

APRIL 15 - 30, 2022 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

MOURNING CLOAK



1. Mourning Cloak, *Nymphalis antiopa*.

© Dick Harlow

One would think in April that it might be a bit early for butterflies to be flying about. However, if it is warm enough, there are a few species one might be able to see flying about. However, because it is early in the Spring for butterflies generally, they can be quite skittish.

Although this image is an older picture, I did come across a Mourning Cloak on April 15, 2022. He/she would have nothing of me trying to get a picture, so I am left with an older image to show you. It is a beautiful butterfly when the sun catches its open wings. Otherwise, when its wings are closed, even though I feel it is attractive, some people feel it gives a rather drab appearance.

The other name for Mourning Cloak is "Harbinger of Spring" because it tends to be the first butterfly of Spring or first of the season.

Some butterfly species overwinter as adults, and this is one that does. So, how does it survive through the winter between cold spells and every now and then a warm period? When these butterflies hibernate, they are able to chemically form glycerol in their blood which is an antifreeze. Having found their way to a crack in tree bark or some other sheltered area they will then spend the winter.

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2. Mourning Cloak, *Nymphalis antiopa*.

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On those days that are sunny these adult butterflies will search for tree sap, usually oak sap, and then return to their shelter.

The Mourning Cloak caterpillars are generalists. In other words, the caterpillars will feed on a variety of plant leaves: willows, aspens, American elm, paper birch, cottonwood to name a few.

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GREEN HERON



1. **Green Heron**, *Butorides virescens*,

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Picture #1 was taken in 2015 on the shore of South Pond, which is now covered in Cattails. At that time it was easy to see either a Green Heron or a Great Blue Heron stand out against the grassy banks of the pond. Today you have to search with your eyes through the tall Cattails to catch a glimpse of this heron.

Green Herons tend to be a solitary bird. Yes, you might find another in the same habitat, but it's not a bird that will hang out with other members of its species. The habitat that this species prefers is either freshwater ponds and streams or either freshwater or saltwater marshes.

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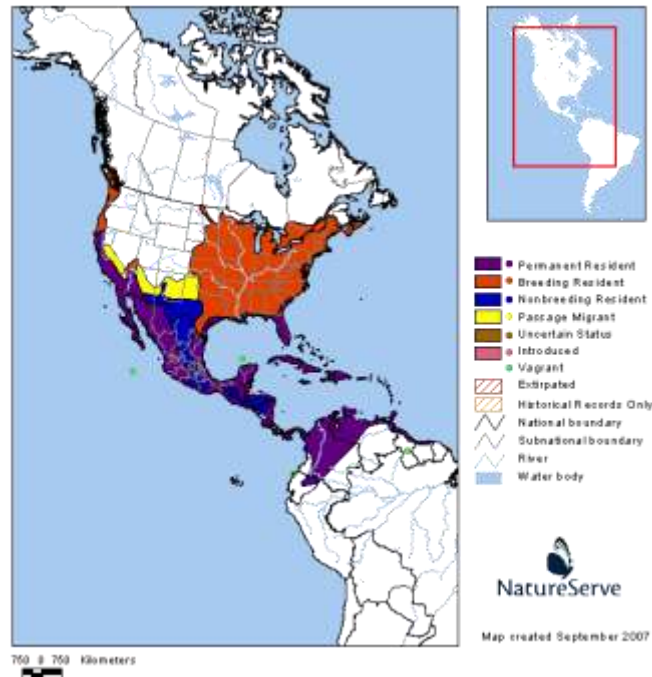
2. Green Heron, *Butorides virescens*,
© Dick Harlow

This species breeds in Eastern and Central United States, rarely in Canada and Winters on the southern coast, Florida, Central America, and the Caribbean Islands.

As can be seen in the accompanying Range Map, the red color is representative of the heron's breeding territory, while the blue and purple represent more permanent residence. Therefore, here in Vermont the Green Heron is a migrant breeder. We should begin to see them once we are in the month of May.

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Green Heron Range Map,
© NatureServe

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

White-tailed Deer

Meadow Vole

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Average April Average precipitation for Vermont = 2.83 inches.

APRIL:

First Week = Overcast 5 days and 15.4 mm of rain; Second Week = 5 Overcast days with 52.4 mm of rain; Third Week = 5 overcast days and 32.8 mm of rain; Fourth Week = 7 overcast days and 16.0 mm of rain. Total for the Month was 116.6 mm or 4.59" of precipitation and 22 days of overcast skies.