

**Newport Forest**

Saturday May 7 2011

12:40 - 5:50 pm

**Weather:** prec. 40 mm; RH 71%; BP 101.2; clr; calm; T 18°C

**Purpose:** Annual Bluebell Walk

**Participants:** Kee, Erin, Muriel & 12 Visitors

The property was so spongy after its (unexpected) 40 mm of rain, that I hesitated to take the new van+tire combo down to the trailer, leaving it on high ground, instead. I met up with Erin and Muriel at the camp and before I knew it, some eight visitors had arrived (including Terry Grawey, TTLT Board member, and Ron Martin, longtime Friend of Newport Forest). They decided to head out for the Bluebell Walk while I remained behind to pick up stragglers. As it turned out only two more people showed up, namely Bill Maddeford (TTLT Board member) and his wife, Joanne.

We didn't realize just how muddy the trails were until we struggled along the river bluffs, hopping large puddles and walking off-trail to avoid the soupy mud (well churned by the previous group) between the liners. The worst portions were mostly on the slopes of the Hogsback, where seeps crossed the trail. Bill and Joanne had a bit of a struggle in this respect, but both seemed to delight in what they saw and heard around them. Bill is a pretty good birder and called out "Barn Swallow" at the mere sound of some flying above the Riverside Forest. Further along we watched a large flock of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, most of them males competing for the attention of a few females. (Indeed, other evidence of breeding came from a chasing pair of Orioles and Nuthatches in pairs, as well.

The Bluebells were a bit disappointing, not yet fully out, yet close enough that one could see bits of blue throughout the rather extensive patch of these plants. I found one plant with flowers that were fully out. (See below for lousy photo.)

As we came out of the woods, I noted that a few Western Chorus Frogs were still calling and the American Toads were now trilling in greater numbers.

Back at camp, we found that the other group had already left. Then Bill and Joanne left after resting up in the Nook. Left to my own devices, I felt too tired to do any more planting, contenting myself with an extensive tour of the Regen Zone and removing all the bud protectors as I went. I noted that two of the Bigtooth Aspens planted nearly ten years ago now had a base diameter of a good 10 cm. Maples and Ashes have broken bud, Tulip Trees are breaking now and trees like the American Basswood, Hickories and Oaks had yet to do so. It occurred to me

that this was a good time to carry out a census of the ant mounds in the Regen Zone area, while the vegetation is still low. Chipmunks and Red Squirrels raided the camp feeders while an incessant shuttle of birds filled the gaps between raids.

**Birds: (24)**

American Crow (HB); American Robin (GF); Barn Swallow (RSF); Black-capped Chickadee (BCF); Blue Jay (Tr); Brown-headed Cowbird (BCF); Canada Goose (TR); Common Flicker (RSF/W); Common Yellowthroat (LM/BCF); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Eastern Towhee (EW); Gray Catbird (GF); Hairy Woodpecker (FCB); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Oriole (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Red-tailed Hawk (BCF); Red-winged Blackbird (ER); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (BCF); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (RSF); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (RSF/W)

**Phenology:**

Six-spotted Tiger Beetles out; White Trout Lilies, Trilliums, Wood Violets all in bloom; Virginia Bluebells almost in bloom; Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Gray Catbird, Common Yellowthroat all back

**Trail Cam:**

one Virginia Deer, one Raccoon\*, one Wild Turkey hen

\*This could be the nursing mother; the fur is worn away from her rump, a not uncommon result of sitting for hours on one's rump with kits crawling all over.

**IMAGES:**



Virginia Bluebells sport their mystical, out-of-focus blue flowers.



Bluebell Walkers take a break with fearless leader Erin Carroll (on left) and co-leader Muriel Andreae (far right)





Nursing Raccoon mother heads back to box after drink from tub.  
(ignore time-stamp)