

Newport Forest

May 8 2002

2:00 - 6:30 pm

Weather: precip. 7 mm; overcast, winds lt. SE; LM 15 (12) C; FCF 12 C

Purpose: to put the bridge up for the season

Participants: Kee and Nic

Here's how to re-install the bridge: First, inspect for damage and repair it. This year, the pegs that hold the near cradle in place were bent out of place and two of them driven sideways by the force of the big ash log that came down the creek. We also had to nail a new shoe to the centre trestle and repair the trestle keepers (which also anchor the gang plank) on the far side. Generally, if a peg or stake has gone awry, pull it up, refill the hole to at least half its depth and re-drive the peg or stake.

When the nearside cradle was installed on its pegs, we moved the heavy steel pipes into approximate position. (In a "normal" winter, when no large logs come down with the thaw, the pipes will already be in place.) We then crossed to the other side, repaired the trestle anchors and resealed the trestle on the newly laid sediment to make it both level and parallel to the far cradle. Placing the cradle over the trestle, we next moved the pipes up one at a time to rest on or in the cradle slots.

We went up the hill to bring down the first few deck slabs. We installed the first as a "keeper" for the pipes, then placed one more, recrossed the creek and seated the pipes in final position on the farside cradle. Then we installed the gang plank and carried the midstream trestle out under the pipes. To do this I switched from rubber boats to hip waders. We hammered the trestle near the top to slide it slowly under the pipes. As the trestle became more and more vertical, it found the pipes continually heavier, until the trestle moved very little with each blow. Nic then lifted the pipes as well as he could to relieve the strain on the trestle, while I continued to drive with the maul.

With the midstream trestle in place, hammered lightly until the level read vertical, we could install the decking slabs, one at a time. Those in the center of the span were difficult to place because one of the pipes has a pronounced bend in it and the pipes must be pried apart with a 2x4 of the right length, while the other worker tramps the slab into place using his/her bodily weight.

I was amazed that by 5 pm, we had the bridge entirely re-erected and there was still ample time to walk the Fleming Creek Trail -- which we did.

At about the 300 m mark, where the glade opens to the right in the upstream direction, Nic drew my attention to a Great Blue Heron flapping upstream, alarmed by our presence. Further on, in the old thorn scrub not far from Harvey's property, the Garlic Mustard grows in more profusion than anywhere else in the entire local forest complex. Just between two such patches, Nic spotted something curious that got him trotting off into the thorn scrub about 20 m off the trail. "There's something here," was all he said, so I went over. Large, white eggs, all of them smashed, half-shells only remaining, littered the ground over highly disturbed soil. Later at home, Pat identified the eggs as those of a Wild Turkey with high probability. Raccoons?

The rest of the walk was uneventful except for the discovery of two drawbacks in the present course of the Fleming Creek Trail. The first is that the trail passes right through the middle of an immense patch of May Apples in the middle of Harvey's Woods (Old Creek Forest). The second is that the trail passes through the middle of a large, deep slough (ephemeral) right at the base of Tower Hill, deep in Harvey's Woods.

We returned to the trailer, bringing up all the tools, and took a break. After the break, Nic went up to check on Lotor, while I inspected the trees in the regeneration zone. A few show no signs of breaking bud yet, but most are out or coming. The recent spell of cold weather has delayed growth to the point where I still cannot always be sure whether a tree's lack of progress is due to setback or cold nights. Nic called from the HB to say that Lotor was home. He left some DBs.

Note: on recrossing the creek on one occasion, Nic noted the remains of a probable sucker, a mature individual, judging from the intestines that remained. A fragment of gill-racker also remained. Raccoons?