

Newport Forest Sunday April 30 2006

12:35 - 5:30 pm

Weather: prec. 0mm; RH 35%; sn/hz; SE 10kmh; LM 21C; FCF 19C

Purpose: maintenance (bridges, etc.)

Participants: Steve, Rick, Kee, Will

When Will and I arrived, Steve and Rick had been there since about 9 am. They had successfully redecked the steel pipes, installed the far ramp - everything but the mid-trestle. I went down to the log bridge to see how they were coming along. They looked rather picturesque, huddled over the far end of the log bridge. Steve explained that the no-slip belt had worked perfectly - once they had cleared an ice-thrown Box Elder from the far end. The bridge is almost level again - serviceable in a word.

On the way back to the trailer, Rick mentioned that they had flushed a Ruffed Grouse down by the river that morning. Rick also reported a Rose-breasted Grosbeak from the same general locale. We struggled for a while with the mid-trestle, Steve deciding in the end to simply walk it into position, with much thumping from us.

At the nook I opened the lunch bag for general consumption while Rick told the story of a pet raccoon he'd once had called Cato. This animal, owing to a little too much meat in its diet, had turned very aggressive on its master, but only during random moments that neither coon nor master could predict. But it was most often after Rick came home from work that the tension would mount to unbearable levels. Was Cato under the bed? No. There'd be a different hiding place every time. Only as Rick was about to forget the raccoon altogether would he hear that sudden scramble of claws, the lamp upsetting, and a furry rocket attaching itself to his ankles. Jesus, that hurt!

We watched a trio of tree Swallows swoop and dart over the meadow nearly beside us. What had brought them from the UM? Wasps escaping from the trailer? (100s there) Also, a Cabbage White, a Mourning Cloak, and an Anglewing all flitted past the lunch scene.

We saw Steve and Rick off from the TS, where we succeeded in getting the pipe back out of the ditch, Steve thoughtfully inserting 2x4s under the pipe, so we could roll it back into the ditch with minimal effort, later.

I toured the LM zones, seeing little in the way of progress (not surprisingly). Will cut thorn trees for a while and then we set out on the TRT. The Virginia Bluebells are just a few days from full bloom. We cut another layer off the bitternut log "stepover" and retraced our path to save energy. We drove up to

the TS, where we stopped. Will clipped the grass and I fussed with the leaky valve. inside the TS, as we were about to depart, I found our old friend, an undoubted Phidippus audax, the Audacious Jumping Spider. Handsome thing in a dark hairy suit, square head, and white V on abdomen.

Birds: no bird report today (but see below), owing to very few being about, in general.

phenology: Ruffed Grouse flushed, first Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Garlic Mustard beginning to flower