

Newport Forest

Saturday November 26 2011

2:00 - 5:00 pm

Weather: prec. 25 mm; RH 67%; BP 101.8 kPa; ovcast; calm; T 11° C

Purpose: Stewards Meeting & walkabout

Participants: Jane Bowles, Erin Carroll, Pat Dewdney, Kee Dewdney, Nina Hurdle, Bruce Parker

The Newport Forest Stewards Committee met at Nina's house across from the Newport Forest main gate. Over hot cider and hermit cookies, we discussed the past year and the year to come. The reading of the minutes of the previous meeting, instead of taking the few minutes I had anticipated, took a full half hour of discussion. Discussing the present agenda, point by point, generated the following decisions: We would have two work days in which volunteers would continue to cut thorn trees in the upper meadow areas, install replacement steps in two of the steeper portions of the Thames River Trail, and pick up remaining scrap metal, including the two 355-lb steel pipes that had been used for the Fleming Creek bridge.

We also planned two other operations: a) contact the surveyor for the lot line with Ruth Ann's property in order to locate the boundary precisely and b) to replace all or most of the roadside fence which is becoming rather decrepit, especially toward Ruth Ann's property, where erosion of bluff soil has left posts dangling from the fence they're supposed to support. We also discussed the "Mudhole", an area of seepage that becomes impassable for ordinary vehicles unless the area is graveled or a drain installed. No conclusion was reached.

Other events planned for the coming year were the Bluebell Walk in early May, as well as a special picnic for Stewards.

We had planned to have a walkabout on the property following the meeting, but we did not get out until nearly an hour before sunset. I drove down ahead of the others and just in time to see a Northern Harrier swoop across the Lower Meadow and up into the lone Black Walnut by the edge of the property. "There's a Harrier down here!" Good," said Pat on her walkie-talkie. "We're on the way." Of course, the bird took off before anyone else got there.

Jane had to leave early, so Erin, Bruce and I walked to the river to check on conditions there. We noted high water levels and a continuing loss of material from the bank near the mouth of Fleming Creek.

Birds: (5)

American Crow (UM); Blue Jay BCF/RL); Dark-eyed Junco (LM); Great Blue Heron (where?); Northern Harrier (LM)

Note on new species: The organism that I labeled tentatively as *Diophrys* is not *Diophrys*, as the latter genus turns out to be exclusively marine, not partially so, as with some ciliates. Bill Taylor at Waterloo made some suggestions for genera to search, but these came up blank. Under the rules for square bracket notation, the label [*Diophrys*] will remain, since it means that “the closest lookalike to be found in references X, Y and Z for this species is *Diophrys*”, other factors being irrelevant to the tag.

Readers Blog: Dave Martin, one of our area bird experts, agrees that my quick statistical peek at on site observational data is inadequate to detect a significant decline. He suggests that the current scarcity of birds is probably normal annual variation and continues with a description of the record-keeping along the shore of Lake Erie during the annual hawk migrations:

“I had reason to compare changes at a hawk migration project that we have been working on. As a comparison, I looked at 10 years of data at the 3 major hawk migration sites on Lake Erie: Hawk Cliff, Holiday Beach and Erie Metropark. I corrected their yearly totals for the survey hours which vary at each from year to year and between sites. These sites have 10 years of data collected by experienced observers that follow strict counting protocols, they count birds for 6 to 8 hours per day, 7 days per week from August 1 to November 30. As a result they have a lot of data that would be much more comparable from year to year than what you are collecting. I've attached a table which shows how much the number of hawks observed varies from year to year even though these sites get continuous coverage during the fall migration.”

The Newport Forest website:

Readers who have not yet visited the Newport Forest website may do so at any time by clicking on <http://www.csd.uwo.ca/~akd/>, then reading the description of the property or scrolling down to the archives. The webmaster is slowly and steadily adding reports to the archive, working his way backward through time. Such reports are now posted back to 2008/

IMAGES:



FinePix

A typical maintenance issue: to make access easy, the road into the property must be maintained. In this image an upland seep crosses the road, creating the feature we call the “Mudhole”. It has received three dressings of B-gravel and these work fine over the space of a year but by the following spring, the stones become submerged and another dressing is called for, Should a cross-road drain be installed?

Hurdle’s garage (on left) and house where the meeting took place (on right) can be seen in the distance.



FinePIx

Bruce Parker and Erin Carroll survey the river in front of them. Bruce points at the heavy erosion near the mouth of Fleming Creek upstream from the property, while Erin looks downstream toward the rapids.

There is little we can do about natural erosion caused by the river. The forces of nature are inexorable. But there's an upside downstream, so to speak. Land lost on this side of the rapids is balanced by land gained on the other side.



Trail Cam

Doe (partially masked by a morning halo) seeks browse last thursday at 9:06 am. (time stamp was accidentally advanced by 12 hours) No hunters have been observed in the area to date.