

Newport Forest

Monday August 14 2006

2:40 - 6:30 pm

Weather: prec. 0mm; RH 95%; ovcst; S 0-15 kmh; LM 24C; FCF 23C

Purpose: two-day stay

Participants: Pat & Kee

Within five minutes of our arrival, the girls came “out” and devoured what we put out with as much urgency as enthusiasm. They hadn’t eaten much, apparently. Meanwhile, we were treated to a few drizzly showers that didn’t even show up in the rain gauge. Then the sky began to break up.

We set up a new mattress pad to give us better sleep and then walked to the RL. I lingered on the beach when Pat went back. Here was a line of rocks in a stratum between one clay stratum and another. Was this the source of all the rocks presently in the gravel bars? I tried to trace the rocky layer to the east, but it petered out and I could see rocks well above where this layer had been, scattered about the face of the bluff.

Vegetation presently on the beach is nicely grouped, with Indian Hemp growing in a sparse patch near the RL, then a long stretch with no vegetation, then a modest gravel bar with (mostly) Chairmaker’s Rush growing, along with a few miniature Eastern Cottonwoods, on it. Then little or no vegetation to the next gravel bar, which has a modest stand of Cottonwoods between 1’ and 2’ in height, as well as one or two Sandbar Willows. The pattern repeats itself two more times, with the Cottonwoods being greater in size and number on each bar. At the very end of the beach, beside the rapids, the river is no longer cutting bank and the RSF meets the river directly, with extensive grassy hummocks paving the way.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the beach Pat had discovered a private little copse in the eastern part of the BCF near the RL. Five Indigo Buntings, parent and fledglings, sat and sang in the copse.

After Supper, the girls remained active until after sunset, when Pat decided to take a short nap. I went up to close the gate after setting up the coon feeding patterns with the DB bait. Greylock, as is his habit, did not linger after his meal on the log. While the girls enjoyed some Ritz crackers on the deck, the sisters came into view, following my DB trail. They immediately looked in the direction of the sisters, noses pointed like hunting dogs. I could see that the sisters were distinguishable, one having a long vertical eye-stripe from the inside of the mask upward to cross the white brow entirely. The other sister had a stripe in the same position, but it did not extend even halfway across the brow. So, they are Long Stripe and Short Stripe, for now.

It was Long Stripe that came to the edge of the deck to inspect the kits and to hoof gently. The girls huffed nervously, but stayed where they were. After Long Stripe had passed, we heard a ruckus of yelps and growls, very short-lived, coming from the vicinity of the log. I snuck over with a flashlight, turned it on just past the log and there were three kits, all the same size as Thelma and Louise. These are almost certainly their siblings. An hour after that lot had vanished back into the forest, Short Stripe came to feed on some extra DBs I had thrown out. Two very large kits accompanied her - almost adult size. It seemed reasonable to assume that these were the same "advanced" kits we had seen about a month ago, feeling certain that they were *not* our girls siblings.

So we can reconstruct things as follows. Long Stripe was impregnated around January 29 and gave birth after the usual 63 days gestation to 6 kits on April 2. Their eyes opened at the usual time of three weeks after birth, April 23 on this occasion (following their abduction from the maternal nest). However, Short Stripe had bred a good month earlier, most likely in late December. Questions: Were the fathers different? Were they the same? Was Greylock involved?

[note: the weather was warm on Jan 28, according to our records. December remained quite cold until the 22nd, at the earliest. So Short Stripe likely bred some time on or after December 22nd. This would lead us to conclude that Short Stripe's litter is not more than 5 weeks and 3 days older than Thelma and Louise.

After the Raccoon excitement was over, I spent some quiet time in the trailer trying to identify a new moth that had flown in. I needed to pin the specimen to diagnose the species, however, and it wasn't until Tuesday night that I could identify it as an Armyworm moth. (See new species.) Overnight the low reached 14C. I spotted some Southern Flying Squirrels on the SH. I went to bed. The girls slept with us all night.

We had expected the Murrays to show up next day, but they never came. Pat and I took the girls down to the creek, where they dabbled in the rapids for a while, then slept on the log. (still tired!) We then walked down to the river, Thelma & Louise following. I tried to carry them to save their energy, but they insisted on walking. I took them down to the far end of the beach, where they suddenly bolted into the RSF. Since I had intended to walk the TRT with them (part of their landscape education), I went back to the RL and took the bluff trail into the RSF, hoping to link up with the sisters at some point. They appeared like magic as soon as I got into the RSF and whistled.

Dutifully, they followed me around the entire trail, galloping along behind me, with only occasional stops for a sniff or a scratch. When we got back to the trailer, we gave the sisters a large meal, hoping they would not try to go home with us. After playing around the log for a while, they went up the old Black Maple and went straight into the box to sleep! This was the first time we had seen them do this and they had apparently done it before. We broke camp quietly and departed.

Birds: (24)

American Crow (FCF); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (BCF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (BCF); Canada Goose (TR); Cedar Waxwing (TR); Common Flicker (BCF); Common Grackle (LM); Common Yellowthroat (GF); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Field Sparrow (LM/GF); Gray Catbird (RL); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF/LM); Indigo Bunting (RL/ET); Mourning Dove (Tr); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Red-tailed Hawk (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Spotted Sandpiper (TR); Tree Swallow (HL); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr)

New species:

Armyworm Moth	<i>Spodoptera dolichos</i>	Tr KD
“Striped Orb Weaver”*	<i>Tetragnatha [straminea]</i>	FC pd/KD

*This specimen had the typically elongated body of some Tetragnathids, the spider being a full cm long, the abdomen narrowing slightly toward the rear and decorated with two yellow stripes running along the dorsum and bordering a black medial stripe. The yellow stripes widen abruptly in the fore part of the abdomen. Tentative diagnosis as *T. straminea* is based on the shape of the abdomen and the description in Kaston (no image details).

Phenology: cicadas still calling, katydids still calling