

Newport Forest

May 17 2001

2:00 - 7:30 pm

Weather: cloudy, no breeze, 20 C

Purpose: to prepare the site for the West Elgin Nature Club tour.

Participants: Pat, Kee and Nic

We dropped Pat at Eva's, staying long enough only to dig up several small Elderberry bushes to plant on the property. Nic and I then went over to the forest, where we planted the Elderberries on the "terrace" where we had earlier planted the TT and the HL. The TT appeared to be dead, but the HL was leafing out nicely. We watered the trees along the bluff, then the ones in the lower meadow, but we had no time to do more watering than this. Returning from the bluffs, Nic spied a small snake and captured it for me to examine. (P) It looked like a young Garter Snake, but I made a drawing of the scale pattern on the back and sides, noting the colour of the belly as well. (Unfortunately, I did not think to count the rows of scales above the ventral in order to determine if it was a Garter or Ribbon Snake. I did not even think to check the thinness of the tail. However, the small size of the snake, about 11 inches, as well as the checkerboard pattern immediately adjacent to the medial/dorsal (light) stripe more closely resembles the Eastern Ribbon than the Eastern Garter Snake. We need another specimen -- as well as the herptile field guide.)

During our initial stay on the property, Nic spotted two GBHs that I missed altogether. We returned to Eva's to pick up Pat, then drove her down to the trailer. Presently, Ms Shirley Stocking showed up with her two sons, Aaron and Caleb. Nic and I took the brothers up to the Hogsback to do some quick watering before the tour would begin. We tried Caleb out with the brush-hook on every patch of Garlic Mustard we could find. At the top, we discovered that most of the newly planted trees, at least in the west end of the Hb, had been pulled up. We half-heartedly replanted a few, but abandoned the rest to their fate. (If only it would rain soon.)

back at the trailer, we agreed that we would give Caleb a try. As soon as the Stockings had left, we headed up to Nina's for a preliminary "lunch" to get our energy up for the tour. We had barely finished when people began to collect by Edgar's garage. The tour was on. The sun was beginning to peep through the clouds and a glorious evening was in progress. (See next report for details of tour and what was found.)