VES NEWS

The Newsletter of the Vermont Entomological Society

Number 112
Summer 2021

Sugar Maple Borer (*Glycobius speciosus*)
Photo: Mary Metcalf

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The **Vermont Entomological Society** (VES) is devoted to the study, conservation, and appreciation of invertebrates. Founded in 1993, VES sponsors selected research, workshops and field trips for the public, including children. Our quarterly newsletter features developments in entomology, accounts of insect events and field trips, as well as general contributions from members or other entomologists.

VES is open to anyone interested in arthropods. Our members range from casual insect watchers to amateur and professional entomologists. We welcome members of all ages, abilities and interests.

You can join VES by sending dues of $15 per year to:

Deb Kiel
147 Allen Irish Road
Underhill, VT 05489

Number 112 ♦ Summer — 2021

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Newsletter Schedule

Spring: Deadline April 7 - Publication May 1
Summer: Deadline July 7 - Publication August 1
Fall: Deadline October 7 - Publication November 1
Winter: Deadline January 7 - Publication February 1

Want to submit an article?
Please contact Laurie DiCesare NatureHaven@MyFairPoint.net,
"VES News" on subject line, for Guidelines.

Membership

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The upper right corner of your mailing label will inform you of the month and year your VES membership expires.

Dues are $15 and can be sent to our Treasurer:

Vermont Entomological Society
c/o Deb Kiel
147 Allen Irish Road
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President's Message

Welcome to summer! If you're reading this, then we have amazingly gotten out another newsletter during one of the busiest times of the year. We spend all winter waiting for summer, coming up with various bucket lists of species to find, habitats to visit. Then when summer comes, it feels like one of the most demanding times of the year as we try to take advantage of this narrow window to see organisms we waited all winter for. I do hope that people are able to take advantage of the summer season and get out and explore various habitats. I know we'll never get to them all, but you've got to try. You don't see new things if you don't make some effort to get out. Sometimes it only takes a few minutes of your time.

A short walk between rain storms in June netted me my first Vermont record of the tortricid moth ***Epiblema resumptana*** at the West Hartland Dam. During another short walk along the pipeline in Gallup Mills, I saw the first record of the **Common Drill** moth**, (*Dichrorampha petiverella)*,** for Vermont. This spring, I was able to take a pleasant walk to Peacham Bog from the east end and saw some **Delta-spotted Spiketail (*Cordulegaster diastatops*)** dragonflies for the first time, as they worked a flooded section of an old logging road.

On Saturday, June 12, I joined Julia Pupko of Vermont Center of Ecostudies for a **lady beetle field trip** at the Stranahan Town Forest in Marshfield. We ended up with more ladies and gentlemen (12) swinging nets than we did lady beetles (3) in the nets, but I think everyone had a good time. Julia gave an excellent presentation on just about everything you think you wanted to know about lady beetles and creating iNaturalist records.

I have been working seasonally for the Vermont Department of Agriculture on their vector (tick and mosquito) surveys. One of the bucket lists I have gotten out of this work is going back to monitoring sites, such as a powerline cut just south of the border in Jay; revisiting Belvidere Bog or Little Otter Creek WMA, to survey for things of interest. Another idea is to do a survey of non-target insects that gather on the tick flag as it is being dragged. One discovery from tick flagging is **collecting lepidoptera in alcohol**. I was able to get a few microleps that landed on the tick flag into a vial of 70% ethyl alcohol. Surprisingly, I was able to dry the specimens off when I got home and get a pin through them without any loss of markings or color.

With the lessening of covid restriction Sonia Deyoung is hoping that VES members will visit/use the **Zadock Thompson Zoological Collection** and consider doing some volunteer work there. Her e-mail is: sonia.deyoung@uvm.edu.

Delicate Cycnia Moth (*Cycnia tenera*)
Photo: Michael Sabourin

Delta-spotted Spiketail
Photo: Michael Sabourin

Julia Pupko with Lady Beetle Hunters
Photo: Michael Sabourin

Dark-spotted Aethes (*Aethes mymara*) (Lepidoptera, Cochylidae) in Vermont

By Warren Kiel

During a recent visit by Mike Sabourin to our house, I had the opportunity to show him a couple of Cochylid specimens that I had recently captured at black light. I had tentatively determined them as *Aethes mymara Razowski*, and Mike agreed.

