

**Newport Forest**

Thursday June 2 2011

1:55 - 8:00 pm

**Weather:** prec. 22 mm; RH 58%; BP 102.5 kPa; clear; W 0-15 kmh; T 18° C

**Purpose:** Mapping ant mounds

**Participants:** Kee, Steve

My paranoia about the beavers being so close to Newport Forest led me to make a quick census of the beaver's favorite trees on site. There are five rather large poplars (*Populus* spp.) in the Regen Zone within about 100 m of dragging distance from the creek. These were planted from 6 to 9 years ago and most of them are now over 6 m in height. Delicious, I'm sure! .

Waiting for Steve to arrive, I walked the rest of the Regen Zone, noting lots of Monarchs and Crescent butterflies about, but few other species. Two rather young trees seem to have some frost damage, but the rest are fine.

When Steve rolled in after an unforeseen delay, we got right to work placing the remaining grid point flags for the ant mound survey & mapping project. It will be a race against time as the goldenrod grows daily, obscuring the little flags and making the survey more difficult. In the process of mapping the second strip of squares, I noticed the odd hump on the ground that seemed to be an ancient mound, long abandoned. Should I include these? I made an executive decision not to, given that I couldn't be 100% sure that they once had been mounds.

During a break in the Nook around 3 pm, the female raccoon that Pat calls "Iris" showed up for some lunch. Much later, after Steve left, the other female, Lily, showed up for her own lunch. She was wet, as though she had just crossed the creek. I assume she keeps her kits in the Fleming Creek Forest. I stayed until nearly 8 pm, but decided to leave before sunset for fear my shepherd's pie would be cold by the time I got home. (Some naturalist!)

I just had time to walk down the hill through the Gallery Forest to the creek. The water levels are still high, but below the banks. On my return I spotted an unfamiliar plant that was in bloom, so I collected it for Pat to examine.

On the way home along Longwoods Road I saw several farmers out in their respective fields, racing to get their crops in, now that the ground has dried out enough to support tractors, ploughs, and seed drills. The spring planting is already a full month behind schedule, thanks to rains that lasted through most of May.

Back home, Pat keyed the new plant out to *Smilax* and we decided that it must be *S. herbacea*. After checking all the characters, Pat put the flowers up to her nose and made a face. “Smells like rotting flesh!.” That clinched it.

### **Ant mound structure:**

We are curious about the underground arrangement of galleries and chambers within and beneath the mounds in the Lower Meadow. But we are not as curious as a certain high school science teacher in Ohio who annually takes his class to a mound area, selects a mound and then pours molten lead into the main entrances. He directs his students to dig up the mound and carefully remove the casting of its underground architecture. Ants, particularly, find the experience educational!

### **Birds: (17)**

American Crow (BCF); American Robin (BCF); Bald Eagle (EW); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (GF); Common Flicker (BCF); Common Yellowthroat (HBF/LM); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Towhee (BCF/LM); Field Sparrow (UM); Great Crested Flycatcher (GF); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (BCF); Turkey Vulture (FCF); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (FCF);

### **New Species:**

Carrion Flower                      *Smilax herbacea*                      FC/GF kd/PD Je02/11  
(Current species count = 1709)

### **Phenology:**

Wild Phlox in bloom, Carrion Flower blooms past peak; Monarda bloom starting, Six-spotted Tiger Beetles still plentiful; Crescent butterflies out

### **Trail Cams: (No.1 had dead batteries)**

No. 2: One deer, probable doe  $\geq 2$  years old, browsing in same spot as the deer photographed a week ago.

IMAGES:



image credit: Stan Malcolm

ABOVE: Grapes? Not quite. Berries of the Carrion Flower grow in globular clusters. Our plants will look like this in about a month.



Fleming Creek is well below its banks but still high enough to mask the rapids upstream in this image. But if one travels upstream another 300 m or so, one arrives at . . .



. . . this beaver dam, as viewed downstream from the Fleming Line bridge. The dam is outlined by white water outflow.