

**AUGUST 01 - 14, 2019 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES**

**By Dick Harlow**

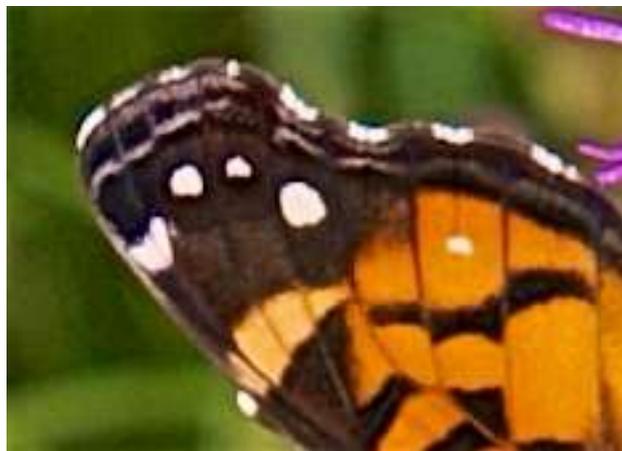
**AMERICAN LADY VS PAINTED LADY**

Two butterflies that look almost identical if, you do not know the difference.



**(1) American Lady, *Vanessa virginiensis*,** nectaring on Liatris. © Dick Harlow

To see the differences there are two distinct characteristics that will help you decide which one you are seeing. We will deal with the dorsal forewing first. Notice the single white dot in the middle of an orange panel, photo **#1** and **#2**.



**(2) American Lady, *Vanessa virginiensis*,** single white dot in a panel of orange. © Dick Harlow



**(3) American Lady, *Vanessa virginiensis*,** ventral view Nectaring on Liatris. © Dick Harlow

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Now look at the ventral side of the forewing and you will see that single dot in the middle of a red panel, photo **#3**.

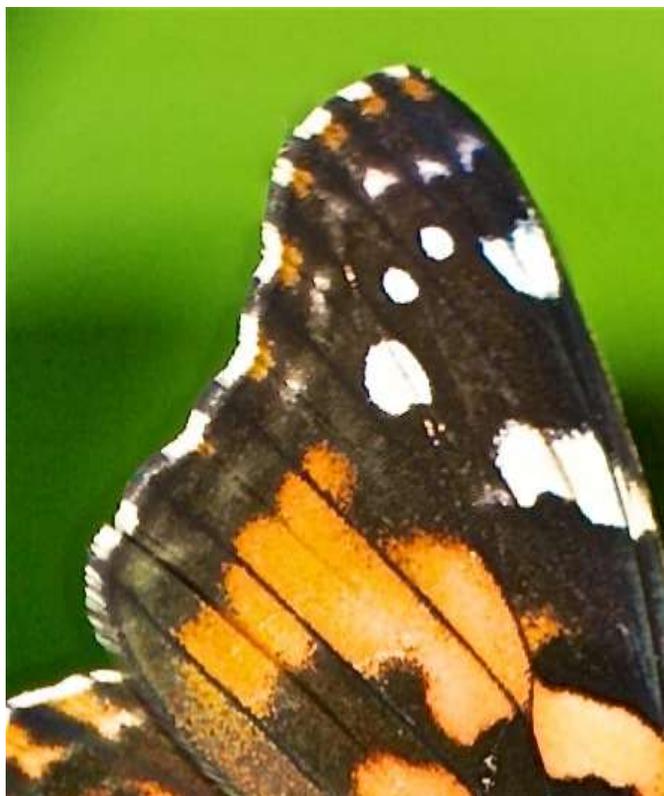
Granted, if you are looking at a butterfly in the garden that looks similar to this picture, finding that single white dot could be difficult. However, there is another characteristic that stands out and that is the ventral side of the hindwing as seen in photo **#3**.

Notice the two large black dots shaded with dark brown, almost black, around them. The dark patches on the hindwing along with the single white dot is a dead give-away to an American Lady butterfly. Photo **#3** gives both characteristics in one view to provide certain identity to this species.

In Painted Lady, notice that the orange panel is free of a white dot. Also, as said before, this characteristic is difficult to make out in the field.



(3) **Painted Lady**, *Vanessa cardui*, nectaring on Buddleja. © Dick Harlow



(4) **Painted Lady**, *Vanessa cardui*, no single white dot within an orange panel. © Dick Harlow

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However, turning to the ventral side of the hind wing, notice that even though there are smallish black dots, they are not heavily darkened and there are 4-5 of them rather than just two. There is no black to dark brown shading around these black dots. Yes, there is some shading, but it is a muted brown and certainly not as dark as it is with American Lady.



(5) **Painted Lady**, *Vanessa cardui*, nectaring on Buddleja. © Dick Harlow

Therefore, you can see that from these two characteristics you should be able to see at least one identifying characteristic that will name the butterfly you are observing as it nectars on a flower.

Both species can be found in open areas, fields, roadsides, meadows, including dunes along the sea coast.

The **American Lady** is seen more often and is more common than the **Painted Lady**. However, since 1991 the Painted Lady has become more numerous here in New England. Both species are migratory. The American Lady migrates south in the Fall and north in the Spring. Whereas the Painted Lady, though migratory, tends primarily to move north in the Spring. Its Fall migratory habits are not fully understood. However, we do know that its numbers change considerably from year to year.

The **American Lady's** food plant that its caterpillar feeds on is a variety of composite plants; an example is Pearly Everlasting. The **Painted Lady's** primary food plant is thistles as well as other similar species.

Therefore, the crux of it here at EastView is that we should be seeing one or both of these species from May to October. However, from my records, since 2013 to present, both species have occurred here middle of September 2014 and 2017 but were not observed the other years.

I wish you all good luck, hope you see one this year and let me know if you do!

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Can you name the accompanying butterfly? Answer in my next notes. You might want a field guide for the next unknown butterfly!

### UNKNOWN?



**1 August 2019** dorsal view of this year's visitor.  
Can you tell which one it is? © Dick Harlow



**1 August 2019** ventral view of this year's visitor.  
© Dick Harlow

### OBSERVATIONS

#### BUTTERFLIES

1. Monarch – observed almost daily
2. Butterfly Species seen August 1, name next week.
3. Giant Swallowtail, first one this year.
4. Eastern Tailed-Blue

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**AMPHIBIANS**

Leopard Frog  
Bull Frog

**MAMMALS**

Eastern Cottontail  
Red Fox – in excellent condition

**Weather Tidbits**

**Month of AUGUST 1-14, 2019**

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

**PRECIPITATION**

**Total Precipitation: 79.4 mm or 3.2 inches**

**Overcast Days: 5**