There is a good color illustration of this species in the Peterson Field Guide to Moths of Northeastern North America (Beadle and Leckie, 2012). Known as The Dark-Spotted Aethes, my two examples were taken at black light here at our home in Westford, Chittenden Co.

Both are females, one on June 29, 2017, and a more recent example July 27, 2020. The species does not appear common here. The larval host is probably still unknown.

Dark-spotted Aethes (*Aethes mymara*)
Photo: Deb Kiel

On the Hunt for Crowberry Blue

By Laura Hatmaker

"Don't mess this up. Stay calm," I muttered under my breath, repeating it as a mantra as I slowly and cautiously extended my net ahead of me. My footsteps were measured and knees crouched as I slinked closer. Different scenarios rapidly played in the back of my mind as I neared my target: a diminutive butterfly that flashed brilliant blue when it batted its wings, nectaring on a cluster of nearby Labrador tea flowers.

The target of my attention was the crowberry blue (*Plebejus idas empetri*) a small butterfly in the *Lycaenidae* family. Taken in profile, the wings and antennae together are no bigger than your thumb. Two black-and-white striped antennae poke out above two jet-black eyes and a predominately white head and legs.

As you gaze at its folded wings, the outer scales are mostly an ivory color that fade to a steely light grey at the thorax. Both upper and lower wings are dotted with ebony spots and ringed in a brighter white, each shaped more like a splash of paint than a perfect circle. Along their wing margins, the ebony spots are smudged and ringed in a bright orange before being edged once more in black - a paintbrush dragging along each vein. The outermost margin is further decorated with a delicate sable line that

enhances the shape before the wings feather out at the very edge. This last trait is the identifying marker of the crowberry blue.

When the butterfly opens its wings, the ivory color and spots are gone, and you are dazzled by a vibrant, iridescent blue that shimmers in colors ranging from brightest azure to royal blue, the back of its body scaled and tufted to match. The black outline from its exterior is mirrored, but the outermost edges remain white, enhancing the dramatic display of opalescent blues.

As with many pollinators, the crowberry blue is highly specialized. Its larval host plant is black crowberry, a plant that nestles in bogs and clings to rocky outcrops. However, this butterfly is even more particular, preferring the coastal plateau bogs found only in Maine's Washington County. This limited range and sensitive habitat have earned the blue an S2 (Imperiled) species rank in the United States.

This summer, I was working in one of these coastal plateau bogs. At my particular site, the last crowberry blue sighting had been in the 1990s, and no specimens had previously been photographed or taken for confirmation. As part of my study, I was determined to find, catch, and photograph the crowberry blue to validate its presence in the bog. A daytime flyer on the wing in mid to late June and July, that June afternoon in the bog was a bit early for the crowberry blue. I was not anticipating finding my quarry, and had even contemplated not bringing the net with me that day. Yet, serendipity and the stars aligned: I glanced up from my peat-depth measurements just in time to see a flash of deep azure ahead of me, a wink of color before returning to a white spotted tuft – the size of tussock cotton sedge's apical fluff.

I held my net poised under the Labrador tea the crowberry blue was on. Offering a quick prayer, I flicked the net up and over, heart hammering as I peered through the mesh to see my results. Success winked back at me in blue and speckled white, the fluttering form of the crowberry blue secure in my net. Hands shaking in excitement, I took deep breaths to steady myself. Nerves calmed, I carefully transferred the delicate form to my cellophane envelope to capture a lateral image without touching and irrevocably damaging the butterfly.

My documentation complete, I released the crowberry blue to the gentle breeze over the bog, watching as it joined with companions I had not previously noticed. A sign of a steady population, they danced around hummocks of crowberry and tufts of Labrador tea.

Crowberry Blue (*Plebejus idas empetri*)
Photo: Laura Hatmaker

Curculio rubidus: A Possible a New Weevil Record for Vermont

By Larry Clarfield

Like many others, I'm continually amazed at the inexhaustible number of species, moths and otherwise, that show up at a light in the darkness. Nearly every insect order puts in an appearance, and I try to photograph as many as I can. There are so many different creatures to document that I have become backlogged with unidentified photos stretching back several years. Whenever I have a few spare moments, I try to add some of these to iNaturalist in the hope that they may be identified.

On April 2, I posted a photograph of a weevil that I had taken in 2019 with a long "snout" and a broad white stripe across the elytra. A month later, a beetle expert, Boris Büche, a prolific iNaturalist identifier, recognized the insect as *Curculio rubidus* (Family Curculionidae) which he noted is an adventive species and possibly a new record for Vermont. This species has been previously recorded in Michigan, Ontario, and Quebec and possibly other places, so it isn't terribly surprising that it should show up here. It will be interesting to see if any more recent sightings can be identified, or whether this sighting from two years ago was a one-off occurrence of a yet-to-be established newcomer.

