

Newport forest

July 22

2:00 - 5:15 pm

Weather: mixed sun/cloud, later sunny, NW breeze, 25C

Purpose: to extend trails and look for new plants & animals

Participants: Pat, Kee

Driving into the upper meadow, we startled a large hawk (couldn't make out the species, but probably a broad-winged hawk). It flew away across the river.

While Pat searched the meadow along the OCF edge, I carried five bags of wood chips along the track to the new OCF trail, where I hacked out another 20 m or so, then chipped out 2.5 bags. Coming out for a new bag, I spied a Wood Frog hopping across the track, then a peep-toad. Back in the OCF, I came upon some tough grape vines, now dead, about 2" in diameter. I sawed through them and, clearing away the woody debris below them, was surprised to discover the leg of a child's doll! Pat came along the trail, looking for me and we left for the Landing. I estimate that the OCF Trail is now about 150 m long.

At the Landing we lunched at the (Uncle Cam's) chairs & table. Pat said she had seen Yellow-flowered Jewel-weed (Pale Touch-me-not) along the track. This is somewhat less common than the usual, Orange-flowered Jewel-weed (Spotted Touch-me-not) that we see so commonly closer to London. Lunch finished, we crept up to the riverbank, hoping to spy some Spiny Soft-shell Turtles. (They are *extremely* wary!) I saw a very flat-looking "stone" at the bank, pointed it out to Pat as a possible SSSh and turned my attention elsewhere for a moment. Plop! the stone launched itself into the river with lightning speed. At least Pat saw it, a probable SSSh. But it didn't reemerge to show us its sharp nose.

We contented ourselves by seeing how many different animals had left tracks on the soft mud by the water's edge: Deer (a young one, in Pat's opinion), Raccoon, Great Blue Heron, Ducks of some kind, and turtles. Pat also found a giant red mite, about one mm across. I was delighted to discover that the binos Pat had loaned me (Pentax) functioned as a microscope if one looks through the other end. The mite had tufts of white hair near or on its legs. We also saw a few smallish Leopard Frogs in the grass nearby.

We explored along the riverbank until we came to the Riverside Forest (RSF). I photographed an interesting pattern of cracks in the blue clay while Pat searched for stranded shells.

We did not spend a long time in the RSF, just long enough to show Pat the end of the trail, now nearly through the forest. On the way back, she pointed out a fungus growing on a log. It was a bright orange and rather unusual-looking. I collected it, not realizing until we got home that it was a Netted Rhodotus, “widespread but rare,” according to one of our books. She also pointed out a large patch of Yellow-flowered Jewel-weed right in the middle of the forest.

We returned to the van and left without further incident, stopping once by the crest of the Fleming’s Creek floodplain to check the level. It has dropped to something like a more typical level since the heavy rains of a week ago.

note: We stopped by Sportsman’s Pond on Brigham Road on our way home. We had read in Tom Hayman’s column (LFP) that morning of an Anhinga which had strayed up into Middlesex Co., the first Canadian record for this bird. Signs of global warming are everywhere these days!

New species

Netted Rhodotus *Rhodotus palmatus* RSF

Pale Touch-me-not *Impatiens pallida* RSF, OCF

(Pat has collected several other plants, which she is working on and will include in her plant list.)