

Newport Forest

Wednesday July 27

2:25 - 6:25 pm

**Weather:** prec. 27 mm; RH 79% BP 101.3 kPa; overcast; calm; T 30° C

**Purpose:** to practice with new camera

**Participants:** Kee

In spite of media yakky about the heat wave and the need for rain, the fact is that we've been in a high precipitation regimen from the beginning of 2011. We currently stand at 767 mm to date, more than 100 mm ahead of any precipitation record on site for the same period over the last 12 years. The most recent rain left the property muggy, but I've never see the vegetation, from mosses to trees, look so lush and, well, "happy".

I recently purchased a used digital camera and adapter for my microscope so that I could take clear pictures of microbial life. The camera, a Nikon 995, can also be used for closeups of smaller critters that are beyond my present point-and-shoot camera. I began to work my way through the manual with actual examples.

My first test came in the form of a colorful beetle flying right past my head in the Lower Meadow. I followed it to a landing in the grass of the track and took picture after picture, playing with the focus button, but never quite getting the clarity I wanted. Nevertheless my images were certainly clear enough to ID the beetle as a new species. (See below) A few minutes later I found my next subject; a Red Milkweed Beetle (not new), which turned out very well.

Taking in the larger picture, so to speak, there seems to have been a minor population shift in the Lower Meadow area. We have not heard a song sparrow there for over two months, but now always hear them down at the river. It used to be the other way around. Meanwhile, the Lower Meadow has come to be dominated by the Common Yellowthroat, now more abundant than ever.

Visiting Fleming Creek I was somewhat dismayed to encounter a little pile of internal organs, possibly from a young raccoon, with no body in sight. What could have happened to it? Coyotes eat the guts first, as do most scavengers. So who takes bodies and leaves intestines? (Reader opinions welcome) I might add that the mother raccoons that had been visiting the Nook regularly in the late afternoon have recently ceased doing so. My attention was distracted by a pair of Gray Catbirds nearby, one using the familiar "meow" call, the other using a repetitive call that was new to me. The visible one resembled a large grey wren.

After a wee break I headed for the river, noticing a Giant swallowtail in the meadow before I even got to the forest. Later, I spotted a second one along the trail. When I got to the river, I found a third Giant Swallowtail puddling on the beach. Newport Forest has a great many Prickly Ash bushes, a favoured food source for the larva of this magnificent butterfly. There is even a Hop Tree (introduced) on site, another favorite food tree.

At the river I started a Spiny Softshell Turtle on the beach and watched a flight of swallows hunt above the river. They went too fast and were never close enough to identify, but they had narrow, unforked tails and light underparts. Just then about 110 grackles flew across the river, starting their flocks somewhat early, it would seem. Back at camp I repositioned the rain gauge before leaving.

**Birds: (15)**

American Crow (UM); American Robin (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Common Flicker (FCF); Common Grackle (TR); Common Yellowthroat (LM); Eastern Towhee (GF); Field Sparrow (UM); Gray Catbird (FC); Great Blue Heron (TR); Mourning Dove (FCF); Northern Cardinal (GF); Song Sparrow (TR); Spotted Sandpiper (TR); Tree Swallow (Rd)

**Leps: (7)**

Angleming (LM/GF); Common Wood Nymph (LM); Clover Looper (LM/HBF); Giant Swallowtail (LM/HBF); Hummingbird Moth (RZ); Monarch (RL); Tawny Emperor (LM/GF)

**New Species:**

Banded Net-winged Beetle\*      *Calopteron reticulatum*      LM/GF KD J127/11

\*our first beetle in Family Lycidae (net-winged Beetles)

**Notes:** The microscope dealer from whom I purchased the camera-adaptor combination is Sid Lipkowitz of Toronto. Sid is an avid “wildlife microscopist” himself and has since joined our list. He has an amazing inventory.

**Phenology:** Chickadees and Nuthatches still sequestered, grackles flocking.

IMAGES:



**Subject:** Red Milkweed Beetle on goldenrod leaf. This shot would have been impossible with my little point-and-shoot digital camera. Note the composite flower head of the tall “daisy” (*Helianthus?*) behind the beetle.



This large open area in the Blind Creek Forest (which used to have a nearly closed canopy) is the indirect work of the Hickory Borer which infested Newport Forest from 2005 to 2007. The immediate impact is the riot of herbaceous vegetation that has sprung up as the hickories fell over. Strangely, one of the dominant colonists has been the Wingstem plant, which is not exactly common.



Doe enjoys a lick of salt last monday in the early dawn.  
Trail cam traffic is enhanced by a water supply & salt.