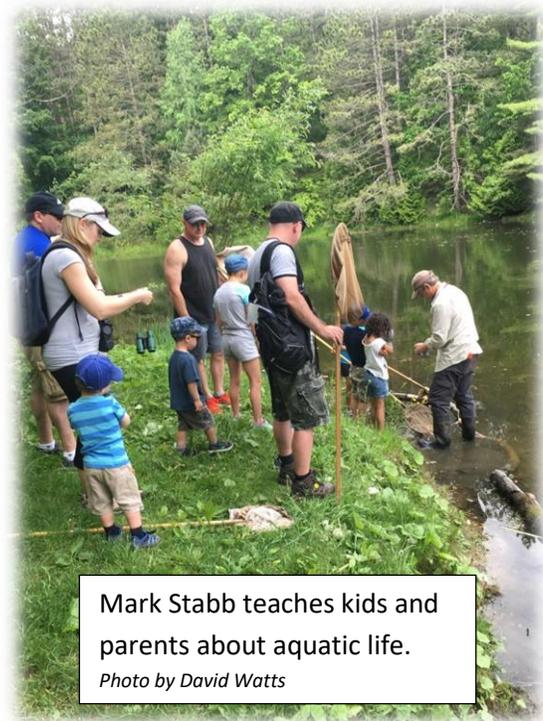




## *Canada 150 Species Challenge met by North Durham Nature!*

*by Derek Connelly*

North Durham Nature, Uxbridge Recreation and many guests counted over 180 species in the Uxbridge Countryside Preserve on June 11<sup>th</sup> on a beautiful sunny morning. Four separate hikes focusing on wildflowers, trees, aquatic critters, butterflies and other bugs, and birds were led by naturalists (Derek, Jean, Mark, David, Cara, James, & Geoff) exploring the trails of the Preserve. Participants joined in the fun of finding, identifying and recording the different life forms. Guide books, checklists, nets and hands-on assistance ensured the success of the event. Self-guided scavenger hunts were also



Mark Stabb teaches kids and parents about aquatic life.  
*Photo by David Watts*

provided so everyone in the family could participate in this exciting Canada 150 event.

To maintain the Preserve's biodiversity no plants were picked and all wildlife (if captured) was released after identification.

Uxbridge Recreation offered free brochures, water bottles, buttons and fruit. NDN provided three nature-themed "door" prizes and Christine Smith of ChrisMar Mapping dropped in to promote the new Green Durham trail maps. Thanks to Christine and Mark the new Countryside



*photo by Mark Stabb*

Preserve map was installed in the Kiosk in time for the day.



photo by Mark Stabb

We thank the Town of Uxbridge for allowing us to run the event, Uxbridge Recreation for their support and cooperation and our guests and volunteer naturalists. By the way, once the final list is compiled it will be posted in its entirety on the NDN website so you can all see what a diverse and amazing place the Preserve actually is!

## *Remembering Dot Hooker a birder and friend*

*by Suzanne Lee*

Anyone who had ever met Dot knew her excitement and love for birding. In the early 1990s Dot discovered a passion for birds and began feeder watching. By the mid-90s her passion had grown and her travels took her from Florida to Arizona, Texas to Cuba, and Newfoundland to British Columbia. Her love affair with birding grew over the next 25 years and her larger than life excitement made her the first one ready to go with her bins and her endless supply of snacks (love that chocolate). In each new area she would find a new bird and she would say “You

only get two looks at a bird...your first and your best!”. She marvelled equally at a Black-necked Stilt, a Cuban Pygmy-owl, endangered warblers and even the Baltimore Orioles in her own yard. She brought her love of birds right to her own back door and created a Bluebird Trail from her house extending north towards Seagrave that encouraged bluebirds to nest in Scugog Township.



An annual pilgrimage in Ontario was undertaken to Rondeau Park, Point Pelee and other local hot spots every May with her birding buddies Suzy, Carol and Marie. Her credo was, “There are only so many Mays in our life and we need to make the most of each one!” True to that, the length of their birding trips got longer and

longer and came to include ‘The Biggest Week in American Birding’ at Magee Marsh in Ohio and The Huron Fringe Bird Festival. Just last May their birding extravaganza included Ontario, Ohio, Michigan and then back to Ontario, then in the fall to Algonquin Park. She made many lasting birding friendships along the way.

