

Newport Forest

Saturday/Sunday May 7-8 2005

2:10 - 6:25 pm

Weather: 2 mm; clear; calm; LM 20 C; FCF 18 C

Purpose: two-day stay

Participants: Pat & Kee

Pat was overjoyed, when we arrived at the trailer, to discover that the Rose-breasted Grosbeaks had just arrived from Peru - none the worse for wear. We counted four males and a female, with others undoubtedly about. The woods were ringing with bird calls.

While I watered the trees, Pat noted birds, including some 5 or 6 cowbirds displaying to each other and chasing a lone female across the LM and back. I'm not sure why I was worried, several weeks ago, about a scarcity of Blue Jays. The air was filled with a variety of their calls. After I finished watering the gate trees, as well as the trees in the LM, Pat & I wondered how we have developed as ear-birders. I calculated that we could identify over 80 percent of the calls. (But who knows what a Turkey Vulture sounds like?)

Although we had heard no frog chorus all afternoon, the Spring Peepers started up around sunset and kept the chorus going until early dawn. (The overnight low was +1 C.) One of the sources for their chorus lay in the direction of the FCF, which must have an ephemeral pond or two to support that activity. We decided to look for it on the morrow. At sunset I went up to close the gate. The toads were trilling in the Hurdles' pond.

During the night, the mother raccoon came up from her tree to eat at the nook. Pat caught her in the flashlight beam several times. She also spotted one of the Southern Flying Squirrels on the old Black Maple tray feeder. Around 10:30, we heard a brief scuffle right beside the trailer. Judging from the snarls and accompanying whimpers, she had just driven a male away from her feeding area.

In the morning, we waded Fleming Creek at the lower rapids and explored the area from the bench at Eva's Hairpin right around to the other bench near Junior's Beach. Just beyond the latter point, I discovered a textbook slump of the creek bluff. It had slid about four metres down to the very shore, carrying all the grass & bushes with it. A smooth, slick "slide" of clay soil beneath the slumped mass revealed the mechanism of slippage. (P) I went looking for the vernal pond that the Spring Peepers had called from last night, but found nothing. I followed one of the old beds of Fleming Creek for a while and for the umpteenth time,

wondered if its history could be reconstructed from clues that were still available. I also ran across two earlier planting areas, noting that although the other young trees were either dead or dying, the Black Maples had all “taken.”

After a brief visit to Eva, we returned to the property to visit the HB. While Pat climbed directly up, I took the long way round in order to water the four trees by the river. Pat had been looking for the small meadow on one side of the HB. We could not recall the exact location. It would be prime Woodcock country, she thought. Along the way, she had been taking many pictures of wildflowers, including a new species she discovered that morning in the FCF. We found another new plant in one of the more “permanent” of the vernal ponds. (I

Butterflies:

Cabbage White; Eastern Comma; Mourning Cloak; Spring Azure

Birds: (30)

American Crow (FCF); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (GF); Bank Swallow (FCF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (Tr); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Canada Goose (TR); Chipping Sparrow (Tr); Common Flicker (HB); Common Grackle (GF); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Eastern Bluebird (UM); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Field Sparrow (UM); Great Horned Owl (EW); Hairy Woodpecker (Tr); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (Tr); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-winged Blackbird (ER); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Screech Owl (RSF); Song Sparrow (Tr); Tree Swallow (UM); Turkey Vulture (FCF); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); White-throated Sparrow (Tr); Wild Turkey (ER); Wood Thrush (BCF)

New species:

Cursed Crowfoot	<i>Ranunculus scleratus</i>	FCF PD
Great Water Dock	<i>Rumex</i> sp.	VPI PD

Phenology: first bee fly of spring; toad chorus beginning; Hop Trees, Black Walnut, and Kentucky Coffee Trees not leafing out yet.