

AUGUST 15-31, 2016 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

VICEROY



Viceroy, *Limenitis archippus*, feeding on Buddleja
© Dick Harlow

In past notes I have written about this mimic to the Monarch Butterfly. Its orange and black with white dots resembles both butterflies; and a bird cannot tell the difference whether they are looking at one or the other until they partake one or the other as food. Then, if it is a Monarch, the chemical of the milkweed that its larva fed on will cause the bird to wretch and vomit. Of course the Monarch that the bird tried to eat is gone, but the bird will associate any butterfly that looks like the Monarch as forbidden fruit! If the bird should take a Viceroy it will find it to be delicious until it sees a Monarch and tries it. Thus, because of this close association of color between a Monarch and a Viceroy, and where one is bitter and causes palatability problems, the Viceroy is considered a mimic.

This type of mimicry is called Batesian Mimicry. However, a great deal of research has been done on these two species and it has been found that the Viceroy under certain circumstances of caterpillar food and climate could also be bitter to birds, which is all dependent on what the Viceroy larva feed upon.

This butterfly is quite universally known throughout most of the United States and Canada as well as Mexico. It is the state butterfly of Kentucky.

This butterfly is diurnal, which means it flies during the day. Preferably, it flies during late morning and early afternoon taking the nectar of garden flowers and various species of milkweeds and thistles.

The primary way to tell whether you are looking at a Viceroy or a Monarch is by checking the post-median black line that runs across the veins on the hind-wing. If you see this you don't have to consider any other characteristic, you are in fact looking at a Viceroy.

AUGUST 15-31, 2016 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow



Monarch, *Danaus plexippus*, feeding on New England Aster
© Dick Harlow

As you can see in the above photograph there is no black bar that crosses the veins of the hind wing.

The primary food plants, or host plants of the Viceroy are trees in the willow family. The Viceroy female will lay its eggs on trees of the willow family, such as poplar and cottonwoods. If you are looking at a willow twig and it has what you think is a bird dropping hanging from it or attached to it, you are most probably looking at the developing chrysalis of the Viceroy.

SKIPPER BUTTERFLIES

If you see a butterfly that is quick, that darts to and thro as it flies, you are probably looking at a skipper butterfly.

These butterflies are classified into a group of butterflies called Skipper Butterflies and they are found worldwide.

Unfortunately, like sparrows in the bird world that are known as "little brown jobs" to non-birders, skippers represent the same analogy to butterfly neophytes in the Northeast because skippers are so difficult to tell apart from each other.

An example of a skipper we have here at EastView is the **Delaware Skipper**.

AUGUST 15-31, 2016 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW
By Dick Harlow



Delaware Skipper, (1) *Anatrytone logan*, resting on a milkweed leaf
© Dick Harlow

As you can see in picture (1) skipper butterflies are small and don't look like the traditional picture of a butterfly. But, this is the way many appear as they rest on plants or on flowers. The orange-yellow color with black edgings along the wing edges and within the wings is typical of both sexes on the dorsal side of the wing. However, the ventral or underside of the wing is yellow, maybe light yellowish orange as can be seen in picture (2) with no black markings. Basically, the ventral side has a solid color that is not interrupted by black other than the dark highlights from the dorsal side of the wing edges.



Delaware Skipper, (2) *Anatrytone logan*, resting on a milkweed leaf
© Dick Harlow

AUGUST 15-31, 2016 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

This species is also called a Grass Skipper because it is found along grassy outcrops, suburban lawns, along roadsides, fields, and even in wet meadows or marshes. Their distribution covers a wide area from Maine to Montana, south to Florida and the Gulf states.

The adults can be found nectaring on Swamp and Common Milkweed, Crown and Cow Vetch. They have one brood in the north during July and August and their larva feed on Little Bluestem Grass, Panic Grass and Switchgrass.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD



Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Male, *Archilochus colubris*, standing guard! © Dick Harlow

You can see in this picture the gorget or throat patch that is iridescent and where the species gets its common name. However, at other angles this throat patch could appear black. As this species is sexually dimorphic the female does not have this iridescent patch, and has a throat of white, sometimes with a fleck of darker feathers, that continues to its under-tail coverts. The backside of the female is a light green whereas the male is darker green.

Notice in the picture below how part of the throat appears darker, almost black.

The Ruby-throat's nesting range extends from southern Canada west slightly into eastern British Columbia, but doesn't reach the West coast. The rest of its summer range includes the entire Mississippi valley to the East coast

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird males tend to migrate a week or so before the females and young. By September most males have gone and the females and young are bulking up on nectar from flowers or sugar water from feeders in order to leave by the middle of the month.

AUGUST 15-31, 2016 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

This group of females and young birds tends to stay through August then feed at hummingbird feeders in September to develop enough fat reserves to take them across the Gulf of Mexico into Central America. The "hummers" that fly from their furthest northern nesting sites in southern Canada will migrate to the Gulf Coast or the tip of Florida, but the bulk of the US population will head to Central America.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Male, *Archilochus colubris*,
© Dick Harlow

Young birds need the experience of adapting to their surroundings, learning where to get food, how to stay safe from predators and environmental dangers. It is not uncommon to keep hummingbird feeders up through first frost. Even though the local males have left, and it seems that the females and young of the year have also gone, there may be a southern Canada Ruby-throat that could stop by your feeder on its way south; or, for that matter, a western "hummer" that has moved east before migrating south could visit your feeder.

OBSERVATIONS

BUTTERFLIES

Cabbage White
Clouded Sulphur
Giant Swallowtail
Black Swallowtail
Eastern Tailed-Blue
Monarch
Viceroy

DRAGONFLIES

Canada Darner
Common Green Darner
Widow Skimmer

AUGUST 15-31, 2016 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW
By Dick Harlow

DAMSELFLIES

Eastern Forktail
Marsh Bluet

AMPHIBIANS

Gray Tree Frog
American Bullfrog
Leopard Frog

MAMMALS

White-tailed Deer
Gray Squirrel
Eastern Cottontail
Eastern Chipmunk
Meadow Vole
Muskrat

Weather Tidbits

Month of AUGUST 1-31, 2016

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 84.8 mm or 3.3 inches

Overcast Days: 6

WIND

Highest wind gust: AUGUST 15, 25 MPH, Direction: South

Average Wind speed for AUGUST 1-31: 1.3 mph,

Dominate Wind Direction: South

Days w/wind gusts 20-30 MPH: 11

Days w/wind gusts 30 MPH: 0

TEMPERATURE

Mean Temp: 21.8 C⁰/71.2⁰F

High Temp: 31.7 C⁰/89.1⁰F

Low Temp: 13.4 C⁰/56.1⁰F