

MARCH 15-31, 2022. NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

GREAT BLUE HERON



Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*, South Pond shoreline, March 2019, © Dick Harlow.

Here at EastView, before South Pond became overgrown with Cattails, the Great Blue Heron would stop on its migration South and North each year, for five years, from 2013 to 2018. You could see a Great Blue either in the late Fall or early Spring. I believe for the first two years, 2014 and 2015, one stopped both times, twice in those years.

Once the cattails became abundant either they visited and were unseen or the herons missed the evidence that there was water to investigate for food.

There was never enough or an adequate food supply in South Pond to keep them here for very long. So, their visit was usually short-lived.

The Great Blue Heron can be found from Alaska to South America and from the West Coast to the East Coast. Wherever there are fish bearing waters you can find a Great Blue Heron. Even in the North, as long as the water stays unfrozen one could still have the possibility of seeing a Great Blue Heron.

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Wetlands, whether they be freshwater or saltwater, as long as they hold fish you could find a Great Blue Heron.



Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias* South Pond drainage wire cubicle, 2015. © Dick Harlow.

Great Blues nest in groups close to water and many times on islands. Nesting in shrubs or trees on islands tends to protect them from predation and localizes their fishing territories.

Their primary concern is for predators of their eggs and young. These predators can vary from Crows and Ravens to Turkey Vultures, including Red-tailed Hawks and Eagles. However, an adult or juvenile could be snatched by an alligator or crocodile in the southern part of this species range either here or in South America.

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Vole vs Moles



Meadow Vole, *Microtus pennsylvanicus*, © Judith Myers, *Britannica*

The one thing to remember relative to the difference between these two small animals is this: A mole, **M**, eats **meat** and a Vole is a **V**, a **vegetarian**.

Both will do damage to your lawn and or garden or both at the same time. Both create tunnels or runways through the garden or in your lawn. Some of you may have either experienced this from where you lived before EastView or are experiencing it now here in your gardens.

The population dynamics of these small rodents is quite diverse. There could be a population expansion of Meadow Voles in the gardens of the Inn. However, down at the end of Deer Meadow Drive once the over population of Meadow Voles has crashed, little activity is seen. Also, you can't rule out predation helping to lower the numbers of voles.

As mentioned, Moles are Meat eaters and Voles are Vegetarians or plant eaters. Therefore, don't confuse what is happening visually in your lawn or garden with what they are doing to your garden. Moles are simply disrupting the vegetation NOT eating it. Moles are feeding on insects, earthworms, and grubs.

Voles on the other hand are both disrupting the landscape of your lawn and garden as well as eating your plants and plant roots in your lawn and garden.

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Eastern Mole, *Scalopus aquaticus*, Eastern Mole, © Victorpest.com

These rodents are only doing what comes naturally, what is in their DNA. We think of them as pests because they damage our plants that we spent money to plant. From my point of view, I would rather see a Fox or hawk out my window looking for a mole or vole.

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Field Mouse in my shed.
Fox tracks in the snow

[*All Measurements taken at solar noon \(1200 EST\).*](#)

PRECIPITATION

Average March Precipitation for Vermont = 2.2 inches.

Total precipitation for the month of March 2022 here in Middlebury is 49.4 mm or 1.9 inches.

Overcast Days 1-31: We had 22 days of overcast skies. Of those overcast skies 16 days produced precipitation. This month deficit is 0.3 inches.