

## JULY 1 – 14, 2017 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

### GIANT SWALLOWTAIL



**(1) Giant Swallowtail, *Papilio cresphontes*,**  
Dorsal View, on Lilac blossoms, © Dick Harlow

The name Giant Swallowtail is a name that really doesn't fit. There are female Tiger Swallowtails that are larger and there is a Jamaican Swallowtail, *Papilio homerus*, that is also larger, having a wingspan greater than 5 inches. But, like many insect and other animal names we have to go with the cards we have been dealt.

As I have mentioned in past notes the Giant Swallowtail, *Papilio cresphontes*, is an example of an insect that has extended its range from its previous southern range of Florida, coastal Carolinas, and southern states to Mexico and California. Now it has extended its range into Vermont and southern Canada. Depending on which reference one reads, there is a wide variance as to where this butterfly has been found. However, although it is found in the south and west, up until 2010 this species was not observed on a regular basis in Vermont. Looking at some published range maps of 2005 it was suggested that it was only seen in Massachusetts and southern New York as a vagrant and north of that not at all. After 2010, Vermont observers were regularly beginning to see this butterfly in July and August. Since 2014 this species has been seen as early as the first week in June.

My first observation of this species in New England was in 2012 and when we moved to EastView saw it regularly from 2013 to 2016 and again June of 2017. It became obvious that Vermont had a food source for the larva of this species. The larva's favorite is any plant that is citrus.

Our Northern Prickly Ash, *Zanthoxylum americanum*, when the leaf is crushed or the stem is broken will give off a citrus odor. There are several plants with the Genus name *Zanthoxylum* that are visited by the Giant Swallowtail.

Whether visiting flowers in your garden or lazily flying over the meadow this butterfly is definitely eye catching. I have shown dorsal (1) and ventral (2) views so that you can see the absolute beauty of this insect. Picture (1) was taken in June of this year, 2017 and Picture (2) was taken last year, 2016.

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**(2) Giant Swallowtail, *Papilio cresphontes*,**  
Ventral View, on Zinnia blossom, © Dick Harlow

Ecologists consider this species a generalist and adaptable when compared to other citrus-feeding swallowtails. Notice that in the first picture the butterfly is nectaring on a Lilac and the second picture it is feeding on a Zinnia. Neither plant has a citrus relationship.

**GRAY FOX**



**Gray Fox, *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*,**  
© Adirondack Almanack

In the latter part of June, early in the morning, Terry Kline of EastView, while walking Henry, (his dog), on the dirt road extension of South Street, had an adult Gray Fox, *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*, cross the road in front of him. That is the first recorded Gray Fox sighting near EastView. We now have three Canids either on or within sight of our campus. Both the Red and Gray Fox along with Eastern Coyote have either visited, been seen or heard either close to our campus or in fact on our campus.

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There are 16 recognized subspecies of the Gray Fox. The one found in New England is *Urocyon cinereoargenteus borealis*.

The Gray Fox is the only canid that is found in both North and South America. Its range extends from southern northeastern Canada, to southern United States to northern South America.

Unlike the Red Fox, the Gray Fox can climb trees. Hunting at night and during predawn light, most people wouldn't be up and about to catch a glimpse of a Gray Fox. However, around EastView, without having unleashed dogs or children out and about, EastView is probably a safer place for foxes, coyotes and other mammals to be near campus and to move freely. During daylight hours most Canids of the family Canidae, are sequestered away in woods or dense vegetation, hidden 'til the sun goes down.



**Gray Fox, *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*,**  
© Adirondack Almanack

The Gray Fox feeds on rodents such as Eastern Cottontail Rabbit, voles, and also birds, and fruit. In other words, it is omnivorous, but has solitary hunting habits. Being an omnivore gives the Gray Fox survival strategy over animals that are specifically carnivorous.

### **TIMOTHY GRASS**

It might be interesting to look at and try to identify some of our Meadow/Field grasses. Not every species, but some of the more easily identifiable ones.

Timothy Grass, *Phleum pratense*, is thought to be an old world grass whose seed was brought over initially by various ethnic settlers. However, some will debate whether Timothy was also growing wild in North America before the Pilgrims journeyed to Plymouth or Virginia. Whatever the case we do know that Timothy Grass, the same species as we have here currently in North America is also the same species found in England.

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**(1) Timothy Grass, *Phleum pratense*, growing in Eastview's field, © Dick Harlow**

Timothy is a valuable hay grass. Although too rough to be considered a pasture grass for cattle, it is and was considered an excellent hay for winter food. From the 1870's to 1920, before the advent of tractors and other machines Timothy Grass was the primary hay feed for horses. Horses were the primary means by which farmers were able to haul agricultural machines for haying, plowing and planting.

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(2) **Timothy Grass**, *Phleum pratense*, developing seed head, © Dick Harlow

The seed head is unlike any other grass seed head that we could see in our area. The only possible confusion would be with a much shorter sedge. But, because this grass grows tall (5-6 feet), it is probably the easiest to identify. (1) is a field picture of Timothy Grass plants. (2) is a single developing seed head before it in fact flowers. And, (3) is a Timothy Grass seed head that is flowering.

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**(3) Timothy Grass, *Phleum pretense*, flowering seed head, © Dick Harlow**

**OBSERVATIONS**

**MAMMALS**

Gray Squirrel – 3  
Eastern Chipmunk – 2 individuals

Eastern Cottontail – 2 individuals

**AMPHIBIANS**

Gray Tree Frog

American Bullfrog

Leopard Frog

**FISH**

Bait-like Fish

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**BUTTERFLIES**

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail  
Cabbage White  
Monarch  
Mourning Cloak

**Weather Tidbits**

**Month of JUNE 1-14, 2017**

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

**PRECIPITATION**

**Total Precipitation: 85.4 mm or 3.4 inches**

**Overcast Days: 6**

**TEMPERATURE**

**Mean Temp: 21.0 C<sup>0</sup>/89.8<sup>0</sup>F**

**High Temp: 29.6 C<sup>0</sup>/85.3<sup>0</sup>F**

**Low Temp: 13.4 C<sup>0</sup>/ 56.1<sup>0</sup>F**