

Newport Forest

Sunday/monday June 5/6 2011

1:40/3:05 pm

Weather: prec. 0 mm; RH 47%; BP 102.0 kPa; NNE 5-10 kmh; T 30° C

Purpose: two-day stay

Participants: Pat, Kee

It was a relief to see the entrance road (aka “farm track”) nicely mowed by Edgar Hurdle and his tractor-drawn bush-hog. He does this in the late spring every year in exchange for a lemon meringue pie. We gave the trailer a spring cleaning and as soon as I had finished scrubbing the floor, I was free to examine the next two rows of the ant mound grid system. It took approximately half an hour to process each row, finding all the mounds within each 10-metre square.

With a clean camp and a clear conscience, Pat and I wobbled down to the creek to have a look around. The water level is now near normal and both the Upper and Lower Rapids are making music once again. While I searched the muddy banks for beaver tracks, Pat took two samples from a patch of rather short Buttercups that she found on the bank downstream.

After supper, Steve and Karen Logan, along with Rick Goodwin, all Friends of Newport, dropped by for coffee and cake. As this was happening, the female raccoon we call Iris dropped by the Nook to join us, keeping her distance. She gulped down the kibble as fast as she could. Then, suddenly a second female showed up and I announced, “That’s Lily.” But it wasn’t. Although this female resembled Lilly superficially, she had a split ear which, according to Steve, had healed a long time ago. Then, just before Steve & Co. had to leave, a third female showed up: Lily at last!

We have had so many tidy hypotheses spoiled by these creatures that I wonder why we keep trying to sort out the local population. We thought Iris was an auslander and Lily the mother who formerly inhabited the nursery box with her kits. But where did the new female come from? Was her resemblance to Lily more than an accident?

Steve gave me a ride up to the gate, so I stopped in to see Nina Hurdle to inform her that the new Director of the TTLT might be coming in for a visit on June 21 and would she be around on that day? Walking back to the Lower Meadow in the twilight, I was startled to see a frog hop across the track. “Leopard out late,” I thought. Bending over I was surprised to discover that it was not a Leopard, but a young Green Frog. One rarely sees Green Frogs in upland areas. But later, back in

the trailer, I heard two or three more Green Frogs calling from the bushes nearby -- well above the creek. What was going on? In a handbook on Amphibians from the trailer library, I discovered that this was the kind of night on which juvenile Green Frogs migrate out of their home territory in search of new habitat. Was that it? Green frogs take several years to mature.

As Twilight deepened into dusk, it happened again, just like last summer; right after wondering what the Coyotes were up to, a chorus started up in Eva's Woods nearby. They had apparently been drinking heavily, unable to hold a note. Were they celebrating an abundance of raccoon kits? No Beatrix Potter Award for them!

After Pat went to bed I stayed up to read a bit. I was reading a book on the strange relationship between quantum mechanics and consciousness. Spooky stuff. A Screech Owl began to call just then, as if in agreement. The owl continued to warble for an hour. Was this to celebrate recent Green Frog dinners? Later I became increasingly aware of a regular chorus of Gray Tree Frogs over in Eva's Woods. They went on all night, as far as I know, a continuous chucking. I went outside to look at the stars. Two meteors streaked in from the NE. Lily was out on the road eating some scattered kibble, while Iris helped herself to the remaining birdseed in the Hickory feeder by the trailer. Fireflies pulsed sparsely over the Lower Meadow. I didn't hear any kits until bedtime.

The day dawned bright and sunny, with clear skies. While Pat went birding at Blind Creek, I finished rows D, E, & F of the ant mound map, ending up with exactly 40 mounds in the 60 x 60 m area of the Lower Meadow Regeneration Zone. We are now in a position to make a map of the mounds with 2 m of resolution, good enough to spot most trends and tendencies. Pat returned from her expedition to Blind Creek to report that a lot of Green Frogs had congregated in the vernal ponds there. The Green Frogs are on the move!

We decided to walk Edgar's Trail to the river, fearing the worst from mosquitoes. But the heat of day (now 33° C) reduced their numbers to a minor nuisance. At the river, Pat had a "field day" discovering possibly new plants. We noticed that new hummocks had appeared on the bluffs (P). I spent several minutes watching bumble bees visiting the many Yellow Irises now in bloom along the Landing trail. None of the expected birds, from Cedar Waxwings to Great Blue Herons, showed up. Back in camp, we were scolded by a black-phase Eastern Gray Squirrel who had arrived late at the feeders.

Near the end of our stay we tried to catch up on the butterfly list, but only to the

point of finding that the Crescents flying about were Northerns. We did not have time to confirm even the genera that we had seen fleetingly while working on other projects: satyrs, ringlets; fritillaries, and hairstreaks.

Birds:(31)

American Crow (EW); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (GF); Bald Eagle (TR); Black-capped Chickadee (LM); Blue Jay (CF); Brown-headed Cowbird (BCF); Canada Goose (LM); Common Flicker (EW); Common Grackle (HBF); Common Yellowthroat (HBF/LM); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Eastern Kingbird (HL); Eastern Screech Owl (FCF); Eastern Towhee (GF); Field Sparrow (LM); Gray Catbird (BCF); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF); Killdeer (LM); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (FCF); Northern Oriole (TR); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (LM); Song Sparrow (TR); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (EW); Wood Duck (VPA); Wood Thrush (FCF)

Leps: (11)

Angleming* (Nk); Black Swallowtail (LM); Cabbage White (TR); Giant Swallowtail (GF); Monarch (LM); Mourning Cloak (LM); Northern Crescent (LM); Silver-spotted Skipper (TR); Sulphur* (LM); Tiger Swallowtail (LM); Viceroy (TR)

*not ID'd to sp.

New Species:

Pat has returned to plant identification, looking to distinguish similar species within problem genera like *Convolvulus* & *Ipomoea* (Bindweed & Morning Glory), as well as *Ranunculus* (Buttercup) and an assortment of clovers collected earlier, such as *Trifolium* and *Melilotus*. Once she can check the flowers, there will be (potentially) five new species.

Phenology:

Six-spotted Tiger Beetles still abundant; first Ebony Jewelwings out; first firefly display; Gray Tree Frogs in chorus; Green Frog migration (?)

IMAGES:



Mound #26 pictured here is in Square D5, Cell d2. It has a basal diam \approx 0.6 m, is crowned with a variety of grasses, and has actively foraging citizens.

Each mound now has its own serial number and location information: first comes the code for its grid square, C2, E5 or whatever. Then comes the cell code based on a 5x5 subdivision of each (ten-metre) square into 2x2 m “cells”: b5, c1, etc. Standing in the cell, one cannot fail to see the mound so specified, usually at one’s feet.



We call them “hummocks”, large clumps of soil knit together by vegetation and slowly edging downslope into the water. The river is still about 2 m above normal, concealing a hard clay beach that extends several metres out from the base of the bluffs. The loss of hummocks is a major mechanism of erosion (“mass-wasting”, as the geologists call it). Some of the hummocks further upslope are as large as a school bus, with deep slump scars since filled in with vegetation!



I demonstrate the “bee door”, by inserting my little finger under a flap that hangs over each petal. The flap is called the “style arm” and is not a regular petal, but a part of the female apparatus: stigma+style+ovary. Bees looking for nectar are forced to crawl under the flap, depositing pollen from their backs to the sticky style arm. The Yellow Flag shown here is nonnative, but pretty, nevertheless.