

SEPTEMBER 15 – 30, 2017 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

**BELTED KINGFISHER**



(1) **Belted Kingfisher**, *Megaceryle alcyon*,  
on Purple Martin Pole, © Dick Harlow

These two pictures of a Belted Kingfisher, facing South Pond, were taken September 5 during a heavily clouded rainy day. I couldn't tell whether I was looking at a male or female until he dove into the South Pond and flew back to the pole. When he landed back on the pole he was facing me and then quickly turned toward the pond. He had no chestnut or brownish patch on his belly; otherwise he would have to be a she. That characteristic indicates this was a male Belted Kingfisher. The United States and Canada only have this species of kingfisher; whereas Central and South America have several species of kingfishers, two of which tend to enter the United States through the border of Texas and Arizona. They don't enter far, but because they do they are found in present day field guides. These two species are the Ringed Kingfisher and the Green Kingfisher.

Although kingfishers will eat a large variation of food they need to have access to a body of water for both 'banks of earth' for their nesting tunnels and a ready environment for feeding. They need clean unclouded water for hunting. They need to see their prey below the water surface. Therefore, you would most likely see this species during the spring near a body of water and a place that has earthen banks so it can dig a tunnel for its nest. At any other time during the year you will see these fellows near ponds, streams, lakes or near the shores of saltwater. In the winter, our kingfishers migrate to Central America.



(2) **Belted Kingfisher**, *Megaceryle alcyon*,  
on Purple Martin Pole, © Dick Harlow

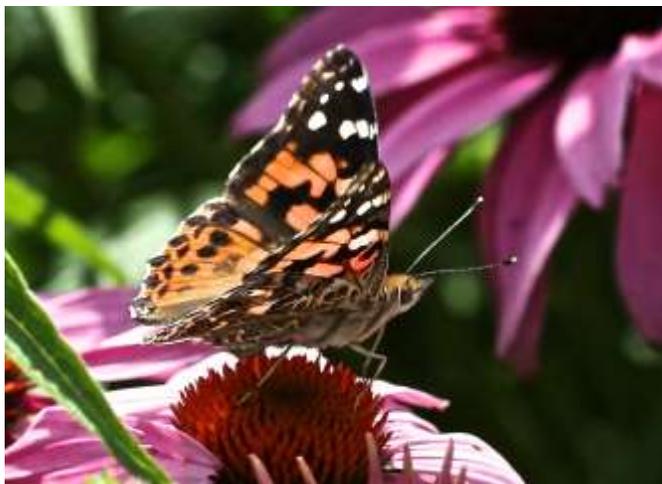
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Stomach contents of kingfishers show a very varied diet. They will feast on small bait fish to as large as small trout, bass or salmon in either fresh or saltwater. However, they will also eat frogs, snakes, small mollusks, shrimp, small birds and mammals. Some stomach contents show that they will not pass up berries as well.

**BRUSH-FOOTED BUTTERFLIES**

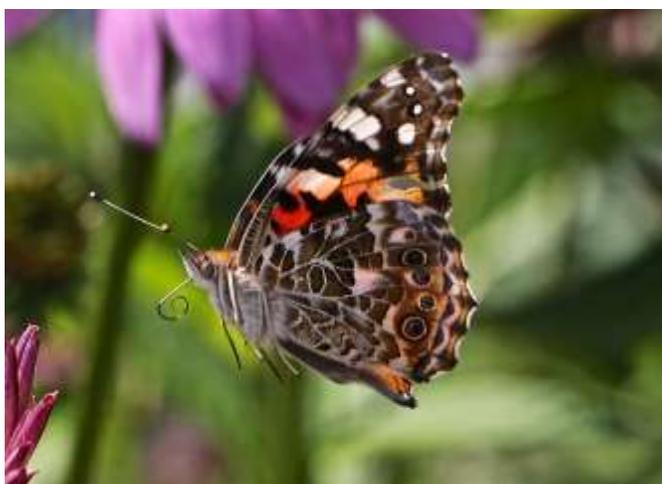
Butterflies are insects and insects have three pair of legs, total of six. Butterflies whose first pair of legs are not used as legs, but have hairs at the end of the appendages that are specific to taste and smell are grouped as brush-footed butterflies. This group is called Nymphalidae and they represent a very large and diverse conglomerate, making up many of the colorful butterflies we see in our gardens. The Painted Lady is a Brush-footed Butterfly.

**PAINTED LADY VS AMERICAN LADY**



**(1) Painted Lady, *Vanessa cardui*, on Purple Cone flower, *Echinacea purpurea*, © Dick Harlow**

This is the first sighting of a **Painted Lady, *Vanessa cardui***, here at EastView, according to my records since 2014. Because this species is usually found throughout our area and south of us I thought it should be fairly regular as a garden visitor. Not so, thus I was delighted to see it this year, not just one butterfly, but as many as 4 individuals at one time. Since early September this species has multiplied to where it is now considered having an irruption in Vermont. It is being seen in large numbers throughout New England and New York as well as other states. Painted Lady Butterflies are found in all continents except Australia and Antarctica. It can be said that they are worldly. The primary host plant for this butterfly, are Nettles, although they will lay their eggs on over 100 different plants. Some of the favorites other than Nettles are Hollyhock, Mallow and Legumes.



