

JUNE 15 – 30, 2017 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

VICEROY VS MONARCH



(1) Viceroy, *Limenitis archippus*, Ventral View, on Buddleia blossom, © Dick Harlow

When people come to me at the end of May or first couple of weeks of June and say they saw a Monarch Butterfly, small but definitely a Monarch, I ask, are you sure it wasn't a Viceroy? At that point they look puzzled and I understand why. Monarch butterflies are large, showy, slow flying most of the time. Viceroy's look very similar, but tend to fly a tad faster, but also can be slow. Problem – on the wing they look so similar that unless you actually look for the key visual characteristics that primarily separate the two species, and only observed well when the butterfly is at rest, you will definitely think you saw a Monarch!

Picture (1) shows the Viceroy, *Limenitis archippus*. The visual key is the black bar that is in the middle and concentric on the hindwing, which can be seen whether you see the dorsal or ventral side of the hindwing. If there is no black concentric bar, bold or faint, it is NOT a Viceroy.

A Viceroy is a generalist. The adults will nectar on Lilacs, Buddleia blossoms or Aster flowers. You can see Viceroy's from the end of May through to September. Therefore, a Viceroy will emerge from its chrysalis either May or early June and have a ready nectar supply of flowers. The female will lay her eggs on Poplars, Cottonwoods, or any Willow family tree. Having two broods allows them to be seen throughout the summer and early fall.

Research has proven that the Viceroy is **NOT** the mimic of Monarchs, but actually is also a species that is unpalatable to birds or insect eaters. They are able to hold salicylic acid in their bodies, and the salicylic acid is bitter and causes birds to retch and regurgitate; thus the Viceroy butterfly is considered unpalatable. Birds seem to associate their experience with the butterfly's color. Once the experience has been felt they seem not to try again.

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(2) **Monarch**, *Danaus plexippus*, (M) Ventral View,
on Swamp Milkweed, *Asclepias incarnate*, blossom,
© Dick Harlow

Picture (2) of the Monarch Butterfly, *Danaus plexippus*, is known as a Milkweed Butterfly. Its larva depends on milkweeds, (27 species of milkweeds}, but primarily here in the east it is the Common and Pink Milkweed known as Swamp Milkweed that adults nectar on. You will generally not see a Monarch in late spring or early summer; however, I will not go out on a limb and say never. When the milkweed buds come to fruition that is when you could expect that the Monarchs that survived their migration north will appear. Since Monarchs nectar the flowers of Milkweed and lay their eggs on Milkweed, it goes without saying that Milkweed needs to be mature enough before Monarchs will appear. The fact that caterpillars of the Monarch interact with the toxicity of Milkweed sap is fodder for another note.

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HOUSE FINCH



(1) House Finch, *Carpodacus mexicanus*, Male,
on sunflower bird feeder, © Dick Harlow

Before the 1940s House Finches primarily lived west of the Mississippi. In the late 1930s western House Finches were caught and brought to New York City to be sold as pets. However, as the birds were being sold illegally as ‘Hollywood Finches’ they were released before the law caught up to the vendors; so a small population began to develop around New York City in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By the late 1970s early 1980s the House Finch population had expanded to include most of the Mid-Atlantic States. By the early 1990s the population had increased to the eastern shores of the Mississippi and today House Finches completely cover the whole of the United States and Mexico and up into southern Canada.

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(2) House Finch, *Carpodacus mexicanus*, Female,
© Dick Harlow

In my mind there is a definite difference between House Finches and Purple Finches, but those differences are less apparent unless they are in your mind's eye. None on the male Purple Finch (3), that usually you will see a lighter pink area in back of the eye, called an eyebrow by some field guides, and a darker purple red area behind the bill and on the forehead.



(3) Purple Finch, *Carpodacus purpureus*, Male
© Scott A. Haber

The bill is slightly stouter and straighter than that of the House Finch, but by itself this is a tough call. Also, note that the Purple Finch is slightly larger and more robust than the House Finch. Again, you would need to be familiar with both species or see them side by side to see this characteristic.

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The male House Finch has browner wings compared to the male Purple Finch. The male Purple Finch's wings have a tint of raspberry color mixed in with brown. Also, when the male Purple Finch is upset or excited it will raise its crown feathers, unlike a House Finch.



(4) Purple Finch, *Carpodacus purpureus*, Female,
© njaudubon.org

The eyebrow of the female Purple Finch is very apparent along with robust streaking on the breast. However, the female House Finch is definitely more muted and seems smaller. Will you see robust streaking on a House Finch like picture #2, sure, but notice no eyebrow, no area from the back edge of the eye nor a shortway to the neck that is lighter in color. A definite give away to the species. Also, notice on (4) this female has slightly raised her feathers on top of her head, which makes the head looks slightly coned. House Finches heads are flatter rounded and subdued.

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SALVIA

Salvia pratensis is the original scientific name for this plant. However, there seems to be many names for this dark purple-blue flowered member of the Mint Family of plants. Blue Sage also known as Caradonna Blue Sage, or *Salvia sylvestris*, Caradonna, or *Salvia nemorosa*, Caradonna, or simply Meadow Sage.



Meadow Sage, *Salvia nemorosa*, Caradonna,
© Dick Harlow

Whatever the name, the genus *Salvia* is an Old-World sage that has been worked on by horticulturists. It is deer resistant and a good pollen and nectar plant for bees and butterflies. For those times during the summer when we don't receive as much precipitation as we would expect, Blue Sage will survive well because it is known as a drought resistant plant.

If you enjoy knowing that butterflies and bees will thrive from the nectar garnered from this plant, you will thus have reason to grow it in your garden!

NOTE:

This is the time of year for female Snapping Turtles to be looking to lay their eggs. Nice soft garden soil is a likely spot so be aware that you might have a visitor between the second week of June to the first week of July. Since one has already dug in our garden most probably by the time you read this note it will have already happened.

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OBSERVATIONS

JUNE

MAMMALS

White-tailed Deer, 4 Doe and 1 Buck

Gray Fox - Adult crossing South St. near Farm (before the Barn was torn down) on the dirt part of South St. extension

Eastern Cottontail Rabbit - 2 individuals

Gray Squirrel - 4 individuals

Eastern Chipmunk - 2 individuals

Meadow Vole - 1 individual

REPTILES

Snapping Turtle - 1 Female

AMPHIBIANS

Gray Tree Frog - evening chorus

American Bullfrog - day time chorus

Leopard Frog - South Pond

American Toad - Garden

FISH (South Pond)

Bait Fish - still seen when water is calm Goldfish - not seen this month

BUTTERFLIES

Cabbage White

Silvery Blue

Giant Swallowtail

Canadian Tiger Swallowtail

Viceroy

Common Ringlet

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Weather Tidbits

Month of JUNE 1-30, 2017

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 163.4 mm or 6.4 inches

Overcast Days: 9

TEMPERATURE

Mean Temp: 19.5 C⁰/67.1⁰F

High Temp: 30.5 C⁰/86.9⁰F

Low Temp: 5.6 C⁰/42.1⁰F