

Newport Forest

June 14 2001

4:00 - 8:30 pm

**Weather:** sunny, hot 30C+, humid. no breeze

**Purpose:** to drive Eva Newport home, meet with Darren on property and to carry out a brief environmental scan

**Participants:** Kee, Pat, then (later) Darren and Stephen

We dropped Eva Newport off in Wardsville after a very pleasant visit she paid to us in our London home. We proceeded directly to the property and parked behind the trailer. Pat, who was tired, retired to the trailer, while I walked down to the creek twice, carrying a trestle and its cradle on separate trips. The creek is nicely down now and easily fordable at either of the two rapids. I went over to the chip pile and raked the top layer towards the edges to expose the wet chips to the air. They were still wet from recent rains! On top of the chip pile was a remarkable growth of fungus, with a buff-brown coating and chrome yellow spores just under this skin. Beneath the spores was a heavy dark material which, I suddenly realized, was not necessarily the fungal body, but the substrate. Feces? Vomit? I hate these mysteries! What would an animal be doing having a dump on top of our chip pile? I spotted a Tiger Swallowtail flying along the edge of Harvey's Bean Field (now a capitalized locale name).

While Pat slept, I walked slowly up the creek bluffs, accompanied by a virtuoso Rose-breasted Grosbeak. A good way to scan for new trees is to name the trees you see as you go, stopping at any tree you are not entirely sure about. I did this, walking slowly along the road. I did not write the trees down but recall the lower (northern) bluffs were dominated by Black Maple, Red and White Oak, with one or two Hackberrys and several Hawthorns, including at least two Cockspur Hawthorns. Further up the bluffs, the trees became more spread out, the Hawthorns bushier. But near the top I ran into what I at first thought were three White Oaks, only to realize, after I had collected the acorns, that these were Bur Oaks.

I sat to rest for a while on the open bluffs, noting a distant tree with a peculiar, clumped structure to its leaves. Then I spotted the same tree much closer and smaller, just a few metres below me. I scrambled down to collect a sample. It was an ash (S) of some kind, but rather unlike the White Ash we normally see in a number of respects. The leaves were thicker and waxier, with a more finely toothed margin. It was not a Black Ash, so I wondered if it might be either a Red or Green Ash, two species of Ash that I have yet to see (anywhere).

My reverie was interrupted by a call on the walkie-talkie. It was Darren coming along the Beattie Line, so I began to walk back to the trailer, Darren showing up behind me just as I arrived. He had brought a friend with him, Stephen Logan, who is very interested in nature. I got Darren to help me carry the trestle and cradle across the creek, placing the ensemble in approximate position on the far bank. We then retired to the trailer to drink some liquids before heading out into the heat again. (Pat had found it impossible to sleep, after all.) At this point a blur of wings just outside the front window caught our attention: a Ruby-throated Hummingbird!

We set out for the river along Edgar's Trail, noting that Edgar himself had recently mowed it. We saw a Mourning Cloak in the BCF, as well as two Orchard Orioles and a Baltimore. Pat stopped to examine a Moonseed Vine with Darren. At the river, Stephen saw a Spotted Sandpiper pecking along the shoreline and I spotted some fish-wakes moving upstream about 3 metres off shore. These turned out to be catfish (probably) surface feeding in the debris-stream (marked by thin foam islands). Every now and then we could see their mouths gape to take in something larger, but we were never quick enough to see the whiskers through our binos. A Tree Swallow darted and swooped over the river. We walked to nearly the end of the promenade and then back. It was nearly seven 'o clock and Pat had a date with Edgar, who had promised to take Pat to see the beavers in Betty Purcell's pond.

I said goodbye to Darren and Stephen, who drove Pat up to the Hurdles. I stayed behind to close up, but when I got up to the road, Pat and Edgar had not yet left, so I joined them. Edgar drove us to the pond, where he laboured to open a culvert the beavers had plugged, a cycle repeated every 24 hours for the last month! We saw some tails slap at the far end, but nothing closer.

**Species** seen/heard:

Baltimore Oriole; Orchard Oriole; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Spotted Sandpiper; Tree Swallow;  
Mourning Cloak; Tiger Swallowtail  
Beavers (?) Channel Cats (?)