

Newport Forest

Sunday October 23 2011

2:35 - 6:30 pm

Weather: prec. 39 mm; RH 55%; BP 101.8 kPa; clear; S 0-15 kmh; T 14° C

Purpose: maintenance & birdwatching

Participants: Pat, Kee, Brian

It was the sound that we noticed first. After rolling into camp we heard hundreds of birds all calling at once, some in large flocks, others singly in low bushes. As if to make up for the dearth of birds over the last two months (with 6-8 being seen or heard on each visit) we now had what my grandfather used to call an “ample plenitude”. Flocks of robins, grackles, starlings, even towhees, congregating in trees along the creek bluffs and, later, down by the river.

We brought our hired hand Brian with us to repair all the steps in the trail down to the creek. Brian did a great job, making it safe once again for people with infirmities to descend. He also reset the bluffs bench legs and reinforced the seat. It will be a pleasure to sit there again without feeling that you are about to tumble down the bluffs into the river.

While Brian worked on the bluffs bench, Pat examined the alleged “Dog-strangling Vine” that Erin and I had worried about, declaring that to her it looked like the Ground Nut that we found in that location over two years ago. Pat also collected one of the innumerable species of “river daisies” as the locals call them, discovering after examining a specimen at home, that it was Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*).

It was at the river that we picked up some birds we hadn't seen for a while, including a female Ruby-crowned Kinglet flitting among some low bushes by the trail. Back at the camp, I went up to the Copse to see what new fungi might be found there. A lone Trich had sprouted behind a log, but nothing else, despite the excellent precipitation we have been receiving.

We had been worried about the canoe that we left had tied up by the creek. Brian retrieved it for us and pulled it up to higher ground.

Birds: (14)

American Crow (FCF); American Robin (LM); Black-capped Chickadee (RL); Blue Jay (LM); Canada Goose (TR); Common Grackle (GF); Eastern Towhee (EW); European Starling (GF); Redwinged Blackbird (FCF); Ruby-crowned

Kinglet (RL); Song Sparrow (RL); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (PL)

New Species:

‘Brown Trich’ *Tricholomopsis [platyphylla]* Cps KD Oc23/11

Note: The square brackets indicate that one character was missing; this species fruits on wood or buried wood. The closest rotting log was about 2’ away.

Phenology: all leaves off Black Maple; last Anglewing, Sulphur?

Trail cams: White-tailed Deer Oc17 8:39 am; Wild Turkey Oc22 4:11 pm; White-tailed Deer Oc 23 10:53 am

Readers Blog:

Expert birder Dave Martin had these observations on the removal of invasives like the Russian Olives mentioned in the previous Bulletin. Perhaps one test for non-removal ought to be whether or not it benefits other wildlife in some way:

“We spend a lot of time at Aylmer Wildlife Management Area. This area is full of nonnative species that were planted by Ministry of Natural Resources in the 1970s, as they were wont to do. The lanes and trails through the area are stock full of Russian and Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose, Pin Cherry, various crabapples, European Buckthorn [invaded on its own], dogwoods, hawthorns, Highbush Cranberry. In the fall it is full of 100s to 1000s of American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, European Starlings, House Finches, American Goldfinches and smaller numbers of Purple Finches, Hermit Thrushes, White-throated Sparrows all feeding on the millions of berries and fruits. On rare occasions, Northern Mockingbirds show up and even become year round residents. In some winters Bohemian Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks show up to eat the berries. It is an awesome sight. In the spring when the shrubs are in flower, they are packed with bees of many species, butterflies, moths and other nectar and pollen eating insects. It has become a great place for warblers and sparrows in spring and fall. Because this site is so isolated from any "natural habitats" [several kilometres] I would say that it is not a threat in terms of being a source of nonnative invaders.

“I know that some environmentalists are greatly concerned about nonnative species, but most are here to stay, no matter how much time, money and effort is

put into eradicating them. I've read a few articles recently on *Science Daily* that most invasive species are not nearly as damaging as they are made out to be. I would agree and suggest that we only remove invasives in locations where we don't want them or where they are crowding out plants we would prefer . . . If I were in your position, I think that I would ruthlessly cut it [Russian Olive] back where it is threatening to close down the trails and where it might shade out some rare plants. Otherwise, enjoy it!”

Dave Martin

IMAGES:



FinePix

Fall Fruits Theme: Berries of Carrion Flower (*Smilax herbacea*) provide food for Robins, Cardinals, Waxwings and other species, including Wild Turkeys. The plant gets its common name from the smell of its flowers -- like rotting flesh! Flowers may smell sweet if they are to attract bees and wasps, but this plant depends on carrion-loving flies for pollination.



Wildview

Wild Turkey caught on Trail Cam #1. This is a male with a wattle decorating its neck. We expect the turkeys to do well this winter because so many trees went into mast this fall, including oaks. Acorns are said to be a favourite food.



FinePix

Who can resist a beautiful sunset? Small Cumulus clouds drift lazily against a mackerel sky. “Red in the night, sailor’s delight” may be true sometimes, but tomorrow’s forecast calls for rain. . .