Reference:

https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/72744768.

A Nut and Acorn Weevil (*Curculio rubidus*)
Photo: Larry Clarfield

Bordered Sallow Moth: Caterpillar and Adult Connection

By JoAnne Russo

On the night of July 27, 2020, while exploring my yard in Rockingham, Vermont, with "the Beast", my UV flashlight, I found a colorful caterpillar resting on a raspberry leaf (*Rubus sp.*). Many caterpillars glow in UV light so using this type of flashlight makes them stand out. I managed to capture one decent photo before it fell into the tangled mess of low shrubs and vines. Curiously enough, I had just seen one exactly like it while reviewing identification requests for Lepidoptera in Vermont on iNaturalist. A caterpillar expert had identified it to *Pyrrhia* species which led me to check bugguide.net for more information. I found a match with Bordered Sallow (*Pyrrhia cilisca*) but still wanted to be certain as the moth was not listed in our Vermont Moth checklist. I sent the picture to Dave Wagner, author of the "Caterpillars of Eastern North America" guide book, who confirmed the identity.

More than ten months later, on the night of June 12, 2021, while checking UV lights at

Bordered Sallow Moth: Caterpillar and Adult Connection (continued)

Bordered Sallow larva (*Pyrrhia cilisca*)
Photo: Joanne Russo

my house, I spotted a moth I had never seen before. As luck would have it, the adult Bordered Sallow (*Pyrrhia cilisca*) had made its first appearance. It's a species found in hardwood forests of eastern North America; the adults fly from May through October. The larvae are generalists feeding on alders, cabbage, roses, sumacs, walnuts and other plants.

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Bordered Sallow adult (*Pyrrhia cilisca*)
Photo: JoAnne Russo

From the State Entomologist's Corner:

Our Old "Friend" the LDD

By Judy Rosovsky

In keeping with the tenor of our times, the Entomological Society of America (ESA) has a "Better Common Names" project to review and change the names of insects whose appellations may be offensive or that may contribute to the maintenance of ethnic or racial stereotypes. As part of this project, the gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar dispar*) will be undergoing a common name change (ESA, 2021). While a new common name is chosen for the gypsy moth, the term "LDD", which is based on the initials of its Latin name, is being used.

This destructive and voracious moth was introduced to Medford, Massachusetts in 1869 by a Frenchman named Trouvelet who was trying to find a silk-producing insect that could compete with those used by the Chinese for silk production. Silk had been produced in the U.S. as early as 1603 and required silkworms (*Bombyx mori*), mulberry trees (for larval food plants) and labor (Landry, 2013). By the early 1800s, a reasonably successful home industry in silk production existed but the machinery for processing the raw silk was still crude. There was a brief boom when the Chinese mulberry was introduced but that tree became over-priced and the market for them crashed. Later a blight hit and killed many of the mulberry trees, temporarily halting much of

LDD moth (*Lymantria dispar dispar*)
Newly-hatched first instar larvae on egg mass
Photo: Caela Waite

the US silk production industry. Improved machinery resurrected silk production until the 1940s.

Trouvelet's experiment was not successful. His moths escaped or were released from his laboratory, unnoticed (except by Trouvelet's neighbors) until almost 20 years later when a gypsy moth outbreak overwhelmed Medford (Forbush and Fernald, 1896). The history of the escape and its consequences is well documented by the notable gentlemen Forbush and Fernald, who found letters and testimonials from the original sufferers of this outbreak. The weighty compendium that Forbush and Fernald assembled is a remarkable document and quite interesting to read. Control methods of choice by Medford residents were collecting quarts of the caterpillars and burning them with kerosene; or pouring boiling water on them then burying the bodies to prevent the ensuing odor (Forbush and Fernald, 1896). Some people used torches or candles to burn the caterpillars directly from the trees. It's a wonder they didn't burn the town down.

Town and state officials were finally called in to address the infestation. They used Paris green, a compound made of copper acetate and arsenic trioxide (Wikipedia, 2021). They stationed guards on outbound roads to check all vehicles to try to prevent the movement of the moth, and amassed 250 people to help spray the insects. Acids, creosote, chlorine and bromine plus hand scraping were used to destroy the eggs. Many burlap bands were deployed around tree trunks to assist in collecting the different life stages of the invasive moth (Fernald and Forbush, 1896).

