

OCTOBER 15 – 31, 2020 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

Believe it or not the following butterfly and moth are seen toward Falls end feeding on some of the last blooms of the season.

WOOD NYMPH



(1) **Wood Nymph**, *Cercyonis pegala*, southern variation. © Dick Harlow

This species is found in the subfamily called Satyrinae, or Satyrs. The two images are examples of this subfamily, the largest in the subfamily.

We have both these varieties of the Common Wood Nymph here at EastView. The name, Common Wood Nymph, is inaccurate according to Rick Cech and Guy Tudor who wrote "Butterflies of the East Coast, An Observer's Guide." The name is inaccurate because these varieties, although they can be found at woodland edges, prefer and are found in open country.

The primary species is the southern variation, (1) *Cercyonis pegala*, and the subspecies is the northern variation, (2) *Cercyonis pegala nephele*.

The **yellow** (can be bright or faded) that is on the forewing of (1) 'pegala' the southern variety, can be either light or dark, but continuous around its two dark spots with a light center. Whereas, (2) 'nephele' the northern variety, has no contiguous yellow between the two dark spots on the forewing.

This species likes open sunny meadows, gardens, open fields, shrubby fields and prairies, etc., that have thickets of vegetation that they can dive into to escape danger from a bird on the hunt.

The larvae feed on a variety of grasses, particularly Oat, Poverty, Bluestem and Purple-top grass.

We have seen this species irregularly here at EastView. Since 2013 it has been observed for 4 years. Sometimes it is just the southern variety, other times it seems to be both varieties. I have to admit I do not have any records that suggest only the northern variety has been seen.

This species is considered a generalist and can be quite widespread.

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(2) **Wood Nymph**, *Cercyonis pegala nephele*, northern variation. © Dick Harlow

HUMMINGBIRD MOTH

This is a daytime moth that looks to the uninitiated as a form of or type of Hummingbird, either as a butterfly or moth variety. In fact, it is a moth.



Hummingbird Clearwing, *Hemaris thysbe*, feeding on Black Knight Buddliea. © Dick Harlow

There are a total of four separate species of Hummingbird Moths found in North America. The Nessus Sphinx, (*Amphion floridensis*), Snowberry Clearwing (*Hemaria diffinis*), **Hummingbird Clearwing (*Hemaris thysbe*)**, and the White-lined Sphinx (*Hyles lineata*).

The one shown here is the Hummingbird Clearwing moth, and the other, **not** shown, is called Snowberry Clearwing, *Hemaris diffinis* that would be seen feeding along with thysbe.

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These species are members of the small sphinx moth family, Sphingidae. Both of these species are diurnal that feed on flowers in the gardens, as seen in these pictures, as well as in the meadow on sunny afternoons.



Hummingbird Clearwing, *Hemaris thysbe*,
feeding on Black Knight Buddliea. © Dick Harlow

Specifically, the host plants for these moths are Snowberry, Honeysuckle, dogbane, hawthorn, plum and cherry. Each species has two broods in a year.

The primary difference between these two species is the color of the abdomen and the legs. In this species above, notice the somewhat dark chestnut abdomen and the light brown thorax and white legs with black tips.

The Snowberry Clearwing has a black abdomen, a cream-colored thorax, with black legs.



Hummingbird Clearwing, *Hemaris thysbe*,
feeding on Black Knight Buddliea. © Dick Harlow

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OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

- **Coywolves howling**
- **Gray Squirrel**
- **Meadow Voles**

Weather Tidbits

Month of OCTOBER 01-31, 2020

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Average October Precipitation for Vermont = 3.58 inches.

Total precipitation for October was 60.0 mm or 2.4 inches. This is a 1.18 deficit for the month.

Overcast Days: We had 21 days, three weeks of overcast skies. Of those overcast skies 12 days produced rain. This month definitely added to the draught we are in even though it may not feel like it did.