

Newport Forest

Wednesday October 4 2011

2:25 - 7:20 pm

Weather: prec. 22 mm; RH 63%; BP 102.5 kPa; N 0-10 kmh; clear; T 22° C

Purpose: Searching in unusual places

Participants: Pat, Kee

Before driving down to the trailer, we stopped at the water tank and made a foray across the Upper Meadow and down into the East Ravine, the one that drains Hurdle's pond. Here we hoped to find unusual plants, with Pat collecting three specimens as possibly new. Owing to the recent rains, there was a small amount of water running at the bottom of the V-shaped ravine. Pat found an escaped domestic apple tree near the ravine bottom. The fruit was firm, but quite tasty. It might even be what some people call a "heritage" apple, not actually hybridized, but representing a rather old variety.

Thanks to the rains over the last six months, this has been a heavy mast year for many trees, including the Black Maple that spreads over the Nook, with small, dark helicopters littering the ground, chairs, table, etc. The Hickory nutfall has been very plentiful and as for walnuts, it is now almost dangerous to walk property trails, with about 10 walnuts per square metre, like marbles on a dance floor.

We heard and saw very few birds on this visit and even our three excursions netted fewer than we would have thought to collect. We have several theories about the low bird numbers, but nothing very convincing.

I went down to the creek to dump the sample from the Lower Rapids back into the lower rapids (home of the 5000 "little guys" in my jar). On my way back up to the Nook, I noticed what appeared to be an unusually large Xerula mushroom, which I collected. We decided to take a walk along the bed of Blind Creek (see first image below), noting that the Green Dragons have packed it in for the year. The many Wood Nettles that line the old creek bed appeared to have frequent stem galls, but we are hard put to identify the perpetrator, there being no web references at all to such a gall (!)

There were huge numbers of Honey Mushrooms sprouting everywhere, literally hundreds, along with numerous other fungi and slimes. Pat found a Hairy Turkeytail growing on the same log as our common Turkeytail. (See New Species below) As Pat collected plants, I noticed several cushion-like growths on the top of an old (elm?) log. I photographed them in situ and collected one cushion to

send to Greg Thorn, our fungal consultant.

Pat decided she had enough energy in her batteries to motor on down to the river and on up to the river bluffs bench, where we watched for birds for a while. Very little, except for a Mourning Dove calling from the other side and a few Robins flying into and out of bushes nearby. We did not visit the Honey Tree, but returned slowly to camp. We ducked under a beautiful fall display of Nanny-berries and, once again, a Gray Tree Frog began to call from the Hole when we got back to the trailer.

Birds: (8)

American Crow (UM); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (FC/LR); Blue Jay (UM); Canada Goose (TR); Great Blue Heron (FC); Mourning Dove (TR); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (LM/HBF)

Leps: (4)

Cabbage White (LM); Common Buckeye (UM); Monarch (LM); Spotted Sulphur (LM)

New species:

‘Sandshell Amoeba’	<i>Centropyxis ecornis</i>	FC/LR KD Sp22/11
‘Creek Spirogyra’	<i>Spirogyra fluviatilis</i>	FC/LR KD Sp22/11
‘Polka-dot Worm’	<i>Aelosoma [hemprichi]</i>	FC/LR KD Sp22/11
‘Big Brown Xerula’	<i>Xerula furfuracea</i>	FCT KD Oc04/11

Phenology: mosquitoes over; lots of bees, wasps and flower flies still out; outbreak of giant crane flies, lady beetles; box-elder bugs; fly swarms over

Precipitation: At the end of September, three quarters of the present year had passed and our total precipitation stood at 955 mm. Given a continuing average rate, we might expect to end up with 1327 mm, a figure which exceeds our best years to date:

Two Best years: 2006 (1020 mm) & 2008 (1227 mm)

Two Worst Years: 2005 (667 mm) & 2007 (674 mm)

IMAGES:



FinePix

Blind Creek is a relict watercourse that was cut off when Fleming Creek found a new outlet on the Thames River upstream from the old mouth. Now its bed is covered with moisture-loving plants. Every spring, this particular stretch turns into an elongated vernal pond.



