

Newport Forest

May 9 2004

1:00 - 8:20 pm

Weather: prec. 0 mm; SE < 10 kmh; overcast; LM 9 C; FCF 9 C

Purpose: to conduct McIlwraith tour

Participants: Kee, Pat

Guests: Anita Caveney, David & Winifred Wake

The weather, which had been described by locals as “raw” turned much nicer by the time we arrived. We noticed a drop in the rainfall as we passed Melbourne and we have finally decided to dub the change to milder conditions that we so often encounter when passing through that town the “Melbourne Thermocline.” Conditions on the property remain dry and it has been about 2 weeks since our last significant rainfall.

We cleaned up camp and prepared for something less than an onslaught of guests. Of course, the above-named showed up, perhaps from a sense of duty. Good thing that they were all good birders because it turned out to be a stellar bird day, with two new records.

As we waited for 2:00 pm, I noticed what I thought was an interesting flower fly whose main characters I recorded. However, it turned out to be a Bee Fly (Bombylidae) - with a very long proboscis. (See drawing in field notes and see “new species.” below.)

We took the Thames river Trail, stopping about every 10 meters or so to watch new birds that someone had noticed. There were quite a few in the blind Creek area along Edgar’s Trail. Another hot spot was the river bluffs graduating into the RSF. We diverted twice, once to see the Virginia bluebells, which are peaking now, and the new “sandbar” that we found several weeks ago.

Back at the trailer we had a light lunch and compared notes. After our guests had left, I donned my waders and went into the BCf to collect fairy shrimp in the vernal ponds. I got 3 or 4 species, including a frequent, very large brown Fairy Shrimp - but no pink ones. I was amazed to see a great many very young crayfish (1 cm or less) inhabiting these pond bottoms, possibly larvae of burrowing crayfish during their vagrant stage. While I collected, Pat had a stunning bird observation back at the trailer: A Redheaded Woodpecker! This came just as she was feeling somewhat despondent over the paucity of birds she had contributed to the day’s list.

Birds: (38)

American Crow (LM); American Robin (Tr); Belted Kingfisher (FC/E); Baltimore Oriole (LM)/BCF); Black-capped Chickadee (UM); Blue-headed Vireo (ET/BC); Blue Jay (Tr); Blue-winged Warbler (RSF); Brown-headed Cowbird (HBF); Catbird (ET/BCF); Common Yellowthroat (ET/BCF); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Eastern Bluebird (UM); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Field Sparrow (UM); Grackle (BCF); Great Blue Heron (LM); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF); House Sparrow (HP); Meadowlark (UM); Mourning Dove (RB); Northern Cardinal (ET/BCF); Northern Flicker (UM); Northern Rough-winged Swallow (UM); Ovenbird (HB/RSF); Palm Warbler (ET/BC); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (HB/RSF); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (ET/BC); Song Sparrow (UM); Swamp Sparrow (BCF); Tree Swallow (UM); Turkey Vulture (HB); White-breasted Nuthatch (ET); Wood Thrush (ET/BCF); Yellow Warbler (ET/BC);

New species:

Large Bee Fly	<i>Bombylius</i> sp.	Tr KD
Blue-headed Vireo	<i>Vireo solitarius</i>	ET/BC DW
Palm Warbler	<i>Dendroica palmarum</i>	ET/BC DW
Redheaded Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	Tr PD

Phenology:

Vernal ponds still full; Black Maple leaf buds breaking; White Elm leaves quarter size; Tulip Tree first leaves 1 cm; migrant warblers peaking