

Newport Forest

Je12-13 2008

2:35 - 3:30 pm

weather: prc. 25 mm; RH 66%; BP 99.92kPa; sn/hz; SE 0-15kmh; LM 30°C

purpose: two-day stay

participants: Pat & Kee

We were pleased to see Edgar hitching the Bush Hog to his tractor when we arrived. He kindly cut the whole farm track for us ! I swapped Cameras #2 & #3 to see if the extreme sensitivity of Cam #2 to motion couldn't be tamed by a quiescent meadow scene.

A review of trees along the track produced some pleasant surprises, including a vigorously-growing Sassafras (the one we moved several years ago from under the hydro tower on Tower Hill). We spotted an American Snout butterfly near the trailer and decided to keep a butterfly/moth list just this once.

We knew from the quantity of mosquitoes around the trailer that they would be thick in the woods, but we girded our loins for a trip to the Sandbar, nevertheless. What a nightmare! I made the mistake of taking a hoe and brush-hook, being ever-ready to pile one project on top of another. In this case, I thought I'd do a little trail-clearing along the way, as well as straighten a section of trail in the RSF. The flies were very thick along Edgar's Trail and we only got relief when we sat for a while on the bird-watching bench on the river bluffs, where a fresh breeze kept the mosquitoes at bay. The river is again high enough to cover the clay beach and gravel bars. We watched a muskrat make his way slowly across the river. Then we continued the expedition, wading into the RSF, noting that the bluebells were definitely over as we went, the plants turning yellow.

Clearing the overgrown trail into the RSF as we went reminded me of movies of the Amazon, hacking through vines with a machete. It was maddening. Mosquitoes crowded my face and hands, every bit of exposed flesh they could find. We slapped constantly at them, abandoning our Jainist philosophy forthwith. Back and forth went the brush-hook, as I constantly juggled backpack and hoe against the need to slap-slap-slap. Dead mosquitoes encrusted our faces and clothes. We tried to go to the Sand Bar, but found that the trail leading there had disappeared entirely. I made a half-hearted attempt to find the Pawpaws there, but the combination of freshly aroused mosquitoes and stinging nettles proved too much. Like the coward I am, I turned back to the main trail. Pat, meanwhile, continued to watch and listen for birds. She started back along the main trail and I promised to catch up with her after a frenzy of hoeing to remove a huge swath of

riverdrift that had blocked the trail into the Beech-maple portion of the RSF. Pat stopped and noted some new birds for us at the river, while I stumbled blindly toward camp. When we were finally both back at the trailer, we washed our faces and necks in cool water to remove the grime and sting from our faces.

Pat pointed out a growth of gilled bracket fungi on a recently fallen Bitternut trunk by the trail to the creek. I took several caps. (S) We were both happy to see that the old Shagbark Hickory that had nearly died from a beetle infestation a few years' ago, was now again covered with leaves, with only a few dead branches poking out here and there as evidence of the disease. After supper the sun set and, after a quick visit with Nina and Edgar, we returned for the coon-watch. A mother and two kits fed in the Nook, then out on the road, where we had scattered kibble.

Within the hour, three more kits showed up. By the time I was outside the trailer again, the coons were gone, but a magnificent light-show had begun all over the meadow. These are ideal conditions for fireflies - a warm humid night with no breeze. Everywhere one looked, little lights winked on and off, some long-lasting, some brief, some steady, some scintillating. There were basically two layers of lights. One layer seemed to consist of stationary beetles (females?) on the meadow plants. The other layer consisted of lights moving back and forth above the meadow. Very often the tracks seemed part of a pattern. A straight flight, followed by a steep dive toward the vegetation. However, some of these lights were very high over the meadow -- up to 30' or more.

The meadow lights were brighter than the stars overhead and certainly a lot more lively. I estimated that within any one-second period about 50-100 lights would be turned on. How many beetles this represented, I couldn't say, except that it would surely be at least double those numbers, possibly triple.

The day dawned cool and gloomy. Pat looked forward to a beautiful day, but I was pessimistic. When I finally got up around noon, a gentle rain began to fall, soon to end. We had a breakfast-lunch and wondered if a much bigger rain were about to descend. We prepared to leave, but continued some of our regular activities, as well. Pat watched and listened for birds, while I pattered about in the RZ, moving flags and cans, noting progress. (There are now a LOT of young trees in the RZ and they're getting easier and easier to miss on watering days or when mulching.)

TS inventory:

BE 3@3', 2@4'; HB 4@1', 1@4'; HL 5@2'; HT 6@1/2'; OHB (?) 2@1', 3@2'; RO 2@1/2'; SiM 1@4'; WA 2@2', 2@4';

birds: (29)

American Crow (RSF); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (GF); Bank Swallow (TR); Blue Jay (FCF); Brown-headed Cowbird (GF); Canada Goose (GF); Common Flicker (GF); Common Grackle (TR); Common Yellowthroat (BCF); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Towhee (RSF); Eastern Wood Peewee (RSF); Field Sparrow (LM); Gray Catbird (HB/R); Great Blue Heron (FC/TR); Great Crested Flycatcher (RSF); Killdeer (LM); Mourning Dove (BCF); Northern Cardinal (EW); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-eyed Vireo (BCF/LM); Red-winged Blackbird (ER); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (TR); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wood Thrush (BCF)

leps: (14)

American Snout (Tr); Cabbage White (LM); Common Wood Nymph (LM); Eastern Comma (ET); Eight-spotted Forester (Tr); European Skipper (LM)/GF); Giant Swallowtail (GF); Monarch (LM); Mourning Cloak (Tr); Red-spotted Purple (LM/GF); Ringlet (UM); Summer Azure (Tr); Tiger Swallowtail (LM/HBF); Virginia Ctenuchid (LM);
birds

new species:

Robber Fly *Laphria index* GF/KD/Je12/08

phenology: wild strawberries now ripe;

note: the rain-gauge may be leaking, thanks to late frosts. The snowpail had 42 mm of rain in it, which works out to more than 25 mm.