

## June 3-4 Site Visit

Newport Forest Wednesday June 3-4 2009 2:20 - X - 6:30 pm

weather: prec. omm; RH 55%; BP 99.6 kPa; NE 10 kmh; ovcast; T 19° C  
purpose: two-day stay  
participants: Pat. Kee

We had barely been on site for five minutes when we found evidence of savagery on the camp garbage pail lid. A jumping spider named Phidippus the audacious had paralysed a caterpillar called Malacosoma the American and was busy slurping up body fluids when we caught him in the act. (See picture below; our new digital cameras continue to amaze us with their capacity for detail.)

Phidippus is a very common spider around these parts. It is easy to recognize and large enough to make you want to pet it. It also has attractive blue poison-fangs. The tent caterpillar has established perhaps 5 or six smallish tents over the whole lower meadow and its young trees, but the infestation is so far rather slight

As soon as we entered the trailer, a House Mouse (not a Deer Mouse) scampered out of the open fridge, plunged to the floor and ran off into the bedroom. It had been storing nyjer seed in the 'fridge. But then Pat found two freshly born baby mice in one of the pillows. (We donated these to the sub-trailer carnivore clan.) Out in the RZ, I found lots of Blue-eyed Grass in bloom. On my way to changing the camera batteries, I crossed several tendrils of what I thought was Poison Ivy. Pat scoffed: just a species of wild Clematis.

On my return I found the Raccoon called "Two-stripe" at the Hickory feeder, anxious to get the seed before the birds did. I put out the three sets of cover boards donated by Darren Jacobs as surplus from Rondeau PP. (We also call these "Newt Hotels.") Set A went to the Copse, set B below the Nook, and set C to the Hole. While I was doing this, Pat sighted a Bald Eagle flying right over the camp toward the river. The great bird was so close that Pat could hear faint strains of the Star-spangled Banner.

Visiting Nina & Edgar Hurdle, Pat brought her new metal detector to scan for artifacts at one of the alleged homestead sites at the UM. (Upper Meadow) She got several signals from a pit, one of them from scrap iron at the surface. An Eastern Phoebe currently nesting above the Hurdle's outside porch light flew over to see what we were up to. She has several young in her mud nest.

Back at camp, a Field Sparrow followed Pat closely along the track, anxious about a nearby nest, according to Pat. I spotted a black-phase Gray Squirrel climbing in the GF (Gallery Forest) as we prepared for a walk to the river. The mosquitoes were thick enough along Edgar's Trail to encourage a smart pace to the river, where several new birds for the day-list awaited us, including a pair of Northern Orioles nesting in an overhanging Elm, a Spotted Sandpiper on the shore, and a lone Cedar Waxwing hawking insects cross-river, first one way, then the other. A small gang of grackles harassed a majestic Great Blue flying over the river to the property. Our First-Tick-of-the-Season showed up on my arm as I photographed a nice stand of Yellow Flags in bloom.

After sunset we were visited by sibling raccoons that had probably overwintered together, but with no sign of Two-stripe or her kit. They ate all the kibble intended for the mother & offspring, then raided the hickory feeder, where a Southern Flying Squirrel had been enjoying some peanuts. Later, a pair of screech owls traded calls across the LM, one faint, the other nearby. Much later, a Great Horned Owl boomed out with about five separate calls before falling silent. The night was cold and clear, with the Big Dipper overhead about to be replaced by the Summer Triangle. By 2 am the LM temperature had plummeted to exactly 0° C, threatening frost.

In the trailer, I read through Hamr's crayfish manual by lamplight, reviewing the conservation status of the 11 known Canadian species and deciding to adopt the author's recipe for chimney-fishing on our next visit; lower a small piece of raw meat into a chimney on dental floss. Gently pull up the crayfish, clinging to the meat for dear life,

After breakfast in the morning, Pat went birdwatching while I inspected the RZ (Regeneration Zone). Lorne Newport's memorial tree (SM) has started to grow after spinning its wheels for 7 years. The other trees are mostly growing quickly now, with a good supply of ground water still remaining. Pat called my attention by walkie-talkie to the Bald Eagle flying overhead, this time much higher and accompanied by another immature-looking eagle. I spotted a Virginia Ctenucha moth on a young maple (P) and finished off the pile of river drift from two years ago, mulching 8 trees with it. I then changed the cards in the trail cams (one deer and a few shots of the work crew from last visit) as Pat prepared for a foray to Fleming Creek's lower rapids.

Kick-sampling in the rapids, Pat produced several early-moult crayfish -- all Northern Clearwaters -- then found two female Rainbow Darters and a darter that (later) turned out to be a new species -- the long-awaited Johnny Darter which has the largest NA distribution of any of the darters. Pat then went searching for new Green Dragons while I returned to camp. Here was Two-stripe out foraging in broad daylight with her (lone) lookalike kit. Was this a shift-system, a way of sharing resources to avoid conflict with the usurpers? The situation was complicated by the appearance of a third raccoon that had no clear relationship with either Two-stripe or the night raiders.

birds: (37)

American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (GF); Bald Eagle (TR); Black-capped Chickadee (LM); Blue Jay (Tr); Brown-headed Cowbird (GF); Brown Thrasher (GF); Canada Goose (TR); Cedar Waxwing (TR); Common Grackle (LM); Common Yellowthroat (HBF/GF); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Kingbird (LM/HBF); Eastern Phoebe (UM); Eastern Screech Owl (BCF); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Eastern Wood Pewee (LM/HBF); Field Sparrow (LM/HL); Gray Catbird (GF); Great Blue Heron (TR); Great Crested Flycatcher (FCF); Great Horned Owl (FCF); Hairy Woodpecker (Tr); Mallard (TR); Mourning Dove (FCF); Northern Cardinal (RL); Northern Oriole (RL); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-tailed Hawk (TR); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Spotted Sandpiper (TR); Tree Swallow (UM/Rd); Turkey Vulture (BCF); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wood Thrush (BCF)

leps: (7)

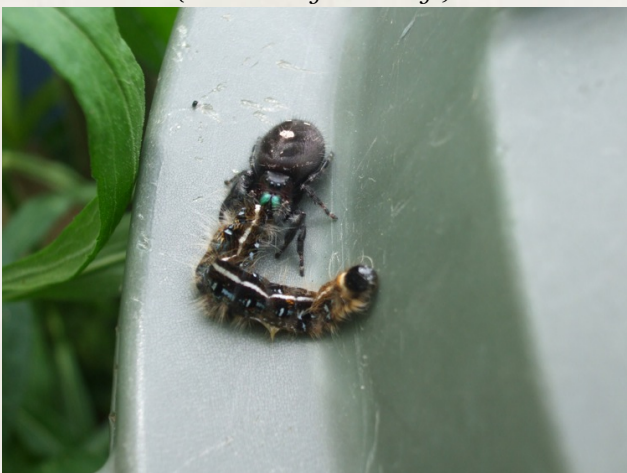
Cabbage White (LM); Clouded Sulphur (LM); Inornate Ringlet (UM); Northern Crescent (LM); Spring Azure (LM); Tiger Swallowtail (LM); Virginia Ctenucha (LM)

new species:

Johnny Darter *Etheostoma nigrum* FC pd/KD Jeo4/09

### IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)



*Phidippus* dines on tent caterpillar (now getting "baggy")

(click on image to enlarge)



*Virginia Ctenucha* Moth on maple in RZ