Despite these efforts, the LDDs continued to spread, although during the 1940s, the use of DDT did slow their advance for a time. (Just for the record, I do not advocate using that substance.) The scientists charged with exterminating the pest continued to use an arsenal of arsenites for spraying. They started to explore bio-controls, ultimately introducing a number of different species for that purpose, including the "friendly fly" (*Compsilura concinnata*), a somewhat indiscriminate parasitoid of Lepidoptera. (Vetting of biocontrols was not as thorough then as it is now.)

LDD moth larva (*Lymantria dispar dispar*)
Photo: Bonnie Pease

Our Old "Friend" the LDD (continued)

What can modern homeowners do to control LDDs? As with the 1889 outbreak, burlap bands can still be placed around the tree trunk. Folding the band over at the top gives the caterpillars a good hiding and resting place. Once concentrated under the bands, they can be collected and destroyed by dumping them in soapy water. All life stages (caterpillars, pupae, adults and egg masses) can be found under the bands. Sticky substances placed on tin foil and wrapped around the tree trunks can be helpful too, although they may need to be cleaned off frequently. Take care not to girdle the tree when encircling the trunk. Don't put sticky substances directly onto the trunk as petroleum-based materials can damage the bark. The sticky goo can be more easily applied if it is heated and painted onto a surface.

Most hardware or home supply stores carry some form of *Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki* (BTK), a Lepidoptera-killing bacteria that can be sprayed onto foliage. Unfortunately, it is most effective if applied when the caterpillars are young (2nd instar) but most people don't notice the effects of these insects until they are much larger. In Vermont, the most recent outbreak was in 1990. At that time, a fungus called *Entomophaga maimaiga* became prevalent and has kept the LDD population under control. The recent dry weather seems to have reduced the fungal presence, hence the current upsurge in LDD.

Female LDD moths laying eggs
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

LDD moths mating
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

For those of you who have not previously experienced an LDD outbreak, the volume of larva and frass can be overwhelming. Frass is the scientific term for caterpillar droppings. Here is a description from long-time Milton Conservation Member Bonnie Pease: "In the mid-1980s, we were hit with a huge infestation of gypsy moths for three or four years in a row. There was even a report of a train in Massachusetts that could not go up a hill because of the high level of gypsy moth poop on the tracks, making them slippery. You could sweep your walkway and, by the time you got to your mailbox, you would never know you had swept it clear.

Luckily the spring of 1989 was warm and wet, so the *E. maimaiga* fungus kicked in, and the caterpillars started to explode if you touched them! We could hear them munching all night, along with their poop pellets hitting our little metal roof shed. To try and save some of our oak trees, we put bands of aluminum foil coated with axle grease around them and in the morning, the base of the tree trunk was solid caterpillars! My husband Brian

reminded me that cars also slid off the road when it rained, because of all the gypsy moth crap on the road." Milton Tree Warden Kris Dulmer reports "I discovered that my truck was covered in green slime yesterday, due to driving through an LDD-infested area on Old Farm Road."

We should consider ourselves lucky that the fungus has controlled the LDD population for so long. In the past, VT would experience outbreaks every 6 to 10 years (Parker et al., 1989). It's been 30 years since our previous outbreak, so we've been spared a couple of rounds. Since 2016, however, we have experienced at least one dry-to-drought season each year, so we may not be able to count on such a prolonged period of protection from LDDs in the future. Funding for aerial spray projects is sparse, and commercial pest managers don't usually have the equipment to treat tree tops. Protect your favorite ornamental trees by using burlap or sticky bands and hope for rainy springs. On the plus side, keep in mind that Massachusetts has endured these moths since about 1869, and the state still has plenty of healthy trees. Eventually, even without the fungus, the natural, native and introduced enemies of the LDD will increase their populations and thus decrease those of the LDDs.

References:

To participate in the gypsy moth or other organisms name change, please go to the Better Common Names site at https://www.entsoc.org/better-common-names-project.

*Forbush and Fernald (1896) note that the Germans called LDDs sponge spinners or stem caterpillars and the French called them "le zigzag".

