

Newport Forest

Saturday July 23 2011

2:10 - 7:15 pm

Weather: prec. 0mm; RH 79%; BP 101.6 kPa; sun/cloud; calm; T 35° C

Purpose: to sample the river for fish

Participants: Kee, Glen, Darren, Kate

Kate Leigh, who sometimes works with Darren on conservation projects, is an environmental science student at Fleming College in Lindsay, Ontario. She agreed to join us to help Darren manage the large seine net that he brought with him, all spooled up in a tub. Darren's uncle Glen joined our expedition to the river.

It was hot out on Mussel Beach. Darren and Kate waded out to the rapids, spread the net, then folded it in, bringing our first catch to shore. We plucked every wriggling little fish from the mesh of the net and plopped it into a large pickle jar which soon came to resemble an overcrowded aquarium. This would turn out to be the last time I would have to use my regular digital camera for close-up ID work. It would have been too hard on the fish to leave them in the jar of hot water while we thumbed through the Peterson Fish Manual. I removed them one or two at a time, photographed them in a baggie and released them. Later at home I found that most of these images were blurred or foggy. The only species I could confirm was one that she claimed was a Blacknose Shiner. Luckily, the row of dark crescents along the mid line (distinctive for this species) showed up clearly in the image.

Having seemingly exhausted the potential of the seine net, we resorted to kick-fishing. We found a Greenside Darter (not new & common in both the Thames and Fleming Creek), several small crayfish, and some Juvenile Catfish that Kate thought were Channel Cats. But the best find of all was Darren's when he felt something smooth and hard underfoot. He came up with a beautiful dark green rayed mussel. (See images below.)

Back at the camp, we cleaned up with antibacterial soap before launching a second, somewhat informal, expedition to the creek. We made our way beyond the Lower Rapids, then downstream to the next riffle. Darren found the creek water somewhat cleaner and cooler than that of the river, so he took the opportunity to immerse himself in a fairly deep pool between the two riffles, not only to cool off, but to wash out the river water from his clothing. Just before we left, we noticed that a great many birds were all calling at once, as storm clouds gathered in the west. Does that mean they sensed the coming rain and were "excited" by the prospect? We agreed to meet again next weekend for a hook & line fishing derby. No ID problems there!

Birds: (13):

American Crow (EW); American Robin (GF); Common Flicker (GF/E); Common Yellowthroat (LM); Eastern Towhee (GF); Killdeer (TR); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Oriole (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Song Sparrow (TR); Spotted Sandpiper (TR); Turkey Vulture (UM)

New species:

Blacknose Shiner

Notropis heterolepis

TR dj/KL J123/11

IMAGES:



Darren & Kate deploy the big seine net at the rapids by Mussel Beach.



Blacknose Shiner

Image Source Unknown



The Black Sandshell above seems to match the “Slough Sandshell” below.



Source: US Fish & Wildlife Service

Note: The superficial similarity of two specimens does not always mean that they belong to the same species. In fact the two organisms shown belong to different genera, the Sloop Sandshell (from the Mississippi drainage system) is *Lampsilis teres teres*, while the Black Sandshell is *Ligumia recta*. Although ground colour of an organism is often highly variable, here it makes an important difference, the latter species being generally darker than the former.