

Newport Forest Friday September 21 2007 2:40 F - 6:45 pm S

weather: prc. 0 mm; RH 56%; BP 99.35kPa; sn/hz; SW 0-10 kmh; LM 32 C

purpose: two-day stay plus dedication ceremony

participants: Pat, Kee & a cast of thousands . . .

We arrived the day before the dedication ceremony, in which title to Newport Forest was officially passed to the Thames Talbot Land Trust. We wanted to be on site as the various participants showed up the next morning and afternoon.

When we arrived, we found that Chris George had done a great job of getting the marquee tent up, as well as a plains indian tipi, colourfully painted in black, white and red. (Later, there would be such a strong first nations presence on site that Nina Hurdle would voice the fear that we secretly planned to give the land back to the natives!)

The porta-potty was also in place.

At the trailer, we set up as usual and I went off to check the cameras. Cam#2 had taken 134 pictures, a sure sign that it as being triggered by blowing vegetation. (another set of batteries worn out for nothing. . .) As I approached the camera (now in the Copse), I startled a pair of Wild Turkeys that took off with the usual crashing noise as their wings shattered dead branches.

We went up to the water tank, where Pat watered trees in the nursery and I loaded up on water to complete the job begun on the last visit. At this point, Chris George and his assistant, Ben Ninham, arrived in a pickup truck loaded with chairs. We got together later in the Nook only to discover the Chris & Ben had recently got religion (a strange blend of Christianity and native traditions), busying themselves by explaining how theirs was the only true path. We were rescued by Steve, who drove up in his truck (looking quite spiffy in cowboy hat, boots and sunglasses).

After Steve left, I watered the RZ/N liberally and we had a sunset supper. I walked to the gate and visited the Hurdles, as I often do. Returning, I heard a loud argument between two raccoons somewhere along the open part of the creek bluffs. The moon was bright and just past the first half. Pookie came for kibble in the Nook as we listened to the Katydid's (still calling) in the GF. The crickets continued to call, as well. They may still be at it a month from now.

Next morning, we awakened to a squirrel scolding in the GF. Wild Turkeys goggled away in the BCF. (We had yet to see any chipmunks. Did Pookie kill them?) Pat made the amazing discovery of some nine Northern Flickers perched in the dead elms at the edge of the LM. She surmised that these were two families which had probably been raised here. The morning was capped off with the sighting of a Bald Eagle sailing majestically downriver just visible over the BCF canopy.

At noon the Andreaes (Peter & Muriel) arrived to set up the chairs, put up flags and mount the Thames Talbot Logo. Soon Jane Bowles and Andre arrived, then the piper. After that things get blurry. People arriving in cars, confusion about parking. Stan and Anita come in. Then Steve and the Walpole Island Singers in a mini-convoy from Moraviantown. The piper was piping, the drummers were singing and our friend, Jean MacKay wandered about playing folk tunes on her violin. Everyone agreed that these elements, apart from a small lack of coordination, contributed greatly to the success of the event. After two speeches by local politicians, Terry Keep gave a speech, then I. Muriel ended the ceremony with her thanks to Pat and me for donating the land.

Following the ceremony, Jane Bowles led one tour on the TRT while I led another fifteen minutes later.

birds: (16)

American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (GF); Bald Eagle (TR); Black and White Warbler (GF); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Gray Catbird (GCF); great Blue Heron (HL); Hairy Woodpecker (GF); Mallard (TR); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Flicker (BCF/LM); Red-bellied Woodpecker (BCF); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (GF/S)

phenology: Katydid still calling