

Site Visit Report

Newport Forest Sunday July 19/20 2009 3:15/7:25 pm

weather: prec. 15mm; RH 56%; BP 99.7 kPa; clm; cld/sn; T 28° C
purpose: two-day stay
participants: Pat. Kee

We were greeted (as we sometimes are) by the Red-tailed Hawk who flew escort down to the trailer. We had barely gotten settled in when Heather Campbell dropped in for a quick visit. Heather had some (domestic) plants for Pat and brought us up to date on her doings. After Heather left, I performed the Bee Protocol with Pat so that she could do it as well as I (summary results will be released in a report this fall). Pat pursued some butterflies, recognizing everything except a puzzler that resembled a Painted Lady, but wasn't.

Two-stripe came down from the nursery box (rather early) with four kits. We never saw more than four all evening, so she may have lost another. If so, we're down from an original litter of 7 kits to a gang of 4. Leaving mother & kits to nibble on kibble, we walked to the river where Pat birded and I walked the beach, noting a whole new collection of mussel valves brought in by January/February floods. I then continued on the TRT into the RSF (Riverside Forest), where I cleared a temporary trail to the Sand Bar (SB) and discovered a whole new hill of sand about 3 m high and a good 10 m long. This must have been deposited by the two massive floods of last winter. I suspect the sand gets trapped as 20 feet of cold, dark water rolls over the Box Elders (barely poking through the surface), slowed by the friction with the trees and dropping its suspended load of coarse sand and silt. I could locate none of the planted trees or other landmarks of the SB, so I left that for another day and returned to the RL (River Landing). The mosquitoes were only moderately abundant and proved hardly a bother. Crossing the bluffs, I stopped to look for liverworts, a whole class of plants that we had never bothered to seek out. None found.

Pat spotted a Cottontail out on ER by the trailer. We speculated that it might have a burrow in the RZ. As the sun set, we drove up to the gate, where Pat visited with Edgar and Nina, while I watched for late-flying Bobolinks, Woodcocks, or whatever I could see. Later, after dark, I sat in the Nook, watching no less than eight raccoons munching on kibble all around my chair and oblivious to my presence. (I could hardly think for the sound of continuous crunching in all directions) Five of these belonged to the Two-stripe family, two were brothers that had shown up on a few previous occasions, and one was a very dark raccoon of the type that some people call "Swamp Coon." Raccoons of different origin normally fight over scarce food, but will form "feeding groups" when food is plentiful, tolerating each other's presence. Later, Screech Owls called out repeatedly for about half an hour. Very few fireflies were about, possibly past their climax. The sky cleared completely and the stars were all out. Air temperature dropped to 12° C.

Pat studied some sunflowers in the trailer by the light of an oil lamp. She wants to learn all the species included in the group that locals call "River Daisies" -- preparatory to constructing a key to same. The species at hand turned out to be the Ox Eye or False Sunflower, *Heliopsis helianthoides*, one that she had ID'ed years ago, but needed to refamiliarize herself with. (This work was interrupted by the sound of a coyote chorus somewhere near the mouth of Fleming Creek.) Pat also tentatively ID'd a willow specimen as Slender Willow, a species that would be new, if confirmed. Busier with a more important project, I located two ticks on my person.

Later in the night, I and the Two-stripe family were the only mammals still awake. The kits were so wound up from their earlier kibble, that they rampaged across the trailer deck, prying open a water bottle to dabble endlessly in the contents, dragging my bush shoes out to beat the tar out of them (as if some fearsome foe), and playing floor hockey with some cherries. Two-stripe looked on with alternating concern & maternal pride. (Beatrix Potter School of Ecology)

In the morning, we thought we heard the "Rain Crow" again -- "kwa-ka-ka-ka . . ." Pat went looking for new butterflies, snagging a Coral Hairstreak* along the way, but nothing new.

*first of the year

In the early afternoon, I drove up to the UM to meet the water truck from Carruthers (Melbourne) and paid the driver after he deposited 1000 gal in the Drought Buster. Later, we took the canoe down to the river, put in, and paddled up to the mouth of Fleming Creek. Normally blocked by deadfall and skeletal trees from far upstream, the creek proved to be navigable for about 200 m, a delightful little paddle. We then returned to

the river, drifting downstream to the landings below the rapids, where we explored the willow thickets there. Pat spotted a colourful Hummingbird Moth sipping nectar from some Purple Loosestrife plants (P) and collected more plant specimens, while I found a potential new plant higher up the bank, along with some diminutive algal growths on wet clay. The former was not new, the latter was. We beat our way upstream, returning to the beach. Pat went back to camp, while I gathered some algae-covered rocks from the rapids for later examination.

I stowed the canoe up on the River Landing (RL) and returned to camp to discover a baby Red Squirrel at the Maple feeder. Judging from the direction of the mother (whose acrobatics put Gray Squirrels to shame) the nest is downslope from the trailer and about 100 m to the east.

birds: (29)

American Crow (BCF); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Cedar Waxwing (TR); Common Flicker (GF); Common Grackle (UM); Common Yellowthroat (LM/BCF); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Kingbird (FCB); Eastern Towhee (GF); Eastern Screech Owl (BCF); Field Sparrow (HBF); Gray Catbird (GF); Great Blue Heron (TR); House Sparrow (Rd); House Wren (HL); Killdeer (TR); Mourning Dove (Tr); Northern Cardinal (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-tailed Hawk (UM); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (HBF); Tree Swallow (Rd); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wood Thrush (BCF); Yellow Warbler (GF)

(Thought we saw/heard: Scarlet Tanager; Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Northern Oriole, Purple Martin)

new species:

'Beach Button' Chlorococcum humicola MB KD J120/09

Slender Willow* Salix petiolaris TR/Rp PD J119/09
Field Bindweed Convolvulus arvensis TR/Rp PD J120/09

beelike Tachinid fly* Bombyliopsis abrupta HL pd/KD J120/09

* to be confirmed

Note 1:

Our species inventory format requires a common name within each entry, whereas many of the smaller or more obscure species have none. Besides ordinary common names, we include three other kinds: names given in an accessible document by a professional, but not appearing in general references; purely descriptive names used to temporarily distinguish a species, e.g., "small gray slug;" and made-up common names, e.g., "Sedge Jelly" (Tremella concrescens). Purely descriptive names contain no leading capitals. Others do. The fourth kind of name is enclosed in single quotes, others have no quotes. We are obliged to accept the practice of some professionals of giving a made-up common name based on the scientific name, e.g., "Fervid Bumble Bee" for Bombus fervidus. A good common name usually shows a) some imagination and b) a reference to an important characteristic of the organism.

Note 2:

The specimens of attached filamentous algae collected from the rocks of the river rapids turned out to be Cladophora glomerata, the same species in the creek rapids. (I had hoped for a new species of Cladophora.)

IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)



The water truck delivers 1000 gallons to Drought Buster

(click on image to enlarge)



Up the creek where, on one bank, we found long claw marks of a large mammal climbing out of the water.

(click on image to enlarge)



Hummingbird Moth (drag onto screen for close-up action)