

Newport Forest

Sunday April 7 2012

2:30 - 8:30 pm

**Weather:** Prec. 0 mm; RH 66%; BP 101.7 kPa; sn/cld; N 5 - 40 kmh; T 16° C

**Purpose:** maintenance and species search

**Participants:** Kee

At the Newport Forest gate, I was pleased to see the planted trees doing nicely, with the Amelanchier already in bloom. I drove in to find the property quite dry, with even the Mudhole now drained. As often happens, a Redtail was on hand to greet me by swooping low over the van as it descended into the Lower Meadow. In camp the first thing I noticed were beeflies everywhere. They are an early spring insect that hovers just over the ground, long sodastraw proboscis at the ready for deep-throated flowers. A Mourning Cloak butterfly, fluttering vainly against the strong north wind, whipped past the trailer.

Time to look for new aquatic species. I donned boots and carried my nets to the vernal ponds by The Hole. After ten minutes, all I collected was a small black *Physa* snail, already in our log I thought. Where did all the Caddisfly larvae go? That was a short-lived foray.

I then walked to the river, hearing no frog chorus along the way. Mussel Beach is nearly fully emerged, and at record speed. I scanned the shoreline for Spiny Softshell turtles, but saw none. I walked the beach, finding it already dry. It must be remarked that, taking all signs into account, Newport Forest is drying out rather rapidly, indicating a dry spring and summer ahead.

That said, there remains one active seep crossing the trail down to the creek. Back in camp, I jerrybuilt another section of treadway (out of 2/2" lumber on hand) to immerse in the muddy part of the trail. Returning to the Nook, I spotted several patches of Cutleaf Toothwort growing beside the trail and at peak bloom, delicate white nodding flowers borne in a row from a central stem. (ideal for beeflies?)

I took a break in the Nook and had not been sitting for more than a minute when a fat little bird with a spotted breast flew through the Nook to park in some bushes to the east where (naturally) I couldn't see it. However, I recognized the same thrush (sp.) that I saw during our last visit. According to Dave Martin (see below) this would "almost certainly" be a Hermit Thrush. As this was going on I became aware of a modest eating noise from beside the old log. There was the same female raccoon that we had seen at the end of the last few visits. However, when I went to the trailer later, I spotted a second raccoon up on the Hickory feeder tray.

Later still, as I was about to leave well after sunset, a third raccoon emerged from the brush below the Hickory. More on this gang later.

Driving through the Upper Meadow on the way out, I flushed what appeared to be the same crow-sized ground bird (not a crow), silhouetted briefly in the twilight.

**Birds:** (16)

American Crow (EW); American Robin (GF); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (BCF); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Towhee (HO); Hermit Thrush (Nk); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Northern Flicker (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-tailed Hawk (LM); Song Sparrow (BCF); Turkey Vulture (EW); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (HO)

**Phenology:** First beeflies out, first Mourning Cloak, Cutleaf Toothwort in Bloom, Amelanchier in Bloom, frog chorus absent

**Trail Cam Record:** day/month (number)

#1:Coyote 4/06 (1)

#2: Eastern Cottontail (1) Wild Turkey (1)

#3:Eastern Cottontail (1); Eastern Gray Squirrel 4/04 (5) 4/05 (4) 4/06 (4) 4/07 (2) Raccoon 4/04 (8) 4/06 (2) 4/07 (3) Striped Chipmunk 4/04 (1)

**Correction:** The Bluebell Walk (now called the Wildflower walk) has been set at *May 6* for several weeks, contrary to our recent announcement of no set date.

**Readers Write:**

(Dave Martin, our consulting bird expert, comments on the thrush we saw Ap04.)  
“Given your description of the thrush and sequence of migration, it is almost certainly a Hermit Thrush. They should be peaking in the next week or two. But only a few are being reported on Ontbirds, the Ontario Bird Listserv. We've only seen one so far this spring. Wood Thrush and Veery do not return until the first week of May and their migration does not peak until mid May. Migration is now stalled out because of the north winds, temperatures below seasonal norm and lack of fronts coming up from the south. Our resident yard Chipping Sparrow finally arrived overnight , 3 days later than usual in recent years.”

**IMAGES:**



FinePix

I am standing in the middle of Mussel Beach, with an equal stretch of exposed land behind me. The Beach is now mostly emerged and already dry & firm to walk upon.



FinePix

“Resident female”, as we call her, gleans birdseed at base of Black Maple. With a little practice, one can learn to recognize individual Raccoons by noting just five characters: colour of nose stripe, solid or broken mask, peaks on mask, overall coat colour plus hilights, and sex. Females have longer faces than males, with sharper noses and lighter builds. This female has a divided mask and brown nose stripe, and one pair of low peaks, for example.

Coat colour may vary somewhat over time. straw colour of her coat may indicate a poor diet, although her weight seems reasonable. Our guess: she is constantly being drained of nutrients by kits.



**WILDVIEW**

04-06-2012 21:24:54



Trail Cam #1

We get about one Coyote in our trail cams about every two years, on average. You can barely make this one out -- just beyond the two small trees on the left. It wandered through the Blind Creek Forest on Saturday night at 9:24 pm. Note the bushy tail, grey underparts and canine shape. Probably looking for the Easter Bunny. Yum yum.