

NOVEMBER 15-30, 2016 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

PILEATED WOODPECKER



Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*,
looking for ants. © Dick Harlow

We have a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers that considers the Middlebury golf course and compost heap as part of their territory. This is terrific for EastView, as we from time to time see one or two fly from there to the river over and beside EastView. The fact that Pileated Woodpecker pairs are known to occupy this space as their territory all year and will defend their territory, which is to our advantage. However, they do tend to let up during the winter.

Although Pileated Woodpeckers prefer older deciduous woodlands, they have been known to visit suburbia where there are large maples and beech trees present. However the Pileated Woodpecker favors large mature trees for nesting. Their food is primarily **carpenter ants** along with other ants (representing 40-97% of their diet), along with wood boring larva and beetles. They have also been known to eat fruits and nuts of Sassafras, Sumac, Dogwood, Poison Ivy and Elderberry. They will also visit backyards for suet, seed and nuts, especially in the winter.

If you see a large rectangular hole, rounded edges at the ends you are looking at the work of a Pileated Woodpecker. Most of these are not for making a nest cavity, but for in fact to look primarily for ants, and grubs as well.

The oldest recorded individual Pileated Woodpecker was 12 years, 11 months, from when it was banded to the time it was recaptured and released in Maryland.

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Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*,
carving out a new food or nest hole. © Dick Harlow

PUFFBALL FAMILY



Gem-studded Puffballs, *Lycoperdon perlatum*,
© Dick Harlow

When we think of puffball mushrooms we think of a group of roundish fungi with an opening at the middle top of the mushroom. And, when we squeeze one of the balls it will shoot out a cloud of spores.

However, there is a larger puffball one that can be much larger than the puffballs in the first photo. This puffball can attain the size of a soccer ball or basketball.

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(1) **Giant Puffball**, *Calvatia gigantea*, developing
© Dick Harlow

Image (1) is a developing puffball mushroom three times as large as a softball. Since many puffball mushrooms are small, approximately one sixteenth the size of this mushroom, this fungi is called a Giant Puffball, *Calvatia gigantea*.



(2) **Giant Puffball**, *Calvatia gigantea*, still enlarging
© Dick Harlow

Puffballs are terrestrial saprobes. A saprobe's function is to decompose dead and decaying organic matter. Although Giant Puffballs are usually found growing singly, alone in grass or a meadow, as this one is growing, they are still decomposing organic matter.

Puffballs are unlike other fungi that are parasitic and attack living trees. Many fungi that work on decomposing dead wood, leaf and pine needle litter or dung are saprobes.



(3) **Giant Puffball**, *Calvatia gigantea*, about ready to spawn © Dick Harlow

Giant Puffball mushrooms can be seen growing in late summer through to early fall. They can generally be found in the East. When the ball of the Giant Puffball is immature, fresh, white with no indication of spore development, then it is considered edible. As it matures it will change color to a yellowish, yellow brown or an olive brown and loses its palatability and can cause digestive upsets if eaten.

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After it has produced spores and released them, it will show holes where the spores were emitted and turn dark brown, atrophy and dry up.



Giant Puffball, *Calvatia gigantea*, spuned,
© Dick Harlow

GREAT BLUE HERON



Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*, hunting
© Dick Harlow

This is a Great Blue Heron hunting in south pond in November. The up and down temperatures favored herons to stay longer.

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Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*, hunting
© Dick Harlow



EastView Super Moon, November 15, 2016
© Dick Harlow

From Google: "A "["supermoon"](#) occurs when the moon becomes full on the same day as its perigee, the point in the moon's orbit when it is closest to Earth.

The term is borrowed from the pseudoscience of astrology, but has been adopted by popular culture and astronomers. Supermoon generally appear to be 14% bigger and 30% brighter than other full moons.

While such moons occur around every 13 months, November's is a special one.

[According to NASA](#), this month's supermoon becomes full within about two hours of perigee -- arguably making it an extra-super moon.

In America, the November full moon is known as a **Beaver Moon**, because it arrives at the time of year when fur trappers would hunt the dam-building animals."

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OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS FOR NOVEMBER

Eastern Coyote
Gray Squirrel
Eastern Cottontail
Eastern Chipmunk
Meadow Vole

Weather Tidbits

Month of NOVEMBER 2016

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1130 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 74.4 mm or 2.9 inches

Overcast Days: 17

TEMPERATURE

Mean Temp: 8.5 C⁰/47.3⁰F

High Temp: 21.2 C⁰/70.1⁰F

Low Temp: -4.0 C⁰/24.8⁰F