms that are extremely helpful in, or that are necessary to, pollination of thousands of trees and herbaceous plants.



**Crab Spider**, on Echinacea. © Dick Harlow

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Honeybee (left) and lady bug larva (right) on aster flower, both act as pollinators. © Dick Harlow

Examples of those plants that, per se, don't depend on insects to pollinate them are grasses. Grasses, reeds and that type of plant depend more on wind power to send pollen to the pistil of a different grass plant, than having grasses depend on just insects. Yet, I'm sure there are insects such as flies, fruit flies, other non-descript winged insects that help in the process.

Most flowers, but not all flowers, make it easy for insects to pollinate. There seems to be a symbiotic relationship (mutualism, commensalism, parasitism) of some sort with all life that makes these relationships a necessity

The reward for the insect is either in the sweet nectar from the flower as an energy source or the pollen itself as a source of protein, usually available and easy to harvest .

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**Hummingbird Moth**, nectaring on Monarda.  
© Dick Harlow



**Giant Swallowtail** Butterfly feeding on nectar  
from lilac. © Dick Harlow

The reward for humans is the absolute beauty of watching nature in action.

The last two weeks of this month have been remarkably cool to cold, with some sun, but mostly cloudy skies. This has resulted in no butterfly sightings on EastView property that

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I know about. Notices on the internet have shown an interesting and fruitful warbler migration, but not here. The bird activity here has primarily been at feeders and bird houses. It is an understatement that the weather has definitely played a part in the lack of migrating bird observations at EastView.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

#### **MAMMALS**

Gray Squirrel – bird feeders  
Stripped Skunk – odor  
Coywolf – barking/howling  
Red Fox – on berm of South Pond

#### **Weather Tidbits**

**Month of MAY 1-31, 2019**

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

#### **PRECIPITATION**

**Total Precipitation: 127.0 mm or 5.0 inches for the month of May.  
Monthly average is 3.4-4.0 inches. Wet May!**

**Overcast Days: 12 = 37.5% of May was overcast/rainy weather.**