

Site Visit Report

Newport Forest Sunday September 27 2009 1:45S - 3:50M

weather: prec. 19mm; RH 69%; BP 96.2 kPa; NW<10kmh; cld/sn; T 22° C
purpose: two-day stay
participants: Pat, Kee, Ron Martin

Ron Martin, a UWO chemist who has contributed to the Environmental Science Program there, made his long-anticipated visit to the property. Pat spotted a red-legged Braconid wasp crawling on a tea towel and I took a picture (love those digital cams!) Once I had finished the Bee Protocol (there being a unique sunny window to accomplish it), we walked the TRT. Having done this so many times, I frequently forget to keep my eyes peeled. In any case, fresh eyes invariably see things I miss. In the course of the walk, Ron drew my attention to several insects and fungi that I would have gone by without notice.

Introducing him to Mussel Beach, I spotted another Ebony Jewelwing, replacing last week's stab at phenology for this damselfly. A small covey of Rock Doves flew down the river. (We normally see Rock Doves perched on the hydro towers by The Furnival, but rarely on the property.) We made our way to the Sandbar, then back to the main trail and up to the HB slope, where Ron spotted some Beech Drops growing near the base of a mature American Beech. On the HB itself, Ron found what may be a new fungus growing on a log -- a white jelly-like bracket with an orange flush. In the BCF, Ron found two caterpillars, one a colour variant of the Banded Tussock Moth, the other a Hickory Tussock Moth (2P). I don't know how he spotted it, but Ron also pointed out an Oblong-winged Katydid crawling along a green leaf that was a dead match for its colour. This was in the area where twice in the last ten years we had seen the pink morph of this species.

Relaxing with coffee at the Nook, we were entertained by a large hawk flying in the distance. Was it a Redtail? Likely, but it never showed its tail clearly. We were also entertained by two chipmunks, one raiding birdseed at the tray, the other scrounging below. We took Ron down to the creek, all of us noting, en route, the smell of a corpse nearby. A large carrion beetle scuttled across the path. We took the newly opened trail to the lower rapids, where Pat spotted a new aquatic plant with a basal whorl of geranium-like leaves.

After Ron left, Pat walked up to the old Bitternut snag, where she frequently finds interesting things -- this time only an Eastern Gray Squirrel (black phase). After a supper of beans, I walked up to close the gate and pay a courtesy visit to Nina & Edgar Hurdle.

There had been intermittent cloud all afternoon, but by sunset the clouds had cleared and the waxing half-moon marched across the eastern sky. Pat recited, "The moon was a ghostly galleon, tossed on a stormy sea." Some coyotes took up one of their insane choruses, either on the HB or across the river -- hard to tell. Pat heard a Screech Owl calling from the FCF. Up to eight o'clock, we had seen no raccoons. Then two subadults showed up. From their size and behaviour, we took them to be two surviving kits of Two-stripe's. They ate kibble out on the track, happy with their moonlit banquet. I had anticipated a cold night, but the air temperature held at 14° C. The kits were bold with me (as I would expect), but extremely skittish in regard to their surroundings. They would look up and listen far more frequently than even the wildest raccoons would. I wondered if this anxiety had some connection with the breakup of their family a few weeks ago -- a missing mother and now the other two siblings no longer showing up. (We had last seen four together)

About an hour after the pair departed, an (unrelated) adult raccoon came sniffing over from the BCF, finding the odd bit our friends had missed.

The katydids had been calling infrequently during the afternoon but after sunset they picked up the pace with a good half dozen calling along the Gallery Forest (GF). They kept this up through midnight, when a breeze picked up from the southwest and the air temperature began a slow climb to 16° C. The sky had since clouded over and the breeze became a light wind. By 3:45 am, the sky was thick and black, the moon long gone; flashes of lightning illuminated the western horizon. I joined Pat to enjoy the sound of rain on the roof.

By 7 am all was calm and the sun rose on a gray, misty meadow. According to the rain gauge, 12mm had fallen overnight, a good half-inch. By 7:30 the wind began to rise again, steadily gusting to higher and higher velocities. Then came a light rain, then a heavier one. We decided to spend the remaining time doing a long overdue trailer cleanup, then leave early. I changed the SD card on the (new) trail cam. All 42 pics taken turned out to involve moving leaves -- or birds flashing by too quickly to appear in the frame.

Bee protocol

HB BB OB SW LW SF LF
27 3 1 0 0 8 5

birds: (16)

American Crow (FCF); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (GF); Black-capped Chickadee (BCF); Blue Jay (LM); Canada Goose (TR); Common Flicker (GF); Gray Catbird (FC); Eastern Screech Owl (GF/W); House Sparrow (LM); Mourning Dove (Tr); Northern Cardinal (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Rock Dove (TR); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (LM)

phenology: Black Maples turning yellow & shedding; last Ebony Jewelwing?

new species:

'Red-legged Braconid' [Dusona] sp. Tr pd/KD Sp27/09

Abruptly-bulbous Agaricus Agaricus abruptibulbus RSF KD Sp27/09

NOTES:

1. the jelly-like bracket found by Martin turned out to be *Phlebia tremellosa*, already logged on the property

2. We also found another *Agaricus* that "bled" a pink fluid rather profusely on the white napkin I use to examine fungi upon. I could not confirm it as either the Bleeding *Agaricus* or the Wood *Agaricus* owing to my inability to bruise the flesh red. (older specimen?)

Note: this report is the first to emerge from my new iMac, with a WP that lacks the New York font of which I am so fond.

IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)



female Braconid wasp -- prob.
Dusona sp.
another colour variant of the
Banded Tussock Moth

(click on image to enlarge)



Last of Two-stripe's brood?
(pink kibble bag behind kit)

(click on image to enlarge)



caterpillar: (light morph) Don't be
confused by thorns projecting from
beneath the larva. Name comes
from dark band that runs along
length of larval dorsum
adult: utterly amazing