

Birding

Newport Forest Sunday May 24 1:15 - 6:00 pm

weather: precip 0 mm; RH 64%; BP 29.49; calm; hz/sn; T 25° C
purpose: birdwatching
participants: Pat, Jennifer McIntyre, Kee

Nina said it had rained for nearly half an hour this morning, but the rain gauge on site indicated no rain. Pat and Jennifer attended the Skunk's Misery tours held this morning, then joined me on the property for some birding. Almost as soon as we had settled into the Nook for a quick lunch, we spied two male Northern Orioles jousting in the bushes on the border of HBF for the attention of a female in one of the bushes.

The mother raccoon we call "Two-stripe" was busily gorging herself on bird seed at the hickory feeder. We listened carefully for the sound of kits in the nursery box, but heard nothing.

Walking to the river along ET, we noticed that the mosquito population was now approaching the bothersome level, with about 20 landings/min. The river was down enough to expose about half of MB (Mussel Beach) and the water itself had now clarified considerably since last week. Pat saw an Indigo Bunting and a Yellow Warbler at the river landing. Later we saw a Spotted Sandpiper searching the far shore and then Pat saw an Eastern Kingbird hawking insects over the river. A Tiger Swallowtail visited us twice. On the way back to camp, the first Ebony Jewelwing of the season crossed the trail ahead of us. Later, Jennifer pointed out that "spit insects" (Cercopids) had built houses in the clover and other low veg beside the trail. When we arrived at the Nook, Jennifer pointed out raccoon kits looking out of the nursery box. Meanwhile, another raccoon had taken over the hickory feeder, not Two-stripe. Chipmunks plied their trade of raiding the feeders, as well.

Back in the Nook I captured what I thought was a dark Checkerspot of some kind. But it turned out to be a Juvenal's Duskywing, a new species for us.

Later in the afternoon we heard a mournful, repeated descending "coo"- sound that was fairly loud and distinctive, coming from the BCF. Later the calls started up again and were answered by an identical call from the GF down the road a way. It wasn't until we got home and listened to several tapes (incl. recordings at the Cornell ornithological website) that we could be sure we had been hearing a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. This secretive bird is heard more often than seen. It has two quite different calls, one a rapid ka-ka-ka, the other the "rain-call.: Down south the Yellow-billed Cuckoo is called the Rain Crow in the belief that the repeated coos presage rain. (Out of curiosity, I checked the weather Channel website, but we're not expecting rain until late tuesday/wednesday.) Meanwhile, if you're lucky enough to see one, here's the general appearance:

Jennifer had to leave for Toronto, so we let her go, then cleaned up camp for the West Elgin Nature Club tour on the morrow. (They call it a "Bluebell Walk," but they'll be lucky to see one in bloom -- they're more than 90% over.)

As we closed the gate, Pat spotted a breeding pair of Tree Swallows on the road fence doing just that -- breeding. "Shameless things," I cried. "We give them a box for privacy and this is what they do!"

birds: (30)

American Crow (HBF); American Goldfinch (HBF); American Robin (GF); Blue Jay (Tr); Brown-headed Cowbird (LM); Common Grackle (TR); Common Merganser (TR); Common Yellowthroat (BCF/LM); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Kingbird (TR); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Gray Catbird (RL); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF/LM); Hairy Woodpecker (GF); House Wren (Rd); Indigo Bunting (RL); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Oriole (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (EW); Red-winged Blackbird (RL); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Song Sparrow (GF); Spotted Sandpiper (TR); Tree Swallow (UM); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (HBF); Wood Thrush (BCF); Yellow-billed Cuckoo (BCF); Yellow Warbler (RL);

new species:

Juvenal's Duskywing *Eryennis horatius* GF KD My24/09

IMAGES:

[\(click on image to enlarge\)](#)



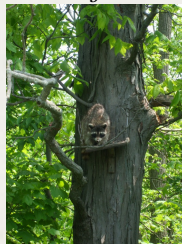
frost damage to young Tulip Trees

[\(click on image to enlarge\)](#)



Juvenal's Dusky in a baggie: (with apologies for lack of clarity)

[\(click on image to enlarge\)](#)



Two-stripe, a nursing mother (note second stripe above outer corner of eye:

[\(click on image to enlarge\)](#)



*. . . and sniffing the deer-rubbings on the post
The new trail cam has been set to take pictures in burst mode (two per)*