

**Newport Forest**

Friday My 13 2011

3:45 - 8:30 pm

**Weather:** prec. 14 mm; RH 83%; BP 100.5 kPa; calm; ovcast; T 29° C

**Purpose:** finish planting trees plus maintenance

**Participants:** Kee, Steve

I arrived before Steve did and drove down to the trailer with no problem. As soon as I disembarked from the van I was accosted by three female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks demanding that I fill the Hickory feeder without delay. Then two Red Squirrels descended on that tray before the Grosbeaks could get fairly started.

The place was in wonderful shape. The sun broke through a misty haze, bathing the woods and meadow in a subdued, mystical light. I could hear American Toads trilling in the Blind Creek Forest, along with a new voice in the choir: Gray Tree Frogs. I took a quick walk through the Regen Zone, noting that the Young Yellow Birch was now mature enough to produce catkins.

Steve arrived and we got down to planting the eight remaining trees, that being the main purpose for today's visit. We planted Red Oaks, White Ash, and Bitternut Hickory in the Regen Zone, two trees going into the adjacent strip on the other side of the road. Our next job was to add an "artificial limb" to the old Black Maple in the Nook. The "limb" was a two-by-four that replaced the branch that used to give easy access to the Raccoon nursery box.

I had wanted to start mapping the ant mounds in the Regen Zone, but the day was already growing late, so in the time remaining, we decided to walk to the river, instead. Good idea. Along the way we stopped at Vernal Pond A, where Steve spotted a very large Green Frog and a Chorus Frog not far away. Walking Edgar's Trail further to the bend, we stopped to install a new trail cam that looked directly down a well-traveled game trail leading into the heart of Blind Creek Forest.

Before we arrived at the river, an Eastern Cottontail come out to the trail, watching our approach. Then another came out to watch. When we got too near, they both hopped off into the woods but instead of completing their escape, they stopped a mere five metres away under a fallen branch, where Steve spotted a third Cottontail watching us. It was a bit strange, we thought.

At the river we started a majestic bird of prey that had been perched in a tree overhanging the river. Steve wondered if it might be a Golden Eagle, but I decided it was actually an immature "baldie", as some birders call it. After Steve

left, a young raccoon showed up in the Nook, as it has done the last three visits.

**Birds:** (19)

American Crow (HB); American Goldfinch (LM); Bald Eagle (TR); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Common Flicker (GF); Common Yellowthroat (BCF/LM); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF); Indigo Bunting (GF); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Oriole (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (FCF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (TR); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr) Best bird: *Indigo Bunting*

**Mammals:** (5)

Eastern Cottontail (ET); Eastern Gray Squirrel (GF); Raccoon (Nk); Red Squirrel (GF); Striped Chipmunk (Tr)

**Phenology:**

Morels appearing

**Newport Forest Anecdote Archive:** It's an ill wind that blows no good!

Excerpted from the Bulletin of October 26 2003. Nic Mihlik was a volunteer:

“We drove down to the trailer, encountering on our way a white balloon fluttering in the middle of the road like an exhausted animal. ‘I hope no kids have been down here,’ I menaced. Nic jumped out of the van. ‘It’s got handwriting on it.’

“1 free game of laser tag - must bring balloon  
Laser Blast. Greenville (903) 455-2820”

At home I decided to call the number on the balloon, thinking it might be Greenville SC. I was very surprised to learn that I was talking to Greenville TX. That person was equally surprised that their promotional balloon had traveled some 1017 miles in less than two days! The Greenville paper did a story about a Canadian who found one of their balloons over a thousand miles away. The average speed of the balloon was a bit over 22 mph.

**IMAGES** A walk to the river



Very large female Green Frog looks almost big enough to be a Bullfrog (locally extirpated), but isn't that species. Two narrow ridges or "folds" running down its back, along with smaller size, are the only distinguishing features of these otherwise remarkably similar species.



This Yellow or Wood Morel had only recently sprouted when we came upon some near the river. The mushroom is better-than-edible when prepared properly, according to Steve. He usually collects up to three bags of morels during the spring, allowing them to dry out for later use in various dishes. Others he immediately fries up in butter and has them with his steak.



As the river clarifies, fish become more visible and prone to being caught by Eagles and Ospreys. Our young Bald Eagle had been perching in the tree overhanging the left bank about 100 m away.