

It Never Rains But It ...

Newport Forest Sunday July 18 2010 1:40 - 9:05 pm

Weather: prec. 58 mm; RH 83%; 100.9 kPa; calm; ovcast; T 28° C

Purpose: to finish trail and search for new species

Participants: Pat, Kee

It is now nearly certain that the Bobolinks did not select any of the Newport Forest open areas for their nesting ground this year. They are probably somewhere else in the general area. We finished measuring the Thames River Trail, coming out at 1640 m. (For those walking it, the trail has four segments: Edgar's Trail to the River Landing, the Bluffs Trail from the River Landing to Riverside Forest, the Riverside Trail up to the Hogsback, and the Blind Creek Trail from the Hogsback down to the Blind Creek Forest and through to Edgar's Trail again.)

After the last stake was driven, we went to the River Landing, where I found a Spotted Water Hemlock (already logged) before moving on. Pat had a field day, finding a Black-and-yellow Argiope spider beside the path, being overflown by a Giant Swallowtail, then spying a Green Heron perched across the river. It was joined by what appeared to be a younger Green Heron and the two flew off to the mouth of Fleming Creek. (A Giant Swallowtail also showed up later at camp.)

I went to the Sandbar to inspect the trees there, but found the trail incomplete, blocked by a dense growth of Stinging Nettle. Next maintenance visit, we'll push on through to the young trees. Elsewhere in the Riverside Forest, fungi seemed to be sprouting everywhere after this last rain, Armillaria, Pleurotus, Russula, Schizophyllum, and Xerula, among others. Up on the Hogsback, I inspected the fragmented canopy, noting that about half the trees showed evidence of crown dieback, probably a long-term drought effect.

Back at camp, I inspected the Regen Zone, finding virtually all the trees in good shape, except for a young oak that had been stripped by tent caterpillars. I also spotted my first ant-mimic beetle on the head of a Queen Anne's Lace plant. Pat, meanwhile, was visited by an Eastern Cottontail rabbit and enjoyed watching a Red Squirrel at the Hickory tray feeder.

Steve and Karen Logan stopped by for a "hillbilly dinner," even as storm clouds gathered in the west. We stretched the visit as far as we dared, getting out to the road just before a driving rain and lashing winds hit the area.

Birds: (21)

American Crow (FCF); American Robin (BCF); Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose (TR); Common Flicker (EW); Common Grackle (BCF/ET); Common Yellowthroat (LM); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Gray Catbird (GF); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF); Green Heron (TR); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (Nk); Spotted Sandpiper (MB); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wood Thrush (BCF)

Best bird: Green Heron

New species:

Ant-mimic Beetle *Euderces picipes* LM KD J18/10
'Archimedes Snail' *Discus [patulus]* BCT KD J18/10

Phenology: first cicada heard

Drought watch: precipitation shortfall 26%, now dropping ?

IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)

(click on image to enlarge)

(click on image to enlarge)



Ant-mimic beetle (upper left) enjoys a lunch of pollen on Queen Anne's Lace flowerhead. (Drag to desktop for close-up.)

One often sees a dark spot (middle right) in the middle of a Queen Anne's Lace flowerhead. No one seems to know just what function it serves. I fantasize it's there to make "other" insects think it's a great place to visit, like a duck decoy.



A young Spotted Water Hemlock, seen here growing near the river, looks innocent enough. The plant is poisonous however, even deadly poisonous, depending on 1) the parts of plant eaten, 2) when* it is eaten, 3) and by whom.

Extract from a plant of the same genus, Cicuta, was administered to Socrates as punishment for "corrupting" the youth of Athens. His death was apparently preceded by a slight narcotic effect, followed by convulsions. (All 5 species of this genus are poisonous.)

***in plant's growth cycle**



The woods were full of fungi after the recent heavy rain. Here is a troop of what may be one of the most common mushrooms in the world, a cosmopolitan species called Common Porecrust or Splitgill Bracket (Schizophyllum commune).