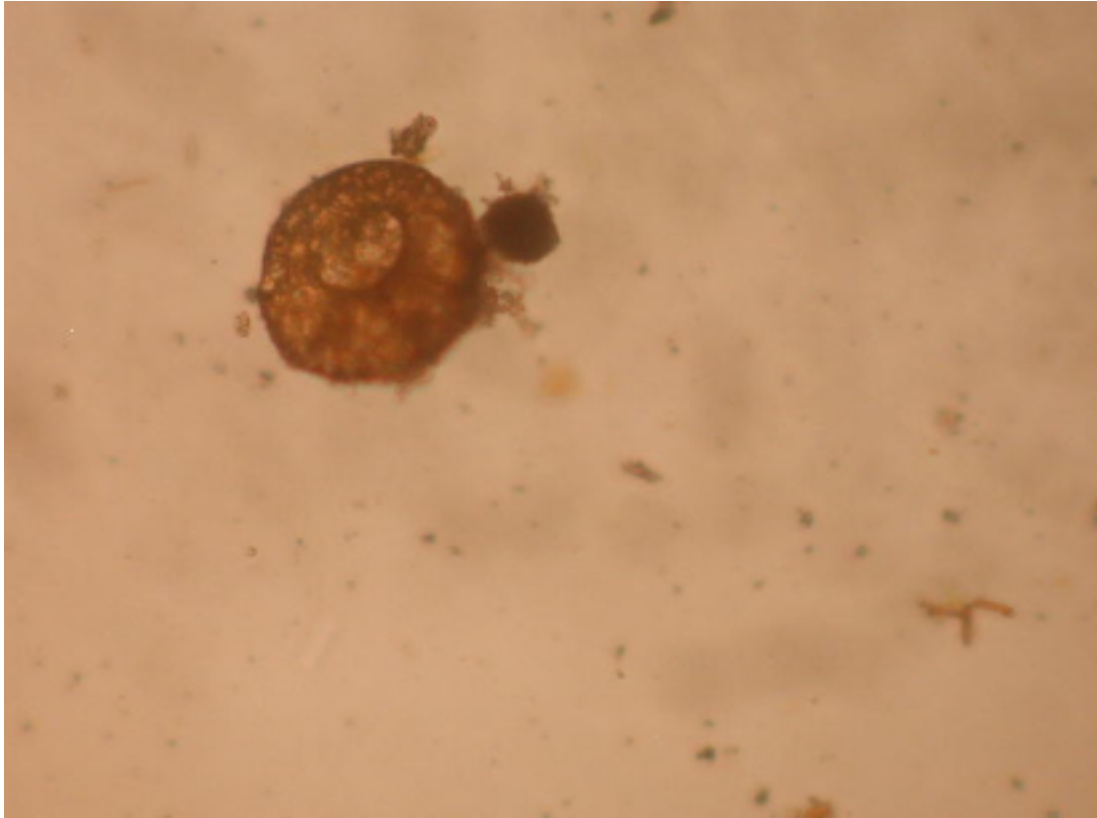
Nikon 990

Half-ripened Nannyberries hang over the river bluffs trail. It's that time of year again! At this stage the riper berries are bland-tasting, but clearly sweet.

Nannyberry Jam

Ingredients: 4 quarts ripe berries
1/3 cup sugar per cup of sauce
3 oz liquid pectin

Wash and stem berries. Place into deep saucpan and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes. Mash with potato masher, then strain through a food mill to remove skins and seeds. Measure pulp and add sugar. Bring to a boil. Add pectin and continue to boil hard for 1 minute while stirring constantly. Skim off foam and pur into hot, sterile jars and seal.



Nikon 990

Centropyxis belongs to the same family as *Arcella*, a common testate (shelled) amoeba at Newport Forest and virtually everywhere else. In this case the shell is composed of micron-sized sand grains cemented together. (It's amazing when you think about it.) It extends pseudopods from the opening to trap food in much the same way that all amoebas do.