

AUGUST 1-14, 2014 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

A high-pressure weather system has a clockwise motion to its winds, which aids birds during fall migration. Conversely a low- pressure weather system has counter clockwise motion to its winds and aids birds in their spring migration. Consequently, when we have early fall weather from various storms coming through, there is a high-pressure system right behind the low and migrants will flock up behind these systems waiting for the following winds to aid them in their route south. However, it is not as easy as one might think. Depending on where the low pressure is relative to our Atlantic coast and the high pressure relative to the outgoing low-pressure area, that divergence can cause problems. This is why birds are seen far out of their flight path and why we tend to see rare birds here in Vermont during migration periods in spring and fall. Fall especially since fledged birds of the year have not had migration experience.

The end of July into the month of August is the time to look for a myriad of Butterflies. They will be on Coneflowers, Buddleia, Butterfly Weed, Petunias, Black-eyed Susan's, Liatris and Asters to name a few. There are several to look out for this month, especially the Giant Swallowtail, Papilio cresphontes, a rare southern butterfly that is establishing itself here in the Middlebury area, or, at least, it appears this is what is happening as it has been seen here from June to September for the past 4 years.



Giant Swallowtail, Papilio cresphontes Dorsal View

Photo © Dick Harlow

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Giant Swallowtail, *Papilio cresphontes* Ventral View

Photo © Dick Harlow

With some, but not all, butterflies it is fairly easy to tell the difference between male and female. One such common butterfly here at East View is the Black Swallowtail, *Papilio polyxenes*.

Female – notice light or muted yellow markings and prominent bright blue on the end of the hindwing.



Black Swallowtail, *Papilio polyxenes* (F)

Photo © Dick Harlow

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Male – On the other hand, the bright yellow markings with a prominent second band of enlarged yellow dots with small amounts of blue on the hindwing of the male allows for an easy difference between male and female.



Black Swallowtail, *Papilio polyxenes* (M)

Photo © Dick Harlow

As you walk about during August and September, and if you are subject to hay fever, the likely culprit is not the colorful yellow goldenrod or other colorful wildflowers, but the unobtrusive green Ragweed and the pollen it sheds. Goldenrod gets the blame because it is what people see after they have a sneezing fit. This is not fair. Goldenrod, whose fields of stunning golden yellow flowers, that bloom in August and foretell the beginning of fall, will get blamed by hay fever sufferers for their affliction. As seen below green colorless flowers of Ragweed can easily go unnoticed. The Ragweed pollen is notorious for causing mild to severe allergies!

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Ragweed, *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*

Photo © Dick Harlow

As mentioned last month, the Clearwing Moth that looks like a Hummingbird is out and about nectaring on many different flowers. However, there are two Clearwings that look very much alike. The way to tell them apart is by checking the tail (end of the abdomen) along with the legs and general body color.



Hummingbird Clearwing, *Hemaris thysbe*

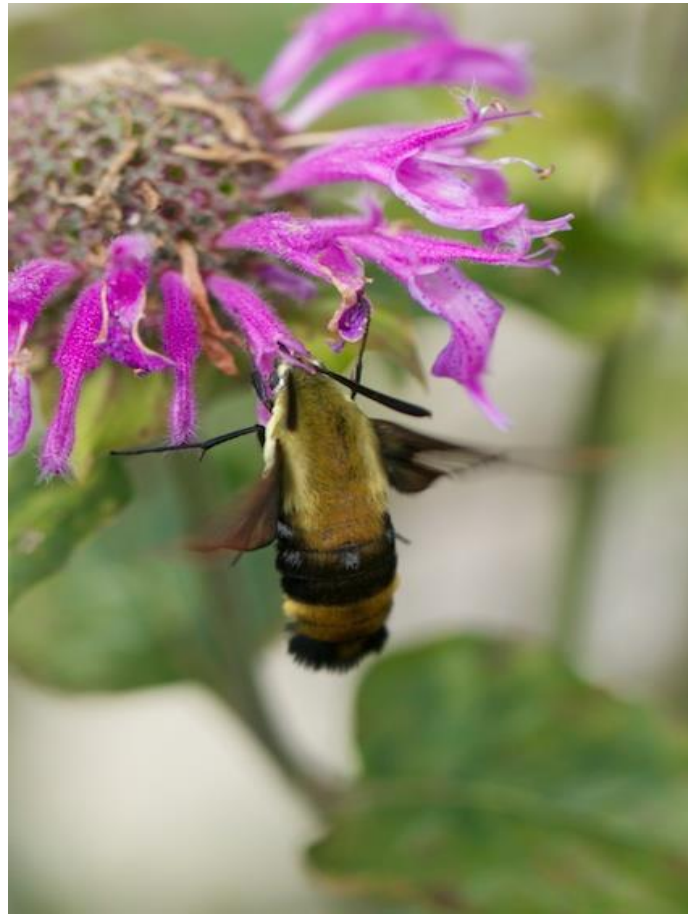
Photo © Dick Harlow

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The primary difference between the two that is quite noticeable is the light colored legs and chestnut or rusty coloration in the middle of the tail for the Hummingbird Clearwing; whereas, the Snowberry Clearwing has black legs and its tail is all black.

The other difference is the body or thorax color. The Hummingbird Clearwing is more rusty brown or chestnut while the Snowberry Clearwing is yellowish with a darker center in the middle of the back or thorax and the bands are mostly black.



Snowberry Clearwing, *Hemaris diffinis*

Photo © Dick Harlow

These fellows are in constant motion; one needs to notice the tail and legs of the Clearwing, even though the other colors are apparent. It is easy to look at a picture and say "Oh yes, I see", but to go out in the field and see one of these critters of constant energy flitting about from flower to flower is another story altogether. So, look for the tail and color of the legs, which is the key characteristic that is most noticeable, and then look at the body color.

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The dominant Dragonfly at the retention ponds here at East View is the Canada Darner a blue and brown dragonfly. Mostly, you will see the males patrolling along the shore, but their flight is fast enough that unfortunately the following image is somewhat blurred. However, it should give an indication of what you might see along the edges of the ponds.



Canada Darner, (M) *Aeshna canadensis*

Photo © Dick Harlow



Canada Darner, (M) *Aeshna canadensis*

Photo © Dick Harlow

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If you missed the chance to see the Super Moon, the Sturgeon Moon on August 10, 2014, here it is!



Sturgeon Moon, Super Moon August 10, 2014

Photo © Dick Harlow

All pictures were taken at EastView at Middlebury.