

MARCH 15 – 31, 2019 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

MARCH - APRIL

What can we expect to see by the end of March entering early April?

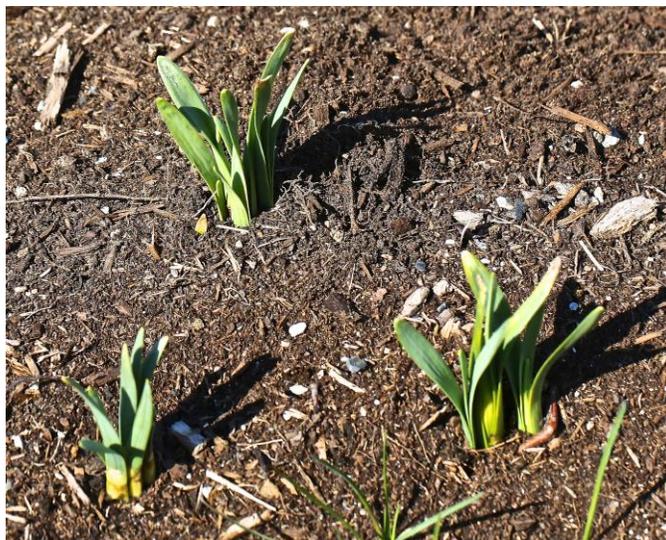
Meteorologically, March is the first month of spring! Temperatures are moderating between warm and cold, melting snow and thawing ground and ice brings on the mud season. Occasional snowfall and periodic rain let everyone know winter isn't finished even if we would like it to be. Trees are waking, buds are swelling which suggest tree and shrub sap is moving through their veins carrying stored nutrients for the leaf buds so they can open at the most opportune moment.



(1) *Narcissus* poking up early in March
© Dick Harlow

If we are lucky to have a moderate March, we might see daffodils poking up through the thawed-out ground. Otherwise, we will have to wait. As the weather continues to feature warm days and cold nights, which is perfect for maple sap to run, our daffodils will further push themselves into leaves showing up as in picture (2)

About this time, we have to ask the question: Have we had enough winter? There have been days of warmer weather during winter thaws, followed by cold temperatures; biting north winds still persist and remind us of how much we want consistently warmer temperatures to arrive. Patience, they will come!



(2) *Narcissus* beginning to leaf out
© Dick Harlow

What do we have to look forward to in April? Spring ephemerals (see my notes the end of the month) will bloom for a short time and our lawns will begin to see dandelions and clover blossoms. Our drab landscape of tan and brown dead grass will be renewed by

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shoots of living new green blades of grass. Weed seeds that you haven't given a thought to over this winter, will now be sprouting and asking you to renew your vow to keep them under control.



(3) **Daffodils, *Narcissus*,** in full flower
© Dick Harlow



(4) **Daffodils, *Narcissus*,** in full flower close-up .
© Dick Harlow

But soon, pictures (3) and (4), will be showing themselves in many EastView gardens.

The *Narcissus* is a genus of spring perennial flowering bulbs of the amaryllis family. These plants are given common names such as jonquil or daffodil. Along with tulips these spring flowering bulbs are colorful and a delight to the eye. Weary of snow, ice and mud we transition from winter to spring.

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BLUEBIRD NOTE:



Eastern Bluebird, female, © Dick Harlow

Bluebirds that checked out the bird boxes in February will now be more aggressively staking out the area around the box that they plan to defend. The only “fly in the ointment” is the European Starling pair or House Sparrow pair that have decided they want the same box. Unfortunately, both Starlings and House Sparrows also aggressively defend their box and will start defending it earlier than bluebirds. The other problem is that if a House Sparrow nest is successfully eliminated by humans, (i.e. removing the nest and cleaning out the box), they will harass and or kill occupants of another box so that they will end up taking over two boxes instead of one.

The only way I have successfully been able to circumvent this behavior is by following standard ornithologically based procedures: going into the nest box and removing all but one egg; mark that egg, come back in a week and remove it and all but one of the new eggs; mark the new egg and repeat this procedure throughout the bird’s nesting season. The female will ultimately give up and abandon the box. The male on the other hand will not. This whole procedure is very labor intensive; I have to admit I have less of a will to do it today. Plus, today there is a Canada Thistle “forest” that I would have to walk through to carry out each procedure.

GREAT BLUE HERON

This shot was taken of a Great Blue Heron as it stood on the south shore of South Pond. It was taken on 26 March 2019, a few days after the 24-hour snow storm we had. It should be noted that South Pond was frozen. Therefore, there was no food available for this heron. The Great Blue left shortly after I took a series of images. Hopefully it will find some near shore open water to hunt for food. This photograph and sighting are the earliest EastView sighting to date since 2013.

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Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*
© Dick Harlow

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Red Fox – good views walking on south berm.
Eastern Cottontail – eating conifers and fresh scat .
Gray Squirrel – at bird feeders.
Striped Skunk – odor
Weasel – evidence first of month, no new evidence by end of month

Weather Tidbits

Month of MARCH 1-31, 2019

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 40.6 mm or 1.6 inches for month, very low.

Overcast Days - 12

Precipitation Days - 9