

Newport Forest

Wednesday June 29

2:20 - 6:50 pm

Weather: Prec. 4 mm; RH 77%; BP 101.9 kPa; sn/cld; N 5 - 15 kmh; T 24^a C

Purpose: to check trees for disease

Participants: Kee

As soon as I arrived at the camp, I realized that I had neglected to bring along my field pack; no camera, no notebook, etc. As if to console me, a Northern Crescent butterfly settled on my knee as I relaxed in the Nook. By the time I decided to take a quick butterfly survey, a strong northerly breeze had come up, inhibiting the flutterbys. Two Wild Turkeys came out of the Gallery Forest and went trotting down Edgar's Road toward the Upper Meadow.

Today's mandate, to check forest trees for damage, required at least one circuit around the Thames River Trail, a 2 km walk from the camp and back. When I got to the river, I decided to skip checking the beach, then changed my mind. That was good because I saw what was almost certainly a medium-sized Spiny Softshell Turtle dive into the water at my approach. Unfortunately, I did not see the turtle well enough to be sure it was a SST, but that's the *only* kind of turtle we've ever seen on the beach, with an average of about 5 turtle sightings a year.

Jane Bowles had suggested that I check for the presence of a pathogen on Bluebeech, (aka "Musclewood" for its smooth sinewy trunk). This disease causes leaves to abort full development and to curl and brown. I decided to check ash trees as well, for signs of the feared Emerald Ash Borer. Once in the Riverside Forest, I selected ash trees at random along the trail to inspect them for signs of this pest. Ash #1 was clean. But Ash #2 looked terrible. Its top branches were all dead and only a few of the lower branches had any leaves, and few at that. I inspected the trunk for holes. Lots of holes. Some were round-ish, but the majority were D-shaped. I did not see the adult beetle. What a great day to forget my field pack! We plan a visit this coming weekend when I hope (not) to confirm its presence. I checked three more ash trees inside the Beech-maple sector of the forest and found them all apparently clean and healthy.

Starting on the slope of the Hogsback, I selected five Bluebeech trees at random to check their leaves. All appeared normal.

Continuing my ash survey in the Blind Creek Forest, I checked several more trees, finding no further signs of infestation. Dare I say we're at an early stage?

My depression at the supposed Emerald Ash Borer presence was allayed somewhat down at the creek where I found that the Green Dragon we had moved there last summer was now up and running, so to speak. I also discovered that the decapitation of a Green Dragon reported in the previous Bulletin was not the end of that particular plant. It had another stalk and this one is fine. For those visiting Newport Forest any time soon, the plant will be found just shy of the 100 m mark on Edgar's Trail (to the river). Green Dragons are, in any case, somewhat more abundant on the property than we at first thought.

Although I spent as much time in the Nook as ever this visit, not a single raccoon showed up. Chipmunks and a black phase EG Squirrel visited, however

Birds: (15)

American Crow (EW); American Robin (BCF); Blue Jay (Tr); Brown-headed Cowbird (BCF); Common Yellowthroat (LM/ER); Downy Woodpecker (BCF); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF); Northern Cardinal (GF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (HBF); Tree Swallow (Rd); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (ER/GF); Wood Thrush (BCF)

Leps: (6)

Cabbage White (ER/LM); Common Wood Nymph (GF); Inornate Ringlet (Nk); (Meadow Fritillary (RZ); Northern Crescent (Nk) [no Monarchs last 3 visits!]

Phenology: Common Milkweed in bloom

New Species: [tbc]

Emerald Ash Borer *Agrilus planipennis* RSF KD Je29/11
We will treat this ID as "unconfirmed" until a more extensive study can be made.

Note: Newport Forest is just now beginning to recover from a major bark beetle infestation that started in 2005 and laid waste roughly 100 mature Bitternut Hickory trees on site. The Hickory Borer (*Scolytus* sp.) is every bit as thorough as the EAB and has completely opened the canopy in the Blind Creek Forest which had the most bitternuts growing in it. But you can see lots of corpses, a few still standing, in all the Newport Forest components. A boon to fungi & woodpeckers.

IMAGES: (no camera this visit)



Image Credit: US Department of Agriculture

Adult Emerald Ash Borer eats leaves of ash, then lays eggs on bark to ensure a continuing infection.



Image credit: David Cappaert Mich. state U.

Mixed larval stages of EAB with scale in cm; last stage uppermost



image credit: Natasha Wright, Florida Dept of Agriculture

The Hickory Borer *Scolytus quadrispinosus* is every bit as destructive as the Emerald Ash Borer. Infestations of this beetle are particularly common during drought years -- which Newport Forest had four of prior to 2006, when Bitternut trees started crashing to the ground everywhere. In spite of the different scale of this image, the Hickory Borer and the Emerald Ash Borer are both about 5-6 mm in length.