

Newport Forest

Thursday January 7 2012

2:15 - 5:20 pm

Weather: prec. 26 mm; RH 70%; BP 101.1 kPa; sun/cld; W 0-15 kmh; T +7° C

Purpose: tracking animals (not!)

Participants: Pat, Kee

A Visit to Moraviantown

On the last day of 2011, Kee visited Darren Jacobs and friends in the Delaware First Nations Reserve at Moraviantown for a birding walkabout. They saw few birds but ran into some magnificent fungi, including a Mossy Maple Polypore on a Poplar tree. It was still deer season so every now and then a high-powered rifle would go off not far away. (The Rez is only 2 mi x 3 mi in size.)

Darren told of his recent trip down the Thames in the company of friends from the Walpole First Nation. They paddled from Big Bend down to Moraviantown. As they passed Newport Forest, one of the Walpolers spotted a beaver sitting on the bank of the river opposite the mouth of Fleming Creek. They took several close-up pictures before it tired of the attention and waddled into the water to swim to the Newport side. Presumably it belongs to the same crew that built the dam on Fleming Creek just upstream from the property. We must now add the beaver to our species list, even if we wish it weren't there.

A Visit to Newport Forest

We expected to find enough snow on the property today to do some serious animal-tracking, but found it completely free of snow once again! As if to make up for this, there were more birds around, easing our fears somewhat about any declines. The only bird we missed today was the Dark-eyed Junco.

In contrast to recent weeks, moreover, the property seemed to be teeming with game. Almost as soon as we set out for the river, three Red-tailed Hawks with dark copper tails saw us off from the sky above the Lower Meadow. Inside the Blind Creek Forest, Pat looked up to see a majestic Bald Eagle soaring high above the tree tops. At the river landing, a large flock of Canada Geese floated quietly in front of us -- until one of us inadvertently sniffed. With a great rustle of wings and the bicycle-horn orchestra going full blast, the flock took off, leaving two small flotilla of Mergansers and Mallards, respectively, behind. Then a large Muskrat appeared out of nowhere to swim along the bank in front of us, trailing its sinuous ruddertail.

I left the river to walk the rest of the Thames River Trail for a lookabout, while Pat stayed, lurking in some bushes to watch the ducks. She later reported that when the Mergansers (all males) finally took off, they flashed some arresting reddish colours of bills and legs in the sunlight.

As I climbed the Bluffs Trail, an Eastern Cottontail rabbit raced along the hillside above me, as though fleeing for its life. I followed the Bluffs Trail into Bluebell Woods, where I first became aware of some vandalism: Liner logs had been lifted from their positions and laid across the trail to block it in parallel piles. Not once, but over and over again. Annoying. It wasn't clear what the trespassers thought they were achieving. They also pulled up one of the 100-metre marker stakes. Flooding was not the cause of the disarray, as I had already walked that trail several times since the last inundation. They entered the area on foot, evidently

A Blue Jay watched my progress through the Riverside Forest, as a Nuthatch yanked out calls nearby. Then, just as I began the slow ascent up the Hogsback, a large Whitetail Deer (buck) bounded along the side of the slope above me, pausing once to see if my walking stick was a gun or not. (my fantasy)

There was no visible trail disturbance on the other side of the Hogsback. As I descended into the Blind Creek Forest, I could see the chain of ponds that trace the course of the former creek had become fully charged. If this were March, it would be perfect for the annual spring frog chorus.

The ground below about two inches remains frozen on site, but the top layer was distinctly spongy today. Fleming Creek has had a minor flood, with hanging ice along the banks no more than half a metre above its normal level. The Thames continues moderately high, still submerging Mussel Beach

Birds: (11)

American Crow (FCF); Bald Eagle (BCF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (RSF); Canada Goose (TR); Common Merganser (TR); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Mallard (TR); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-tailed Hawk (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF)

New Species:

'Lesser Urostyla'

Urostyla sp.*

VP1525 KD Dc17/11

Narrow Chaenea	<i>Chaenea [robusta]</i>	VP1240 KD Dc17/11
Fusiform Chaenea	<i>Chaenea [teres]</i>	VP1525 KD Dc17/11
Colonial Chrysophyte	<i>Anthophysis [vegetans]</i>	VP1525 KD Dc17/11
Eruptive Vahlkampfiid	[<i>Naegleria</i> sp.]	VP1390 KD Dc17/11
Canadian Beaver	<i>Castor canadensis</i>	RL DJ Dc 28/11

Note 1: Even with certainty about the genus *Naegleria*, one could not distinguish species without seriological tests, so that's it for *Naegleria*, in any case

Note 2: Doing a routine check of names, I was outraged to discover a website in which our beloved national symbol was called the "American Beaver". To be fair, I also had to review other claimants, discovering that the "beaver" is also the state animal of both New York and Oregon. Should I enter it as the North American Beaver or should we switch our national symbol to the Raccoon? No trouble there.

Note 3. I am ready to give up my search for the mystery hypotrich mentioned in the Bulletin for Nv20/11. I have been running three infusion cultures from the source ponds for two weeks, checking the contents daily. The rarity did not reappear. The record for this organism remains a note on the ATBI list.

