

JULY 1 - 14, 2019 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

DAMSELFLY vs DRAGONFLY

What is the difference between a damselfly and a dragonfly? Is it a play on words, the difference between a damsel and a dragon? That would be fun for a story, but no. Damselflies are more fragile looking, slow, tend to hide, but are predatory. Whereas, dragonflies are fierce looking, definitely quicker and predatory, usually out in the open where they can leave swiftly to prey on other dragonflies as well as other insects. Besides, being predators themselves, both are also food for flycatchers.

Damselfly



(1) Eastern Forktail, Male, *Ischnura verticalis*,
© Dick Harlow

Notice in picture #1 the damselfly is at rest. The wings are placed parallel to the body, the ends going back almost two thirds the length of the abdomen.

Now compare that observation with the next picture of a dragonfly #2. The dragonfly's wings are at right angles to the abdomen and body. Notice that the eyes are forward and almost touching. In some species they do touch, whereas the damselfly's eyes are at the ends of the head, widely separate from each other. The dragonfly is looking for action, more intense like a primary predator, whereas the damselfly is pointing in toward other vegetation, hiding or being unobtrusive.

Dragonfly



(2) Eastern Pond Hawk,
Erythemis simplicicollis, © Dick Harlow

Both dragonflies and damselflies lay their eggs in water. When the eggs hatch the larva molt (growth stages) several times. As they molt the larva become predatory on aquatic insect larva. As they mature their predatory appetite increases to include aquatic animals such as tadpoles or even small developing frogs.

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Remember, dragonfly and damselfly larva in their various growth stages become a source of food for fish, frogs and birds.

Once the larval dragonfly or damselfly reaches its adult stage, it becomes almost a free predator on other flying insects. They are not immune to flycatchers such as Kingbirds or other flycatchers, but are generally immune from other insect predators.

Like the changing colors in the fall, dragonflies also show up brighter as the season progresses. Picture #4 shows a fall dragonfly and #3 shows a colored damselfly.



(3) Eastern Forktail, *Ischnura verticalis*,
Immature Female, © Dick Harlow



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

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SNAPPING TURTLE



EastView van and female Common Snapping Turtle, *Chelydra serpentina*, 30 June 2019 © Tatum Daily



Common Snapping Turtle, *Chelydra serpentina*, female, close-up, resting under EastView van © Tatum Daily

This is an interesting sighting!

First, adult female Snapping Turtles move about to find a spot to lay their eggs usually by the end of May or early June here in Vermont. Second, this spring has been cold to cool, rainy, cloudy and except for those few days of warmish weather at the end of the month, June felt like early spring.

On June 30, 2019 Tatum Daily, learning from the Klines that there was a Snapping Turtle under the EastView van, took these images of a female Snapping Turtle hiding under the EastView van. The van did provide shelter, or a resting stop after laying her eggs. She is at least three weeks late from when Snapping Turtles are normally seen burying their eggs and returning to water. When I had a chance to go up and see the turtle it had disappeared.

When the turtle was re-found it was headed in the direction of the Alpine garden, and if she stayed on a straight line would find her way to North Pond.

This turtle behavior may be additional evidence that this spring at EastView has been difficult for various wildlife such as butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, turtles and other organisms who are having a difficult time adjusting to this Spring's particular climate change. Obviously, we here in Vermont are a miniscule part of the United States, but

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the fact remains we have had, so far, a distinct different weather pattern from the rest of the country. That weather pattern, in my mind, has definitely affected our wildlife, its food supply and behavior patterns. As written in earlier notes we have seen fewer animal tracks along pond edges, evidence of less than normal butterfly species in our area, different bird migration patterns and generally a feeling of malaise concerning how wildlife are faring around us here at EastView.



Common Snapping Turtle lumbering on her way back to North Pond. © Dick Harlow

GIANT SILKWORM MOTHS



Luna Moth, *Actias luna*, Outside EastView on the back patio. © Tatum Daily

The above photograph was taken by Tatum Daily with her cell phone and e-mailed to me. Beautiful head-on shot!

Later that afternoon I went to see if the moth was still on the back patio; it was found hiding on the bottom of the wooden leg of a chair.

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Luna Moth, *Actias luna*, Outside EastView on the back patio. © Dick Harlow

Most people pay little attention to moths unless they see a large beautiful colored moth like the Luna Moth, or a Prometheus Moth of last month, or the Polyphemus Moth (see image). Then again, we all have heard of the dainty drab colored clothes moths and the destruction their caterpillars can cause! Between the big, the colorful, to tiny and drab or the many that are drawn to lights at night is the extent of many peoples understanding or interest in moths.

Suffice it to say, there is a whole other world of interest and beauty out there that goes on mostly in the dark of night. We are very lucky indeed to see a tiny sample during the day.



Polyphemus Moth, *Antheraea polyphemus*, 7757, Middlebury, VT. Common, © Max Kraus

The Polyphemus Moth has the second largest wing spread of the Giant Silkworm Moths, 100-150mm. It is widely common throughout New England and southern Canada. Its caterpillar feeds on maple, oak, pine, ash and birch.

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EUROPEAN YELLOW UNDERWING MOTH

This moth is a very familiar moth of our region, as well as being cosmopolitan in the palearctic region, i.e. all of North America and Europe/Asia from North Africa/Central America north to the arctic. Yes, I know the color is more orange than yellow, but I didn't name it! It is a pretty moth, but it does have its negative attributes. If you are a gardener, you are very familiar with the cutworm that severs your garden seedlings and even attacks small herbaceous plants. This fellow is the adult stage of that notorious larva.



European Yellow Underwing Moth,
Noctua pronuba, © Dick Harlow

OBSERVATIONS

BUTTERFLIES

Red Admiral
Viceroy
Pearl Crescent

MOTHS

Luna Moth
Polyphemus Moth
European Yellow Underwing Moth

REPTILES

Snapping Turtle – headed to North Pond

AMPHIBIANS

Gray Tree Frog – on garden furniture
Bullfrog – South Pond
Northern Leopard Frog – South Pond
Eastern American Toad - Garden

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MAMMALS

White-tailed Deer - Meadow
Eastern Cottontail Rabbit - lawn
Gray Squirrel - lawn

Weather Tidbits

Month of JULY 1-14, 2019

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

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 36.0 mm or 1.4 inches

Overcast Days: 4