

# First Day of Summer at Newport Forest

Newport Forest Saturday June 21 2009 2:20/21 -- 3:15 /22

weather: prec. 33 mm; RH 72%; BP 98.7 kPa; calm; ovcst; T 22° C  
purpose: two-day stay  
participants: Pat, Kee

We arrived in high spirits only to have them dampened by the discovery of two dead baby raccoons in the Nook, directly below Two-stripe's nursery box. After engaging in a round of Beatrix Potter forensics, we decided that Two-stripe had simply shoved them out of the box to lighten her nursing load. (Raccoons call it "tough love.") But we didn't come to that conclusion until Two-stripe emerged before sunset with a total of five kits. (All this time we assumed she had only one or two.)

A happier aspect of our first hour was the presence of a great many birds, many species and more evidence of fledglings than we had ever seen before. Everyone, it seemed, had a baby or two to feed. So much so that Pat cried out in exasperation, "Where were you during the Breeding Bird Survey?" Amusing sight: a father Grosbeak faithfully attending to a young Grosbeak and two young Cowbirds. Pat was much charmed a little later by the discovery of a nestful of Common Yellowthroats near The Hole.

I walked the Thames River Trail (TRT), brush-whacking as I went. I noticed (as I have many times before) that as one walks Edgar's Trail (ET), the thickness of the mosquitoes is matched only by the presence of the Ebony Jewelwing Air Force, hawking these little \*&^#% right out of your face. Why do you think the jewelwings follow you? I cleared major stretches of the floodplain portions of the TRT so at least now anyone walking it can at least see where they're supposed to go. The HB was completely free of mosquitoes, so I took a little break there. I got back to camp in time to see Two-stripe emerge from the nursery box with one kit, then another, then another . . . The kits practiced acrobatics on a low branch while waiting for sundown.

After supper I walked up to the road to close the gate and visit briefly with the hurdles. Pat, meanwhile, went over the Copse with a fine-tooth comb, looking for fungi. (usually a good spot after a rain). She picked up a plant specimen or two before heading back to camp. A Gray Tree Frog began to call from Eva's Woods (EW).

After lighting the lamps, we witnessed heavy competition from fireflies in the LM, even surrounding the trailer. We estimated about 500 working the LM and by the first week of July there could easily be double that number. The stars were brilliant, with the Great Bear still dominating the sky as the Summer Triangle (only Vega and Altair visible overhead) steadily gains. By 11:30 pm the firefly display had died down to a handful still winking. By 1:30 am, the temperature reached its overnight low of 12° C. By then the Summer Triangle was almost fully in view. A Screech Owl called mournfully from time to time.

Next morning the light was brilliant and the dawn chorus in full swing. As the air temperature warmed up to the day's high of 33° C, I walked through the Regeneration Zone (RZ), pleased with the continuing stellar growth in all the (rather small) oaks we had planted 3 years ago. The plentiful rain continues to work its magic. We remain at a par with the only two non-drought years we have experienced to date: (prev. yrs to end of June)

2009 2008 2007 2006 2005 2004 2003  
507 mm 544 mm 305 mm 453 mm 345 mm 200 mm 269 mm  
etc.

Some of the trees planted back in 2000-2004 are now up to 15' and growing quickly.

I sensed something wrong during that walk. Where were the bees and wasps? I decided to walk the same (watering) trail again, this time slowly, with great attention to every flower in view. What a shock! I realize this isn't august, with a carpet of goldenrod and asters and I also realize that hymenopteran populations are still building in their cells, but ONE bumblebee, TWO small wasps, and A Syrphid or two? Maybe I just don't realize that this is normal for The first day of summer. Plants in bloom included Tall Buttercup, Red Clover, Birdsfoot Trefoil, two species of daisy (one prob. fleabane), Dog Rose, Multiflora Rose, Ninebark, and Cinquefoil. That should attract more than 5 pollinators.

Pat was meanwhile examining the Fleming Creek Trail through the GF, finding a chocolate mushroom and a remarkable young fungus that looks like a possible Geaster -- then collecting another plant or two to examine.

After lunch, the tray feeders were visited by the Eastern Chipmunk, the Eastern Gray Squirrel (black phase) and the Red Squirrel. Then Pat took a nap while I decided to improve my ID skills with bushes. Yes, there were Chokecherries along the FCT, Prickly Greenbrier at the GF edge and, finally what were these "thornapples" (as I had been calling them) really. They keyed out to Malus coronaria, the Native Crabapple. Could it be a hybrid? The RZ has a good 30-40 of them! Then I found a small tree that keyed out to Glossy Buckthorn, but the leaves were too small -- about 20-30 around the trailer. No problem. I'll just consult with Jane . . .

Before leaving, we changed the cards on the trail cams and left some "forage" for the kits.

leps: (11)

Black Swallowtail (LM); Cabbage White (LM); Clouded Sulphur (LM); European Underwing (CP); European Skipper (LM); Great Spangled Fritillary (LM); Little Wood Satyr (LM); Monarch (LM); Northern Crescent (LM); Red-spotted Purple (LM); Virginia Ctenucha (GF);

birds: (33)

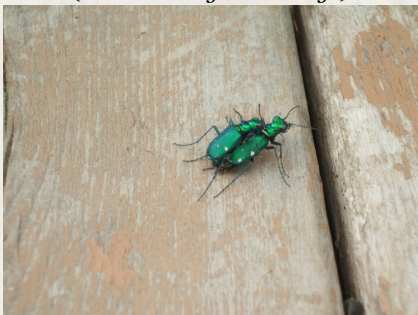
American Crow (HL); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (BCF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Brown Thrasher (BCF); Cedar Waxwing (LM); Common Flicker (BCF); Common Grackle (GF); Common Yellowthroat (LM); Eastern Kingbird (LM); Eastern Screech Owl (BCF); Eastern Towhee (CB); Field Sparrow (LM); Great Blue Heron (FC); Hairy Woodpecker (GF); House Sparrow (Rd); Gray Catbird (HL); Mourning Dove (Tr); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Oriole (BCF); Great Crested Flycatcher (GF); Indigo Bunting (CP); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (LM); Wood Thrush (BCF); Wild Turkey (BCF); Yellow Warbler (LM/HBF)

new species

Barberpole Sedge Scirpus rubrotinctus ER PD  
'European Underwing' Noctua pronuba CP KD

## IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)



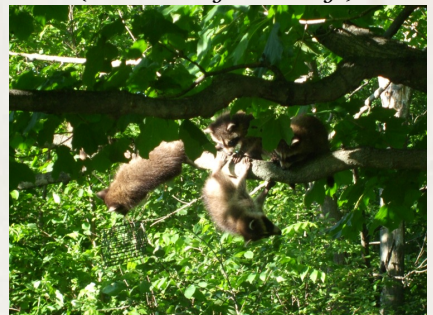
Tiger Beetles showing affection . . .

(click on image to enlarge)



Malus Coronaria X ?

(click on image to enlarge)



kits practice acrobatics