

**Newport Forest**

Sunday November 20 2011

1:55 - 5:50 pm

**Weather:** prec. 0 mm ; RH 62%; BP 102.1 kPa; ovcast; N 5-15 kmh; T 9° C

Purpose: checking site

**Participants:** Pat, Kee

Once again we had the impression that few birds were about and not necessarily because of the weather. Are there fewer birds on site this year? We have tried to answer the question statistically below.

While Pat stowed supplies and checked out the camp, I took the van back out to the Fleming Line and proceeded to post both the Janik property next door and Newport Forest with NO HUNTING signs. I ran out just as I got to Ruth Ann Newport's property, so I stopped there.

There had been no rain since the last visit and the ground had dried out nicely. This made for a firm and easy walk along the Thames River Trail (1.65 km). Occasional herbaceous plants, still with green leaves, appeared here and there along the trail. These almost always turned out to be small patches of Garlic Mustard or solitary stems of Yellow Rocket (aka Winter Cress) -- at a guess, both of them in the Riverside Forest. In the Blind Creek Forest I found a few still-green Cow Parsnips, as well. On the Hogsback I started up a Wild Turkey that flew off.

On a separate mission, I moved Trail Cam #2 from its location near the trailer and mounted it in an inconspicuous spot within the forest near The Hole\* and pointing at Trail Cam #1. Arranging the trail cameras in this manner raises some interesting possibilities, including catching the thief who stole the original Cam #1 last January on the same day that a deer was shot, butchered and carried off site. If he returns (I have his boot size and tread pattern), I might just catch him stealing the new Cam #1. (Hunting deer may be exciting, but hunting deer hunters is more exciting.) In any case, the real issue is not so much the deer as trespassing.

Before returning home after a sunset coffee, we stopped in for a quick social visit with Eva Newport, matriarch of the Newport clan. She is 88 now, but holding up well. On the way out to the main highway from Eva's we descended into a valley. "Here's Possum Hollow", I said jokingly. Within a few seconds, a possum scuttled right across the road in front of us, narrowly avoiding becoming roadkill.

\*from the Lower Meadow it looks like a hole, entrance to the Blind Creek Forest.

**Birds: (6)**

American Crow (HB/W); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (RB); Dark-eyed Junco (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (HB)

**Note on Bird Decline:** Although the following little analysis is hardly the last word, it does seem to indicate a potential problem. The average number of birds observed per visit (on those occasions where we kept a record) is shown in the table below, the average being taken over the three calendar months Aug to Oct inclusive for the last three years. Since the average for 2011 is not markedly lower than the one for 2009, we cannot be sure that the shortfall isn't a normal annual fluctuation. We must look at more extensive stats going back over all 12 years.

year	# of records	av # of birds
2009	14	10.5
2010	11	12.6
2011	13	9.4

**New species:**

'Flexing Bacterium'

*Flexibacter* sp.

VP/BCT KD Nv06/11

'Lobed Hypotrich'

[*Diophrys* sp.]

VP/BCT KD Nv06/11

**Note on Hypotrich:**

The organism in question is almost certainly not a species of *Diophrys*, a largely marine genus. But it's the only genus I know, among a great many that I've recently reviewed, that has a caudal lobe or extension like our specimen. I have submitted my ID materials to a local expert on ciliates and look forward to the reply. In this case the square bracket notation merely indicates a state of suspended judgment, but certainly a new species in any case. (Watch this space.)

**Phenology:**

Cow Parsnip, Garlic Mustard, Yellow Rocket (?) still green

**IMAGES:**



FinePix

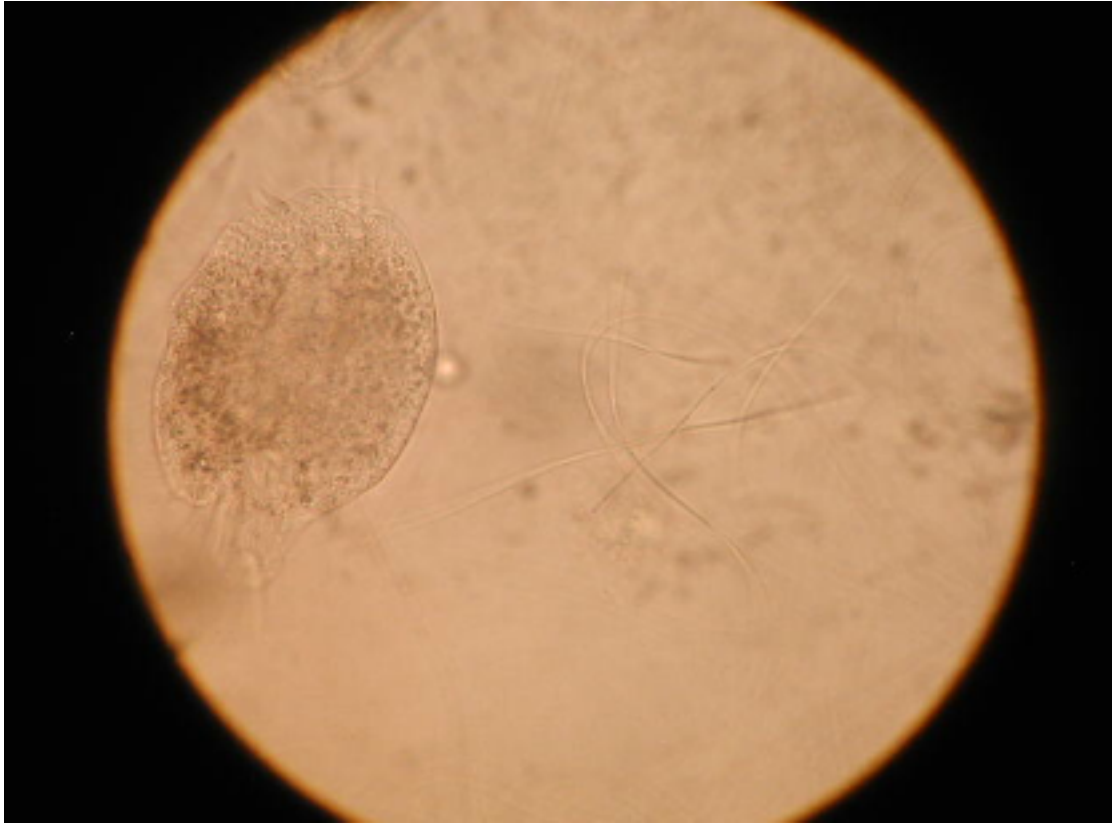
Pig's Eye Department: It is a very common experience to encounter hunters emerging from almost any local woodlot, returning to their trucks. "Did you gentlemen not see the NO HUNTING signs posted all along the road?" The usual reply goes something like this: "Beats me how we could have missed them!"



FinePix

Black Willows in Blind Creek Forest wetland (swamp) all seem to have strangely inflated bases. Does anyone know the reason for this?

The vernal pond from which the most recent sample was taken is just to the left of the image area.



Nikon 990

Drawing of mystery hypotrich appears above, along with one of seven photomicrographs of living individual. Length of ciliate is approximately 180 microns. *Flexibacter* filaments appear (faintly) to the right.