

Liverwort Hunt a Success!

Newport Forest Saturday September 25 2010 2:00 - 7:45 pm

weather: prec. 10 mm; RH 71%; BP 101.9 kPa; SW 5-15 kmh; ovcsr; T 14° C

purpose: to walk trails
participants: Pat, Kee

We had received email messages from Jane Bowles and Greg Thorn on Friday, declaring a successful hunt for Liverworts on the property that very morning.

After setting up camp, we went down to the creek, me first, Pat later. On the way down, I noticed about a dozen small birds that were too far away to make out -- all flitting from one plant to another. They looked like they were eating seeds. Possibly warbler migrants? We looked behind and under every log by the creek, but could find no liverworts. Apparently, Greg had the same experience on Friday.

I thought about doing the bee protocol, but the weather was not suitable. I did a quick walk along the protocol route, saw two bumblebees and no honeybees at all. The goldenrod is now more than 90% out of flower, with heads turning brown.

We walked to the river bluffs and sat on the bench to watch a huge flock of Common Grackles across the river, approximately 1000 birds. At one point, they all rose into the air, as if at an inaudible signal. By the time I realized what a great shot this would be, fumbling the camera out of my thigh pocket, the flock had already begun to descend. I left the bench in disgust to complete my walk, while Pat patiently remained. Within minutes she was rewarded by the sight of a mature Bald Eagle doing something of a stunt before her very eyes. It hovered out there at eye level, back-winging with claws extended in front of it, as if to dive for a fish. Then, thinking better of the impulse, it flew on. You're too impatient," she says after such missed adventures. One of our native friends has nicknamed her the "Animal Magnet."

Along the same trail I found an orangey mushroom growing on buried wood. Sometimes when I spot a fungus, a name pops into my head, the result of hundreds of hours reading fungus guides. "Golden Pholiota" popped in just then*. Later I found a dead branch with Tender Nest polypores glowing along it. (*Poronidulus conchifer*)

I had an uneventful walk up to the Hogsback, except when, part way up, I was scolded by a Red-tailed Hawk from a tree overhead, as though I were trespassing. I therefore hurried my steps. Pausing for some juice on the Hogsback, I got a call from Pat on the walkie-talkie. She was now on the Blind Creek trail and had just heard heavy footfalls near by. "Was that you?" Nope. "Then I'm heading for the trailer right now!" Down in the Blind Creek Forest myself a few minutes later, I spotted a Wood Frog, my second this week. (P) The footfalls will just have to be added to our long list of "Newport Mysteries."

After a late supper in the trailer, we went out on the deck to find a feral cat staring at us. It took off like a lightning bolt. We put kibble out in the Nook to see who would come as the sun set. Just before we drove out, a single raccoon came to dine. It was too dark to make out "who." The trail cam has been consistently showing a pair of raccoons drinking at the water tub for the last several weeks. We assume these belong to the Twostripe Family.

*Indeed, it was a Golden Pholiota when I went through the list of characters. However, we had logged this species in the Fleming Creek Forest in 2001.

Note: Congratulations and sincere thanks to Jane and Greg. Besides the liverworts that Jane found, there will be several new records from Greg, who identified a number of lichens, some of which will undoubtedly be new. A special report will be issued when these data become available. For the record, it was not us who proposed the bet, but Greg. Having taken the bet, however, it is now our solemn duty to pay off in the form of a steak dinner for the winners! New species don't always come cheap!

Birds: (12)

American Crow (BCF); Bald Eagle (TR); Black-capped Chickadee (BCF/LM); Blue Jay (UM/CkBlfs); Canada Goose

(TR); Common Grackle (TR/N); European Starling (UM); Gray Catbird (GF/E); Mourning Dove (LM); Red-tailed Hawk (RSF/HB); Turkey Vulture (BCF); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr);

Drought watch: precipitation shortfall still hovering around 25%.

IMAGES:



Late-bloomers: It was hard to find ANY goldenrods still in bloom at this late date, but a few can be seen in the foreground of the Regen Zone. Purple flowers are Asters.



The edge of Blind Creek Forest can be seen in the background. Eyelash Cups, an Ascomycete fungus, dot this muddy log near the creek. Each "cup" is ringed by a fringe of black "hairs" resembling an eyelash. You can just make out the black edges in this image.



The woody plants have already begun to take on their fall colours. Here a vine of Climbing Poison Ivy sports a variety of orange/brown hues. The dead tree is probably an elm. (When an elm tree dies, the first thing it does is get naked.) Scene is just above Fleming Creek near the trail.