**(2) Painted Lady, *Vanessa cardui*, flying, © Dick Harlow**

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If you look closely at picture (2) you can see that the tongue, or proboscis, is rolled up below the head. The proboscis is hollow much like a straw and is used by the butterfly like a straw so that it can suck up or sip nectar.

According to references, adult Painted Lady butterflies live only two weeks, but can have two to three broods in a year.

The other very similar butterfly to the Painted Lady is the **American Lady**. Looking at picture (3), you can see subtle differences, but those differences would be very difficult to observe in the field unless the butterfly is still. However, if the butterfly is still enough for you to either take a picture or to study you can tell them apart, because the American Lady has a significant white dot in the orange rectangle of the forewing, small, but definitely there as seen by the red line that is pointing to the white dot.

This white dot is visible either from the dorsal view as seen in (3) or from the ventral view as seen in (4). Either way, to be an American Lady it has to have that white dot in the orange rectangle.



(3) **American Lady**, *Vanessa virginensis* on Gayfeather, *Liatris spicata*, © Dick Harlow

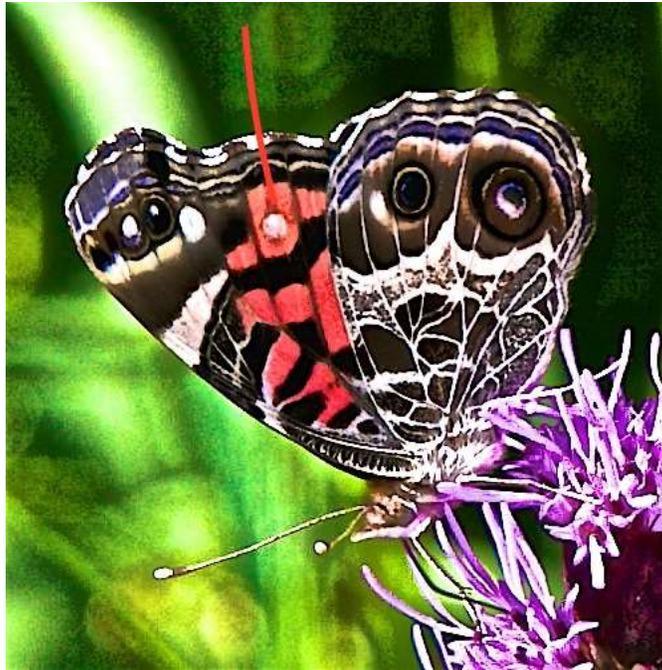
As an example of the large diverse group of Brush-footed Butterflies I will name some of the ones we could see flying around our campus.

- Great Spangled Fritillary \*
- Pearl Crescent \*
- Baltimore Checkerspot
- Question Mark
- Eastern Comma
- Mourning Cloak
- Red Admiral \*
- Painted Lady \*
- Viceroy \*

To name just a few!

The five species with an asterisk, are ones I have taken images of here at EastView.

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(4) American Lady, *Vanessa virginensis* on Gayfeather, *Liatris spicata*, © Dick Harlow

**FALSE SUNFLOWER**



(1) False Sunflower, *Heliopsis helianthoides* 'Summer Nights', © Dick Harlow

False Sunflower, *Heliopsis helianthoides*, 'Summer Nights' is a very showy flowering perennial. But, it also grows like a weed. If you let the flowers go to seed in your garden, as I do, expecting goldfinches to feed off of the dead flower heads in the fall, you can expect next spring to have hundreds of new plants sprouting and coming up everywhere in your garden! Now you may like that as I do, but to the more orderly gardener this would mean extra work pulling up all of these volunteer plants.

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(2) False Sunflower, *Heliopsis helianthoides*  
'Summer Nights', © Dick Harlow

However, that is a small price to pay when you have the joy of watching goldfinches feeding from each dried blossom. The goldfinches even check out the False Sunflower blossoms during the summer, impatient, checking out each flower to see if they can pull seeds out even before they have formed.



(3) False Sunflower, *Heliopsis helianthoides*  
'Summer Nights', © Dick Harlow

### **OBSERVATIONS**

#### **MAMMALS**

Eastern Chipmunk – individuals  
Eastern Cottontail Rabbit

#### **REPTILES**

Garter Snake – young (small) slithered across our front walk.

#### **AMPHIBIA**

American Bullfrog

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**BUTTERFLIES**

Cabbage White  
Clouded Sulphur  
Viceroy  
Monarch  
Painted Lady

**Weather Tidbits**

Month of **SEPTEMBER 1-30, 2017**

**PRECIPITATION**

**Total Precipitation: 68.8 mm or 2.7 inches**

**Overcast Days: 3**