

## **July 1-14, 2014 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW**

**By Dick Harlow**

### **TRANSITION PERIOD**

The excitement on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of July was a visitation by 3 Purple Martin scout birds to investigate those white gourds on the PUMA (Purple Martin) Pole because of all the Tree Swallow activity at Deer Meadow. Of course, resident Tree Swallows trying to protect their territory and their nest gourd confronted the Purple Martins. However, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> they allowed an adult male Purple Martin to perch on a gourd without the slightest evidence of aggression. The fact that we have scouts visiting the gourds this year should bode well for next year. Every year various Purple Martin colonies will dispatch members called scout birds, either looking to re-nest or looking for possible new areas to expand their colony for the following year. We will have to wait and see if they come back in 2015. July and the beginning of August are the period in the summer months where young fledged birds learn how and when to find food, generally how to survive. Some bird species have more than one brood a year, but those species that have a second clutch and don't fledge until the middle or end of August are destined to have a more difficult time surviving! Most bird species need almost two months of survival training to make it either through migration or through the winter months.

Case in point, a Peregrine Falcon and a Cooper's Hawk were recently observed around East View. During these two weeks either the falcon or the hawk could have been the predator that killed and ate a swallow and two Killdeer chicks on separate occasions. Every year many fledged birds called 'hatching year' or 'immature' birds, as well as adults, are taken by predators. And, this doesn't account for the number of birds that are killed by automobiles and airplanes.

Migration south begins in July through the middle of August for some species; and there are other species where the adults will start to migrate by the end of July. Some immature birds will migrate either with adults or as a separate group. So, July is like a transition month where development, finding food, avoiding predators, learning survival skills and just staying alive is for a young bird the key to its success. Then, they have a part or all of August to hone their skills.

As of the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, if you wondered where the Tree Swallows have gone, most have left our area and have moved with the bulk of other Tree Swallows of the Northeast to the Atlantic coast. Traditionally, they move to the coast and start their migration south in July and August. They fly during the day and roost in huge flocks during the evening.

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Their exit from their breeding grounds to the coast can take several weeks, and then they fly lazily to Florida and Central America where they will spend the winter months.



**Chicory, Cichorium intybus** Photo Courtesy of Dick Harlow

Chicory, Cichorium intybus is a common perennial plant that has been given weed status in the U.S. Chicory is native to Europe, but has become naturalized in North America. Its blue flower is often seen growing along roadside edges and along edges of highways where it hasn't been cut down or mowed. It is easily recognized by its multi-petaled blue flowers that only last a day and yet one can see the plant flowering from June to September even into October. An interesting note about Chicory is that during World War II, when it was difficult to import coffee, USA coffee at that time was produced from Chicory roots. Then, it wasn't considered a weed it was cultivated! How time has changed the status of some plants.

The clovers are starting to wane, but the **Bushy Aster**, **Queen Anne's Lace** and **Black-eyed Susan** are coming into bloom. As the day length shortens you will see increasing blooms of shorter day length flowers, such as NE Aster and goldenrod. As you travel around the countryside

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Goldenrods will be seen blooming, and this will be foretelling that fall isn't far behind.

The amphibian singing next to your cottage or outside the East View Inn is probably the Gray Tree Frog.



**Gray Tree Frog, *Hyla chrysoscelis*** Photo Courtesy of Dick Harlow

Looking at this picture of the Gray Tree Frog it may not be apparent how camouflaged it can become when up against stone or bark. The Gray Tree Frog however can change its color from mottled gray to gray-green, as long as its color matches somewhat the environment in which it is living like the bark of a tree. Since their home is found in woodland habitats, they will travel outside that habitat if food, a breeding pond and protection are available.



**American Bullfrog, *Lithobates catesbeianus*** Photo Courtesy of Dick Harlow

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I'm sure most of you have heard songs of both the Gray Tree Frog and if you live near enough to a retention pond, the American Bullfrog. Bullfrogs are large voracious predators who are unique among frogs because they feed on a number of different aquatic animals such as other frogs, submerged organisms, fish, snails and beetles. Yet I have no idea how they can survive in the mud of a shallow retention pond for the duration of the winter months. The Bullfrogs that were here last year, 2013, and now again this year, 2014, have obviously survived this past year's harsh winter. So, in my mind it is quite remarkable that there are more than 7 individuals in one Deer Meadow retention pond. In spite of living in a small shallow pond they seem healthy and very intent on defending their personal territory!

As reported at the July 14th VIVA Meeting likely a male Black Bear (Boar) was observed heading to the Middlebury College compost heap this past week. If a bear gets wind of bird feeders full of seed, we might see them in our back yards.