

Newport Forest

May 5 2001

1:10 - 7:30 pm

Weather: cool 16C, S breeze, clear, with high cloud

Purpose: to check wildflowers in West Ravine and on Hogsback

Participants: Pat, Kee

Note: In this report and in all subsequent ones, a (P) after the name of a plant, animal, fungus, landform or what have you, will mean that we took a photo.

We parked the van by the west corner of the lot along the road, climbed in through a hole in the fence, and proceeded to explore the ravine, taking much the same route as last fall, but not going quite as far and coming out through the fence again. We found Common Blue Wood Violet (P), lots of small caterpillar tents (P), a patch of Wood Anemones (P), Rough Bedstraw, Spring Beauty, Wild Phlox (P), Golden Alexander (P), Kidney-leaf Violet, Wild Ginger (P), Wild Geranium, May Apple, Trout Lily, Yellow Violet, Wild Strawberry, Dandelions, Garlic Mustard, Running Strawberry, False Solomon's Seal, Early Meadow Rue, and Yellow Currant.

Pat found an interesting sedge and I bagged one of the many individuals of that species growing in the area.

In the small, ephemeral watercourse that runs along the bottom of the gully, we saw numerous Raccoon tracks. At one place, a gully enters Newport Forest from the Janik property to the east. It joins the main gully and here a large Shagbark Hickory (P) grows right on the bank near the forks (P). Just up-gully from this spot I spied a strange sp. of Prunus (?), its leaves recently unfurled, sporting red sepals or protective sheaths still clinging to the stem like little flowers (P). Further up the ravine we came to a young tree growing by the fence. Its leaves were still growing, but were heart-shaped, with reddish bud sheaths still clinging to the stem. Was it a young Basswood? The bark (dbh 3") was smooth and grey.

Coming out of the ravine, we heard a Towhee calling: "tow-hee, tow-hee" and passed a "wolf tree," probably a Bur Oak.

We proceeded to the main gate where we spotted two Mourning Doves, then down to the trailer, where we unloaded more household items from the van and began to clean the trailer up a bit. Pat found mice droppings in some of the drawers and some wasps which have taken up residence in the hollow behind the metal door jamb. Then Pat sat in a chair outside while I filled the two feeders. She spotted a

Swallow of undetermined species, a Blue Jay, some Red Admirals, a few Turkey Vultures overhead, a Cabbage White, and a GBH going over Harvey's Beanfield. Later, she spotted a Downy Woodpecker, a White-breasted Nuthatch, two more Blue Jays, and a beautiful Red-breasted Grosbeak in a tree high overhead, singing most musically.

While Pat took a nap (she finds it easy to sleep in the trailer), I went down to the creek and filled two jugs with water, taking them up the Creek Bluffs to inspect and water the new trees. Whatever animal has been digging them up seems to have given up. All were undisturbed, but thirsty. The Tulip Tree had been dug up, however, so I re-planted it, put in more stakes around it and watered it. All the new trees, but two, along the strip from the trailer to the upper bluffs are now leafing out and looking healthy.

I then went down to the creek for two more jugs of water, then went over to check the deer. I did not cross the creek to look at it, but the hide is at last coming off. I returned to water the trees in the regeneration zone (RZ). The Ohio Buckeye looked a little stressed, its leaves beginning to fold up, so I watered it copiously. One or two trees had been dug up, so I re-planted them, watered them, etc. A deer had nipped most of the bud from two of the Red Oaks, but I watered them anyway, whispering, "Good Luck."

I went back down to the creek to sit for a while. I stared at the riffle in front of me, suddenly realizing that the gravel might not be the result of accumulation by the creek waters, but simply part of a deposit of till that crosses the creek there at right angles. I wondered if these gravel bars corresponded to the ones in the river. I heard the mystery bird (see previous entry) again. In vain I scanned the nearby trees with binoculars, only seeing one bird, a weird one at that. It was perched up on one of the hydro wires and through my binos it looked all black (facing me) with vertical yellow streaks on its fore-wings! A bit bigger than a Robin.

Just before waking Pat, I measured the corners of the trailer, following some advice from Harvey who suggested that we better get it up on blocks soon, before the wind shook it apart. The steel tongue at the front of the trailer is 5" off the ground and the two rear corners (steel frame) are both about 16" off the ground. Some time soon, when the trees are at last all "launched," we will put construction blocks under the rear corners, about 10" high, then use the trailer's screw-jack to tilt the back down onto the blocks, ultimately raising the tongue another 5" or so, then put another block under that, then release the screw-jack to take the weight off the wheels and distribute it evenly among the three support points.

After Pat had awakened and refreshed herself, we headed down Edgar's Road to the river. Along the way, Pat checked a nest in a bush by the road while I watered the trees there (and of course re-planted a few). Along the road we found some White Violets (P) and spotted two Catbirds and a Robin. We did not spend much time at the landing. I had little water left but shared a pittance with the Cedars and two Witch Hazels. I will be back with Nic to-morrow, so I will water more heavily then.

We made our way across the River Bluffs. By the RSF "entrance," Pat spotted a curious sedge that resembled *C. aquatilis*. I collected a specimen for her to examine later. The fully developed plant had four female parts (whitish) below, each about 2" long, and one male part (brownish) above. Inside the RSF, Pat found a Yellow Currant (P). A little later, we spotted what one of the tourists had described as a "half-acre of Virginia Bluebells," (P) more like a quarter-acre.

We had a brief rest at the first bench. Looking around, I realized that all the maples were almost fully out, the ashes less than half way, the other trees only beginning. Two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, males, had an altercation in a tree overhead and flew off to settle the argument elsewhere. We continued on, collecting a third sedge (?), finding several large patches of Trilliums (P), then grinding on up to the Hogsback where we collected what we thought Muriel Andreae might have meant by the "Mermaid Plant" during last week's tour, an apparently rare item. Pat gathered some specimens from a rather large patch of the stuff. We made our way slowly back to the trailer, the sun slowly sinking in the west. We realized with a shock that it was already 7 pm, high time to leave.

We returned to the trailer, locked up and drove off with many a backward glance.