

Newport Forest

Wednesday March 7 2012

2:10 - 7:00 pm

Weather: Prec. 0 mm; RH 47%; BP 102.1 kPa; sn/hz; SW 50-60 kmh; T 18° C

Purpose: Environmental scan

Participants: Kee

I was stunned when I looked at the (shielded) meadow thermometer to find it registering 18° C. Also unusual were the high winds, gusting frequently to 60 kmh. As I would discover later in my walkabout, they were not without an impact in the woods. It was also a day of strange noise, presumably due to the high wind. All afternoon I was treated to the intermittent metallic groan of power lines in the wind. Later, I would hear a more ominous sound in the Riverside Forest. Setting up in the trailer, I spotted a large Winter Stonefly crossing the ceiling. I made a drawing of its salient features.

Before taking the Thames River Trail, I decided to visit the creek, picking my way down the trail to avoid the worst of the seeps bleeding from thawing soil. There is quite a jumble of dead wood near the bottom of the trail and I noted a bridge trestle lurking among the trunks. Another bridge part, a steel keeper, still lay at the base of an old ash that leaned precariously over the bank. We should clean up these bridge parts during the April workday, fast approaching.

I also inspected planted Tulip Trees. One had been crushed by an ice cake but had already started a new stem. The other had been crushed several years ago, but had not only resprouted, but was now a good 2m tall. *All* saplings growing on the creek bank get crushed sooner or later. If they can survive and regrow tall enough before the next episode, they are thereafter immune. (A steel stake that I had driven to protect the first tree had bent over double under a heavy ice cake!)

Walking the Thames River Trail, I had barely entered the Riverside Forest when I found that a dead elm snag that had been standing ever since we came onto the property in 2000 had finally fallen over, right across the trail as luck would have it. Later, while walking through Bluebell Woods, I heard a loud knocking noise coming from the general vicinity of the Hogsback. It sounded like a man with a sledge hammer periodically striking a large tree. Shades of the Blair Witch! Further along, I came upon a colourful discarded gum wrapper that I bent over to pick up, only to discover that it wasn't a gum wrapper at all, but a colourful early-fruiting cup fungus. The big knocking noises continued.

Half way up the Hogsback slope, I was arrested by the sight of a semi-mature tree

that had reddish zones between closely appressed strips of brownish bark. I looked up. Not a maple or ash, but “elmlike”. Later I would identify it as a semi-mature Slippery Elm. I didn’t realize how different the bark was in younger trees of a species sometimes called “Red Elm”, perhaps because of the bark.

By the time I gained the summit of the Hogsback, the giant hammering noise had stopped. The Witch clearly wished to avoid a confrontation. With no rest on the Hogsback bench, I descended into the Blind Creek Forest only to find that another giant willow had lost one of its “stems” to the wind. This makes the fifth large willow to lose one or more trunks over the last ten years. At the loss rate over the last decade, the willows should have disappeared many years ago. Hmmm.

Back at the trailer I had some coffee and then headed through the gathering twilight up to the road where I had left the van. In the Upper Meadow I heard the distinctive buzzing of a Woodcock courting in the scrub over on the west side.

Birds: (7) (With today’s high winds, I was lucky to get even this many!)

American Crow (FCF); American Woodcock (UM); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Canada Goose (TR); Turkey Vulture (HB); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (HB)

New Species:

Large Winter Stonefly [*Taeniopteryx*] *sp* Nk KD Mr07/12

Note: The common species of *Taeniopteryx* I had in mind has a lookalike species, *Strophopteryx fasciata* that also has dark bands across the wings, though not as uniform. Both genera are common in the Great Lakes area.

Phenology: First Turkey Vulture, American woodcock courting

Trail Cam Record:

Eastern Cottontail: Mr04 6:32 pm, 8:57 pm; Mr06 12:05 am; 7:07 pm
Eastern Gray Squirrel: Mr05 2:04 pm; Mr06 8:14 am, 12:26 pm; Mr07 9:21 am
Raccoon: Mr05 1:06 am; Mr06 7:50 pm; Mr07 12:40 am
Wild Turkey: Fb20 12:27 pm

IMAGES:



FinePix

Except for ice damage, planted Tulip Trees thrive along the bank of Fleming Creek. (Old Ash snag backgrounds Tulip Tree Stem.)



Nikon 990

One of the first cup fungi to sprout every year are these Scarlet Cups (*Sarcoscypha coccinea*), usually in late March to April. Like everything else this year, these are a bit early. They fruit on fallen branches in wet places and represent a different, more primitive phylum of fungi called Ascomycetes.



WILDVIEW

03-06-2012 19:07:04



Trail Cam

In the Bulletin of February 15 (tracking in the snow), we expressed the hope that the Coyotes had not cleaned out the Eastern Cottontails. As this image shows, they hadn't. (See also the Trail Cam Record -- above.)