

**SEPTEMBER 15-30, 2014 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW**  
**By Dick Harlow**

When hawks and falcons hunt from roof- tops, winter must not be far behind.



**American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius* on an EastView cottage roof.**

Photo © Dick Harlow

Above is a male American Kestrel, our smallest falcon, looking intently for a meal. When birds of prey, large or small are about, other birds, especially smaller ones, will take cover or make themselves scarce.

Because migrating birds move south as cold weather approaches, local birds disperse into the countryside where they find protected areas that are safe from predators. This behavior ensures their survival during the cold months of winter. Some species, such as starlings and other blackbirds bunch up into large flocks while others like waxwings and the Purple Finch are "scoping out" the countryside for opportunities and eventually hard to find food supplies. This is the time to begin stocking bird feeders.

One of the last flowers to bloom in the fields and meadows of East View, and along marsh and lakeshore edges is the native New England Aster, *Aster novae-angliae*. There are many cultivars of this species that predominate from various nurseries and perennial gardens. These cultivars range in size, shape and color. There are over 70 cultivars that were developed, but only 50 have survived. There is nothing wrong with the cultivars, but it is just nice to have a tough late-flowering native New England Aster!! I guess you have to be from New England to really appreciate the significance of that comment!

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**New England Aster 6-7' tall, *Aster novae-angliae* mauve color cultivar.**

Photo © Dick Harlow



**Wild New England Aster flower 3'-4' tall, *Aster novae-angliae* lavender color.**

Photo © Dick Harlow

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Additionally, there are many color variations on the same theme for either tall, or medium height as can be seen here at East View, either in the gardens of the Inn, cottages or in the meadow and fields around East View.

As the fall season begins to appear, and the New England Asters beckon fall foliage to take hold of the landscape, I am hopeful you all will have or have had a chance to see a Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus*. As can be seen in the previous notes for this month, Monarch sightings occurs 8 out of 14 days but for the month of September, 13 of 30 days or 43% for the month. That percentage is not bad for a butterfly that has a declining population base. Eastern Monarchs migrate south to Florida and the surrounding area, whereas Monarchs of the Midwest and West migrate to Mexico. Monarch Butterflies, have become scarce due to problems with their migration routes over very dry, drought stricken areas as well as fewer habitats for them to feed upon and lay eggs because of human development on their migration paths to their wintering locations. And then there's the difficulty they have flying through potent herbicides and insecticides sprayed on land that they visit. The average citizen doesn't realize that many Monarchs will die on their travels to their wintering areas because of these deterrents.

Now we might think that because the Monarch's mimic is abundant, the Monarch is more abundant than it really is. That is because we are mistaking the Viceroy, *Limentis archippus* for a Monarch. First, the Monarch is larger than the Viceroy, even though they look very similar; but if you only see the Viceroy, you might think that it is just a small Monarch. As noticeable as the dorsal view might be, I am showing the ventral view since that is what you will see when a butterfly is feeding. Secondly, notice the subtle coloration difference between the two pictures and also notice that the Monarch does **not** have a narrow black bar that crosses the black veins of the hind- wing. Coloration by itself, is a dicey indication of a difference when you are looking at one fluttering between blooms, but the size and black bar on the hind wing of the Viceroy is a dead give away.

Understand that the black bar can be faint, but if it is a Viceroy, there will be a bar of some sort on the hind wing.



**Monarch, *Danaus plexippus*. necturing on New England Aster**

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So you can see in these two photos the definite black bar on the hindwing of the Viceroy and no black bar on the Monarch. The black **veins** are on both butterflies, but no **black bar** transcending the hind wing. That feature would be easy to pick out as you are looking at either of these two butterflies. You also will appreciate that as these butterflies are flitting from flower to flower it will be difficult to see the double white dots at the edge of the Monarch as compared to a single row of chevron spaced dots on the Viceroy. As well, there are subtle differences on the forewing. Beginning observers, in the field or garden, always appreciate a simple field mark that will differentiate one from another, i.e. the black bar.



