

SEPTEMBER 1-14, 2015 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EAST VIEW

DAMSELFLIES

There are five family groups of Damselflies, one of which is the Pond Damselfly. Pond Damselflies have the largest number and variation of species in the damselfly family groups.



Familiar Bluet, *Enallagma civile* Male
Photo © Dick Harlow

Many Damselflies look similar to the one above; or at least you would be most likely to see the blue males of various species alighting on a leaf or hanging out at the edge of a pond, lake or any small body of water. Our retention ponds have the requirement of slow water movement and developing alga mats thus representing an ideal habitat for some species of damselflies.

The image above of a blue and black banded damselfly is how many different species of males of Pond Damselflies will appear. There are a number of common Damselflies where the average observer can't tell which is male or female. Both sexes look so similar that most observers aren't going to take the time to either take a picture of the reproductive end of the abdomen or use a net and catch the damsel to determine its sex. Or, for that matter within some species the sexes look so different that the average person would think they belong to a different species. Determining species and sexing within a species can be a daunting task!

EASTERN FORKTAIL

But, the Eastern Forktail is different. Male and female have specific colors and you can tell whether a female is an adult or an adolescent. Of course it helps that this species is most numerous on the edges of a body of water.



Eastern Forktail, *Ischnura verticalis* Male resting on a leaf
Photo © Dick Harlow

If you see a black and **green** damselfly (head and thorax) with a long black abdomen and a blue end you are most likely looking at a male Eastern Forktail.

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Eastern Forktail, *Ischnura verticalis* immature Female resting on leaf
Photo © Dick Harlow

Unlike males, the females go through two color phases. Immature females are **orange** and black on the head and thorax with a black abdomen. As they mature sexually their color changes to a muted blue-gray with black bands.



Eastern Forktail, *Ischnura verticalis* adult Female resting on leaf
Photo © Dick Harlow

Most damselfly species are polygamous where several dominant males will court a single female. That is not the case with the Eastern Forktail. It has been found that females of this species tend to be monogamous, or to put it another way they only mate once. A single males sperm will fertilize a thousand plus eggs without her losing fertility.

A SIGN THAT FALL IS COMING



Goldenrods - Looking south across our field and meadow,
Photo © Dick Harlow

GOLDENROD & RAGWEED

Plants with many flower petals, rays or parts are usually clumped into a group of plants called composites, more specifically labeled Aster Family of plants. A few species of goldenrods started flowering in July, but most will be flowering in August and September showering the fields and meadows with their beautiful yellow gold color. Goldenrods, those herbaceous perennials are given the generic name of Solidago. There are over 100 plus species and most of these are native to North America.

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Goldenrods flower at the same time as ragweed; but, ragweed has a greenish flower that people tend to overlook. Consequently people who suffer from hayfever during the fall see only goldenrod and thus this plant gets blamed for their discomfort.



Ragweed Flowers, *Ambrosia psilostachya*
Photo © Dick Harlow

Ragweed, in fact, is the culprit!

Goldenrods are a good looking flower and don't deserve this unfair attention.



Goldenrod Flowers, *Solidago* sp.
Photo © Dick Harlow

Goldenrod species start flowering toward the end of July and end flowering toward the end of September, first part of October. As mentioned above it depends on the species, flowering time and weather. With over 100 species, we will see members

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of this family flowering most of early fall through to when the tree leaves start to change color.

PEARL CRESCENT

Our most common and very small butterfly in the EastView fields and meadows is the Pearl Crescent, *Phyciodes tharos*.



Pearl Crescent, *Phyciodes tharos*, on White Clover.
Photo © Dick Harlow

The picture above is a cropped image and looks bigger than it is in real life. The next picture below is a better representation of the Pearl Crescent's approximate size.

You would find this fellow in open areas where asters grow. It is considered as being the most ecologically successful butterfly, but the reason for this species success is still a mystery. It certainly is a generalist, found from southern Maine to Florida and throughout the Appalachians.



Pearl Crescent, *Phyciodes tharos*, feeding on minerals.
Photo © Dick Harlow

Being so small, the only way one would catch a glimpse of one flying about in a field or meadow is its bright orange and black color against a sea of green. Or seen against a dark brown background of a garden as the picture above portrays. Grow New England Aster in your garden and you might be fortunate to see them on a fairly regularly basis.

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September: First Two-Week Sightings:

Butterfly List

- Monarch 3/14
- Clouded Sulphur 13/14
- Cabbage White 10/14
- Viceroy 5/14

of sightings per 14 days

Dragonfly

- Black Meadowhawk
- Yellow-legged Meadowhawk
- Ruby Meadowhawk

Damselflies

- Eastern Forktail

Amphibian/Reptiles

- Bullfrog
- Leopard Frog
- American Toad

Mammal List

- Eastern Cottontail
- Raccoon Scat

Weather Tidbits

SEPTEMBER First Two Week Totals

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1130 EDT).

PRECIPITATION

SEPTEMBER 2015 Total Precipitation: 26.8mm or 1.1 inches

Overcast Days, SEPTEMBER 1-14: 4

WIND

Highest wind SEPTEMBER 9: 28 MPH, Direction: South

Average Wind speed for SEPTEMBER 1-14, 2015: 1.4 mph,

Dominate Wind Direction: South

Days w/wind gusts 20-30 MPH: 3

Days w/wind gusts 30 MPH: 0

TEMPERATURE

Mean Temp: 24.9 C⁰ 76.8 °F

High Temp: 34.1 C⁰ 93.4 °F

Low Temp: 14.6 C⁰ 58.3 °F