

Newport Forest

Wednesday April 18 2012

2:05 - 8:05 pm

Weather: Prec. 17 mm; RH 66%; BP 102.6 kPa; clear; calm; T 16° C

Purpose: Maintenance

Participants: Kee, Steve

The Annual TLLT Newport Forest Work Day will take place this coming Saturday. In the spirit of general cleanup, we decided to remove two steel pipes that have been sitting on the creek bed for three years, ever since ice took out the bridge they supported. But how could two men -- one a decrepit senior -- remove pipes that weighed some 500 lb apiece? Steve brought out his chain-operated "Come-along", able to exert a multiplier effect of some 100-to-1 force ratio on any object its pullchain is attached to. I stood in the creek bed to attach the pullchain. The first pipe jammed into the bank and we had to dig out the end before it would come up and out. The second pipe was much easier. Both pipes are now mostly out of the creek and ready for the next phase, where they can be pulled the rest of the way up the bank. This particular job took three hours.

Just before getting started. Steve and I had stood by a log projecting over the creek. "Check out the spider", said Steve. I looked down to see one of the largest wolf spiders I had ever seen. We estimated its legs to span nearly three inches.

After a break from the exhausting pipe-hauling operation, we decided to take a walk around the Thames River Trail, stopping at the Skunk Cabbage area to check out a suggestion of Darren's that we might find (terrestrial) liverworts there -- as he had done recently at Moraviantown. We scoured the area with no luck. Up on the Hogsback we flushed a Wild Turkey under the power lines, then stopped to rest on the bench. A Redbelly had been calling and now a Northern Flicker shrieked, showed itself nearby in a brilliant suit of subtle hues.

Walking with Steve is always a valuable exercise, thanks to Steve's keen eyes. Having just descended from the Hogsback into the Riverside Forest, he drew my attention to several patches of white flowers I had paid little attention to. "Is that Dutchman's Breeches?" asked Steve. It was indeed. This was only the second time I had seen them at Newport Forest!

A little further on, Steve asked, "Is this Pat's walking stick?" it was one we had lost a few months ago. I stopped in an area where in previous years I had always found Morels sprouting. "They should be around here somewhere." Steve looked down. "You're standing on one." There it was, right on the trail by my foot. I

took a photograph for the record. We then moved on to Bluebell Woods, where the legendary flowers were still at peak bloom. Steve pointed out that the Bluebells in his woods were not nearly as high as ours. It is a wonderful experience to stand there amid a sea of Virginia Bluebells, painted a golden green in the late sunlight.

We took a rest on the bench high on the river bluffs. It had been a beautiful afternoon and nothing illustrated it better than the placid flow below us and the perpetual promise of new things from around the bend upstream. There was a stout limb gnawed from a poplar lying there by the bench. Uh-oh, beaver teeth! We made our way back to camp and departed as the sun set.

Birds: (11)

American Crow (EW); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Mourning Dove (BCF); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Northern Flicker (HB); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-tailed Hawk (HBF); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (HB)

New Species:

Thin-legged Wolf Spider *Pardosa [lapidicina]* FC/N sl/KD Ap18/12

Species Note: Although this is evidently a *Pardosa* spider, it is not *P. lapidicina* (a very close lookalike), being too large for that species. In cases like this the pseudospecies name is simply a descriptive tag to distinguish it from other finds. There are over 500 species of this genus worldwide and probably over 100 in North America. I have reviewed barely half of the latter, the remainder being currently unavailable on the web or in my references.

Phenology: Blooms: Trilliums opening; Dutchman's Breeches fully out; Virginia Bluebells still at peak; Morels sprouting; Beeflies still out

Trail Cam Record: format: month|date (no. of "captures")

#1: Virginia Deer 4/17 (2)

#2: Virginia Deer 4/16 (1) 4/17 (1) 4/18 (1); Wild Turkey 4/16 (1) 4/17 (1)

#3: Eastern Gray Squirrel 4/14 (1) 4/15 (2) 4/16 (1); Raccoon 4/14 (3) 4/15 (2)

IMAGES:



FinePix

Steve uses his “come-along”, a chain-operated winch, to retrieve steel bridge pipes from the creek. Steve routinely uses his come-along to pull stuck cars and trucks out of ditches & snowbanks back home on the Rez. This pipe had two deck sections still attached to it. This was merely the beginning of the operation.



FinePix

Giant Wolf Spider spans nearly three inches and has a one-inch body length. It is a female and almost certainly in the genus *Pardosa*, owing to the thinness of the legs and the proportion of body length to overall (resting) length -- less than one-third. With apologies for darkness in the image. (Get closer to your screen.) We have another image that is clearer, but less dramatic.

Our previous giant is even larger. When I first saw it, I thought it was a Tarantula! It turned out to be a Carolina Wolf Spider (*Lycosa carolinensis* syn. *Hogna carolinensis*), unknown in Canada before being collected at Newport Forest -- according to the spider expert at Toronto Zoo who identified the find before sending the specimen along to Ottawa.



Nikon 990

Dutchman's Breeches grows in several small patches within the Beech-maple component of the Riverside Forest. The odd-shaped flower is named after the pantaloons of traditional Dutch garb.