For a woman who had hearing loss and colour blindness, it is amazing that she was able to be such an avid birder. Five years ago Dot received new hearing aids, and that opened a whole new way of birding for her. Dot could identify more than 50 species of birds by ear, and has seen more than 300 different species of birds in her lifetime. Her determination and her passion never once let cancer get in the way of her experiencing her birds and never did it dampen her spirit for birding or the kinship of fellow birders. Of all the bird lists she kept over the years, her “bird-brained” friends list was the ‘tweetest’.

Fly high my friend until we meet again.

*Dot, a long-time member of North Durham Nature, passed away peacefully at her home in Greenbank while surrounded by the love of her family. Dot was a loving and caring woman who fought a brave and courageous 13 year battle against cancer. She never allowed it to define her life. Dot was an inspiration to many and was known for living life to the fullest through volunteer work, birding, gardening, baking and her homemade chocolates. She leaves behind husband Roy, daughters Dana and Melissa and four grandchildren. Her loving and nurturing spirit will be remembered and missed by so many.*

***Dot Hooker***  
***July 14, 1954 - May 20, 2017***

PS - Please consider making a donation to North Durham Nature or your local club in the spirit of birding to honour Dot.

## *Birdathon 2017*

This year’s adventure was very challenging as the weather impacted both the day and the season. A cold, wet spring meant that many birds were widely dispersed (e.g. waterfowl were in fields and remote ponds, and not in traditional staging locations). Shorebirds were almost non-existent and many flycatching species were late or in very low numbers. Consequently I missed many “easy” species on the adventure. That said, I still found 155 species on the official day, which is a bit below my 30 year average and well below my personal high count of 174 species.



Female Wood Duck with chicks

But here’s where it got interesting .. I actually did my Big Day **twice**. On May 26-27 and then again 24 hours later on May 28-29 I headed out for these 24-hour marathons with different companions to test what was around. On the first adventure I found 155 species with Peter Hogenbirk as we travelled through Durham Region and up onto the Carden Alvar. On the second adventure, I birded with Brian Henshaw, Kim Baker and Jay Vandergast and found 157 species. Both outings held

surprises for me as I was introduced to several wonderful Durham sites I hadn't been to before and found lots of great birds. The composite list for the two events totaled 173 species.

In total, thanks to the donations of so many generous people, I raised almost \$1900, 25% of which will come back to North Durham Nature. A complete list of all the birds we saw on both trips will be posted on the NDN website so check it out to see what's around this fabulous area in late May!

## Photography Corner

*Editor's Note: I asked Jay to write a photography column as a new feature for our members. Let us know what you think please.*

### An Eye for Wildflowers

by Jay Thibert

The first wildflowers emerge in early spring, and continue their parade of colour and scent through to the late fall. For plants, flowers are their way of reproducing and during this bloom period they interact with countless insects, birds and animals. We can find beauty in this annual parade. Documenting the display with photographs is a satisfying challenge. I will give you a few tips from my own experience and hopefully inspire you with some photographs.

“The more you begin to see, the more you become involved, not only with the stunning natural designs of whole fields or with individual blossoms, but with nature itself.” *Freeman Patterson, Namaqualand – Garden of the Gods*

### Tip # 1 Observe and experiment

A good wildflower photographer is both an artist and a naturalist. The artist in you will be concerned about visual relationships and your naturalist side will be ready to learn about the relationships this plant has in the ecosystem. Taking photographs that combine both perspectives makes for an interesting challenge. (See Figure 1) Your attention may be attracted to the colour and lines of a mass of wildflowers growing in a meadow or forest. Or perhaps you will move down low where the flowers are and focus on one flower or a part of a flower. “For good photographs of flowers – and sheer enjoyment – experiment with many different camera positions, lighting conditions, and lenses. Abandon yourself to the sense of freedom the flowers evoke. Let yourself go!” (Freeman Patterson)



Figure 1. This photo of a Mayapple was taken as a triple exposure shot at 1/1600 sec at f4.0. The green colour was eliminated to draw attention to the yellow and white flower.

