

## Trails are Ready...

Newport Forest Sunday June 20 2010 2:15 - 8:45 pm

weather: prec. 0 mm; RH 59%; BP 101.8 kPa; calm; cld/sn; T 28 ° C

purpose: trail maintenance

participants: Kee, Will, Steve

Will and I arrived almost simultaneously with Steve at the main gate, Rick wasn't with Steve, as he had just finished a long haul & needed sleep. However, Steve brought his weed-eater and that was the main ingredient in today's successful trail-grooming operation. It's an awesome machine that does the work of three or four brush-hook-wielding workers in the same time.

We groomed Edgar's Trail to the river, cleared a path to Mussel Beach (now almost fully emerged), then the Thames River Trail: up and over the bluffs, down and across the Riverside Forest, and so on, Will following with his hoe, but falling ever further behind. Except for some grassy stretches in the Blind Creek Forest and the mulched portion there, the trail looks like brown velvet. It gives me the shivers just to walk on it! Stewards are invited to share the experience.

My own role, apart from a spell of scraping with the hoe, was to clip overhangs of rambunctious saplings, as well as some multiflora rose that was getting out of hand. I was surprised to find a whole patch of Michigan Lilies deep in the Riverside Forest, where we had never seen them before. Leaving the Hogsback, I spotted and photographed a puzzling yellow crust fungus --or possibly a slime -- that appeared in none of my reference books. Greg Thorn may have an opinion.

After a social break in the Nook, Steve took off and I set Will to work cutting a thousand-stemmed multiflora rose that was trying to take over a portion of the Regen Zone, about 2 m high and 5 m wide. While Will beavered away, I made a trailer supper, delighting in the calls of about three Wood Thrushes, finally back.

The Murrays dropped by to check on their release. Although the female raccoon named "Uno" had not been seen during their last three visits, she appeared to be using her nesting box on occasion. Ken thought she was probably still in the area. The Murrays are now visiting every three days, stretching out the intervals as Uno becomes accustomed to her new home. We did not see Uno, but Strawtail came in for a feed just before sunset. This is an impoverished male whose pale and disheveled fur continues to indicate a poor diet. Meanwhile, the trail cam had picked up a mother and four kits at the water tub by the camera on two separate nights over a week ago. It was impossible to determine if this was Wanda or another mother. Speaking of the trail cam, it also picked up a Coyote coming through the Hole at 7:48 am last wednesday morning.

In camp the Chipmunks were up to their seed-hoarding antics, running a shuttle between the tray feeders and their underground granary, by now a veritable Fort Knox of seeds and nuts. (Winter? No problem!) During a recent trip to Santa Fe NM, I had occasion to visit a Prairie Dog colony in a vacant lot well within the city limits. When a prairie dog stands on guard at its burrow entrance, it has the same profile as our chippies when they stand up to look around. (And of course, they're close relatives.)

Will spotted an Eastern Cottontail while clearing the rose bushes in the Regen Zone. Growth continues to be stellar, with some of the ten-year trees now 5 m in height or better!

birds: (13 -- no time for birding)

American Robin (FCF); Bank/Cliff Swallow (TR); Blue Jay (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Field Sparrow (UM); Gray Catbird (GF); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (RSF); Northern Oriole (GF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (LM); Wild Turkey (MB); Wood Thrush (BCF)

new species:

'Franged Chilodon'\* Chilodontopsis sp. FC KD Je30/10

\*This is a Nassaphorean ciliate; the order is characterized by a fringe of cilia circling the forward part of the cell and a cyrtos or ingestion basket just under the cell wall.

phenology: first Wood Thrushes, Michigan Lilies in bloom

precipitation: Here is the rainfall situation at present, in comparison with past years. All figures represent total precipitation (including snow) to the end of June.

year precipitation

2010 280 mm (drought year?)  
2009 519 mm  
2008 544 mm  
2007 305 mm (drought year)  
2006 453 mm  
2005 345 mm (drought year)  
2004 200 mm (drought year)

It's a good thing we're almost done with the trails because we may well spend the rest of the summer watering in the Regen Zone.

## IMAGES

*(click on image to enlarge)*



*Michigan Lilies seem to pop up in unexpected places, according to Pat, as here in the Riverside Forest. (Good quality of photo is entirely accidental.)*

*(click on image to enlarge)*



*Mussel Beach is exposed for the first time since the ice went out in February. This is where we normally spot Spiny Softshell Turtles that come out from the river to bask in the sun. Now we can start our watch again. . .*

*(click on image to enlarge)*



Stealth Cam 06/11/2010 00:53:43 55F

*Mother raccoon with four (?) kits caught by trail cam at water tub:*