

Newport Forest

Wednesday May 24 2006

2:36 - 6:00 pm

Weather: prec. 0mm; RH 37%; sn/hz; SW 0-10kmh*; LM 26C; FCF 24C

Purpose: to complete GM cut, etc.

Participants: Kee

I stopped at the TS to clip most of the grass inside the enclosure. I checked the water tank, as well, noting that it was still half full and that the leak had slowed considerably.

As I approached the trailer, a Wild Turkey tom fled into the GF from the road. I set up as usual, then relaxed in the nook to practice my ear-birding skills. I can get an increasing number of birds this way. A warbler high in the SH foiled me, however, and I had no binoculars. I noticed that ticks were again plentiful, two appearing on my clothing in the nook. (They must drop from the BM branches overhead.)

I inspected the trees in the NC & SC, noting frost damage (last night) to several TTs and WAs. Did the frost inhibit the KCs? Only two appeared to be budding today. I saw a Red-spotted Purple flitting around in the meadow.

I visited the GM plot, adding the missing corner stake and doing the second cut. I heard a Grey Tree Frog singing very loudly nearby from the direction of the creek. I noticed again today that a species of Galium was growing quite happily among the GM plants. They helped to hold the Galium up and it competes with them for space on an equal basis. Later Pat ID'd this as Cleavers (*G. aparine*).

After cutting two more Russian Olives in the LM, I installed the refill;ed propane tank on the trailer and closed up camp, intending to use my remaining time to check the WM ploughed strip for new trees.

Because we visit the west side of the property so infrequently, there is much to discover there. For example, I hadn't realized what a special place the East Ravine (ER) is. Lined with trees (mostly WA), the central basin is all grass and sedge hummocks with standing water between them. I found a raccoon carcass on the W side of the ravine as I ascended into the WM, taking the skull. Walking the ploughed strip for half its entire length, I found only two SM seedlings and one ABW seedling. (So much for the seed bank & so much for our sowing efforts.)

*From now on, I will give the range of (estimated) wind speeds, instead of the maximum only.

At this juncture I decided to check the wooded area beside the ploughed strip in order to see what trees might be expected to contribute seed to the strip. I was astonished, once I was well inside, to find myself looking down into a deep ravine (more like a valley) about 10 m deep, with a creek flowing along the bottom. At first I thought this was simply the tail end of Blind Creek, but a quick check of the map showed that it was simply an extension of the ravine a had crossed to enter the WM. The banks were steep and lined with quite grand-looking SHs, as well as SM, WA, BW, IW, BH, etc. Apparently the Scolytus infection had not reached this part of the property and one prays that it never will.

On the return I spotted a Viceroy flitting among the heavy growth of hawthorns that now choke the WM. It would be hopeless (and very expensive) to hire someone to cut the thorn trees here, so I began to think about a brush-cutter towed by a tractor. Does such equipment exist? If so, we could do a fall cut and clear the meadow for next year.

Birds: (23)

American Crow (FCF); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (EW); Blue Jay (Tr); Brown-headed Cowbird* (Tr); Common Grackle (UM); Common Yellowthroat (WM); Downy Woodpecker* (Tr); Eastern Towhee (FCF); Field Sparrow (LM/HL); Gray Catbird (EW); Great Crested Flycatcher (FCF); Mourning Dove (FCF); Northern Cardinal (WM); Northern Oriole (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow* (UM); Turkey Vulture* (WM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey* (ER/HL); Wood Thrush (BCF)

* the only birds I got by visual means alone. (22%)

Phenology: first field crickets calling