

**Newport Forest** Saturday April 19-20 2008

2:15 - 7:00\* pm

**weather:** prec. 0 mm; RH 60 %; BP 98.64 kPa; ovcast; SE 0-15 kmh LM 25C

**purpose:** two-day stay + trail maintenance

**participants:** Pat, Kee & TTLT volunteers (sunday)

An inspection of trees in the RZ revealed that about half the species are now breaking bud. The mound ants are busy adding new sand to the mounds and repairing winter damage. I was pleased to record the first wood tick of the season on my person. This could be an indication of a (worrisome) local drying trend. The road in is now firm and compact.

We walked to the HB, ascending its southern slope near the eastern end to look for the Harbinger of Spring. Pat finally found a few plants and I videotaped one (V). She found a sedge in bloom, some Fragile Wood Fern and, further down, some Dutchman's Breeches (or possibly Squirrel Corn) near the trail. (The flood has uprooted the BCF stake bench.) We noted that the vernal ponds are down by about 5 cm over the last four days. The Western Chorus Frogs conducted a moderate chorus during our stroll.

I returned to the trailer before Pat did, surprised to find a Hairy Woodpecker trapped in the raccoon cage. It could not imagine going down to the open door, seeking always the sky near the top of the cage. Finally I had to lift off the top of the cage to set the bird free. (Got a good, close look at the bird while I was doing this.) I strolled down to the creek, noting that a dead elm had fallen across across the creek just a few metres downstream from where the bridge used to be. The elm is Y-shaped, with the twin branches resting on our side of the creek. Raccoons and Squirrels will find this a convenient bridge -- as long as it lasts. The chipmunks are active once again.

After sunset, Pat heard a woodcock over by the power lines. Toads began their night-trill and Spring Peepers would occasionally call for a few minutes. I caught a pair of Southern Flying in the beam of my flashlight feeding on the day's leaving at the hickory tray feeder. Both of us spotted a bat or two feeding in the twilight air.

At midnight (temp 15 C) I went out to the nook to see if any raccoons had

\* Sunday

visited. The kibble was just as I had left it, except for a missing section and

dozens of carpenter ants, some of which struggled with kibbles rather larger than themselves. They were accompanied by an ant-mimic spider which very closely resembled *Castianeira longipalpa*. (seen later on the web)

I saw no raccoons until 2:45 am, when a male showed up to glean kibble from the road. Later, at 3:30, a female (?) showed up to eat kibble from the log.

After sunrise, Pat spotted a grey-phase Eastern Gray Squirrel in the Black Maple over the Nook. Up to this point they had always been black-phase.

The trail-bee volunteers from TTLT showed up in bunches, starting around 11 am. By 11:30 there were a dozen cars and vans parked along the road above the trailer. We gathered in the Nook to plan the day's work. First, Terry Keep, assisted by Terry Grawey and Andre LaChance, set out for the river buffs to install steps. We then formed two brigades, each equipped with a hoe, a rake, and clippers or loppers. By 3:30 the trail to the bluebells had been groomed and lined, with river mulch added to the bluebells section of the trail. The brigades had gone beyond that however, with one working its way up to the HB, the other refurbishing the Blind Creek Trail as far as the foot of the HB. Far more work was accomplished by the 20-odd volunteers than we had originally dared to hope for. I was pleased to see all the beeches we had planted in the last two years ready to bud into leaf for the new season. They obviously like it in the BCF.

While all this was going on, Pat had a multitude of sightings, including an Eastern Bluebird in the LM, resplendent in his near-turquoise suitcoat and brilliant orange vest.

After the last volunteers had left for the day, two pickup trucks rumbled in. One had Steve and Karen in it, the other had Dean Logan (Steve's brother) and his friend Kyla with son Marquez (?) in tow. This meant another walk for me on the TRT, in spite of my general weariness from the trail bee. After some leftover refreshments, we set out with our friends from Moraviantown. This hike produced three raccoon sightings, each involving a lone animal sunning itself near the top of a tree, two in the RSF and one half way up the HB. We then regathered in the Nook for a chat.

**birds:** (29)

American Crow (FCF); American Goldfinch (ET); American Robin (GF);

American Woodcock (HL); Belted Kingfisher (TR); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (UM/Rd); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Canada Goose (TR); Common Flicker (LM/HBF); Common Grackle (LM); Dark-eyed Junco (Lower Meadow); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Eastern Bluebird (LM); Eastern Towhee (ET); Field Sparrow (LM); Great Blue Heron (HBF); Hairy Woodpecker (GF); Mourning Dove (LM); Northern Cardinal (FCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (BCF); Red-winged Blackbird (ER); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (Rd/UM); Tufted Titmouse (Tr); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); White-throated Sparrow (Tr); Wild Turkey (FCF);

**new species:**

Ant-mimic Spider            [*Castianeira*] sp.    Tr KD Ap20/08

**phenology:** trees breaking bud; mound ants active; Bloodroot in bloom; Spring Beauties half-open; Harbinger of Spring in bloom; last Junco (?); Towhees back; chipmunks active.