

A Busy Weekend!

Newport Forest Sunday September 12 2010 1:00 - 7:55 pm

weather: prec. 10 mm; RH 82%; BP 101.7 kPa; calm; sn/cld; T 24° C

purpose: tour for VIP visitor

participants: Pat, Chris, Kee

My brother Chris, a well-known writer and naturalist, had never been on the property before today, so we were quite keen that everything be right. The trails were good and the weather we hoped for materialized just as he arrived.

A bit of rain in the gauge was an added bonus. In the general area of Wardsville, we have seen many trees not exactly turning colour, but simply "crisping out," their leaves withering before they even turn brown. Over the last few months there has been just enough rain for the planted trees in the Regen Zone -- with a few extra waterings on the side.

Heather Campbell, one of the Newport Stewards, arrived a bit later to pick up some plants from Pat's garden, but stayed for a lunch snack. I made arrangements to take Heather around the property soon for a tree-ID seminar, an area of her knowledge that she has always felt was deficient.

Chris and I walked the Thames River trail, stopping first at Mussel Beach where Chris spotted several Tiger Beetles running around. I managed to get a reasonable photo of one of them. (see New species below.) We started a Great Blue Heron and a Canada Goose, then poked around on the beach, finding some fossils and a thunderstone or two.

We walked over the Hogsback Bluffs, then down into the Riverside Forest, where I showed him the very sharp ecocline or boundary between the northern riverine forest type and the mesic beech-maple type. It's quite dramatic: you look to the right of the imaginary line and you see the Box Elder-dominated forest. To the left, the ground is mostly bare of vegetation and maples rule -- except for a "predatory" Sycamore that I couldn't help showing off. It has spent the last 10+ years slowly engulfing a maple. (See images below) Why are there so few beeches here? Harvey Newport once told me that they cut all the beeches long ago to make room for more profitable lumber. Anyway, there's a nice stand on the shoulder of the Hogsback, seeding its way ever outward. A few hundred more years and we should be there.

On the way up the Hogsback Chris spotted a beautiful Tremex wasp laying eggs in the bark of an Elm. These wasps grow to a maximum length of two inches, not counting the ovipositor. Chris gasped when I showed him our rather large Chinquapin Oak growing on the east side of the Hogsback. Well over a metre in diameter, it dwarfed a Chinquapin that Chris had seen at the Pinery. Down in the Blind Creek Forest, some new fungi had sprouted and since I could not name them immediately I was forced to collect them. One was a cheesy-looking bracket with pores so tiny we simply could not make them out with the naked eye.

Pat went birdwatching up by the Snag and was intrigued by the sight of a flock of two dozen "confusing fall warblers," along with a possible Savannah sparrow under some brush.

Back in camp, we enjoyed cheese omelets prepared by Pat -- not your regular hillbilly fare. This was followed by our favorite Too Tall lemon cake -- which should probably be illegal to serve -- or possess with intent to traffic.

As the sun slowly sank on what had been a beautiful afternoon, Chris departed for Toronto and we cleaned up camp, leaving a few scraps for the little nocturnal guys.

Notes: The "cheesy" bracket turned out to be the White Cheese Polypore (not new). A smaller mushroom turned out to be *Psathyrella candolleana* (also not new). I will take the two remaining specimens -- one definitely new -- to Greg Thorn, our consulting mycologist.

Birds: (14)

American Gold Finch (LM); American Robin (Tr); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose (MB); Cedar Waxwing (GF); Common Yellowthroat (LM); Eastern Wood Peewee (GF/Sng); Gray Catbird (BCF); Great Blue Heron (TR); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Flicker (GF); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr)

New species:

Common Shore Tiger Beetle *Cicindela repanda* MB cd/KD Sp12/10

Fiery Skipper *Hylephila phyleus* Loc DM/LW Sp11/10

Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus* Loc DM/LW Sp11/10

Northern Parula *Parula americana* Loc DM/LW Sp11/10

Fringed Gentian *Gentiana procera* Loc DM/LW Sp11/10

Notes: Expert birders Dave Martin and Linda Wlardowski were on site yesterday and spotted some 31 species of birds, two of which are listed above as new species for the ATBI list. Both were migrants. (the birds, not Dave & Linda) They also found a new plant and a new skipper.

Bee protocol: conducted late at 5 pm, but weather was favorable

HB BB OB SF LF SW LW

52 36 1 11 8 0 1

(82 43 1 11 15 0 0) << previous visit

Phenology: goldenrod peak bloom over, fall warblers present

Drought watch: precipitation shortfall continues at 25% (2nd worst year of the last ten)

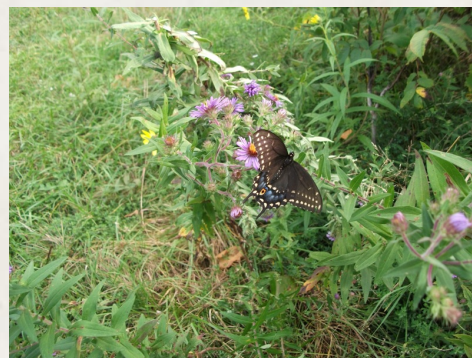
IMAGES:



*Love those shoreline Tiger Beetles !
Courtesy Tom Murray*



*Chris points out edge of
predatory engulfment --
or is it simply true love?*



*A Black Swallowtail nectars in the Lower
Meadow
(We keep hoping for a Pipevine Swallowtail.)*