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LDD moth (*Lymantria dispar dispar*)
Frass and leaf fragments from larval feeding.
Photo: Judy Rosovsky

Marshfield Pond (May 27; June 1, 4 and 5; and July 11, 2021)

By Laurie DiCesare

From late May through mid-July, I made several trips from my home in Milton, Vermont to Marshfield Pond (a.k.a. Turtlehead Pond) in Washington County, initially drawn there in search of the elusive Ringed Boghaunter (*Williamsonia lintneri*), a diminutive dragonfly that has yet to be documented in Vermont. The Boghaunter, an early-season flier, has been found in boggy sites with floating *Sphagnum* mosses in the surrounding states and Canada. I had visited Marshfield Pond on June 2, 2018 on an Odonates (dragonflies and damselflies) field trip led by Bryan Pfeiffer, so knew the site supported a wide variety of ode species including darners, clubtails and a Stream Cruiser (*Didymops transversa*) probably associated with the outlet stream flowing under the bridge. I hadn't noted any floating *Sphagnum* mats there but knew the pond was located near many other wetlands that might.

This year on May 27, I didn't see any signs of the Boghaunter, but was greeted by at least a dozen puddling Canadian Tiger Swallowtail Butterflies (*Papilio canadensis*). I also saw many species of clubtails; a Chalk-fronted Corporal (*Ladona julia*); and thought I detected a Stream Cruiser (*Didymops transversa*) on a fly-by.

On June 1, I returned with my sister, Rusty Posner, who agreed to venture out on her first field trip with me, enticed by the road trip, a sunny afternoon and the promise of an easily-accessible pond. The odes were out in great numbers, many patrolling the shore, as Rusty stepped into the clear, ankle-deep water with net in hand. I was standing nearby taking photos when I heard the splash. On her first big swing, she lost her balance and was totally soaked. I secured my camera on shore then gave her a hand up, thinking this was probably the end of our trip. She was a good sport, though, said she wanted to stay, and agreed to let me take her photo, already thinking of sharing the experience with her friends.

Cecropia moths spotted by Rusty Posner
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

Rusty Posner with Beaverpond Baskettail
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

Moments later, she pointed out a pair of mating *Cecropia* moths (*Hyalophora cecropia*) that I had walked right by. I let her know that I was very grateful to have her there as a spotter. I later netted a Stream Cruiser, and a Beaverpond Baskettail (*Epitheca canis*) which

Marshfield Pond (continued)

Carolina Grasshopper (*Dissosteira carolina*) on a Coltsfoot leaf.
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

she let me photograph on her wet tee .

On June 4, a 6-Spotted Tiger Beetle (*Cicindella sexguttata*) was my favorite find of the afternoon. (Ron Kelley's macro, multi-layered photo of this beautiful insect-hunter species graces the back cover of the Newsletter.) On June 5, with my friend, Joan Ouimette as spotter, we saw many of the same ode species with the addition of a kingfisher and a pair of mallard ducks. July 11 was overcast so very few insects were flying or "posing" except for a violet Variable Dancer (*Argia fumipennis*) damselfly; a common Eastern Forktail (*Ischnura verticalis*) damselfly; and a gray Carolina Grasshopper (*Dissosteira carolina*). I also added a pair of Ebony Jewelwings (*Calopteryx maculata*) to my site list.

I enjoyed returning to this site throughout the Summer. With each visit, even on overcast afternoons, I usually added a few more species to my site list and continued to enhance my understanding of this beautiful wetland and its inhabitants.

Doug and Mary Burnham's Northfield Camp (June 26, 2021)

By Laurie DiCesare

Thirteen VES members and friends gathered at the I-89 Exit 5 (Williamstown / Northfield, VT) park-and-ride to caravan to Doug and Mary Burnham's cooperatively-owned Cilohocla camp. This 140-acre site includes a three- to four-acre pond with a dam and pondside cabin, wetlands, fields and a fen.

Showy Lady's Slippers *Cypripedium reginae*
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

As soon as we stepped out of our cars, we noticed a Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*) laying eggs in the sand near the cabin…only a few yards away from the edge of the pond. We soon spread out in the entry-road field where we found a diversity of insect life. The diminutive yellow and iridescent-green Emerald Spreadwing (*Lestes dryas*) damselflies and Chalk-fronted Corporal (*Libellula julia*) dragonflies were common sightings. Trish Hanson netted a pair of mating Black-and-red Stinkbugs (*Cosmopela lintneriana*) which have had many scientific and common names including the "Wee Harlequin Bugs" (in Alberta, Canada) and the memorable "Twice-stabbed Bugs." (They feed on grapes, potatoes

Emerald Spreadwing (*Lestes dryas*)
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

and raspberries but are not considered pests.)

