

Newport Forest

June 28 2001

2:00 - 5:15 pm

Weather: sunny, hot 31C, humid, no breeze

Purpose: maintenance visit

Participants: Kee, Nic

When we first arrived, we went down to check the bridge. Still there! We filled two jugs with water, then repaired to the van to make a wooden tray for one of the salt licks. We placed the block (blue salt) in the tray and carried it, with the water, to the upper creek bluffs, watering as we went. I am amazed that the little Tulip Tree and the KC are still apparently thriving, both in the shade. We placed the salt lick right next to the gallery forest at the head of the bluff, but far enough into the open that deer using it might be spotted.

We then went to the wood chip pile, filling 7 bags. We set six aside near the trailer and took the remaining one down to the bridge for later trail-making. In the course of filling one of the bags, I noticed that my shovel had the tail of a snake sticking out from the chips. We carried the shovel gently to the trailer where my field pack (and camera) was, extracted the snake from the chips and photographed it twice from two different angles. I also wrote a brief description of the snake: 10-12" long, blue eyes (!), cream/yellow belly, brownish olive gray dorsum with two rows of rather small black dots. The scales were smooth and, as far as I recall, without keels.

We went down to the bridge, recarved the steps at the far end, set in boards and pegged in three of them for stability. We then went down the trail to the end where we took turns stripping vegetation and chipping. We only completed another ten metres, as time was running short.

New species:

(Eastern) Smooth Earth Snake *Virginia valeriae valeriae* ET/LM

Note: If this identification is correct, this would be the first Canadian record for this snake. We must therefore have the ID confirmed. Hopefully this can be done on the basis of photographs alone. The closest known populations of this species occur at the SE corner of Lake Erie.

Note: Sept 2012: It was probably a Brown Snake