### Tip # 2 Use a good tripod

A good tripod will keep your camera still while you are shooting and it will force you to slow down and consider carefully what you want in the photograph. Choose a tripod that is sturdy, has a ball-and-socket head, has legs that spread flat, has an

adjustable centre post and is as light as you can afford. You will treasure a well built and designed tripod. (See Figure 2)



*Figure 2. 1/400 at f4.0, ISO 500 Keeping all the flowers the same distance from the sensor allowed for sharp focus with a shallow depth of field. This picture is only possible with the camera on a tripod.*

### **Tips # 3 Know how your camera works.**

Your camera is likely a digital point and shoot or a digital SLR. Either style is capable of taking great pictures if you know how to use it! How you set the shutter speed, aperture and ISO will affect how your image looks.



*Figure 3a. The picture was shot at 1/25 sec at f18, ISO 400 Notice the great depth of field.*

Set your shutter speed to 1/200 of a second or faster and you will freeze any motion in your subject and get a sharper image. The aperture you choose will determine how much of your image is in focus. This is often referred to as depth of field. If you shoot with a small f-stop number (the lens is wide open) you will have a shallow depth of field. The flower you are shooting will be in focus and the background and foreground will be a soft blur. If you stop the lens down and use a larger number, there will be a greater depth of field. (See Figure 3a & 3b)

The choice is yours depending on the effect you are trying to get. Use the smallest ISO number possible to get the desired aperture and shutter speed that you set. This will result in an image that has less grain and “noise”. Digital cameras allow you to set the quality of your image. Yes, you can fit more low quality images on your SD card but your goal should be to take a few, good quality images. So set your camera to the highest quality jpeg image. Set you camera on RAW if you are prepared to adjust the image with suitable software such as Adobe Lightroom, on your computer.



*Figure 3b. This is the same picture shot at 1/320 sec at f5.0. Notice a much shallower depth of field.*

#### **Tip # 4 Choose the best time of day**

The key to effective wildflower photography is light. For me, natural illumination, as opposed to an electronic flash, will produce the most consistent and pleasing results. I like lighting that will retain detail in both the highlight and shadow areas. Overcast, hazy skies supply the soft, even light that is ideal for wildflower photography.

Set your alarm for early morning for the best possible pictures. There will be minimal wind so plants will be still and there will be less chance of blur. In the early morning plants may be covered in dew which may add to the composition. And the light will be soft and warm - perfect for a great picture. (See Figure 4).



*Figure 4. Pink Ladies Slipper shot at 1/400 sec at f 4.0, ISO 640 with focal length of 180mm. The background in this shot was very dark, so I exposed for the morning light striking the flowers.*

#### **Tip # 5 Make a plan to shoot wildflowers**

Set your tripod up in your own garden. Plants, unlike birds, stay in one place and will be there year after year. Get to know where your favorites are and make a plan to record their beauty. Take some great images share them with your friends at North Durham Nature, make some note

cards or post them on Facebook. These are all great ways to show you care about our wildflowers.

### *Local News*

#### **A Native Prairie Planting in Uxbridge Parks**

*by Derek Connelly*

This winter, 1<sup>st</sup> Uxbridge Scouts approached me with the idea of creating a butterfly garden in the Countryside Preserve. I expanded the idea to a Prairie plot so as to encourage native grasses in the Preserve's meadows as well. Both native grasses and wildflowers would enhance the habitat for butterflies, other pollinators and wildlife in general. This idea was also supported in the Management Plan for the Countryside Preserve prepared by Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) in 2005.

James Kamstra selected the plants based on their occurrence in Durham and I selected the supplier, Native Plant Nursery, based on the quality and proximity. Uxbridge Parks stepped up and offered to cover 50% of the plant costs, while LSRCA offered the other 50% through a LEAP grant. Uxbridge Parks offered to rototill the area and water it after planting. For large prairie grasslands, burning the area before planting is recommended as the most natural and most successful way to remove the non-native plants, however our plot was close to Red Pine plantations and therefore getting burn permits and approvals were not encouraged. A ten metre by twenty five metre plot seemed manageable and 300 plants were purchased including five species of grass and eight wildflowers. Here's our list - Big and Little Bluestem, Indian and Switch Grass, Canada Wild

Rye, Black-eyed Susan, Hairy Beardtongue, Heath Aster, Hoary Vervain, Mountain Mint, New England Aster, Showy Tickfoil, and Wild Columbine.