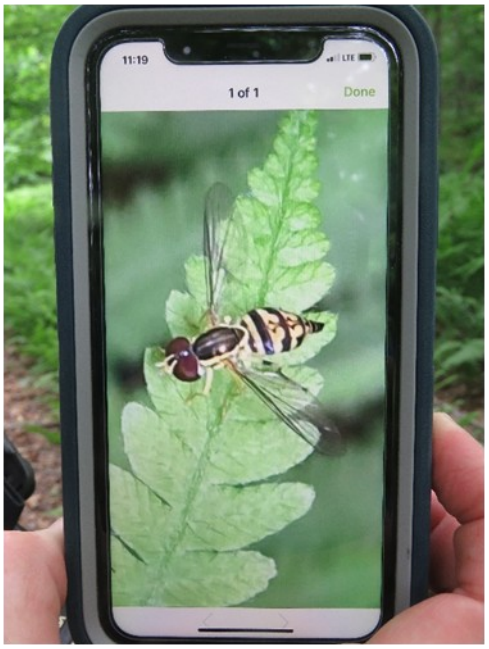
During a short walk to the fen through a woodland interspersed with Hay-scented Ferns (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*), Spencer Hardy of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies noticed a Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) that we inadvertently surprised off a ground nest containing three blue eggs. The open fen was fairly easy to access with only a little groundwater wetting our boots. The highlights for many were the abundant Showy Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium reginae*) in full bloom.

After being netted and held, the skimmer dragonflies will often "pose" for a few seconds before realizing that they are free. The Four-spotted Skimmer (*Libellula quadrimaculata*) dragonfly momentarily graced Laurie's Vermont tee before flying off. Melissa Williams shared her amazing cell-phone photo of a Syrphid fly (*Toxomerus geminatus*) with me on the walk back.

Laurie with Four-spotted Skimmer
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

The Lepidopterans were out in good numbers as well. Among those species noted were a Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*) butterfly; Little Wood Satyr (*Megisto cymela*); and an Eyed Brown (*Satyrodes eurydice*), with its distinctive zig-zag line on the hind wing, identified by Michael Sabourin; and a non-native European Skipper (*Thymelicus lineola*), a species which Don Miller said was common in the fen.

Arabesque Orbweaver
Neoscona arabesca
Photo: Laurie DiCesare



Female Syrphid Fly
(*Toxomerus geminatus*)
Fly ID: Don Miller
Cell Phone Photo: Melissa Williams
Re-photo: Laurie DiCesare

Just as we were gathering for our bagged lunches on the porch of the cabin, a light rain started to fall. Excellent timing. As we were eating, Mary handed me a list of eleven bird species that she'd noted, including a Blue-headed / Solitary Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*), Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) and Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*).

Black and Red Stinkbugs
Cosmopela lintneriana
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

We'd like to thank Mary and Doug Burnham for the use of their camp. To see Melissa Williams' iNaturalist Syrphid fly post, see: https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/84558498.

A list of the species we documented is available from Laurie DiCesare (NatureHaven@MyFairPoint.net). Please put "VES Burnham Camp Species" in the subject line of your request.

Left to right: Doug Burnham, Eve Mendelsohn, Spencer Hardy, Ron Kelley and Don Miller in Burnham's field.
Photo: Michael Sabourin

Milton Town Forest: The Trail to Milton Pond (June 10 to July 22, 2021)

By Laurie DiCesare

Milton Pond is just a 20- to 30-minute walk from the Carriage Barn parking area on Westford Road and only a five- minute drive from my home. The popular four- to six-car lot is sometimes full so I often try to carpool if I've invited a friend to join me. (The much larger Milton Town Forest parking lot is a couple of miles up the road and offers easy access to Milton Marsh.)

June 10 was definitely a "Dragonfly Day" with sunshine, temps in the 70°s and only an occasional light breeze. The clubtail dragonflies were out in good numbers, landing on the ground near the spillway. I was able to confirm a Lancet Clubtail (*Phanogomphus exilis*) dragonfly via iNaturalist.org. Several minutes after sighting…and net-nudging…a scarab beetle (*Geotrupes* sp.) for a better photo op, both my hands felt like all the nerve endings were on fire! When my natural insect spray was no help, I soaked my hands in the pond and let the silty mud relieve the irritation. I knew about blister beetles spraying but this was a new one for me. (I'm now carrying a small spray bottle of lidocaine in my day pack.)

