

Trails & Swallowtails

Newport Forest Sunday May 30 2010 2:05 - 6:30 pm

weather: prec. 0 mm; RH 54%; BP 101.6 kPa; calm; clr; T 32° C

purpose: trail maintenance

participants: Kee plus crew: Steve, Rick, Will

Coming in, we spotted an immature Red-tailed Hawk being mobbed by several crows. The gate was open, indicating that Steve & Rick were already on the job.

There was a noticeable and refreshing cooling effect today when one walked from the gasping heat of the Lower Meadow into the friendly shade of the old Black Maple that makes "The Nook" what it is. Steve and Rick had arrived before 1 pm and had already transported half the mulch pile into the woods using a two-wheelbarrow relay. Will and I joined them for the final push, ending with about two-thirds of the entire Blind Creek Trail now mulched. "We could have the Queen in for a visit," opined Rick.

We then repaired to the Nook for a final round of rehydration, whereupon Steve had to leave to pick up his daughter who works at a cigarette trailer-store on the rez. Rick, meanwhile, checked his cellphone periodically to see if there was a call from the trucking firm he had just hired on with. His new job involves trucking fresh vegetables from the Leamington factory farms to the giant food terminal in Toronto. He is very happy to be reemployed, given today's economic climate.

As Steve's red Chevy truck rolled away up the track, Will and I marched back into the mosquito-ridden woods to pick up at the end of the mulch and clear some deadfall across the trail further on, then up and over the Hogsback, where we started clearing (me with brush-hook) and scraping (Will with hoe) the riverside portion of the trail from the Hogsback slope clear across to Bluebell Woods, about 90% of the entire length. One more visit should put the trails in shape for important visitors who are soon to descend on the place: potential land and/or money donors, we're told.

Although the mosquitoes were thicker than ever, they didn't seem to bother me that much. They rose in clouds from the vegetation with every stroke of the brush-hook. "What's an old guy like me doing this for?" I gritted. Answer: exercise, exercise, exercise. Will called my attention to a cooing sound. "What's that?" "Aha!, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo." Called the "Rain Crow" in the southern US, this call promises rain within a day -- or so they say. We also heard a diminutive Eastern Wood-Pee-wee give his thin, high, "Pee-o-weee" call. Then, of all things, A Giant Swallowtail led us through Bluebell Woods and out to the river. It struck me they shouldn't be out this early in the season.

birds: (17) "paucae sed matura"

American Crow (FCF); American Robin (RL); Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose* (FCF); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Eastern Wood Peewee (BBW); Great Blue Heron (HBF); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF); Killdeer (TR); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Red-tailed Hawk (UM); Red-winged Blackbird (TR/BBW); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (BCF/LM); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (Nk); Song Sparrow (LM); Yellow-billed Cuckoo (BCF);

* flock of about 40 birds honking their heads off

phenology:

first Giant Swallowtail (!) Canada Anemones in full bloom

IMAGES:

[\(click on image to enlarge\)](#)

[\(click on image to enlarge\)](#)

[\(click on image to enlarge\)](#)



The “orange dog,” nickname for the larva of the Giant Swallowtail, here seen eating one of its favorite foods, leaves of the Hop-tree. Note resemblance to bird-droppings, thought to be a form of protective colouration. photo AKD



Canada Anemone, or I miss my guess.



Giant Swallowtail, the largest North American Butterfly north of Mexico. It took me a while to locate this image on the web. Most images of G Swallowtails have black as the ground colour, but our local variety is dark brown, as below: photo by “Drees”