NOVEMBER 1-14, 2016 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW
By Dick Harlow

DOWNY & HAIRY WOODPECKERS

(1) Downy Woodpecker, (M) *Picoides pubescens,*
Full length © Dick Harlow

(2) Downy Woodpecker, (M) *Picoides pubescens,*
head shot © Dick Harlow

This is a full view of a male Downy Woodpecker along with a close-up of the head and bill of the Downy. Notice the size, length of the body, and the short bill.

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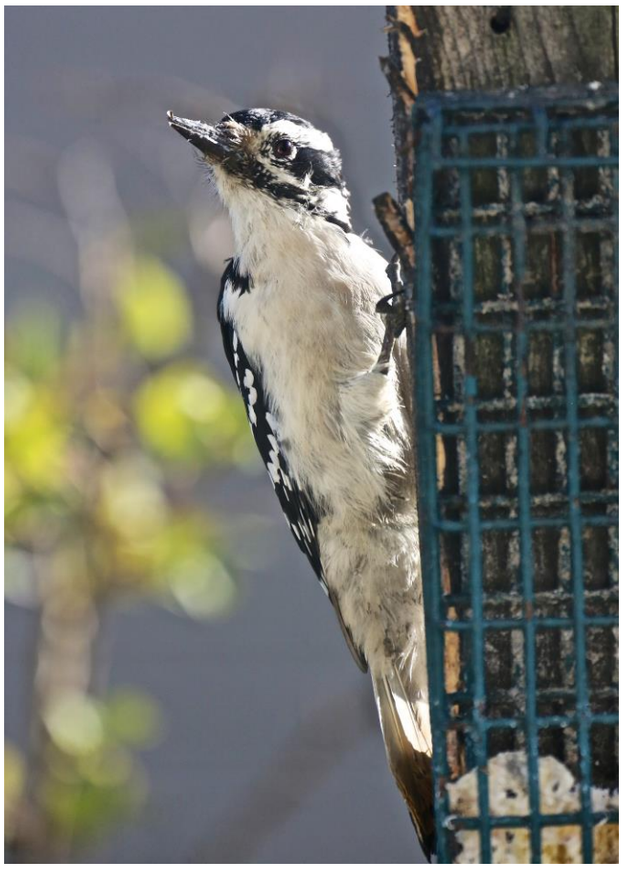

(3) Hairy Woodpecker, (F) *Picoides villosus*,
Full length © Dick Harlow

By comparison look at the following two images (3) & (4) of the body of a female Hairy Woodpecker along with a close-up of her head. Notice the relative size of her body compared to the male Downy. Notice the shorter thinner bill of the Downy compared to the longer thicker bill of the Hairy. We know that Downys have a shorter thus smaller body size than Hairys; but when seen alone, because they have very similar black and white markings, it is difficult to know which one you are looking at unless you have experience.

Once you have a handle on the difference of size and bill length, thus the 'gestalt' of the bird, you should be able to know which is which when one or the other shows up at your feeder.

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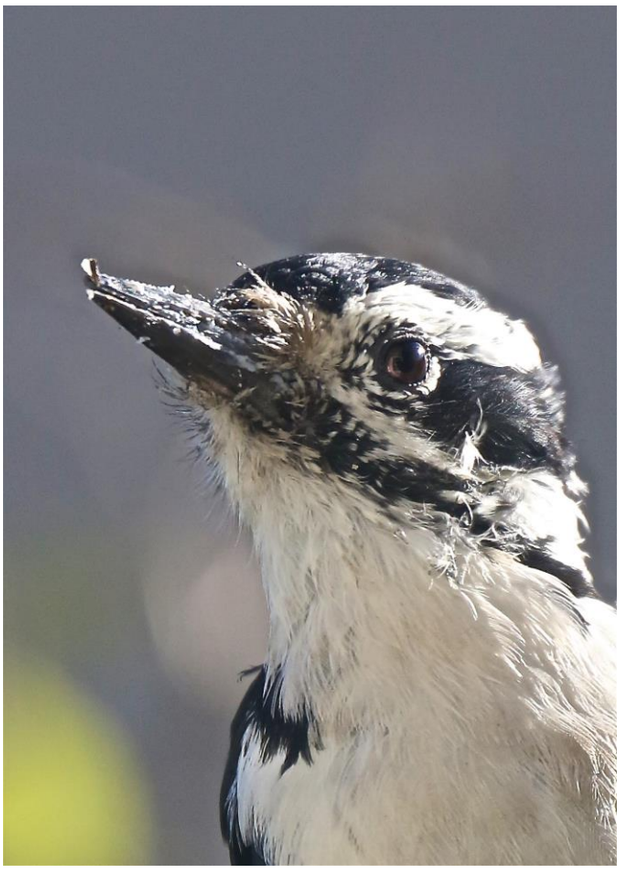

