

Newport Forest

September 25 2001

1:30 - 5:00 pm

Weather: prec: 15 mm, LM 9 C, FCF 7 C, cloudy, lt rn, wnd gsting from SW

Purpose: public relations plus visit to property

Participants: Kee

To-day I had been scheduled to meet Janice Smith, a malacologist from the CCIW, plus Bob Bailey whom i have been trying to get down to Newport since we bought the place. Unfortunately, this was not to be, owing to the inclement weather. I drove down anyway.

In Wardsville, I decided that this might be an ideal time to meet with someone from the Sitler family, so I drove down the Longwoods about one click where I found the Sitler mailbox. The corner lot had a small house the occupant of which told me that the land all around the lot belonged to the Sitler family, but they didn't live there -- only old Delbert Sitler, who kept a camp down by the river. So I drove down an old track through a meadow and past a field until the van was enclosed in a gloomy old riverside wood.

There, in an almost park-like setting, was a small cabin which had been constructed out of two sheds placed end to end. After wandering around a few minutes, I heard a voice behind me. An old, somewhat squat man walked toward me with a limp. I introduced myself and he invited me into the cabin, explaining that he had just been visiting a call on nature when I drove in. He threw some wood in a rather eccentric homemade stove fashioned from a large-bore metal pipe, then settled down in a chair.

I explained that I was the new owner of the land across the river and he said, "Yeah. I heard about you." I asked him about his plans for his own property (although I never established that he was, indeed the owner). Did he like nature. "Sure," he said. "I like to fish and hunt." In fact, he was off the very next day to go Moose hunting north of Cochrane, Ontario.

We talked about his shack. He said that every scrap of wood in it had been salvaged. He never paid a penny for any of it, a point that gave him some pride. The insulation had been salvaged from the hospital at Newbury when they replaced some of their insulation a few years ago.

I asked him about any interesting animals he might have seen over the years. Badgers: "Yeah I've heard of them being around. Never saw any."

Cougars: “There was this big flap a few years back when everybody was seeing one. I never did” Mink and Muskrat: “They’re around.” Foxes, Coyotes, Wolves: “Yep. They’re around.” What about wolves. “They’re either wolves or real big dogs.” On the subject of rabbits, he described the rabbit drives of years ago, when farmers would line up and walk across concessions to “clean them out.” Jacks and Cottontails.

Fishing in the river had always been one of Delbert’s great joys. Before leaving him, I asked him to name all the fish he could think of catching or seeing caught in the Thames, “There’s supposed to be 93 types of fish in the river. I saw this poster from the Thames Conservation people.” The list below is based on Delbert’s recall. Pike are rarely seen in the river, but they are occasionally caught. Perch are also rather uncommon. The three small basses near the end of the list are most common around the mouth of Fleming Creek.

Official Common Name	Delbert’s Name	Scientific Name
Bluegill	Bluegill	<i>Lepomis macrochirus</i>
Black Crappie	Dark Crappie	<i>Pomoxis nigromaculatus</i>
White Crappie	Light Crappie	<i>Pomoxis annularis</i>
White Sucker	Sucker	<i>Catostomus commersoni</i>
Black Sucker		???
Silver Redhorse	(Redfin) Mullet	<i>Moxostoma anisurum</i>
Walleye	Pickrel	<i>Stizistedion vitreum</i>
Northern Pike	Pike	<i>Esox lucius</i>
Yellow Perch	Perch	<i>Perca flavescens</i>
Common Carp	Carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>
Yellow Bullhead	Yellow Cat	<i>Ameiurus natalis</i>
Black Bullhead	Black Cat	<i>Ameiurus melas</i>
Channel Catfish	Channel Cat	<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>
Rainbow Trout	Rainbow	<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>
Coho Salmon	Coho	<i>Oncorhynchus kisutch</i>
Black Bass	Black Bass	<i>Ambloplites rupestris</i>
Silver Bass	Silver Bass	???
Rock Bass	Rock Bass	<i>Ambloplites rupestris</i>
Freshwater Drum	Sheephead	<i>Aplodinotus grunniens</i>