

Newport Forest

April 2 2003

2:15 - 5:30 pm

Weather: sunny/hazy; calm; LM 18 C; FCF 16 C

Purpose: maintenance, tree-planting

Participants: Kee and Nic

As soon as we parked the van, we became aware of a cacophony of bird calls. A Chipmunk scampered around under the Black Maple and A Red-belly began to warble for his lunch. Nic filled the feeders while I repaired the weather station, tightening the nuts that held the station to the pole and installing a new rain gauge.

Our first job was to retrieve various objects from the gradually subsiding spring (mini-)flood, including the deer feeder which had washed off the high bluffs where, a few weeks ago, I was quite sure the floodwaters would not reach it. To the sound of a pair of Redtail Hawks calling back and forth, Nic crossed Fleming Creek at the "Isthmus," spanned by the ash log, over to Eva's Woods. About 50 m upstream from that point we found the deer feeder half-immersed in flotsam. With some difficulty, Nic retrieved it by means of a long stick. Another 200 m upstream was the midstream trestle, lying against the bank, one leg broken and twisted, the other missing altogether. Nic put a rope on it and hauled it up to the bank where it will presumably be safe until we can cross the creek in rubber boots. The creek is now well within its banks, but still about a foot too deep to wade across at the upper rapids. Nic returned by the same route. "What's that up in the tree behind you?" Nic turned and shouted back that it was a very large stick-and-twig nest. Perhaps it was constructed by the Redtails.

After a short break at the trailer we began the second task of our visit. We cut 12 disks for tree-planting in two weeks time. Every visit we will cut as many or more. Nic spotted a Meadow Vole running across the ground in the Triangle. We cut a new disk wherever we saw a sapling that had been completely girdled, effectively replacing it. We have lost about 10 saplings to mice and rabbits.

We spent the short remaining time down at the river, watching and listening for birds, adding another half dozen to our steadily growing list. Two more species rounded out the total. Returning along Edgar's Trail, I distinctly heard the Eastern Towhee calling and just a little later, we both watched a flight of about 50 Tundra Swans crossing directly over the LM, heading west, fluting as they went.

One thing was missing: no frog chorus. Blind Creek Forest is dry.

Birds: (18 spp.)

American Crow (1 HW); American Robin (1 Tr, 1 TR); Black-capped Chickadee (1 WF); Blue Jay (1 Tr); Brown-headed Cowbird (pair Tr); Common Merganser (?) (2 pairs FC); Downy Woodpecker (pair Tr); Eastern Towhee (1 BCF); Mourning Dove (1 FCF); Northern Cardinal (1 FCF, 3 TR); Red-bellied Woodpecker (pair Tr); Red-tailed Hawks (pair EW); Red-winged Blackbird (1 TR); Slate-coloured Junco (2 Tr); Song Sparrow (2 LM); Tundra Swans (50+ LM); Turkey Vulture (1 TR); White-breasted Nuthatch (1 Tr)