(4) Hairy Woodpecker, (F) *Picoides villosus*,
Head shot © Dick Harlow

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers are common to New Englanders as they are seen throughout the Northeast and for that matter most of North America. However, Downys are more gregarious than Hairys, being more accepting of human handouts. Yet once Harrys become accustomed to other birds feeding at feeders and their smaller cousin accepting suet, Harrys will initially check out the area. Once that is done and meets with their approval, they will be regular visitors to your feeders.

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A TOXIC MUSHROOM

YELLOW PATCHES

(1) Yellow Patches, *Amanita flavoconia*
Maybe a **Poisonous Mushroom** © Dick Harlow

The **first (1)** photo of this mushroom shows it as it has recently emerged from the ground. The **second (2)** picture shows what it looks like when the cap is fully extended.

The following is taken from Wikipedia: "The genus ***Amanita*** contains about 600 species of agarics including some of the most toxic known mushrooms found worldwide, as well as some well-regarded edible species. This genus is responsible for approximately **95%** of the fatalities resulting from mushroom poisoning, with the death cap accounting for about 50% on its own. The most potent toxin present in these mushrooms is α-amanitin."

That said, in my opinion this is a rather handsome and colorful mushroom. As mentioned the *Amanita* genus of mushrooms is a genus where many of its members are deadly poisonous. This is due to the deadly and hallucinogenic compounds found within the tissue of this genus. This is probably why this particular species hasn't been actually studied. However, because of the group of mushrooms it is related to I purposely consider it poisonous.

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(2) Yellow Patches, *Amanita flavoconia*
cap fully extended, Maybe a **Poisonous Mushroom**
© Dick Harlow

If you are a mushroom hunter looking for edible mushrooms, **PLEASE** do your research, read up on the mushroom identification, and be completely certain before collecting. Be safe, take pictures!

MIDDLEBURY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Every year in mid-December through the first week in January, bird enthusiasts, birders, and citizen scientists get together at various locations around the country to participate in Christmas Bird Counts. Each count is for a 24-hour period.

Cooper's Hawk, Immature, Accipiter cooperii,
back again © Dick Harlow

The function or goal of the National Audubon Christmas Bird Count is to tabulate bird species and their numbers for a specific period of time, from 12 midnight to 12 midnight each day over a three-week period. This allows members to count night birds, such as owls, as well as daytime birds. By having a consistent time period lasting for three weeks allows for a tremendous

number of counts throughout the United States. Today, there are now counts during this same period throughout the world. This is all done as a form of citizen science; since 1900, 116 years these counts have resulted in a view of the bird population changes over time. The data gives numbers of species, how they are moving, conditions under which they have moved and population trends. This country has been through 2 major world wars, a major economic depression, 2 major post war mini-wars, nuclear annihilation concern, a cold war, a serious recession and ancillary conflicts over this 116-year period. Yet citizen scientists persist toward the goal and continued concern for information relative to our visible avian inhabitants. I believe this is quite a major feat.