**Viceroy, *Limentis archippus* necturing on Joe-pye Weed**

Photo © Dick Harlow

It really makes sense that Monarchs are unpalatable to predators. When the adult was a larva and fed on milkweed leaves the larva was ingesting toxic white sap containing cardiac glycosides. With the unpalatable taste of the glycosides in Monarchs, evolution has created an orange color that over time associates the color with a warning to possible predators of impending danger and that they should avoid that color. Although the Viceroy is not as unpalatable as the Monarch, evolution has made a cause and effect here that the dislike of one causes the dislike of both. As long as a Monarch is tasted first by a predator, the Viceroy is safe. Consequently, as the two look very similar, predators learn to avoid both. On the other hand, if the Viceroy were caught first, even though the Viceroy larva had ingested salicylic acid as a caterpillar, it probably wouldn't cause the same regurgitation and resulting avoidance, as would be the case if the Monarch had been caught first.

**The EastView community** is now on its third year and "critters" began moving into this new area from the start. We are beginning to amass sightings and visual data of the natural history that surrounds this community. What is obvious to all of us are the insects, birds and larger mammals that we see around our gardens, retention ponds or in the fields and meadow adjacent

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to the Inn and cottages. What is not as obvious are the night visitors, unless a skunk has made rounds and left his muskiness and abrasive smell behind him. That is easy, but how about the other "critters" that we do not readily see nor are able to readily photograph. raccoons, opossum, fox, weasel, mink, otter, rabbits and mice all live in the vicinity and are looking for food. When the snow flies we may be able to discern whose tracks we are looking at, but until that happens we have to rely on sightings. Humans are notorious for providing food for animals in one form or another. Human dwellings and establishments have traditionally been easy spots to find food, as well as shelter and protection from predators. Fortunately, some of us have seen or heard Coyote, Deer, Black Bear, Rabbits, Mice, and Voles.

Please inform Dick Harlow if you have visually observed or have noticed evidence that any of these "critters" are on or have visited EastView property.

A September beauty, feeding briefly on Buddleia davidii cultivar, also known as Butterfly Bush, was observed over the last two weeks of this month.



**Great Spangled Fritillary, Speyeria Cybele**

Photo © Dick Harlow

This is our largest fritillary noted for its rounded wings and silvery dots on the underside of the hind wing.

This butterfly likes open meadows that are also moist. Its host plants are various species of violets.

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**Great Spangled Fritillary, *Speyeria Cybele***

Photo © Dick Harlow



**Ruby Meadowhawk, *Sympetrum rubicundulum* Male**

Photo © Dick Harlow

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This fellow and the Canada Darner are probably the last dragonflies this year to be seen about our fields and retention ponds.



**Sunset-looking west from Deer Meadow Drive**

Photo © Dick Harlow

**September Observations: Butterfly List** # of sightings per 30 days

- Monarch 13/30 43%
- Viceroy 6/30 20%
- Giant Swallowtail 3/30 10%
- Black Swallowtail 2/30 7%
- Clouded Sulphur 23/30 77%
- Orange Sulphur 1/30 3%
- Cabbage White 16/30 53%
- Eastern Tailed Blue 1/30 3%
- Pearl Crescent 2/30 7%
- Painted Lady 5/30 17%
- Grt Spangled Fritillary 1/30 3%

**September Dragonfly List**

- Canada Darner
- Yellow-legged Meadowhawk
- White-faced Meadowhawk
- Common Green Darner

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- Black Meadowhawk
- Ruby Meadowhawk

**September Damselflies List**

- Eastern Forktail
- Marsh Bluet

**Amphibians**

- American Toad

**Mammals**

- Eastern Cottontail
- White-tailed Deer

**September Total Rainfall: 42mm or 1.65 inches**

**Highest wind for September was on the 11<sup>th</sup> Maximum Wind Speed and Direction:  
27mph/South**

**Average Wind speed for the month: 2.4 mph, Dominant direction for the month:  
South**