

Newport Forest

Saturday October 15 2011

1:55 - 5:35 pm

Weather: prec. 26 mm; Rh 87%; BP 100.1 kPa; ovcst; W 10-20 kmh; T 11 ° C

Purpose: Invasive species removal

Participants: Kee, Erin Carroll, Steve Logan, Rick Goodwin

Erin arrived first, parked her car on the road and walked down to the trailer. On the way, she saw a White-tailed Deer bounding along the creek bluffs. I came in next and recorded the weather while we waited for Steve and Rick to show up. I had been feeling gloomy on the one-hour drive from London because it had rained most of the way there, only clearing up past Melbourne.

After Steve and Rick came in, we had a brief break in the Nook where Rick recounted his latest truck-driving adventures, including a trip over the Alleghenies. (“you really gotta go there!”)

Trooping into the Blind Creek Forest, we startled (and were startled by) a White-tailed Deer bounding away into the deeper forest. At the river I was surprised to see what looked like a Witch Hazel growing out of the gigantic rotting log that has been sitting there for over a decade. I took a specimen branch.

Up on the bluffs trail we set to work on the Russian Olives, slowly coming to the realization that there were a great many more than we thought there were. We cut and stacked, making piles along the trail until we ran out of space, simply throwing the trees out on the bluffs to be gathered later. Although most of the trees were saplings up to two or three metres in height, Steve found two grandmother trees well above the trail, both about 8-10 cm at the base! Working along a deer trail which parallels our own along the bluffs, Steve spotted a young but definite Witch’s Hat mushroom, not new but always interesting to find. Erin and I both took images of it. Erin, who is far advanced technologically, not only photographed it with her iPad, but promptly emailed it to me, right there from the bluffs!

A magnificent Red-tailed Hawk came wheeling over the river down to eye level, inspecting our work and flashing its copper tail as it soared up again over the other side of the river.

As we worked our way southwest along the trail, we came to the bee tree, which had recently blown over in the wind. Steve, who had been the first to discover this tree (actually a giant snag) last August, wasted no time to check the cavity for

honey. At first only one or two bees came out as his axe split away the rotting wood. Then quite a few came out, despite their torpor, and we all had to retreat. Steve told us not to worry about getting stung. “This time of year, you hardly feel them.” The combs turned out to be “dry” in Steve’s estimation. Back on his own property at the Moraviantown, he had encountered honey trees before.

The more Russian Olives we cut, the more we found. A kind of gestalt comes into play as one’s pattern-recognition faculties warm up. We quit shortly after four pm, having removed over 200 stems. I thought wryly of all those berries sprouting new seedlings, even as the trees we had just cut all began resprouting from the base. (I was unable to purchase any Roundup at the TSC store on the way to Newport.)

The wind had been fierce along the bluffs, but now began to die down as we made our way out of the forest. Then the sun began to peek between clouds. Back in camp we took a brief break, then proceeded to cut a few of the many young Black Walnuts that have seeded into the Regeneration Zone, threatening the whole planting project. Of course we left several in place, as they would be a natural part of the developing forest, in any case.

From time to time today we had discussed the whole issue of removing invasive alien species. Is it necessary? Is it even possible? We had noticed that some of the larger trees we removed today had already been cut several years ago and today we were dealing with resprouts! The only alternative is to “welcome” all new alien plants and then get used to them. And if you end up with a forest made entirely of Russian Olive trees, so be it!

Birds: (6)

American Crow (FCF); Blue Jay (RB); Canada Geese (LM); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Red-tailed Hawk (TR); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr)

New species:

Witch Hazel

Hamamelis virginiana

RL EC Oc15/11

Phenology: Black Walnuts have lost all their leaves

IMAGES:



FinePix

Witch Hazel had been growing right beside the trail all year and we never noticed it until Erin drew it to our attention! Soil collecting inside the hollow log made a suitable substrate. Flower (?) buds can be seen growing at leaf axils.

An extract from this plant has been used by native americans as an astringent and to treat inflammation of the joints. And if we ever run out of water, we can make a divining rod out of this bush and find more!



FinePix

Steve found a “grandmother” Russian Olive upslope from the trail and had to remove it in sections, as with this piece of trunk. Erin (background) hunts for more trees to cut.



FinePix

Bee tree blown over by wind reveals honeycomb inside. (Get close to your screen to see hexagonal pattern of comb.) Steve cut side of tree away with an axe. Recently cut Russian Olive signals for help from bottom of image.



FinePix

Fall Fruits Theme: River Grape (*Vitis riparius*) growing in Regeneration Zone has fruited heavily, thanks to this year's precipitation. This species is a close relative of the Concord Grape, as they hybridize readily. After the first frost it develops a very sweet flavour. (leaves belong to supporting thorn tree)