

SEPTEMBER 15 – 30, 2018 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES
By Dick Harlow

COMMON NIGHTHAWK



Common Nighthawk, *Chordeiles minor*,
© Greg Budney, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

The end of August and the first two weeks in September are migration time for the Common Nighthawk here in Vermont. As mentioned at VIVA on September 4 we had two seen passing over the trees above Otter Creek. This sighting was special as any sighting of these fellows is difficult because we don't live next to a major river. We now have a sighting in 2014 and a new sighting in 2018.

EASTERN GARTER SNAKE



Eastern Garter Snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis*
© Dick Harlow

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Surprise – out to get the morning paper, opened the front door and this fellow was on the front patio keeping cool on a hot morning from the coolness of the concrete. It allowed me to go and get my camera, but shortly after taking its picture it slithered off.

Garter snakes don't grow much longer than 18-28 inches, and if you stretched this fellow out I would estimate it would be very close to two feet; thus, this individual is considered a full-grown adult. Close examination of the picture will show three yellow longitudinal lines along the full length of the rather dark body. A rather narrow head indicates that this snake is non-poisonous. If you go outside of New England, Garter Snakes do have variances in their looks, but they will have those yellow stripes against a variable dark body.

The snake that might look similar to a Garter Snake is the Ribbon Snake. However, the Ribbon Snake is very slender by comparison. If you see white dashes begin to appear on the sides of a Garter Snake that usually means that it is upset, or angry and can strike at whatever is causing it to be concerned.

Garter Snakes are found throughout most of North America. Their habitat preferences are wet areas, such as wet meadows, seeps, near ponds, marshes and meadow edges where they can find areas to hide and nest. This species is so common, it is considered the most encountered snake in suburban areas as long as there is some cover.

Another name for this snake is Garden Snake, due to the fact that it is usually found around gardens, under old boards or debris. It is considered a friend of the gardener because it feeds on garden slugs, worms, small rodents, frogs, toads, salamanders, fish and tadpoles.

Garter Snakes are viviparous, which means they give birth to live young. A female can give birth to as many as 40-50 young per year.

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BEAUTY OF THE NIGHT



Harris's Three Spot, *Harrisimemna trisignata*,
© Dick Harlow

Those who say moths are dull and uninteresting haven't witnessed this beauty of the night!

You would think that this strikingly colorful moth with its black and white pattern and soft brown spots, would garner more definitive information about this species.

We do have a list of shrubs and trees that its larva like to feed on, and we do know where it has been sighted. But, I would think with the weird but interesting shape of its larva, along with the above image that there would be impetus for further study. So far as I can find, beyond where it has been sighted and what the larva eat I am having trouble finding any documentation.

According to Google, "This caterpillar is a bird-poop mimic that also employs the strange tactic of carrying its molted head capsules - perhaps this acts as a distracting decoy for pecking birds."

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Harris's Three Spot, *Harrisimemna trisignata*,
caterpillar, ©Jim McCormac, Ohio Birds and Biodiversity

I think you would agree that these images of the larva turning into this adult moth is quite a deviation from what might be expected.

Suffice it to say this species is found throughout all of the Northeast and Mid-West. Its larva feed on winterberry, blueberry, apple, cherry, honeysuckle and willow to name only a few.



Harris's Three Spot, *Harrisimemna trisignata*,
caterpillar, © Unknown, TGIQ

I have to admit these adult images are a first for me of this a life moth.

The adult makes it almost tolerable to deal with the looks of its larva feeding on some of our trees and shrubs in our gardens.

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Harris's Three Spot, *Harrisimemna trisignata*,
© Dick Harlow

As can be observed from the picture, this fellow is on a window screen. It was quite by accident that I observed it and totally happy that the image was printable!

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Gray Squirrel
Eastern Cottontail
Meadow Vole

AMPHIBIANS

American Toad

BUTTERFLIES

Cabbage White
Clouded Sulphur
Orange Sulphur
Monarch
Viceroy

DRAGONFLIES

Canada Darner
Yellow-legged Meadowhawk

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Weather Tidbits

Month of SEPTEMBER 15-30, 2017

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 86.4 mm or 3.4 inches

Overcast Days: 12



This is a picture of the free roaming cat

That is hunting around the cottages and the Inn.

If anyone recognizes this photo taken September 30, 2018, would you please notify
Connie or the EastView Concierge.

Many thanks.