

No Foolin' - it's Spawning Time!

Newport Forest Thursday-/Friday April 01/02 2010 2:05/6:20 pm

weather: prec.8mm; RH 49%; BP 101.3 kPa; S 20 km/h; sn/hz; T 26° C

purpose: two-day stay for fish-trapping

participants: Pat, Kee, Darren

After setting up camp for an overnight stay, we were pleased to see Darren arrive early with a young relative, Justine Hopkins. He had a trailer hitched to his jeep with a roll net and a box net in it. We deployed the box net in the creek just above the lower rapids, then rolled (literally) the other net down to the River Landing. On the way, Darren spotted a Red Squirrel at Edgar's Elbow. At the RL, Darren submerged the roll-net and we staked its anchor-lines securely to the river bank. In both cases, the mouth of the trap pointed downstream to catch fish swimming upstream. The spawning migration is still "on," but petering out.

While at the river, we watched three fishermen in a boat motor downstream past us. Later, a flight of six Wood Ducks, crying "weep weep, weep," flew into the mouth of Fleming Creek and off into the woods. On their way to join us at the river, Pat saw a the female American Toad (P), while Justine spotted a Garter Snake, our first of the year. The frog chorus continues to be weak and (to me anyway) barely audible.

We retired to the Nook for pie and drinks, amusing ourselves with the antics of a Chipmunk raiding the bird feeding tray. After Darren & Justine left, Pat & I had supper, pleased to hear the American Woodcock doing his mating ritual out in the lower meadow. We could also hear two flocks of Wild Turkeys gobbling occasionally, one under the power lines, the other over in Eva's Woods. After sunset, we were most pleased to see that both of Two-stripe's kits (that we had been tracking through the trail cam) had made it through the winter, apparently free of distemper. They dined on some kibble, then took off for parts unknown with nary a "thank-you." I walked up the UM to close the gate and stopped in to visit the Hurdles, noticing a striped skunk foraging in their back yard. I warned the skunk that if Edgar saw it, he would shoot first and ask questions later. Coming back, I was visited by a large bat, possibly a Big Brown, passing overhead.

Around 11:30 I decided to walk deep into the Blind Creek Forest to take a thumbnail census of the Chorus Frogs. I found about ten males calling, in total. Occasionally I would hear what sounded like a Spring Peeper, but couldn't be sure. Back in the trailer, Pat and I were serenaded briefly by a pack of Coyotes calling from the Hogsback. They sounded like wolves that had been drinking heavily. The overnight low was +8° C. A Great Horned Owl hooted three times and, much later, A Screech Owl gave its warble-call. I went out with the flashlight five times to see if any flyinmg squirrels were at the feeders. Zilch.

The reproductive theme was continued next morning, with literally hundreds of birds calling, some of them already pairing up. Pat pointed out that the strong south wind had brought in new migrant arrivals, including Brown-headed Cowbirds, Grackles and others. The Juncos, meanwhile, had yet to leave for the north. As for pairings, we saw a male Downy trying to feed a female (she refused the offer), two male Titmice chasing a female, two Flickers inspecting a snag for nesting holes, and Brown-headed Cowbird males jousting for the attentions of a female. Pat surprised a pair of Mallards out of VP-A by The Hole.

While Pat did some heavy work, cleaning up for the coming work day and re-organizing the camp, I inspected the Regeneration Zone (RZ) and counted over 50 planted trees now taller than me, along with about 15 volunteers, mostly Walnut & Ash, in the same size class. There are about 250 planted trees still shorter than me in the RZ. Many of the shorter trees have been heavily nipped by deer. (This produces crooked saplings, with lateral buds taking over the job of terminal buds.)

By mid afternoon the sky had clouded over. Darren arrived, this time alone, and we wasted little time getting to the traps. (See images below). The creek trap had five fish in it from three species. Pat helped to move the fish one at a time onto the background cloth where they could be photographed (one overall, one CU of head area, one mug-shot frontal). Catch of the day included two White Suckers (already logged), two northern Pike (a real surprise), and a peculiar-looking fish called a Hogsucker. The river trap was a disappointment to Darren, who had hoped for at least one Pickerel. Instead, one "Mullet." (All fish were returned to their habitat after examination & photography.)

Glen Jacobs, Darren's uncle and something of a celebrity* arrived for a social visit, coffee & pie. We decided to have him up for a visit in June.

REMINDER: TTLT volunteers will join us next weekend for the annual work day, with many fun activities planned: fence signage, trail work, cleanup, etc.

birds: (28)

American Crow (EW); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (LM); American Woodcock (LM); Belted Kingfisher (FC); Black-capped Chickadee (LM); Blue Jay (BCF); Brown Creeper (BCF); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Common Flicker (LM/HBF); Common Grackle (LM); Dark-eyed Junco (LM); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Eastern Screech Owl (BCF); Eastern Towhee (GF); Great Blue Heron (LM); Great Horned Owl (FCF); Mallard (H); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Red-winged Blackbird (FC); Song Sparrow (LM); Tufted Titmouse (GF); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (BCF); Wood Duck (TR)

new species: [with many thanks to Jane Bowles for above-and-beyond work]

Anomodon moss** Anomodon rostratus WR/W JB Mr25/10
Hypnum moss Hypnum Lindberghii HB/W JB Mr25/10om
Phellinus bracket*** Phellinus sp. BCF kd/GT Mr25/10

Northern Pike *Esox lucius* FC DJ Ap02/10
Northern Hogsucker *Hypentelium nigricans* FC dj/KD Ap02/10
Golden Redhorse *Moxostoma erythrurum* TR dj/KD Ap02/10

* Glen was the language coach for Daniel Day Lewis in the movie Last of the Mohicans. Glen remarks that DDL spoke better Delaware than the Indian actors!

** location just off-property at base of tree near ravine

*** Greg Thorn comments that this genus has been split into approx. 100 spp and that revision is ongoing. IDs are consequently uncertain at this time.

IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)



Box net is extracted from Creek to reveal five fish in three species. Darren & Pat are about to extract them.

(click on image to enlarge)



“Northern Hogsucker” is very much a southern fish. Glen Jacobs’ dad used to call them “Stone-carriers,” owing to the concave cranium. This is a young specimen, barely a third of its adult length. Four broad black bands distinguish the adult

(click on image to enlarge)



This Golden Redhorse was the only inhabitant of the roll-net when we pulled it out of the river. Local fishermen call both it and the Silver Redhorse “Mullets.”

(click on image to enlarge)



Northern Pike was NOT expected by Darren (two, already)