

Beating the Bushes

Newport Forest Thursday August 12 2010 3:15 - 6:50 pm

weather: prec. 10 mm; RH 88%; BP 101.2; calm; cld/sn; T 32° C
purpose: to find new species
participants: Kee, Rami

In the company of a young friend who enjoys the outdoors, I was all set to find some new arthropods, when it began to rain. We had already recorded the 7 mm in the gauge, when the General Operations Director decided to top it up to 10 mm. Once again, we find ourselves in a position to skip watering for another week, even as the rain shortfall begins to climb again. The situation is distinctly peculiar. I can only imagine that the drought signs are not worse because the high humidity has been slowing the drying-out process. Meanwhile, Rami spotted a Cottontail rabbit under the Hickory feeder.

We walked down to the creek, noting a bird (larger than a Phoebe) fly quickly away from the Upper Rapids. About the size of a robin. We walked to the river to look for Spiny Softshells, seeing none. The usual Cedar Waxwings were feeding over the river. On our return to camp, I spotted a Red Squirrel at the Hickory feeder.

We beat the bushes (literally) along the track onto a white sheet, netting earwigs, spiders, and ants, mostly. The *Cerceris* wasp I spotted on a leaf of Jane's Sassafras, getting two somewhat distant photographic angles in the process.

New species:

Whitebanded Crab spider *Misumenoides formosipes* GF/LM KD Au12/10
'Pollenbag Leafcutter' *Megachile* [*frigida*] LM KD Au J125/10
'Yellow-striped Digger' *Cerceris* sp.* LM/GF KD Au12/10

*NOT *C. arenaria* or *C. fumipennis*, but clearly a Crabronine wasp

Bee protocol: (taken late in afternoon, sky partially cloudy)

HB BB OB SF LF SW LW
0 6 0 2 1 0 0 NO honeybees on this round

Drought watch: precipitation shortfall 29.5 % (only 2004 was this bad)

Phenology: Goldenrod 5% in bloom

IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)



Mussel Beach is a great basking spot for Spyns. In the past we have seen up to three turtles of various sizes sunning themselves on the clay shore. So far this year -- none.

(click on image to enlarge)



*The dropsheet reveals a yellow crab spider (*Tomissidae*), along with a tiny European Striped Snail, a withered goldenrod leaf, and some sticktight..*

Here is another worrisome trend to go along with the absent Ruffed Grouse, Southern Flying Squirrel, and other critters. We have nightmares that seemingly innocent "conservation" activities have triggered some subtle chain of ecological interactions that have led to extirpation of species!

(with apologies for the distant view)