

Newport Forest

Wednesday August 31 2011

2:50 - 6:25 pm

**Weather:** prec. 0 mm; RH 73%; BP 102.1 kPa; sun/cld; calm; T 33° C

**Purpose:** to start tree survey and continue ATBI inventory

**Participants:** Kee

Lately I keep being surprised when I read the temperature. It's always several degrees warmer in the lower meadow than the official temperature for the area. Perhaps the low relief of the floodplain meadow screens out relieving winds?

As the goldenrod comes into bloom, the entire character of the Lower Meadow changes. A constant hum pervades the air as a thin but vast swarm of bees, bumblebees, wasps, hornets, flower flies, and other insects visit flowers. Overhead the dragonflies ply their trade on those innocents who fly too high. I stood in the middle of all this, amazed at the transformation.

After a walk through the Regeneration Zone, I paused by the trailer, startled by the appearance of an Anglewing butterfly on my arm. "Ho-lee\*" It straddled a few hairs on my forearm and folded its wings for me, revealing a comma and not a question mark. Then it got weird. Out came this long thin tube from below its face -- the proboscis -- extending down to touch my skin, probing it gently like a blind man tapping his cane, then it paused over a tiny globule of sweat which immediately disappeared. "Ho-lee!" Then I remembered. Butterflies like salt.

The afternoon was weird. The light was weird, almost like fall. I felt weird as I walked the trail to the river. What next? I sat on the stake bench high up on the bluffs to watch the river for a while. Presently I noticed a black squirrel creeping along the far shore, a sort of narrow beach. It caught my attention because I had never seen a squirrel foraging so close to water. Then it went out over the water along a half-submerged branch, following it down to the surface. "Aha", I thought. "It's thirsty." But the squirrel promptly dove into the water. Ho-lee! Suicide? Not quite. The animal began to swim slowly out to the middle of the river, by which time I realized where it was going and grabbed my camera. It landed at Muscle Beach below me, then clambered up the slope right past my bench! I shook my head and continued my patrol.

About this time I heard two gunshots, sounding like a hunting rifle. Later, as I passed through Bluebell Woods another 4 or 5 reports. Sporadic. The pattern was not that of a seasoned hunter who only shoots once -- maybe twice. Trigger-happy kid with a new rifle? Suddenly I heard a loud crashing noise to my left as a large

deer broke cover from its daybed and bounded off toward the Hogsback.

Pale Touch-me-not plants line the far end of the Riverside Trail before it breaks into the Beech-maple forest. I stopped to photograph a few of the blooms, a juicy yellow colour. On the upsloping trail that crawls along the Hogsback, I came upon a troop of bright white-yellow mushrooms sprouting from the side of a trail log. Having never seen anything quite like them before, I said “new” and dove in with camera and baggie. The Orange Mock Oyster is supposed to be “common” in our general area.

After a rest on the Hogsback stake bench, I took up the trail but quickly found myself stepping on apples strewn all about. Long ago, when the Hogsback had been cleared, someone planted domestic apple trees there. One or two survive to this day close to the powerlines (where there is more light). I tried one of the apples. Still a bit sour. Descending into the Blind Creek Forest, I paused to photograph an interesting crust fungus growing on a stump.

Time for a break. In the Nook I watched a rather primitive looking insect crawl out of a crack in our rustic coffee table. Bristletail? I got a baggie and tried to grab it, surprised when it suddenly leapt an astonishing height and scuttled into the crack. “Ho-lee“ At home later, I looked up “Bristletail”. Indeed, they do jump.

It was now time to begin a tree survey of the Blind Creek Forest, a rather large undertaking that I probably won’t finish. But I started on Block ‘A’, my name for the part between Edgar’s Trail and the Lower Meadow. I would do it in sections, first section today. The results appear below, with hundreds of trees to come.

I started a bird list, but it was hardly worth continuing. I saw the Vesper Sparrow again, however, and heard the Rain Crow (Yellow-billed Cuckoo) calling from the Fleming Creek forest below the Nook. They say it forecasts rain. In fact it did rain later this evening, according to my weather radar.

As I drove out, a lone chipmunk at the Hickory feeder barely noticed my departure.

\*Expression picked up from Delaware friends. Sometimes “Ho-lee Cow,” etc.

### **New species:**

Orange Mock Oyster

*Phyllotopsis nidulans*

HB KD Au31/11

## Phenology:

Goldenrod 60% in bloom, heritage applefall in progress, Bittersweet in fruit

Initial results of the tree survey include the bushes and vines growing near one end of the strip I surveyed. Data (not shown here) included breast height diameter and general condition. Numbers count stems: Bladdernut (12); Gray Dogwood (10); Crataegus spp.(7); Black Walnut (4); White Ash (3); Bitternut Hickory (1); Bittersweet (1); Red Ash (1); Russian Olive (1); Shagbark Hickory (1); Hackberry (1)

## IMAGES:



FinePix

Squirrel arrives at shore (behind plant). It kept its bushy tail elevated during the entire crossing. If you look closely, you will see the squirrel's wake. This is an Eastern Gray Squirrel (black phase).



Trail cam

Feral cat pauses to do some birdwatching at the Hole. This is also one of Pat's favorite spots to watch birds, except she rarely eats them. According to a previous trail cam image of the same individual, this cat came into the Blind Creek Forest (via the Hole) at 2:04 pm and is now in the process of leaving, about 28 minutes later.

The visit occurred two days ago. None of our rural neighbours have cats, except barn cats that are basically feral in any case.



Nikon 995

Orange Mock Oyster (*Pyllotopsis nidulans*) is a new species for us. Here are some young mushrooms with very pale yellow caps. This mushroom grows on dead wood and has no stalk. It smells (to me) faintly of burning rubber, yuk. Examining the spores later, I found they were sausage-shaped, clinching the ID.