As I wrote last month about the Canadian Winter Finch outlook for 2016-2017, we can expect to see few of the northern finches. Especially, as the winter forecast is for large amounts of snow with minor extreme cold. We may have a dearth of finches, but we may have an influx of Snowy Owls again as we did in 2013.

Last year's Middlebury Christmas Bird count, ably lead by Jim Andrews, herpetologist extraordinaire, had several firsts. It had a total of 74 species, which was eight above the counts average of 66 and 11 above the previous year's count number of 63. As Jim said, "A Christmas Bird Count is a team effort between field teams and feeder watchers. This year, 2015, we had a record number of field birders (43) but our reports from feeder watchers dropped significantly from last year. Perhaps as a result of the warm weather and continued bear activity, people were not yet filling their feeders."

House Finch, Male, *Carpodacus mexicanus*,
© Dick Harlow

There is a niche for whatever you are interested in doing or becoming a part of. Besides hunting for elusive rarities or counting numbers of common and local birds, there is definite social enjoyment and camaraderie that is part and parcel of any Christmas Bird Count.

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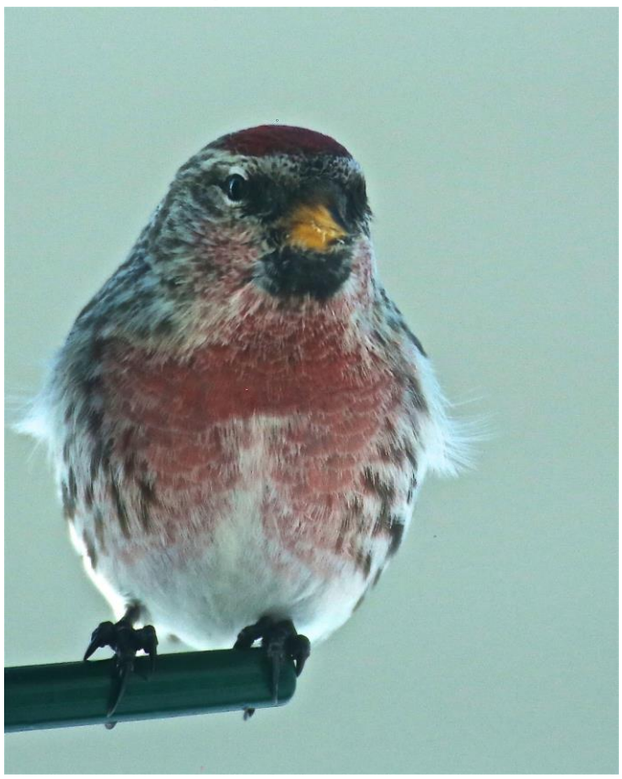

Common Redpoll, Male, *Acanthis flammea*,
© Dick Harlow

An example of what we can see here at EastView, is the **Common Redpoll**, a northern finch species that comes to Vermont from Canada from time to time during the winter. It was observed at EastView in February 2014 and January, February, March and April of 2015. One Redpoll was observed this Fall in a flock of American Goldfinch. We have about a 50:50 chance of also seeing greater numbers this winter either in 2016 or 2017. They are a friendly, gregarious finch and may very well bring with them their cousin, the **Hoary Redpoll**.

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Muskrat
Gray Squirrel
Eastern Cottontail
Meadow Vole

Weather Tidbits

Month of NOVEMBER 1-14, 2016

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 36.0 mm or 1.5 inches

Overcast Days: 5

WIND

Highest wind gust: NOVEMBER 11, 16 MPH, Direction: SW
Average Wind speed for NOVEMBER: 1.2 mph, Dominate Wind Direction: South
Days w/wind gusts 20-30 MPH: 0 Days w/wind gusts 30 MPH: 0

TEMPERATURE

Mean Temp: 3.0 C^0/26.6^{0}F
High Temp: 22.2 C^0/71.9^{0}F
Low Temp: 29.2 C^0/-20.6^{0}F