

OCTOBER 1 - 14, 2019 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

RED FOX



Red Fox, *Vulpes vulpes*, Deer Meadow Drive, Middlebury, VT © Dick Harlow

These pictures were taken October 3, 2019. I had already written two sets of notes but decided to move those notes to another time frame; and I didn't want to wait any longer to show these images to the EastView community. The first was taken at 0715 in the morning across from our cottage on Deer Meadow Drive.



Red Fox, *Vulpes vulpes*, Deer Meadow Drive, Middlebury, VT © Dick Harlow

Initially, I happened to see this fellow outside the front window. When I realized it was a Red Fox investigating the edge of the tall grass I ran to my camera, quickly changed lenses and went carefully out our front door. Took a quick shot that I believe he/she either heard or caught sight of me and started to scamper off. The other two are the fox leaving me in his or her dust! For better or worse they are the only shots I have.



Red Fox, *Vulpes vulpes*, Deer Meadow Drive, Middlebury, VT © Dick Harlow

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To give some perspective as to where the fox was in the community, the following is the original image that the above cropped shot was taken.



Red Fox, *Vulpes vulpes*, Deer Meadow Drive, Middlebury, VT © Dick Harlow

One can now have a feeling for the distance and where the fox was in relation to the cottages on Deer Meadow Drive.

Looking at the cropped images one can see the identifying characteristics of the Red Fox: black feet, black-tipped pointed ears and the white-tip to an otherwise bushy red tail signifying a healthy animal. Although we have Gray Foxes in Vermont and here in Middlebury, they do not have these specific characteristics.

Foxes are omnivorous and are universally distributed throughout North America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

MONARCHS ARE MIGRATING



Monarch, *Danaus plexippus*, nectaring on Buddleja (Butterfly Bush), © Dick Harlow

We had such a showing of Monarchs and a few other butterflies during late Summer and early Fall, I felt it was only appropriate to put up a few last images of Monarchs taken the end of September.

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Monarch, *Danaus plexippus*, male (2 black dots on hindwing), nectaring on Buddleja (Butterfly Bush), © Dick Harlow

Friends in Massachusetts told me they saw large masses of Monarchs migrating along the shore by Westport, MA. on the 2nd and 3rd of October. This fellow might have been one of them.



Monarch, *Danaus plexippus*, nectaring on Buddleja (Butterfly Bush), © Dick Harlow

It is amazing to me that within their small head is the prescribed instinct, the DNA to migrate, to know to go south and when to stop and rest for the winter. A bird I can fathom, a butterfly it is awesome, simply amazing!

Notably, my last view and camera shot of a Monarch was 12 October 2019.

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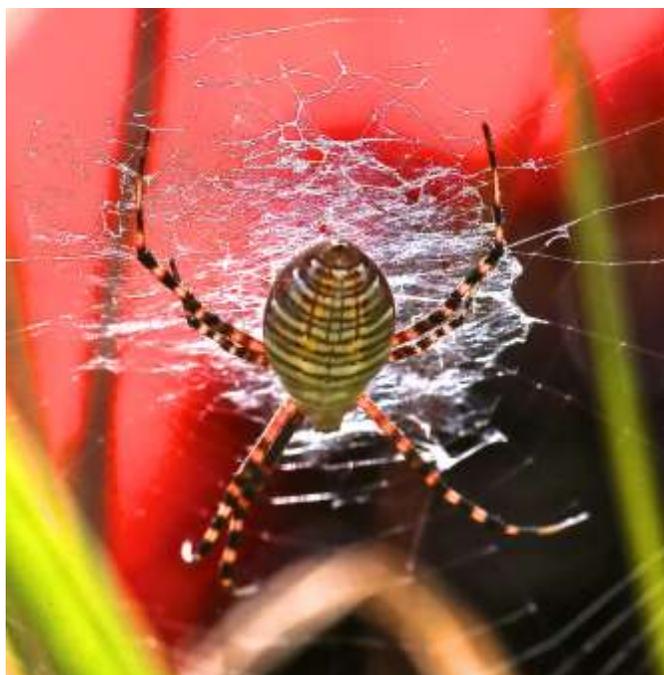
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MEET CHARLOTTE



(1) Banded Garden Spider, *Argiope trifasciata*
Ventral view of 'Charlotte'. © Dick Harlow

Located in Dottie and Terry Kline's garden, 'Charlotte' decided that their garden was ideal to take up residence. Orb Weavers, the group she belongs to, will survive until the first hard freeze. The references say that the Banded Orb Weavers will face their dark ventral side south (**picture 1**) picking up solar heat until the first killing freeze. By consistently facing south this Orb Weaver is able to stay active longer in the garden. Orb Weavers have a one-year life cycle. However, their fertilized eggs will survive the winter and the spiderlings will emerge in the spring. Few survive to adulthood due to birds and other predators.



(2) Banded Garden Spider, *Argiope trifasciata*
Dorsal view of 'Charlotte'. © Dick Harlow

Notice the banded legs in **picture 2**. This is characteristic of Orb Weavers along with the orb-shaped web it weaves between plants in the garden. This particular spider was down about a foot from the top of the garden vegetation. Even so, her ventral side, her abdomen had a direct view of the sun.

Due to the cold weather and morning frost the first week of October, Dottie and Terry had a respectful farewell for Charlotte.

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However, a note from Dottie says that their farewell was a tad premature. A harder look in the garden found Charlotte still alive and visible. I guess a more serious killing frost is needed to do her in!

A report from a Massachusetts bird bander:

"For the first time in over 30 years of bird banding fall migration in Massachusetts, I mist-netted zero warblers (Auburn Sportsman's Club station). I find that Shocking, really, for a September morning with a previous evening of westerly winds.

Declining songbird populations, local spraying for EEE, pesticides, diminishing habitat, domestic/feral cat predation, and climate change have all conspired all **too quietly** among an uninformed public to negatively alter not just today's numbers but, anecdotally, totals at my research over the last decade. Sad indeed!"

ANSWER TO SEPT. 15-30 UNKNOWN BUTTERFLY:

EASTERN TAILED BLUE

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Red Fox
Gray Squirrel

BUTTERFLIES

Cabbage White
Orange Sulphur
Monarch

Weather Tidbits

Month of OCTOBER 1-14, 2019

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 61.4 mm or 2.4 inches. Average monthly rain precipitation for Middlebury in October is 3.58 inches. In two weeks, we are 1.18 inches from a single month's average.

Overcast Days: 6