

## SEPTEMBER 15 – 30, 2020 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

### **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD**



**Red-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus*,**  
Adult male. © Dick Harlow

This species, our summer resident, nests in the cattails of South and North Ponds. This year it produced a bumper crop of offspring.

By the beginning of the second week in August all the males have finished defending their territory. Redwing males are polygamous, which means a single male defending his territory will have in his territory multiple females that he mates with that will nest in that territory.

By the end of the second week of August the males, and all the females that have finished raising their young have left. Only those females that still need to look after their unfledged chicks stay to finish their job.

Another blackbird, the Common Grackle leaves the vicinity at about same time of year. One moment blackbirds are vying for a perch at the feeders, pushing American Goldfinches and House Finches away from the feeder. The next moment all you see are American Goldfinches and House Finches with no blackbirds in sight.



**Red-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus*,**  
Adult female. © Dick Harlow

However, on occasion we might have a young, first year Red-wing Blackbird or Common Grackle check out the bird feeders in our community; but basically, the adults and most of the young have moved on exploring the vicinity until next year.

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Redwings are blackbirds that tend to flock together. Yes, we see them singularly or in small groups, but in the winter, like crows, they will come together especially at night into large aggregations. This type of behavior is protective primarily against night avian predators such as owls. Then at dawn they all tend to separate or move in small pods to their favorite feeding areas.

### **AMERICAN BULLFROG**



**American Bullfrog, *Lithobates catesbeianus*,**  
South Pond © Dick Harlow

To the uninitiated it might seem inconceivable for South Pond to freeze almost to the bottom during the winter; and yet there are frogs that survive this harsh weather. I have walked on the solid ice of South Pond, not recently, but back when there were fewer cattails, and was amazed that the following spring frogs were fairly abundant.



**American Bullfrog, *Lithobates catesbeianus*,**  
South Pond © Dick Harlow

This frog, commonly called just Bullfrog, is the largest frog we have in the Northeast. It is native to eastern North America and has been introduced further west. Due to this large frog's voracious appetite, eating whatever moves, it is considered a pest in some parts of the country, especially where it has been introduced.

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**American Bullfrog, *Lithobates catesbeianus*,**  
South Pond © Dick Harlow

Maybe it is the carpet of algae or the ubiquitous large, thick clumps of algae in South Pond that allow other species of frog's places to hide; but whatever the reason, the Bullfrogs that live in South Pond have not as yet eliminated other forms of amphibians as far as I can determine. Both Green Frogs and Northern Leopard Frog have been seen every year since 2013, which suggests that at least some are able to navigate from being consumed.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

#### **MAMMALS**

- Coywolves
- Red Fox
- Gray Squirrel

#### **AMPHIBIANS**

- Green Frog
- Bull Frog
- Northern Leopard Frog

#### **BUTTERFLIES**

- Cabbage White
- Clouded Sulphur

#### **Weather Tidbits**

**Month of SEPTEMBER 01-30, 2020**

*All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).*

#### **PRECIPITATION**

**Average September Precipitation for Vermont = 3.8 inches.**

**Four Week Precipitation = 64.0 mm or 2.5 inches. 1.3-inch deficit from average.**

**Overcast Days: 11**