

**Newport Forest**

Saturday July 2 2011

2:50 - 8:00 pm

**Weather:** prec. 0 mm; RH 74%; BP 101.6 kPa; hz/sn; calm; 34° C

**Purpose:** three-day stay (canceled)

**Participants:** Pat, Kee

Owing to a storm, we decided to abort our intended two- (possibly three-) day stay on the property. However, before the storm rolled in early in the evening, we had high heat and humidity to deal with. While Pat refurbished the feeders and set up camp, I took the Thames River Trail to the river and beyond, intending to document the suspected Emerald Ash Borer on site.

At Edgar's Elbow, where the trail makes an abrupt bend across Blind Creek, it occurred to me to check if any other Green Dragons were about -- beside the one we mentioned last visit. I was astonished to find not one, not two, but several Green Dragons growing in the old creek bed along a ten-metre stretch. Who knows how far they went? Meanwhile, I had business in the Riverside Forest.

At the river I saw two Spiny Softshell Turtles dive for safety from their basking shore on Mussel Beach. Once at the infested tree, I took pictures of the D-shaped holes (See IMAGES below.) and dying top, then "located" the tree by means of the trail marker system. Visitors will find the tree at Metre 705 in the Riverside Forest not far beyond the Sandbar Trail exit. To save steps in the infernal heat & humidity, I returned by the way I had come. At the river, I started the (immature) Bald Eagle that has been hanging out there over the last few weeks.

Back at camp I removed a dozen or so young Black Walnuts from the Regen Zone. Left to themselves, they would crowd out many of our "demonstration" trees, the ones intended to allow visitors to see most of our forest trees in one place.

Pat was about to make supper when the sky to the west became ominous. We were prepared for the "bit of light rain" predicted by the Weather Network, but this didn't look good. If it rained heavily, there would be little point in staying over because the woods would be too wet to walk and the mosquitoes would be especially bothersome. To-morrow's big event, the Annual Butterfly count being held across North America, might also be jeopardized locally. It would all depend on how extensive the new storm system was. The cool, wet spring we predicted back in January has not only materialized, but may have heralded a hot, wet summer. In any event the continued succession of storm systems crossing the

Great Lakes area has been looking increasingly like a production line!

So, instead of making supper, we broke camp amid a high wind and lashing rain. I was privately amused, as I went to retrieve some items from the Nook, to see one of the big female raccoons, oblivious to the rain and helping herself to some kibble we had left there. First things first.

As for the Emerald Ash Borer, we feel we must now confirm it.

**Birds:** (14)

American Crow (TR); American Robin (FC); Bald Eagle (TR); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (Tr); Common Yellowthroat (LM); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Eastern Towhee (RL); Field Sparrow (LM); Great Crested Flycatcher (GF); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Oriole (RB); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (RL)

**Phenology:**

Chickadee nesting cycle over.

**New Species:**

**Special Report:** The following views sent in by readers reflect various reactions to the presence of the Emerald Ash Borer on the property. Think of it as a “blog”, posted in order of arrival. (IMAGES follow.)

From Darren Jacobs, a naturalist from Moraviantown:

“hi Kee . . . i've recently come across several large ash trees that have died from the borer on the Reserve . . . it is positively here, so im betting it is up your way too, sad to say.”

From Dave Martin, bird expert and naturalist:

“Regarding your question about detecting the Emerald Ash Borer another sure sign of an attack is the profuse production of shoots on the lower trunk . . . that appear a year or two after a given tree is attacked. I don't know if these shoots are capable of replacing the main trunk. An exception may occur, however, if you chop down the main stem allowing the lowest shoots to take over. There may still

be a lot of energy in the root system that will sustain these lower shoots. At my wife's father's place in Leamington we cut down a main stem which stimulated the growth of 15 to 20 shoots from the lower trunk about at ground level and in particular at the periphery of the trunk [the living portion] of where the tree was cut. We quickly pruned back the smallest and weakest of these and ended up with 4 vigorous stems. Eventually we narrowed that down to one stem. Unfortunately . . . we weren't around to find out whether this remaining stem replaced the original tree.”

