

Birds are Coming Back & the Water is Being Delivered...

Newport Forest Tuesday April 20 2:10 - 8:00 pm

weather: prec. omm; RH 44%; BP 101.4 kPa; calm; sn/hz. T 21° C
purpose: setting up for 2010 tree-planting
participants: Pat, Kee

Yesterday I drove to the Garden of Eden Nursery (in Quaker country SE of here: Eden, Mount Salem, New Sarum, Corinth & Sparta) to check out their nursery stock. On a suggestion of Jane Bowles, I stocked up on hickory, their only spp being Shagbark (10) & Bitternut (10), both in 12" bare root). I also picked up some singles in spuds: (3' - 4'): Fragrant Sumac, a nice Juneberry, and a Sycamore.

At 3 pm the Carruthers water truck came in to deliver 1000 gal to our 2000 gal tank -- the Drought Buster. (P) This was all part of the mobilization to get ahead of the impending drought. The water supply is now ready for the weekend. Meanwhile, at least two of the bluebird boxes along the road have been taken over by nesting pairs of Tree Swallows.

Down at the trailer, Pat did some birding while I went through the Regen Zone, locating all the knee-high saplings and red-flagging them for the watering crew. Trees over knee height get a yellow flag, while trees over chest height get a yellow tape. (The smallest planted trees get priority, obviously.) In the course of this survey, I found only nine dead saplings from previous years, a pretty good mortality where a 50% loss is not atypical. Meanwhile, Pat trekked the Gallery Forest and Creek Bluffs looking for Amelanchier to sort out *A. arborea* vs *A. laevis*. Then she spotted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the Black Maple by the Nook. We don't see this particular bird very often.

We walked to the river where Pat examined the emerging shoreline and I went over the bluffs and into the Riverside Forest to check on the Bluebells & Co, (P) Up to this point we had been hearing a strange bird call that we couldn't quite place, a brief, rising whistle. In the woods by the Bluebells, I happened to spot a Towhee watching me from a nearby log. Then it opened its bill. There was the call. It should not surprise us that, like many birds, the Towhee has more than one call -- besides "Drink your tea."

After supper in the trailer we were joined by one of Two-stripe's male progeny. Since we can't tell them apart yet, we have decided to call them both "Waldo." He appeared to be in good shape, although not too thrilled with the vitamin A-laced kibble. No sign of distemper. We caught a glimpse of Mrs Rose Grosbeak, just back from Peru, beating the earlier phonological record by one day. We had wanted to take the wasp blaster to the ever-multiplying caterpillar tents in the Lower Meadow, but decided to leave that for the next visit.

birds: (24)

American Crow (UM); American Robin (GF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (Tr); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Canada Goose (TR); Common Grackle (ER); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Towhee (BW); Field Sparrow (LM); Great Blue Heron (LM); Killdeer (Rd); Mourning Dove (LM); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (FCF); Red-winged Blackbird (ER); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (FCF); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); White-crowned Sparrow (Tr); Wild Turkey (HL); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (GF)

new species:

Fragrant Sumac *Rhus aromatica* LM/GF KD Ap20/10
(We don't normally buy new species!)

phenology: Summer Azures out, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks back, Amelanchier in full bloom.

IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)

(click on image to enlarge)

(click on image to enlarge)



The water truck makes a delivery to the Drought Buster (Brad Carruthers & his tri-axle tanker)



The Virginia Bluebell patch seems to get a little bigger every year. Here, mixed with False Solomon's Seal, Wild Leek and a few other species, the Bluebells extend for well over 100 metres to a pile of river drift in the distance, picking up again on the other side, albeit more sparsely.



Waldo heads off to work early -- around 6:30 pm last friday.