

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

By Dick Harlow

## DRAGONFLY VS DAMSELFLY



**(1) American Emerald, *Cordulia shurtleffii*,**  
© Dick Harlow

Dragonflies at rest will usually hold their wings spread directly at right angles or slightly forward or oblique of the body, never closed against the body in a healthy dragonfly. However, most damselflies rest their wings next to the body. There is a group of damselflies that are called Spreadwing Damselflies, for obvious reasons. However, for the purpose of this note I'll be dealing with the damselflies that fold their wings next to their abdomen, or closed next to the body.



**(2) Familiar Bluet, *Enallagma civile*,**  
© Dick Harlow

The three body parts of an insect are head, thorax and abdomen. In the above

photographs you can see a definite difference between the general shape of each of these insects. That difference is usually all that is needed to determine whether you are looking at a dragonfly or a damselfly. The dragonfly (1) has a larger head, thicker thorax and different shaped abdomen than the damselfly. The damselfly's body (2) is mainly its long thin abdomen, small head and short thorax plus its small dainty overall size.

Physically you can see the difference, so you know whether you are looking at a Dragonfly or a Damselfly. To determine species is another matter altogether. Usually there are specific colors and markings that can be attributed to a species, as well as to the sex of the individual. Sometimes determining species requires collecting the individual in question and looking at it more closely with a field hand lens.

The difference in sex by color of one damselfly species can be shown in the following photographs of the sexes of the Eastern Forktail.



**Eastern Forktail, *Ischnura verticalis*, Male,**  
© Dick Harlow

This damselfly has a small green and black striped thorax, black abdomen with a blue end of the abdomen. Immature females have a bright orange thorax with black stripes on the sides and on top of its thorax. The abdomen also has some orange and

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black. All of the orange color in the female disappears as it matures.



**Eastern Forktail, *Ischnura verticalis*, Mature Female,** © Dick Harlow

### RHUDABECKIA



**Blackeyed Susan, *Rhudabeckia* variety,** © Dick Harlow

Black-eyed Susan or *Rudbeckia* variety is a garden favorite. There are many varieties, some do well in generally average to poor soil; then there are some that do poorly. Since most varieties do well and have very few problems it becomes somewhat like an experiment to find the one that really likes your garden.

The yellow daisy-like flowers with dark centers where the seeds develop are so prominent in fall gardens that this plant has become a favorite for many gardeners.

For those who like providing fall and winter food supplies for birds, leave the seed heads, don't cut them down. Many birds will thank you right into the Christmas season!

### COOPER'S HAWK REVISITED



**Roger Dorwart's front entryway to his cottage on Kestrel Lane. Photo by Roger Dorwart.**

I have written about a Cooper's Hawk before, but this situation is slightly different as seen in the first picture taken by Roger Dorwart in August.

Notice the cropped image of the hawk in picture (1). Can I determine who this is by behavior? Can I use plumage characteristics?

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Or, do I go to my field guide and use that? How about a combination of all to clarify this hawk's identification?

First let's take behavior. Is there a bird of prey, even an immature hawk that has the gall, the inimitable tenacity and courage to sit on a human's bench beside his front door? Yes, without a doubt, the only hawk I have seen do this is a Cooper's Hawk. Probably more of an occurrence with immatures being so bold and brazen than with adults. But, in fact I have seen an adult with a kill being very aggressive and demonstrable toward human interference. They seem to have no fear of humans unless there is immediate and overt action against them.

The plumage characteristics are in tune with field guide diagrams. Although those diagrams can be small the general characteristics are there. Looking at picture (1) the size, the neck indentation, flecking on the crop area and very light flecking to no flecking in the belly and under-tail coverts are key.

Looking at picture (2) notice the banding on the tail and the indication that there is a slight white trailing edge to the end of the tail. All of these characteristics give us a clue to his true identity.

A Sharp-shinned Hawk is smaller, shy and wouldn't think of behaving in this manner. A Goshawk is a woodland hawk and would not appear unless it is for a kill. If that happened he/she would take off immediately to the woods with the kill.

A Red-tail Hawk is a larger hawk than this Cooper's Hawk and it would have no trouble perching on one of the bird boxes around the pond; however it certainly does not have the courage or gall to perch next to the front door of a cottage.



(1) **Cooper's Hawk**, *Accipiter cooperii*, © Roger Dorwart



(2) **Cooper's Hawk**, *Accipiter cooperii*, © Roger Dorwart

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Therefore, even though behavior is a good indication for a Cooper's Hawk, it should never be the only key to a bird's identification. Surprises do occur and a combination of characteristics is always the best for making an identification!

### **OBSERVATIONS**

#### **MAMMALS**

Gray Squirrel - 2 individuals  
Eastern Chipmunk - 1 individuals  
Eastern Cottontail Rabbit - 2 adults  
Eastern Cottontail Rabbit - 1 immatures  
Gray Fox - 1 individual

#### **AMPHIBIAN**

American Bullfrog - South Pond  
Leopard Frog - South Pond  
Green Frog - Garden  
American Toad - Small, Garden

#### **BUTTERFLIES**

Cabbage White  
Clouded Sulphur  
Black Swallowtail  
Giant Swallowtail  
Painted Lady  
Viceroy  
Monarch

#### **DRAGONFLIES**

Canada Darner  
White-faced Meadowhawk  
Ruby Meadowhawk

### **Weather Tidbits**

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

*All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).*

### **PRECIPITATION**

**Total Precipitation: 35.2 mm or 1.4 inches**

**Overcast Days: 6**