Phenology:

Property snow-covered Ja04 - Ja06, but snow-free once again

Year End Precipitation Report:

The precipitation on site for 2011 amounts to a recent record. Last year the property received 1243 mm of precipitation. The second best total, 1227 mm, occurred in 2008. To put the matter in perspective, the average precipitation outside of these two years -- over the last 12 -- was 675 mm, about half!

IMAGES:



FinePix

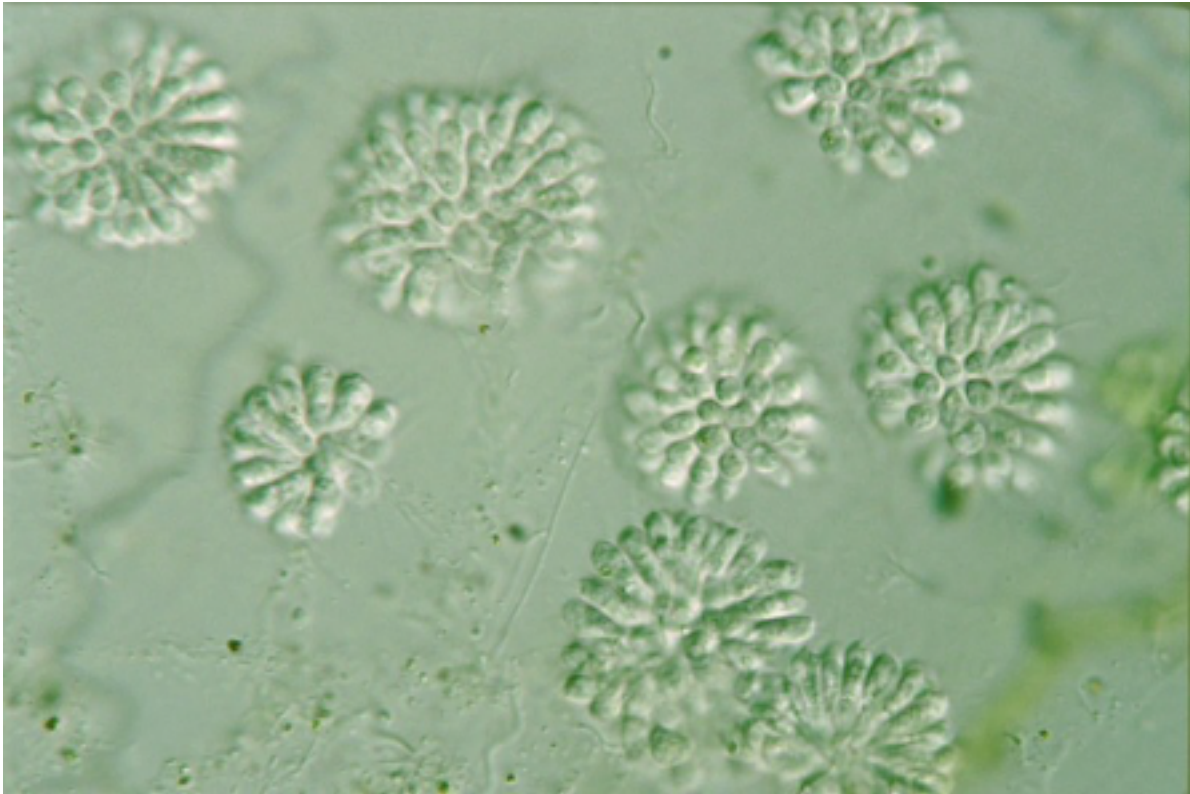
This Blind Creek “headwater”, close to the old cutoff near the River, is now fully charged, seemingly ready for the frog choruses, still at least two months away.

About 50 m beyond the farthest visible stretch of water in this image, Fleming Creek runs from right to left and joins the river proper just to the left of that stretch. The new creek has cut down a good three metres below the old watercourse since the cutoff occurred, leaving it high and dry, so to speak. The alternating pools and riffles of the former creek have since become a chain of ponds, sometimes full, sometimes dry. But here the former bed has filled with new precipitation and runoff, with a few thin sheets of rotting ice on its surface. Did the former creek once look like this?



FinePix

Turkeytail Series: having encountered such a wide variety of colour schemes over the years, it occurs to us to document each new palette as it appears. Here the scheme is grey, black, and white, with subtle ochre banding. According to Greg Thorn, the green colours in our previous image (Dc12) were due to algae living on the upper surface of the brackets. What environmental factors produced these colours?



Protist Information Server

Anthophysis vegetans is a colonial flagellate in the family Chrysophyceae, characterized by a golden light-gathering pigment called fucoxanthin. Some Chrysophytes are pigmented, some not, as here. Normally attached to a stalk, colonies become detached when a sample is stirred, after which they wheel about freely on one's microscope slide. These flagellates are bacterivorous, even though they are officially "algae". A better-known example of varied diet among flagellates are the Euglenoids, some species being photosynthetic, others "carnivorous".

The idea that organisms in the same family can follow either life style seems less bizarre under the hypothesis (Margulis & Co.) that pigments were acquired by these organism via symbiotic partners, resulting in a new composite organism with fused genomes. In these cases an alga once lived inside a flagellate. One sees this hypothesis quoted with increasing frequency, seemingly on its way to mainstream acceptance.