

Newport Forest Saturday/sunday May 24 2008 3:00 - 5:35* pm

weather: prc. 9 mm; RH 55%; BP 99.92 kPa; clr; NNE 5-25 kmh; LM 18 C

purpose: two-day stay

participants: Pat & Kee

We were delighted to find (at least) 9 mm in the rain gauge. The trees in the RZ all appeared healthy, although a few showed some frost damage. After organizing the camp, we went down to the river to find two different species of Swallow catching insects over the water, along with a (possible) Purple Martin. The Thames is running fairly clear again.

As I walked the emerging beach, I noticed a large school of minnows in one of the inlets between gravel bars. About this time, Darren Jacobs showed up unexpectedly with his friend, Fred LaSalle. We walked the beach and then, while Pat made her way back to camp independently, we three walked the TRT to inspect the bluebells that were still in full flower.

Back at camp, Darren explained some of the interesting things he does as part of his job at Rondeau Provincial Park. One of these involves checking the “newt boards” periodically. He sketched how the boards are set up and explained how salamanders and newts liked to crawl under/between them. So to check on the current population, all you do is walk the trail where some 50 of these nboards are set out, lift them in turn and record the numbers and kinds of salamandrids present. (Darren said they also find occasional Five-lined Skinks in these boards.) Darren also mentioned how he “trolls” for deer ticks by dragging a cloth at the end of a stick along human and game trails.

We treated our guests to a bowl of beans & bread, saying farewell at sunset and lighting the lamps for the night. It began to get cold very quickly and we realized we were in for a possible overnight frost.

The only animal action after our (late) supper of hamburgers were a sequence of raccoons that showed up to eat kibble from the road past the trailer. At first there were two females, then a male joined them. Later, a lone scruffy-looking kit -- rather advanced -- showed up. It was followed by one of the females again and she was joined by the kit. By 2 am these were joined by a second (scruffy-looking) kit.

* next day

Next morning, I went to bed after breakfast, while Pat went out looking for new

plants. Among her finds was a Carrion Flower (no prickles) not far from the trailer. She also re-explored the “slip” under the hydro lines. Back in camp, she explained, half-seriously, how she expected an Indigo Bunting to show po at (solar) noon. And it did!

In the afternoon, we went up to the TS where Pat cut grass, planted a HB and worked on the ground cover. (The grass grows long and fast in the TS and it’s almost impossible to manage without suppression.) Meanwhile, I walked several deer trails along the creek bluffs dragging an old towel in an attempt to imitate Drrren’s trolling technique. No ticks showed up on the towel. Just before our departure, I went into the BCF where I collected some fauna from leaf litter. (S)

birds: (37)

American Crow (RL); American Goldfinch (UM); American Robin (HBF); Bank Swallow (TR); Bald Eagle (TR); Barn Swallow (TR); Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose (TR); Cedar Waxwing (LM); Common Grackle (LM); Common Yellowthroat (BCF/LM); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Eastern Kingbird (LM); Eastern Screech Owl (BCF); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Field Sparrow (HL); Gray Catbird (BCF/LM); Great Blue Heron (TR/FC); Great Crested Flycatcher (GF); Indigo Bunting (GF); Kildeer (UM); Mourning Dove (Tr); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Flicker (LM); Northern Oriole (RL); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Red-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Red-winged Blackbird (LM); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (BCF/LM); Song Sparrow (GF); Tree Swallow (LM); Tufted Titmouse (Tr); Turkey Vulture (FCF); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (EW); Wood Thrush (BCF); Yellow Warbler (BCF/LM)

new species:

Carrion Flower	<i>Smilax herbacea</i>	FCT/Tr PD My24/08
Elm Shinx Moth	<i>Ceratonia amyntor</i>	BCF nm/KD J125/00

phenology: Virginia Bluebells still in full flower