As Milton Pond caretaker, fellow Milton Conservation Commission member and new VES member Bonnie Pease and I were walking up to the pond on June 12, she found a Broad-winged Hawk feather. We both considered that a good sign. The Variable / Violet Dancer (*Argia fumipennis*) damselflies were perching on the rocky outcrop by the first pond overlook. Seeing a bright red-and-black Calico Pennant (*Celithemis elisa*) dragonfly and an Ebony Jewelwing (*Calopteryx maculata*) damselfly near the spillway, were highlights of the walk.

Scarab Beetle (*Geotrupes* sp.)
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

Lancet Clubtail (*Phanogomphus exilis*)
Photo: Laurie DiCesare

VES member and nature photographer, Ron Kelley, joined me for a walk on June 17. We noticed a Baltimore Checkerspot (*Euphydryas phaeton*) butterfly in the field near the entry kiosk but the Belted Whiteface (*Leucorrhinia proxima*), with distinctive red markings on the upper abdomen, and 4-Spotted Skimmer (*Libellula quadrimaculata*) dragonflies were even more unusual finds.

Belted Whiteface (*Leucorrhinia proxima*)

Almost a month later, July 15, with temps in the 80°s, aside from the usual skimmer dragonflies, the Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly and the ubiquitous LDDs (see Judy Rosovsky's article), I noted an iridescent red/green Dogbane Leaf beetle (*Chrysochus auratus*) and a large Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) caterpillar.

On July 22, my favorite encounter was meeting a woman from Burlington who is interested in trading medicinal plants and networking with me. (Her daughter and husband are also interested in natural history.) Photographing a Confused Haploa Moth (*Haploa confusa*) was also fun.

For a species list of Milton Pond, please e-mail Laurie at NatureHaven@MyFairPoint.net with "VES Milton Pond spp." in the subject line.

Kelp Fly Residue Blackens Beachgoers' Feet

By Laurie DiCesare

On June 13, 2021, Bill Nemitz wrote an article in the Portland Press Herald entitled "This column will really bug you." Apparently, beachgoers from Wells Beach and York Beach in Ogunquit, Maine (among other sites) who stepped into the black slime that washed up on the shore in early June, came away with blackened feet. "…Even after scrubbing their soles with detergent, they couldn't get the stuff off."

Retired oceanographer, Linda Stathoplos, helped solve the mystery by examining some of the residue under a microscope and determining that the slime was caused by a tiny insect. Jim Britt, spokesperson for the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry said the cause was a "harmless common kelp fly that feeds on decaying seaweed…" The black substance that's been staining people's feet is "the pigment that occurs naturally from what they eat."

The Kelp Fly (*Coelopa* sp.) is a member of the Seaweed Fly Family (Coelopidae) that is characterized by a "flattened thorax and abdomen" and "stout, bristly legs." "…Adults gather in swarms to lay their eggs on decaying seaweed just above the high tide line. Both the adults and larvae, which feed on seaweed, provide an abundant food supply for shorebirds." [Audubon]

The beaches are now clear again as the tide has washed the residue away. Like henna or black raspberry dye, the black pigment poses no threat to humans and wears away… eventually.

References:
National Audubon Society *Field Guide to North American Insects and Spiders*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY @1980. Seaweed Flies p. 675.
National wildlife Federation *Field Guide to Insects and Spiders of North America*. Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. @2008 New York, NY. Photo of a Kelp fly (*Coelopa vanduzeei*) pg. 248.

Kelp Fly (*Coelopea vanduzeeiz*)
~8mm. Orange County, CA. 5/15/10. © Chris Mallory
http://nathistoc.bio.uci.edu/diptera/Coelopa.htm

A Guide to Northeastern Dragonflies and Damselflies

By Laurie DiCesare

This 8-panel fold-out guide to Northeastern Dragonflies and Damselflies is expertly illustrated by Ed Lam and laid out according to habitat (Upland Field, Pond/Lake; Marsh/Grassy/Boggy Shore; and River / Stream.) Ed Lam, who illustrated "Damselflies of the Northeast: A Guide to the Species of Eastern Canada and the Northeastern U.S.", shows fine attention to details such as the light wing-tip veins on the Slender Spreadwing damselfly and the blue "F" on abdominal segments 8 and 9 of the Eastern Forktail in side view. The colors are very true to life.

