

OCTOBER 15- 31, 2019 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

**CARDINAL FLOWER**



**Cardinal Flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*, © Dick Harlow**

This plant and flower is magnificent I can't wait a year to introduce it to EastView. References say this flower blooms from early summer to late summer. However, the plants in our garden bloomed in the beginning of August and for the whole month into the middle of September. What a beautiful splash of color to see flourishing in the garden as fall approaches.

Each single blossom is a vessel of nectar for hummingbirds. It is a joy to have this plant in the garden as an attractant for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

The blossom is an interesting flower due to its tubular shape. Bees have a tough time pollinating it; either they try to chew their way into the nectar and pollen, or they abandon the flower. But hummingbirds love it. Here is a good example of why hummingbirds are pollinators. With their long bills that can reach inside the tube for the nectar and as they do so pollen becomes attached to their bills and head area. Consequently, when visiting other flowers, they will spread the attached pollen grains they already have while picking up additional pollen, along with having a sip of nectar at the same time.

This plant is native to both Americas, living in areas near water, or soil that is moist. So far it is growing well in our garden soil here at EastView; of course, we have had a wet summer. If you don't want the plant to self-sow, clip the flower stems after blooming. We prefer to let it self-sow.

This plant is found under the Bellflower Family, Campanulaceae. Unfortunately, it is short lived. References don't give the life span of this perennial, but I'm hopeful it will grow for 2-3 years.

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**EASTERN TAILED-BLUE**

This is one of the smallest butterflies we have in the US, almost the size of a penny. You can barely see the blue after the black and white edging of the wing. We have seen this butterfly four years of the seven we have been here at EastView.

This butterfly is fairly common in our area, however, not so much in the far north and the hot humid south, although it has been found as far south as Costa Rica.



Eastern Tailed-Blue, *Everes comyntas*, 2014,  
feeding on minerals in the garden. © Dick Harlow

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**Eastern Tailed-Blue**, *Everes comyntas*, 2019, feeding from a wet spot. © Dick Harlow

This butterfly is considered a generalist whose favorite host plants are members of the pea family. It likes various legumes such as clovers and vetch. However, it is a weak flyer, stays fairly close to the ground and could be over-looked by people when they are out walking.

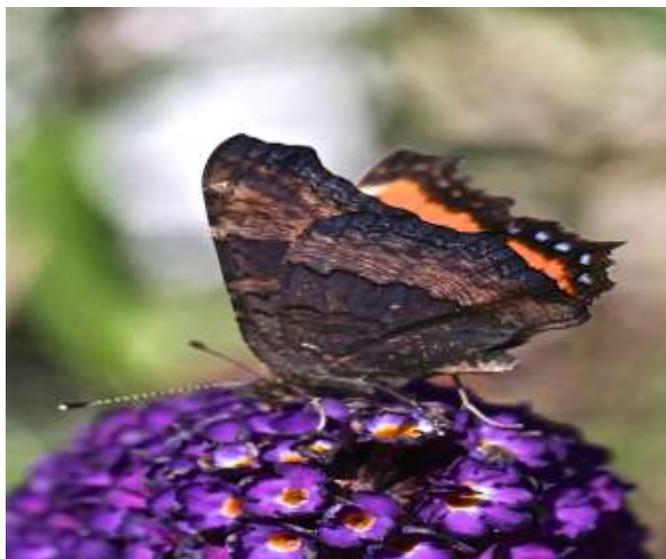
### **MILBERT'S TORTOISESHELL**

One would think that this beautiful Fall butterfly **(1)** would be easy to see in the garden. Certainly, the colors are significant when the dorsal side of the wings are showing. Beautiful dark and light oranges mixed with a tad of yellow here and there along with bright blue dashes at the ends of the hindwings.

However, one look at the underwings, the ventral side of both wings **(2)**, you can see a different scenario. If this butterfly had landed on soil or on a dark background with wings closed it would be extremely difficult to see. And to think this butterfly is quite common.

Milbert's is found from Maine, central Massachusetts south to CT and the Philadelphia area including northwestern NJ, and west to Alaska.

EastView produces the preferred habitat of open fields where the fields abut trees and woods. Nettles grow in this type of habitat and Milbert's will be found wherever Nettles, *Urtica* species are found.



**(2) Milbert's Tortoiseshell**, *Nymphalis milberti*, nectaring on Buddlija (Dark Knight). © Dick Harlow

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(1) Milbert's Tortoiseshell, *Nymphalis milberti*,  
nectaring on Buddlija (Dark Knight).  
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**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.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

### **MAMMALS**

Red Fox - hunting  
Coyote - howling  
Gray Squirrel

### **Weather Tidbits**

Month of OCTOBER 1-31, 2019

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

### **PRECIPITATION**

**Total Precipitation: 133.8 mm or 5.3 inches, which is 1.72" above average precipitation for the month of October.**

**Overcast Days: 9 for last two weeks.**