

MAY 1 - 14, 2020 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES
By Dick Harlow

VIOLA-'FRECKLES' & COMMON VIOLET



(1) This is '**Freckles**' and a **Common Violet** *Viola sororia*, aka '*Freckles*', and Common Violet, *Viola sororia sororia* © Dick Harlow

Gardens are beginning to grow, and some early plants are showing off their flowers.

Violet plants are in a large group of plants. *Viola sororia sororia*, the Common Purple Violet is in fact found in many gardens, either put there willingly by the home-owner or by wind or animal dropping seed into the garden.

The violet is a very stalwart plant, surviving winters that could be difficult for other perennial plants. They throw out their seed and it takes hold the following early spring showing a profusion of leaves and flowers as other plants are just beginning to show their stems through the ground.

Genetically this is a rather diverse group of plants with which taxonomists are having a difficult time. Consequently, I will not try to answer why the two violets presented here are only separated as subspecies of each other even though they are quite different in color.



(2) '**Freckles**', *Viola sororia*, © Dick Harlow

This hybrid violet is considered a woolly violet. Any plant that has small, short, or long hair like structures appearing on the sepals is considered woolly. This white violet '*Freckles*' has many light to deep china blue to light purple dots, slashes or markings on the white petals. The leaves are heart shaped and the plant grows in a mound.

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(3) Close-up of 'Freckles', *Viola sororia*
© Dick Harlow

Number 3 is a close-up of the flower showing spotting and coloration. If you like flowering ground covers in your garden or plants that will spread this is a good one.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD



Red-winged Blackbird, Male, *Agelaius phoeniceus*,
© Dick Harlow

A male Red-winged Blackbird showing off his shoulder patches, i.e. his epaulets, so all other males will see that he is a dominant male; so don't mess with me!



Red-winged Blackbird, female, *Agelaius phoeniceus*,
© Josh Bukoski

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As you can see the male looks completely different from the female. This is called sexual dimorphism, where males and females are different in markings and coloration.

If you were to watch South or North Pond you would see Red-winged males ceaselessly going about either singing, on top of a cottage, on a reed, on a nest box or on a cat-o'-nine tails defending their territory; or you will see them chasing other males out of their territory.

The female looks like a big streaked sparrow, her streaky coloration helps to hide or camouflage her and her nest and nestlings from predators. Their nests are built either close to the water or ground, in among heavy cover of reeds and cat-o'-nine tails.

Since males are polygamous, also called polygyny, one male mates with several females nesting in his territory. Females in a polygynous group act as sisters with one male as the father of their offspring. The females act as a group to ward off predators and intruders, with the consistent help of the male.

Red-wings are omnivorous feeders. They will feed on plants, plant seeds, small fruits, insects, spiders and beetles. My bird feeders are constantly visited by both male and female Red-wings as well as goldfinches, house finches and other birds.

We are seeing more Red-wings this year than in past years due to the thick growth of cat-o'-nine tails growing in South Pond. Hopefully I will be able to have some idea as to the number of male territories and possible number of females in each territory. As females can have two to three broods a year, this pond habitat could produce a number of young!

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Gray Fox
White-tailed Deer

AMPHIBIANS

Peepers

Weather Tidbits

Month of MAY 1-14, 2020

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

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 23.0 mm or 0.91 inches.

Overcast Days: 3

Been unusually cold with frost and snow during these first 14 days.