“As well, from our bird surveys in many locations in Essex County, we can attest to the fact that ash vigorously regenerate in woodlots where the adult trees have died off. In some woods, the ash regeneration is so profuse that one can hardly walk through the woods. This is a good sign in my mind. I'm starting to wonder if the Emerald Ash Borer is moving so rapidly that there are many woodlots and isolated trees that are missed in the tidal wave of expansion. And given the huge regeneration of trees, hopefully this epidemic will not be as devastating as originally thought.”

From Donald Craig, professional forester and naturalist:

“EAB is everywhere in East Kent, Middlesex and Lambton these days. The first clue most people see are epicormic branches sprouting out of the trunk. Right now the new ones this year are up to 2 feet long.

“The D shaped holes are also a good indicator. If you find those holes use a draw knife or hatchet to remove the bark. [shows images of decorticated trees] The first picture is one of a tree which has no cambium left at all. The 2nd is of an early infestation.

“Keep your eyes on the blue ash. Apparently they are all still alive in Windsor and all other ash have been dead since about 2006. I should also point out they have found about 12 trees (Green Ash i think) in Indiana which were infested along with the rest of a woodlot 3-5 years ago but they are still alive - the rest are dead. so there is hope.”

From Paul Handford, UWO Biologist:

“On the EAB, I have never really understood the "cut everything" policy after it was first shown to be incapable of halting the spread. The damned insect has wings for goodness' sake! Like the elms, I would say that we are best off keeping

our eyes open for individuals that show some signs of (genetically-based?) resistance. I believe Jane [Bowles] is of this opinion too.”

Allen Woodliffe, District Ecologist, Ministry of Natural resources:

Sorry to hear about the EAB. Although it hasn't been confirmed, I would say with an almost 100% certainty that the D-shaped exit holes as well as the loss of leaves and sputtered leaf growth are evidence that EAB has been there. And since they are exit holes, that means they have left the individual tree and have gone on to other trees in the area, so it is probably just a matter of time before the other ash trees show evidence of loss of leaves, etc.

Given the amount of EAB activity in SW Ontario to date, it is almost surprising it has not been noted in the Newport Forest area before this -- unfortunately.

I know that the federal government attempted to make an ash free zone across a portion of Chatham-Kent during the early stages of the EAB invasion in Essex in order to contain the eastern advancement of EAB, by removing all ash trees, alive or dead. But if it had any effect, it was marginal at best, and probably an expensive waste of time, as the prevailing winds easily transported the adults well beyond the 10 kilometres or so width of the ash free zone.

Cutting down trees that have already been affected to this stage probably won't slow the EAB down, as they have already left those trees. I can see the logic in cutting them down if they represent a safety hazard, but in all likelihood, they should probably be relatively safe standing for a few years until the trunks become well rotted. Without the leaves, they catch less wind, and I often find that standing dead trees are in reality less of a hazard than an apparent healthy, fully leafed tree that actually catches more wind and is more likely to have branches blown off.

Standing dead trees also provide a vehicle for vines to reach the sunlight levels they are seeking, without the competition for light that a healthy host tree will provide. And as you mention, the woodpeckers, fungi and myriad insects that are involved in the decomposition process can do their work while the tree is upright. Of course there will be the eventual decision, even if it is well away from the trail and therefore not the normal safety hazard, of whether to cut or not to cut. Cutting it down in a controlled way can minimize the impacts to nearby trees, if that is a concern.

IMAGES:



A D-shaped exit hole can be seen clearly just above and to the right of center. Others appear less D-like owing to differences in bark overlay. (The back of the D is horizontal and uppermost. Do the adult beetles come out upside down?)

Diameter of tree at breast height is 28 cm. Species is White Ash.





Here is just one of several Green dragons growing along what were formerly riffles in Blind Creek (when it used to run). Between the riffles were pools that are now the vernal ponds. Green Dragons prefer a moist soil near water.



We departed in the midst of a violent storm. A weird sunset along Hwy #2 gives an end-of-days feeling -- just before another storm hit.