

Newport Forest

June 9 2004

2:10 - 8:30 pm

**Weather:** prec. 10 mm\*; sun/cloud; SW < 15; LM 30 C; FCF 28 C

**Purpose:** to get water tank filled and check trees

**Participants:** Kee

I stopped at the tree station to do a little weeding while waiting for the water truck. The soil had gotten so hard, I had to chop at the weeds with a hatchet! Harvey came by to check if his field had been planted (corn this year) and came back presently to say that it had. We chatted for a while, then I went down to the trailer to check the saplings. The soil had begun to dry out, but the trees all seemed fine. I noticed two more that I thought were dead resprouting from the base. I imagine the survival rate is now at least 70% and probably higher. All that watering may finally be paying off.

In the middle of the inspection I heard the engine and air brakes of the water truck, so I dropped everything and drove up to the UM, where I found Jim Longdough filling the tank from a truck so large I couldn't even see the tank. He put in 1000 gal. The tank seams all held, so the freezing damage seems to have been confined to the valve stem and nowhere else.

I was about to return to the LM, when i noticed a dirty red cloud looming from the west - a most peculiar and somewhat frightening colour. Before long a wind came up and I got into the van and drove out the gate to park on the road. The wind just got stronger and stronger, sometimes coming in gusts of over 100 km/hr (at least) that started to lift the van off its wheels on one side. This was really scary, so I backed the van into Hurdle's driveway to face into the wind. By then it had become what meteorologists call a "straight-line wind," tearing branches off trees in the East Ravine and sending them flying, parallel to the ground, right over Hurdle's property. I began to fear for some of the older trees down on the property. Then came the rain, driving and fierce, even as the wind began to abate. It rained heavily for about ten minutes but the wind had now dropped to the point where I could reenter the property and head back down to the trailer.

I became somewhat soaked standing outside, so I retreated into the trailer until the rain had nearly stopped. I went down to the creek to check the TTs there. One has packed it in, killed by the flood. The other is sending out fresh shoots and leaves, so it may be alright.

By then it was time for supper and, since "Edgar had just mowed the road for the

new season, I invited him out for supper by way of thanks. We went to Thamesville, where we dined at the hotel. Over steaks, he told me once again about the Fairey Swordfish Project, which I committed to notes. (See last bottom of this report for “ethnography” (?))

I drove Edgar back home and spent another half hour on the property. I stood on the creek bluffs, comparing the progress of the gallery forest toward me (over time) with the rather barren appearance of the bluffs further upstream. It occurred to me that the bluffs were not in a steady state, after all, but were gradually reforesting on their own. Eventually, I thought, they might all be clothed in slope forest - as they are closer to the bridge.

**Birds:** (Not a good day for bird-watching!)

American Crow (Tr); Blue Jay (Tr); Common Grackle (UM - carrying food); Mourning Dove (HP); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Song Sparrow (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr)

\*this rain occurred later in the afternoon

The Fairey Swordfish Project: The Fairey Swordfish was a WWII torpedo plane that flew off carriers of the British Navy. One summer, Bob Spence, George DePuyt, and Lyle Mann got together to work on an old Fairey Swordfish that Bob had bought from a farmer near Tilsonburg who had, much earlier, purchased several Swordfish as war surplus scrap - for a song. Bob had noticed these aircraft “rotting away” in the farmer’s orchard and bought the best-preserved plane, occasionally cannibalizing some of the others for spare parts. Slowly, the reconstruction team, occasionally helped by Edgar, reassembled a complete aircraft. A seamstress in Glencoe made the covering fabric and helped the boys stitch it over the wings, tail, and fuselage.

Bob Spence, being something of a local aircraft impresario, had held airshows for several years on his farm (where he has a landing strip). Although the shows have been discontinued, Bob still has a collection of antique aircraft, including a Tiger-Moth, a Harvard Trainer, a Spitfire, and a Hawker Hurricane.