Newport Forest   June 23 2001   1:05 - 5:30 pm

Weather: sunny, 24C, wind from W light
Purpose: to erect new bridge
Participants: Kee, Nic, Edgar, Darren, Bob, Robbie Newport et al.

It took remarkably little time, once everyone had assembled by 1:30, for Edgar to haul the two structural steel pipes (one of which weighed about 535 lbs) into position at the top of the creek bluffs just above the point where the bridge trestles were already in place. We hauled the two pipes (with a little nudge from the tractor) down the slopes in teams of two, Darren, Nick & co. taking the first one, Robbie and I the second one.

Once the pip[es were in place at the bank, Darren and Bob (from Windsor) took the pipes as they were played out from the near bank and hauled them over to the far trestle, where they placed them on edge in the cradles. They fit perfectly. I then jumped into the creek, finding it over my knees in the near channel, then waded out to midstream to make sure the midstream trestle got adjusted properly. I slipped, however, and went up to my waist in a "pool" just below the debris island that had built the sediment bar (on which we were placing the midstream trestle).

By this time Eva had arrived with her two great grandchildren, Jordan and Carrissa, who watched in awe. Darren held the pipe above the cradle so that I could extend the downstream leg to an appropriate height. I was glad I had made the legs adjustable, because after adjusting it, the bar of the trestle was perfectly level and the cradle (which fits into the bar) was also, consequently, level.

Nic retired to the trailer to complete the decking modules which he hadn't quite finished the night before. We placed the six modules that were already available, finding that they tamped down into position with very little trouble. Next, I brought the ramp for the far end down from the trailer (aided by little Jordan) and everyone stood around for a while, more or less admiring their handiwork. Robbie looked at the bridge and smiled: "Not bad for a city slicker." "Wow," I said to Eva. "Did I just hear a compliment?" "You did," she said. "It's a nice-looking bridge."

Edgar then took his tractor home, the rest of us retiring to the river while poor Nic still pounded away at the last module). I had told Darren that he and Robert could fish all they wanted, considering what a big help they had been. Robbie

walked the beach with Carrissa while I put the minnow trap in some shallow water for Jordan's amusement. (Jordan and Carrissa had never seen anyone fishing before. Eva enjoyed everything.

Rob found a large Pigtoe clam, which I asked him for. Then Jordan and Carrissa wanted clams of their own, so Rob collected some for them. Before long, Darren and Bob were pulling a succession of fish from the river, placing them in a temporary stone pen so the children could look at them. They had apparently never seen anyone fish before! I checked the minnow trap, showing them two minnows which had blundered into it.

I went back to the trailer with Eva, Robbie and the kids and bid them adieu. Nic now had the last module ready, so we went down and placed it. The bridge was now completely decked except for about two feet right over the far trestle cradle. The ramp worked fine. Everything worked fine. It was, I thought, a sort of miracle, considering how little construction experience I'd had.

Nic and I then went back to the river to join Darren and Bob. They were throwing away everything they caught. However, I had a chance to photograph several catfish (young Channel Cats (P)) and what Darren called a Sheepshead (P), a very large, silver fish with a very deep body. Pat looked this name up for me and said it was the same species as the Freshwater Drum. I checked the picture of this fish in my Peterson Guide and it did, indeed, strongly resemble the fish I had photographed.

We adjourned after five for a celebration dinner on the insipid food of the Gold Key restaurant.

New Species:

Freshwater Drum (Sheepshead)	*Aplodinotus grunniens*	TR
Channel Catfish	*Ictalurus punctatus*	TR