

No Skinks

Newport Forest Sunday May 9 2010 2:05 - 6:40 pm

weather: prec. 26 mm; RH 64%; BP 102.5 kPa; cld/sn; W 0-10 kmh; T 9° C
purpose: trail work
participants: Kee, Steve, Rick

As I watched the rain blobs cross Newport Forest on the weather radar the other day, I fantasized a 50-60 mm downpour. Not quite, as you will see from the rain- gauge reading in our header. Still, it means we don't have to water for a couple of weeks.

I got a call from Darren at Rondeau Provincial Park the other day. Would we like a load of wood chips from the Park? "As long as they're clean," I said, meaning free of insect or fungal pests. (The TTLT wouldn't be very happy about that) He replied, "They might have some skinks in them."

When I drove in, a Red-tailed Hawk was patrolling the Lower Meadow at cruising altitude, always a welcome sight. Around 3 pm Steve drove in with Darren's trailer in tow. I didn't realize the amount of wood chip material involved -- at least two cubic yards. We saw no skinks as we raked and shoveled it into the mulch pile at the corner of the Lower Meadow. Steve had to leave early, so Rick and I went into the Blind Creek Forest and lined some 300 m of trail. Rick, who drives trucks and does odd jobs, shared his philosophy with me as we worked. Hard times lie ahead, he said, but you'll be fine if you do the opposite of whatever the media tells you!

When we reemerged into the meadow, we were pleased to feel warmer. The air temperature had risen 3 degrees to 12° C. After Rick left, I inspected the Regen Zone, somewhat surprised to see that the Black Cherry we planted three years ago (bare root) was producing its first crop of fruit. (See image below.) Prior to growing one, the only Black Cherrys we had seen were large trees, with flowers too distant to be visible. Puzzled that I hadn't seen any flowers preceding the fruit, I did a little digging and learned that the little balls were not actually fruit (yet), but unopened flower buds.

birds: (15)

American Robin (BCF); Blue Jay (LM); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Common Yellowthroat (BCF); Eastern Towhee (BCF/LM); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-tailed Hawk (LM); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (BCF); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree swallow (Rd); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (BCF);

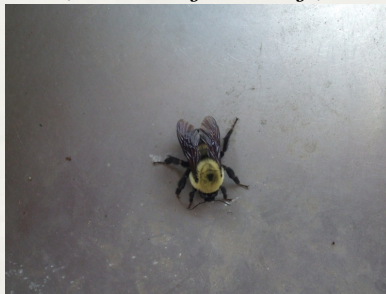
IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)



Young Black Cherry has "taken" with remarkable enthusiasm in the RZ and is already flowering for the first time!

(click on image to enlarge)



Bumblebee found in trailer sink: torpid, but antennae still twitching. Bombus impatiens, at a guess.

(click on image to enlarge)



While working on the trail, I spotted this rather large patch of Early Meadow Rue growing on the slope of the Hogsback. It's fascinating how one species can take over a large area like this.