

Newport Forest

June 29 2003

2:20 - 12:00 pm

Weather: prec. 1 mm; sun/cloud; SSW < 25 km/h; LM 27 C; FCF 24 C

Purpose: two-day stay

Participants: Pat and Kee

After unloading the van into the trailer, I toured both cores, tramping around each tree I came upon to keep the adjacent meadow plants from crowding them. About five trees that I had thought were dead have resprouted from the base. As I tramped around I noticed that all the Ninebark flowers were red, not white. Apparently they change colour at this time of the season.

We walked down to the river and sat for a while, hoping to see the Otter (or whatever it was) that Pat saw during the McGauley visit. Several Bank Swallows plied their trade over the water. We walked to the RSf along the Thames shore, then back to ET along the new trail, now a delight to walk.

As dusk settled in we saw enormous thunderheads catching the last rays of the sun toward London (P). Later we would learn that London got nearly an inch of rain. As the sky darkened, more and more fireflies came out until the meadow and the bushes all around us were dancing with little winking lights. Hundreds, at a guess. The stars were brilliant. A Grey Tree Frog called from Blind Creek.

I sat having a coffee in the semidark, when I heard a familiar crunching noise to my left. A raccoon had come to eat our DBs. Junior? We shone a flashlight on the animal. It had a spare frame and large eyes. Female, I thought. A female with young, apparently, come to test the waters before bringing her charges out for their forage. Presently, we heard a kit whining near the base of the Shagbark Hickory near the trailer. I ran over with the flashlight, but missed nabbing the little creature, as it was already up the bark and just out of reach.

The raccoon that first visited us surprised me by showing very little fear of us, eating her DBs just two metres away from my shoes. I had been surprised a week earlier how the young Chipmunk also grabbed the peanut from near my feet last week, not to mention the male Rose-breasted Grosbeak that followed us around recently. Are the animals getting used to us? Is it a good thing if they are?

Newport Forest

June 30 2003

12:01 am - 5:30 pm

Weather: prec. 0 mm; sun/cloud; calm; LM 29 C; FCF 24 C

Purpose: two-day stay

Participants: Pat and Kee

After midnight, a new set of raccoons came in or else the mother raccoon was joined by her sister. There was some growling and this time, when I went out to the Hickory, where we could still occasionally hear the baby, I was greeted by a low warning growl.

A hundred calling birds marked the onset of morning but for some reason we didn't get up. The sight of Eva Newport just outside the trailer window brought us sharply awake, however, at 10:00 am. We bestirred ourselves, shamefaced, and made coffee for her. After breakfast, we sat down on the bridge. An interesting parallel we noticed between the amber Jewelwings that perched on leaves overhanging the creek, darting out every now and then to snatch a small fly, then return to the perch. A Wood Pewee practiced exactly the same art from a tree branch overhead.

I watched for minnows from the bridge, finally being rewarded by a school of about five in the shallows. the creek is depauperate! A GBH had been wading, however. The algae still hasn't come back after the annual dose of pre-emergence spray. The water is gradually clarifying, however.

This being something of a vacation, we relaxed in the "coffee nook." i noticed that every dead tree (about ten) visible from that spot was a White Elm. A new one is now packing it in along the edge of HBF.

After lunch we went up to the TS, where Pat helped me weed Bed #2, pulling tough daisies out by their roots. I dug another quarter section, turned it and added sand and topsoil. From that point on, I watered trees in the the N and S cores, while Pat looked around for new plants. she found a Bristly Greenbriar right beside the trailer. I watered 25 trees in the south core and 39 trees in the north core, that being a majority of the still-living trees in both cases. It took two tank-filling trips to do that much watering. the new drought cans work very well, it taking only a fraction of time to fill them. They drain in about a minute.

Pat worked at the bench for a while, finally giving up in frustration.

We decided that this was the right time for a paddle down the Thames, so i took the canoe down to the RL, where we put in. A mother duck saw us coming and herded her young under some overhanging branches. We paddled down the north

shore, passing the spot where Pat had seen the noisy animal last week, but no sign of it now. We continued to Sitler's Spit, an embayment large enough to show up on top maps, then deeked around it and across the river to a slower current. We passed the enormous Blue Ash and explored a little further downstream before deciding to avoid the rapids ahead of us by returning to home base.

We fought our way back up the river to the R1 and beyond, to the mouth of FC. There, amid the fallen trees and driftwood, Pat saw a Great Blue Heron picking its way through the branches. Beautiful sight and close-up!

Dragonflies: Common Whitetail (m+f Tr); Eastern Amberwing (? RL); Ebony Jewelwing (FC)

Butterflies: Cabbage White (LM); European Skipper (RL); Little Wood Satyr (Tr); Meadow Fritillary (RL); Pearl Crescent (RL); Question Mark (RL); Red-spotted Purple (RL); Summer Azure (LM) (also sev., on Hop Tree)

Birds: American Crow (LM); American Goldfinch (UM/Rd); American Robin (RL); Black-capped Chickadee (RL); Blue Jay (Tr); Cedar Waxwing (TR); Eastern Towhee (FCF/LM); Eastern Wood Peewee (FC); Great Blue Heron (RL); Indigo Bunting (ET/LM); Killdeer (RL); Northern Cardinal (Tr); Red-bellied Woodpecker (1m Tr); Ruffed Grouse (RSF/TR); Song Sparrow (LM); Wood Duck (1f TR); Yellow-shafted Flicker (FCF/UM); Yellow Warbler (RL)

Phenology: Ninebark flowers turning from white to red; wild strawberries almost ripe. (red but not yet very sweet); Michigan Lilies in flower; first fireflies seen this year

New species:

Bristly Greenbriar *Smilax tamnoides* Tr