Although the sample species are not grouped by families (making comparisons of similar species a challenge), the two panels of detailed illustrations for identifying the key traits (eye configuration; thoracic stripes and abdominal patterns; and anal appendages) of certain species in each family are very helpful. The last panel shows various life stages for both damselflies and dragonflies, from egg dipping, larvae, eclosing (exiting the larval "skin" or exuvium), forming a wheel and tandem flight.

As stated on the back panel of the brochure, "Massachusetts Audubon works to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. With more than 100,000 members, we care for 32,000 acres of conservation land…" Because the guide is focused on habitat, the 3-line individual species descriptions often lack distinguishing details that would help with species identification. For example, the Slender Spreading's "almost comically elongated" abdomen might be better described as all dark. Adding an illustration of abdominal segments (numbered S1 to S10) would help. Then the "pale tail blotch" on the Dot-tailed Whiteface dragonfly could be more clearly described as a "yellow spot on S7." The addition of scientific names for highlighted species would also be beneficial.

Overall, the 5.25 x 8.50-inch guide is well laminated, printed on sturdy card stock, fits easily into a day pack and provides an excellent field resource. With more than 40 illustrated species for a low price of $4.95, it makes an excellent gift for a nature lover or beginning dragonfly enthusiast.

Reference: Field guide @2007 Mass. Audubon Society. Call 1.800.283.8266 or see www.shop.massaudubon.org.

Butterflies of Southern Quebec and Southern/Eastern Ontario

By Rick Cavasin

Rick Cavasin's pocket guides to the Butterflies of Southern Quebec and Southern/ Eastern Ontario, Canada are incredible resources. With over a hundred species and about 240 photographic images on each (including underwings and male / female variations), these field guides can quickly help you identify which crescent, sulphur, fritillary or skipper you have discovered. Each of these 4 x 10-inch (opening to 10 x 28-inches) laminated guides is made up of 7 panels of excellent photo images.

The guides include information on each species' common name (in English with French subtitles or vice versa); scientific name; flight season (by month); wingspan size (very small to very large); and status (common, uncommon, rare, local or migrant, etc.) A 90-mm ruler on the back panel is a helpful field tool.

Arranged by family, with Latin family names (ex.: "Brush-footed Butterflies – Family Nymphalidae"), it's easy to notice small differences between closely-related species with several photos in close proximity. There is much overlap between the species presented in the two field guides. The European Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*) that was recently noted in Vermont is only found in the Southern Quebec Guide. At $15 each, both guides are highly recommended for novice to expert users.

Reference: www.ontariobutterflies.ca; www.quebecbutterflyguide.ca. Rick Cavasin @2018 2nd edition. Rick's website says that his Southern and Eastern Ontario field guide is currently sold out although some Canadian retailers may have it in stock. "A new edition should be ready in late June 2021." $15 per field guide plus shipping. "Ask for quotes for shipping outside Canada."

Calendar

Aug. 27, 2021 (7:30 – 9:30 p.m.): Birds of VT Museum: Evening Moth Walk led by Michael Sabourin.

Max. 10 people; waitlist available. BOVM website: https://birdsofvermont.org/event/moth-walk-2021/

Eventbrite: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/moth-walk-registration-151109666079

Free event, donations welcome. If it's raining, please call the Museum (802.434.2167) to see if the walk has been rescheduled.

Sept 25, 2021 (11a.m.): Vermont Entomological Society Annual Meeting at North Branch Nature Center.

Meet at North Branch Nature Center, 713 Elm St, Montpelier, VT. We encourage visitors of all ages and interest levels to join us for our annual potluck and explore the Nature Center grounds before and after. We bring extra nets and will help identify whatever you net. Any questions? Contact Michel Sabourin at mothvet@yahoo.com, 802.522.7992.

Programs of Interest

North Branch Nature Center (713 Elm Street, Montpelier, VT)

Caterpillar Lab /Caterpillar Camp (Sept. 2, 12:30 p.m. to Sept. 3 5 p.m.): Ages 9 – 13.
Other Caterpillar and Moth programs for all ages.
For more information see northbranchnaturecenter.org

Eagle Hill Institute (59 Eagle Hill Drive, Steuben, Maine)

Summer Seminar on **Native Bees** (Aug. 8 – 14, 2021) with Sara Bushman.
See also online Zoom seminars at Eaglehill.us.

Vermont Entomological Society
c/o Debra Kiel
147 Allen Irish Road
Underhill, VT 05489

Six-spotted Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela sexguttata*)
Photo: Ron Kelley