May was a wet month but Parks managed to find a window and rototilled the plot. Our first planting date called for very wet weather which created logistical problems getting the plants in safely, so I canceled it hoping for a better weekend. Fortunately the weather on May 13<sup>th</sup> was perfect and the Uxbridge Cubs and Beavers managed to reschedule to assist. Local families also volunteered and all the plants were in the ground in a couple of hours. The weather was now definitely on our side as the month of May and June provided plenty of rain to establish the plants. Our first plant invaders into the plot were wild strawberries and Common Milkweed. The milkweed must have heard we wanted a butterfly garden!



On my last visit to the Preserve in mid-June, the plants were doing well, and pollinators were arriving. Monarch butterflies and Spring Azure butterflies were also seen. I hope to organize a Scouts and public watering day later in the summer when we can all observe the results and identify the plants.

## *Kid's Corner*

*by Cara Gregory*

*photo by Kim Lendvay*

While we are enjoying the flowers blooming in the spring, summer and fall months so are the bees. Bees play an important role in our ecosystem by pollinating plants, enabling them to make seeds, so that new plants will sprout up again the following year. Unfortunately, bees are not recognized as frequently for their role in pollination, as they are for their ability to sting. People are often afraid of bees, and instead of sitting back to observe and marvel at the fascinating pollination process, they panic and run away from a bee when they encounter one. Many people don't know that only female bees can sting, as the "stinger" is a modified ovipositor used for egg-laying, and not all species of female bee can sting. It is the wasps, which bees are often mistaken for, that are more aggressive and territorial. They are more likely to sting. Bees are herbivores, unlike the carnivorous wasps, and are more interested in visiting flowers than inspecting a sweet drink you are sipping or sandwich you are eating. They rarely sting unless provoked.

It can be easy and quite interesting to observe bees with the young people in your life, helping to dispel bee myths and fears and foster an appreciation and understanding of them. You can plant a

variety of flowering plant species in your garden, to provide food for bees throughout the growing season. There are several models for building artificial bee nests that can attract bees to nest near your garden as well. A good guide to the biology of bees and how to attract them to your garden is *The Xerces Society Guide: Attracting Native Pollinators, Protecting North America's Bees and Butterflies*. Once you have taken the steps to make your home a haven for bees, if you sit quietly near the flowers they pollinate, all you need to observe them more closely is a pair of binoculars, a magnifying glass, or a camera. If you take photos of the bees, it is easier to identify which bees are in your garden by comparing the photos you have taken to those in a field guide. *The Bees in Your Backyard: A Guide to North America's Bees* by Wilson and Carril may be a good field guide to start with.

Bee biology is fascinating, but can be quite complex. They can be generalists, visiting a wide range of flower types, or specialists visiting a single type of plant. Bees can be solitary or social, with most bees leading solitary lives, meaning that each female constructs her own nest and cares for it, without any help from other bees of her species. Social bees live in colonies, having 2 or more adult females that live in the same nest, and share the work of preparing and caring for it. Solitary bees can be tunnel or ground nesting. Social bee nests are typically located in a dry cavity. When female bees move from flower to flower, their intention



is not to pollinate the flowers, but to collect food for their young and themselves. The pollen, on the females, is carried either on their hind legs or on the undersurface of the abdomen. Nectar provides them with energy and pollen with proteins. Male bees visit flowers to obtain energy for mating and patrol flowers to find females. Pollen, from the male part of one flower, gets transported on the bee's body and transferred to the female part of another flower, leading to the formation of a seed for that plant. Not all bees are active from the spring to the fall, but the start of winter leads to the cessation of all bee activity. Bees go into a state of dormancy called *diapause* during the winter months.

Having a need for a nest and the nature of their food source, bees are sensitive to a greater range of environmental factors than most insects. Natural threats to bees include predators, parasitoids, food thieves, and environmental factors (heat, flooding, climate change).

Human threats to bees include habitat loss (feeding, nesting and wintering areas), introduced species and chemicals (pesticides). The Rusty-patched Bumblebee, one of the most common

bumblebee species in Toronto, only 30 years ago, was the first bee to be listed as endangered in North America.

Creating gardens in our homes full of native plant species free of pesticides, providing nesting opportunities for our local bees, and dispelling the myths associated with these fascinating insects is a first step in helping to sustain this vital

component of our ecosystems, so that they can continue their role of pollination into the future.

