

**Newport Forest**

Wednesday June 15 2011

2:05 - 8:00 pm

**Weather:** prec. 0 mm; RH 64%; BP 101.6 kPa; ovcast; SE 5-10 kmh; T 28° C

**Purpose:** trail maintenance

**Participants:** Kee, Steve

Our time at Newport Forest is necessarily divided between three major projects, namely regeneration, species inventory work, and maintenance. Just when things start getting interesting in one of the first two areas, maintenance rears its ugly head. So it was that Steve and I headed out the Thames River Trail, weapons of mass destruction in hand. Steve's weed-eater is an awesome instrument that does the work of three or four brush-cutters going at it full tilt. My poor garden hoe can barely keep up, but scrape I must.

Maintenance is my only good health habit.

It was a good thing that Steve had his noisy, gas-powered weed-eater turned off as we walked the River Bluffs leg of the trail. Passing an old snag, Steve turned to me. "You hear that?" I shook my head. "There's a honey-tree nearby." We looked around. Steve pointed at the snag, a dead walnut that had broken off about five metres up. We made our way through the underbrush to the base of the snag. Even I could hear the loud hum now. Looking up we could see a dark cleft in the trunk with at least a hundred bees milling about the entrance, some coming, some going, the rest dancing their location messages, presumably (See von Frisch)

"You can't beat wild honey," said Steve looking up wistfully. I kept my thoughts to myself: if a bear finally makes it to the property this summer, it might just get lucky and find the honey tree.

Meanwhile, the sun had broken through the overcast as we got to the hard part in the Riverside Forest. I was sweating, but Steve was getting soaked. His face and coveralls were covered with a green dusting of fragmented vegetation. After a short break on the Hogsback, we decided to double-time it on the Blind Creek trail, cutting and scraping just one side of it. We'll do the other half next time.

Back at camp we took a rehydration break in the Nook, surprised to see the mother Raccoon Lily and four of her kits still wet from crossing the creek. They didn't stay long because there was no kibble around. Instead, they all went up the old Black Maple that shades the Nook, even as another Raccoon, Split-ear, showed up. We didn't know where she came from, but she may have brought at least one

kit with her because now there was a lone kit up in the nursery box staring out at us. (Lily's kits were all up near the top of the maple.) Split-ear showed no fear of me, coming right up to the bag of kibble that I had just retrieved from the van. She knocked it over, then (actually) lay down beside it and began palming one bit at a time, like a sybarite eating truffles.

After Steve left, I inspected the Regen Zone, noting that tent caterpillars had stripped two of the small wild apple trees entirely of their leaves. Jane's Sassafras, as we call it, is growing apace, as are all the other young trees.

There had been very little time to bird today but it was wonderful to see the most brilliantly red Northern Cardinal ever flash through the Nook like a fireball. Before he left, Steve agreed that the Blue Jay population was getting out of hand, not just at Newport Forest, but at Moraviantown, as well. As for other animals, an Eastern Garter Snake wound through the Nook when I first arrived and a black phase Eastern Gray Squirrel came to break the Eastern Chipmunks' monopoly on bird seed.

**Birds: (15)**

American Robin (RSF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Canada Goose (LM); Common Flicker (HB); Common Yellowthroat (HBF/LM); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Oriole (RSF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr);

**New Species: (correction)**

It turned out that only the mosquito (sp.) and the crane fly (sp.), as listed in the previous Bulletin, were new records.

**Phenology:**

First tree crickets calling, vernal ponds drying up.

IMAGES:



If you look carefully, you will see a good dozen little bee-bodies in the air around the dark cleft under the dead limb.



Vernal Ponds are now in the process of drying up. “Tadpoles” have only a week or two to complete their metamorphosis into Wood Frogs, Chorus Frogs, Leopard Frogs, Green Frogs, Gray Tree Frogs, Spring Peepers, and American Toads ! (not to mention newts & salamanders)





Is this Split-ear's kit? It came down from the nursery box to have a look at goings on in the Nook.