

Newport Forest

Monday May 29 2006

2:50 - 5:10 pm

Weather: prec. 0mm; RH 60%; cld/sn; calm; LM 34C; FCF 31C

Purpose: two-day stay

Participants: Pat & Kee

After feeding our procyonid charges and filling the bird trays, we set out for our expedition to explore the ravine that I glimpsed from the edge of the West Meadow during the last visit. On that occasion, I thought I was looking at the East Ravine. I assumed it changed course from northerly to westerly in order to end up parallel to the edge of the WM.

We drove to the TS, parked and walked over to the ER under sweltering temperatures. Near the UM, the bottom of the ravine is open and hummocky. As we descended, a distinct watercourse developed and the trees became larger, closing over the ravine: WE, WA, BW, and SM. We encountered many Ninebark (NB) bushes, as well. Although the ravine deepened, I could see none of the SHs I had seen in the ravine of the last visit. Instead, we encountered several giant Black Willows (BWi) and the ravine opened out into the BWi component of the BCF. What had happened to the ravine of my memory?

We followed the swamp west, crossing into the Janik property, where we stopped to rest on a log on the bank of the swamp to consider our options. I spotted a group of Netted Rhodotus sprouting from the log - only our second encounter with this species in 6 years. Exploring back to the east, I discovered a nearly concealed entrance to a large ravine - not the east ravine, but another. (GM has infested the swamp forest heavily, thanks to earlier cutting.)

The mosquitoes were somewhat annoying, but we schooled ourselves to patience and explored this ravine. There, above us on the slopes, were the SHs I had spotted last time. The ravine is a brand new one that we will call the Middle Ravine (MR). It parallels both the ER and WR and (come to think of it) had been there on our site map all along. So ended the Great Ravine Expedition. Pat was exhausted.

After supper and just before sunset, the big male raccoon with the limp came to feed on kibble. His leg is much better now. Previously, he had kept it entirely off the ground. Next, Nina arrived in a golf-cart to drive Pat up to the Hurdle residence. (This also had the effect of selling Pat on the idea of a golf-cart (make: EZ-GO) to get around on the property.) After our return from the Hurdles, a female raccoon (probably the sisters' mother) came for kibble, but the sisters were asleep.

Well after dark, we could hear Green Frogs calling occasionally from both the BCF and FC locales. At 1:30 am, I saw a SFS feeding on the hickory tray. A bit later, I caught a male Raccoon on the same feeder, possibly hunting for SFS.

The sisters dominated Pat's morning until she finally went to bed and I took over. I deployed about 20 drip-cans on the newly planted maples and oaks. Some of the trees have now put on nearly a foot of new growth. Could this be the banner year we've been waiting for?

Before waking Pat to leave the property, I collected one or two ants from each of three randomly selected mounds. Later, I could ID only to genus (*Formica*), but could not say whether they were *F. exsectoides* or *F. ulkei*.

Butterflies (woefully inadequate list):

Ringlet (UM); Monarch (LM); Giant swallowtail (Tr); Black Swallowtail (LM)

Birds: (36)

American Crow (ER); American Goldfinch (GF); American Robin (Tr); Black-capped Chickadee (BCF); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Canada Goose (FC); Common Grackle (ER); Common Flicker (BCF); Common Yellowthroat (BCF); Downy Woodpecker (FCF); Eastern Kingbird (GF); Eastern Towhee (FCBf); Eastern Wood Peewee (LM); Field Sparrow (HL); Gray Catbird (ER); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF); Great Blue Heron (FC); Hairy Woodpecker (Tr); House Wren (Tr); Indigo Bunting (BCF/W); Killdeer (LM); Mourning Dove (LM); Northern Cardinal (Tr); Northern Oriole (FCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Red-tailed Hawk (BCF); Red-winged Blackbird (ER); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Screech Owl (EW); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree-swallow (UM); Turkey Vulture (HL); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (BCF); Wood Thrush (FCF); Yellow Warbler (ER)

Phenology: mosquitoes plentiful, Ebony Jewelwings starting to appear.