**Myth:** All bees die after they sting.

**Truth:** This is only the case for the worker honey bee. No other bee dies after they sting.

**Myth:** All bees make honey.

**Truth:** Only honey bees make honey, and they make up less than 0.05% of all bee species. They are also a non-native species.

### Create a nest for tunnel-nesting bees

Nests for tunnel-nesting bees can easily be created with just a few materials around your home. All you need to do is to collect a bundle of “hollow stems”. Some examples include: reed, teasel, cup plant, or bamboo garden stakes (sectioned with natural node forming back tunnel wall). Tightly pack the stems, open ends out, into a tin can, paper milk carton, square plastic bucket, or short section of PVC pipe. If making the nest with garden stakes, adults will have to help children cut each stem below a node, so they are open on one end and closed on the other. Then strap the garden stake tubes together into a tight bundle with wire, string, or tape with closed ends all at the same end of the bundle. It is important to place the artificial nests in a location that is ideal for the bees. They should be located somewhere sheltered (such as the side of a barn or garden shed) with the stems horizontal to the ground, or pointing slightly down, and the holes facing east to get the morning sun.

So let's get buzzy – I mean busy! (*Editor's confession: This is Geoff not Cara speaking but I couldn't resist!*)

## Book Reviews

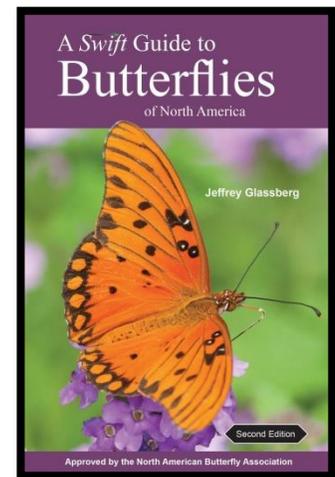
*There are so many incredible new books on the market today. I don't where to begin, so here's a sampling of some of the new titles I've received for review.*

**A Swift Guide to Butterflies of North America** by Jeffrey Glassberg. Princeton University Press. 2017. ISBN: 978-0-691-17650-5. \$29.95 USD.

This is the time of year that butterflies put on their best shows of colour, flight and fancy. I must admit that I struggle to ID many of the smaller or drabber ones, perhaps because I haven't disciplined myself enough to learn all the salient features of these wonderful critters. I have lots of great books on butterflies and wondered if I really needed another.

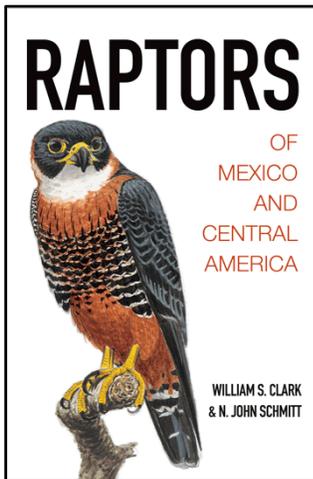
At first glance the book is like others, lots of pictures and ID tips, but on closer scrutiny I found many differences and quickly grew to like the style of the authors. Let me explain. The book opens with some

interesting tidbits about biology, life stages, flight periods, and behaviour. Then it focuses on our interactions with butterflies while we're studying them, so that we can minimize our impacts. The final sections of the intro speak to commercial butterflies rearing farms and conservation. After a brief tutorial on how to use the books, the species accounts begin. The first words in the ID section were a bit of a shock. Did



you know that not all species of swallowtails have “swallowtails”? Yup – that’s true. So here’s what you’ll find in each account: species features with pointers to show the salient features, range map, male and female photos, preferred food, habitat, flight periods, flight style, and speciation notes. All photos were taken of wild unrestrained butterflies so no harm of any kind came to the subjects of the 3500+ photos that accompany the text in the book. So if you don’t have a book about butterflies or you don’t like the one(s) you have, get this one. You won’t be disappointed!

**Raptors of Mexico and Central America**  
by William S. Clark and N. John Schmitt.  
Princeton University Press. 2017. ISBN:  
978-0-691-11649-5. \$39.95 USD.



