

## MAY 1 - 14, 2017 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

### SKIPPER BUTTERFLIES



**Juvenal's Duskywing**, *Erynnis juvenalis*,  
Nectaring on Chive flowers © Dick Harlow

Sometimes the earliest butterfly-like insects one might see in Spring-time are ones that look like this fellow. Looking at this diurnal insect you might think it looks more like a moth rather than a butterfly, even though most moths are nocturnal. This fellow is a Skipper butterfly and taxonomically Skipper butterflies used to be considered a distinct group all on their own and separated from Lepidoptera or butterflies. Without going into detail this group of Butterfly-like insects fly during the day and look enough like butterflies that they were ultimately lumped into a separate family under true butterflies. **Skippers** are in the family, **Hesperiidae**, under **Lepidoptera**, which includes moths and butterflies.

This Skipper is called **Juvenal's Duskywing**. It is one of the first skippers to be observed in early spring. This skipper's hindwings are slightly tattered. Chive flowers are some of the first herb flowers to come out in May, and I was lucky enough to catch this Skipper nectaring. It is normally found in oak woods from Manitoba to Quebec and from Nova Scotia to Texas including Florida. The two to four white spots on the forewing are characteristic of this species.

### TROUT LILY



**TROUT LILY**, *Erythronium americanum*,  
just\_the leaves. © Dick Harlow

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Trout Lily or Dog-tooth Violet, *Erythronium americanum* is an early spring ephemeral. It grows in woods and will flower before the trees leaf out and shade the colony. This plant is slow to flower taking 4-7 years before it flowers. In a colony of Trout Lilies, according to research, only 1% will flower.

Most often you will see a group of mottled leaves of brown, violet-brown or gray splotches rather than nice shiny green leaves. See picture above. If the colony is young this is all you will see. Occasionally, there may be a single flower stalk or two with beautiful 3 petal and 3 petal-like sepals that are recurved. A unique find in the woods.



**Trout Lily, *Erythronium americanum*, flower**  
© Dick Harlow

### **CABBAGE WHITE**



**(1) Cabbage White, *Pieris rapae*, Female,**  
nectaring Buckwheat flowers © Dick Harlow

Notice the two dark spots on the forewing. This is characteristic of a Female. Males only have one spot on the forewing, as in picture #2.

This species of butterfly was established as one of the most abundant and prolific immigrant butterflies from Eurasia and North Africa. It is thought to have arrived in North America, specifically Quebec, Canada in the 1860's. By 1900 this species had spread throughout the continent.

This species is successful because it is a generalist. Its first common name 'Cabbage' gives you a hint as to what its larva originally fed on. But, being a generalist, its larva will feed on any Crucifer, e.g. cabbage, cauliflower, garden cress, broccoli or brussel sprouts, whether native or cultivated. As well, the larva will feed on various species of mustard plants.

It is found in any open habitat, fields, meadows and cultivated fields. Along with being the earliest butterfly it is also one of the last, flying till the first hard frost.

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**(2) Cabbage White, *Pieris rapae*, Male,**  
nectaring Catmint flowers © Dick Harlow

### **FLYCATCHERS**

There are many birds that chase insects but not all are classified as flycatchers. For example, swallows and warblers are insect eaters, but they are not in this group of flycatchers. Flycatchers are birds like Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Pewee or Great-crested Flycatcher that we might see or hear at EastView.

Great-crested Flycatchers prefer to be near woods rather than out in the open. Eastern Pewees have visited us in the fall, probably on their migration south. Eastern Phoebe is a good example of a flycatcher that can be seen around EastView. However, at the moment, there doesn't seem to be good nesting facilities for the Eastern Phoebe here.

Flycatchers tend to tee up on top of a high branch or fence post so they have a clear view from which to take-off to catch a dragonfly, flying beetle or some other large flying insect. Swallows, on the other hand are flying with their bills open much of the time catching smaller insects on the wing. They won't turn down a damselfly or dragonfly if the insect presents itself, but generally smaller flying insects are on their menu.

If you see what you think is a flycatcher stop and watch the show. It will do aerial and acrobatic maneuvers while it tries to catch the insect on the wing. Stopping in mid-flight to catch an insect is called "hawking" and these fellows along with other birds, such as some raptors, will commit to "hawking".

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**EASTERN PHOEBE**



**Eastern Phoebe, *Sayornis phoebe*,**  
© Dick Harlow

I am sure many of you have read in the newspapers how flycatcher populations around the United States have dropped considerably in the last ten years. Scientists feel there are a number of reasons for the decline in population numbers. As human numbers increase so does the clearing of land, construction of buildings and roads; the use of pesticides and herbicides will go up and the bird populations that depend on insects for survival will go down. It isn't quite that simple as invasive species of plants and animals also have an effect on native populations. We, in the USA, have yet to find that balance between man and the natural world especially with insects, the organisms that depend on them and humans who focus on their desire for comfort, which seems to trump all else. I'm just happy I have lived long enough to witness some of these avian species before they become either very rare or extinct. I just feel sorry for my grandchildren who will have to deal with the decline of our natural environment.

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**OBSERVATIONS**

**MAMMALS**

White-tailed Deer, Doe  
Gray Squirrel – individuals  
Eastern Chipmunk – individuals  
Meadow Vole – individual

**AMPHIBIANS**

Gray Tree Frog

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**BUTTERFLIES**

Cabbage White

**FISH**

Bait Fish (type unknown)

Goldfish (single)

**Weather Tidbits**

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

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

**PRECIPITATION**

**Total Precipitation: 46.0 mm or 1.8 inches**

**Overcast Days: 8**

**TEMPERATURE**

**Mean Temp: 11.4 C<sup>0</sup>/52.5<sup>0</sup>F**

**High Temp: 25.2 C<sup>0</sup>/77.4<sup>0</sup>F**

**Low Temp: 1.6 C<sup>0</sup>/ 34.9<sup>0</sup>F**