

SEPTEMBER 1 - 14, 2018 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

**RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD**



**Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Male,**  
*Archilochus colubris*, © Dick Harlow

**MIGRATION**

Have you ever wondered when watching a hummingbird feed at your feeder how far this fellow has to travel during spring and fall migrations? How much energy this little body needs to transport it over the hundreds even thousands of miles it must travel?

To underline the dangers for **this** species is the fact that all migrations, both spring and fall are solitary. They do not flock-up; they all migrate individually, meaning males fly as individuals, females fly individually and young will fly individually. This means their little bodies have to bulk up on food before migration, building up their fat reserves so they can fly long distances without having to stop every few hours to feed.

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**Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Female,**  
*Archilochus colubris,* © Dick Harlow

Where do they come from in the Spring and where do they return to in the Fall? Simply, Central America between southern Mexico and Panama. Because each is a solitary flyer, an individual could be anywhere within that area solely dependent on food supplies available at the time.

Besides being small (tiny in fact), and requiring fat reserves for energy to fly long distances, is there a hazard in their journey besides predators, flying into obstacles or finding food when they need to stop and refurbish? YES, the weather can cause problems with their migration. Being so small regardless of their flying ability, they can be blown off course or certainly affected by storms during their migration.

Consider flying from the center of Central America to New England or Canada grueling as it is, many Ruby-throats choose to fly over the Gulf of Mexico. This is a non-stop flight that takes from 17 to 24 hours, until land is reached. It has been estimated that this hummingbird can fly at a speed of 25 miles per hour flying in a straight line, but I wonder if over that time of sustained flight, do they actually fly that fast.

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Will we see the same hummingbird next year that we saw this year? The longest living recorded Ruby-throat is a banded one of 9 years 1 month. The average age length is between 3 to 5 years. It has also been recorded that any hummingbird that lives longer than five years is a female.

So, the answer is, you are probably seeing the same fellow. It makes the knowledge of his travels that much more amazing or mystically phenomenal.

### A FALL DRAGONFLY



(1) **Yellow-legged Meadowhawk,**  
*Sympetrum vicinum*, © Dick Harlow

A large group of dragonflies is grouped under the common name 'Skimmers' or Skimmer Family, Libellulidae, of Dragonflies.

Skimmers range in size from small to large with wing patterns that are either clear or have conspicuous patterns. The sexes differ by color where the female is usually a different and lighter color than the male.

This is the most diverse group and also the most common among all the dragonfly groups. For the observer this group is one of the easiest to see and possibly identify since individuals will perch on any kind of projection, such as a rock, a tree trunk, on the ground or on any manner of vegetation. This gives the observer time to photograph and take note of its identification marks.

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(2) **Yellow-legged Meadowhawk**,  
*Sympetrum vicinum*, © Dick Harlow

The above individual species, **Yellow-legged Meadowhawk**, has leg coloration that is different from most Meadowhawk species. Many Meadowhawk species have black legs. The Yellow-legged Meadowhawk has yellow legs only when it is young; then they turn dull brown as the individual ages in both the male and female, but never turn black. Therefore, if you are looking at one as in photo (1) notice it has yellow-brown legs, an abdomen that is a shade lighter than in photo (2) and thus can be determined as a younger male than photo (2). Photo(2) is an adult male Yellow-legged Meadowhawk.

As with all dragonflies, part of their initial life cycle is in water. Thus, they must return to water to lay eggs. This species prefers shallow ponds, marshes, and slow-moving streams. Therefore, our retention ponds, here at EastView, are perfect places for this species to begin its life cycle.

Because of this species ability to withstand cold for short periods, it is interesting that this species is usually the last dragonfly we will see on the wing in late Fall.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

#### **MAMMALS**

White-tailed Deer

Coywolf (Coyote X Gray Wolf a coyote-wolf hybrid) – howling like a young wolf NOT barking like a Coyote.

Eastern Cottontail

Meadow Vole

#### **AMPHIBIANS**

American Bullfrog

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## **REPTILES**

Garter Snake

## **BUTTERFLIES**

Cabbage White  
Clouded Sulphur  
Orange Sulphur  
Pearl Crescent  
Monarch  
Viceroy

## **Weather Tidbits**

**Month of SEPTEMBER 1-14, 2018**

*[All Measurements taken at solar noon \(1230 EST\).](#)*

## **PRECIPITATION**

**Total Precipitation: 63.2mm or 2.5 inches**

**Overcast Days: 6**