

SEPTEMBER 1 - 14, 2019 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

PURPLE CONE FLOWER AND NEW ENGLAND ASTER

There are many plants both wild and domestic that attract pollinators and more specifically butterflies. In this note I want to direct your attention to just two, Purple Coneflower and New England Aster.



Purple Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*, being pollinated by a Viceroy butterfly, © Dick Harlow

The **Purple Coneflower**, *Echinacea purpurea*, is an excellent plant to grow in the garden, not only because pollinators love it, but also because it presents a beautiful array of blossoms. Gardeners know that the field guides say that this plant prefers deep rich soil that is moist; but in fact, a home gardener's soil fits that bill nicely! I have never seen a well-cared for garden that didn't have deep rich soil!

Some may not realize that this plant is not native to New England save Connecticut. It is native to CT and New York, west to Wyoming and south to Texas.

A variety of insects enjoy Echinacea's pollen and nectar. The picture shows just one pollinator species; but in fact there are multiple types of butterflies, moths, honeybees, bumblebees, and many other insects that use this plant for sustenance in one form or another. Insects aren't the only ones that appreciate this plant. American Goldfinch enjoy the nutrient rich seeds that develop from pollination. House Finches and other seed eating birds along with birds searching for insects find this plant very beneficial.

A little known fact, hummingbirds are variably searching the flowers of this plant looking for tiny insects.



Purple Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*, © Dick Harlow

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Purple Cone Flower companioned with New England Aster is a great, one two punch for the benefit of pollinators, various insects and birds. Such a wonderful way to enter Fall and the foliage season.



New England Aster, *Aster novae-angliae*, being pollinated by Orange Sulphur butterfly. © Dick Harlow

New England Aster, *Aster novae-angliae* is a beautiful late flowering aster that allows one's mind to dwell on the change of seasons, although Fall and frost are either a reality or soon will be. The first blooms of NE Aster appear by the end of the fourth week in August or certainly by the first week in September.



New England Aster, *Aster novae-angliae*, growing wild in EastView's meadow next to South Pond. © Dick Harlow

Unlike Purple Cone Flower, New England Aster is native to most of the United States, all states but 6, and southern Canada, except two provinces.

This is a very versatile plant, used medicinally by Native Americans, along with its natural food value for wildlife.

However, botanists have made many cultivars from the original wild New England Aster and the cultivars will have flowers in pink, red, navy blue, light blue, shades of purple, etc. It is a sought after Fall flowering plant for the garden. Also, it should be noted that its seed, especially of the blue/purple variations, will produce offspring; so be advised, not everyone is like me who enjoys a helter-skelter competing garden!

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As the climate continues to change and Vermont becomes more like the Carolinas, maybe 10-20 years from now, will NE Aster move more into Canada? Will we see less and less of this wild beautiful purple all flower?

GIANT SWALLOWTAIL



Giant Swallowtail, *Papilio cresphontes*, nectaring on Echinacea, Purple Coneflower. © Dick Harlow

Although these images of the Giant Swallowtail were taken during August, I needed to let everyone know that we here at EastView have had this species visit us every year since 2013. Considering that this butterfly was rarely seen in Middle to Northern Vermont before 2010 is another example of us viewing a change in our climate. Nature provides us with small signs at first that show us that our climate is being altered. Will we as a people recognize these signs in time or will we ignore them?



Giant Swallowtail, *Papilio cresphontes*, nectaring on Echinacea, Purple Coneflower. © Dick Harlow

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I hope you opened your field guides for the following unknown butterfly. Unfortunately, we don't get to experience visits by Great Spangled Fritillary as often as we would like. Its occurrence since 2013 has been only twice in seven years. Females are a beautiful black and white.

ANSWER: AUGUST NOTES

GREAT SPANGLED FRITILLARY



Great Spangled Fritillary, *Speyeria cybele*, male, nectaring on Buddleja, © Dick Harlow

UNKNOWN FOR SEPTEMBER ANSWER NEXT NOTES



Appropriate that this butterfly is feeding on New England Aster, a flower that blooms end of August into September.

Note: Please disinfect your bird feeders before putting them out this Fall and Winter. It is easy for birds to pick up disease from feeders.

Make a weak solution of Clorox, then rinse thoroughly. Or, you can purchase bird feeder cleaners, e.g. from Amazon or other stores.

Many Thanks.

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OBSERVATIONS

September 1-14

BUTTERFLIES

Monarch - seen three times

Viceroy - seen once

Painted Lady - Many

Cabbage White - one

Clouded Sulphur - one

DAMSELFLIES

Eastern Forktail

DRAGONFLIES

Common Green Darner

Black Meadowhawk

White-faced Meadowhawk

MAMMALS

Coyote - barking

Eastern Cottontail - 1

Weather Tidbits

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

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 40.0 mm or 1.6 inches

Overcast Days: 7