Ah, another raptor book! I must admit I wonder if we have too many new books out there. How can each be better or different than the last? Well, once again Princeton has found a niche to fill a gap that has frustrated me

forever. Virtually all of the books on hawks and their allies treat the complex with little thought as to what the reader wants to know and what field marks identify these sub-tropical species. This book goes beyond a standard field guide and offers a great deal of useful information about Central American and Mexican raptors. Sixty-nine species are covered in the book – all of the species found in the region covered, including vagrants. Many of these

are of course also found in Canada and the U.S. so this book has applications beyond Central America. The author acknowledges how difficult it is to identify raptors, due to plumage variations, behaviour, subspecies and the like. To accomplish this daunting task, each species gets several pages of coverage in the book.

Each account includes information on species ID, measurements, taxonomy & geographic variation, similar species, status, distribution, behaviour, moult, detailed field marks, unusual plumages, hybrids, and offers a reference section for further reading. The text is augmented with 32 stunning plates and over 200 photographs. I don’t have a lot of space here, but may I suggest that if you travel to Mexico or anywhere in the Americas, you consider adding this book to your library. It is truly a great addition to the scope of books out there on raptors and offers much information not found in most books.

**The New Neotropical Companion** by John Kricher. Princeton University Press. 2107. ISBN:978-0-691-11525-2. \$35.00 USD.

While we’re on the subject of the tropics, have you ever wondered what all those other neat things are out there when you travel. It’s easy to find bird books, but try to get good books on bugs, mammals, reptiles and amphibians and the like – good luck! And it would be even harder to find all that in one concise



volume. Well, as they say “wait no longer”! Ecosystems, habitats, and ecology for all the tropical zones of the Americas are covered. Don’t expect to read about everything that can be found in this vast region, but do expect to learn a great deal about species and their interactions with each other and the environment. From the Andes to the Paramo and Elfin forests and everything in between, you will delve into the mysteries of this broad zone. This will become your favourite book to read before, during and after you have travelled.

I intend to read every word – a rare endeavour for a reference book that one usually skims looking for tidbits. I can’t wait for winter to sit by the fire and follow the easy style of the author as he teaches me much of what I’ve wondered over the decades.

## Logo Contest

*LOGO contest - Deadline extended until September 19th ! We need more of your great ideas... North Durham Nature - what does it mean? what should it mean? what should it look like?*

## Quiz



I fly in the daytime only and in early summer. I like thistles and am migratory. I’m one of the most cosmopolitan insects in the world. Some years I’m abundant and some almost absent. I’m a Lepidopteran. What am I?

## Nifty Nature News

Fighting aliens ... all around the world alien species are invading and upsetting the balance of nature. Here in Durham we have many including the Emerald Ash Borer, Phragmites, Japanese Knotweed and Mustard Garlic to name a few. Around the world everyone is facing similar challenges as trade between nations increases. So what can we do? Here are a few success stories.

**Galapagos** – goats have, over time, killed millions of Galapagian birds and other wildlife and destroyed habitats. Scientists with the Island Conservation group introduced more goats to control the problem – really? How can that help? Well the goats they released were “special females” that were sterile but always in heat, so the males were greatly attracted to them. Santiago Island, once home to 80,000 goats, now has none!

**The Atlantic coast** – the Lionfish is decimating populations of native marine species. It is an aggressive breeder and invades almost all marine habitats. The solution – a robot. Inventors, Colin and Erica Angle, have created a robot called Guardian LF1. The robot shocks the Lionfish and while it is stunned, it is sucked up by a vacuum and harvested for food. Innovative Bermudians hosted a cook-off with the captured critters to celebrate. There might actually be a viable market here as Lionfish sell for over \$22/kg.

**USA** – Asian Carp have been in the news for years as we struggle to keep them out of Canada. US Fish & Wildlife have developed a new technology that uses electrical currents to jolt them as in the Lionfish endeavours. The stunned carp are scooped up by a special boat called the Magna Carpa that gathers them up in huge nets. Their destiny? Fertilizer – good idea.

## *Answer to Quiz*

I am a butterfly first of all and am a member of the brushfoot family and more specifically a “Lady”. There are four species of Ladies in North America. The West Coast Lady is only found in western North America, so we can rule her out. The Red Admiral looks entirely different with its red-bordered black wings and bold spotting. So that leaves us with the Painted Lady and the American Lady. The latter has two distinct spots on the hindwing and a small black band on the top of the forewing. The Painted Lady, although similar, has four spots on the hindwing and a bold black band on the upper forewing. So this is a Painted Lady.



Four spots on hindwing



Heavy mark on upper wing

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