

Newport Forest

Wednesday April 25 2012

2:45 - 7:15 pm

Weather: Prec. 0 mm; RH 35%; BP 101.1 kPa; sun/haze; SE 3-15 kmh; T 18° C

Purpose: to collect slugs & snails

Participants: Kee

The weather on site started out warm and sunny, but slowly deteriorated over the space of the afternoon, the sky becoming overcast and the temperature dropping slowly from 18° C to 13 ° C. Nevertheless, it was our first chance to get back to serious ATBI work. Today's subject was suggested by Steward Bruce Parker, who presented us with the latest land snail book, *Identifying Land Snails and Slugs in Canada* (Canadian Food Inspection Agency). This is our fourth tome on the subject and useful especially because of its narrower geographic focus, I had done some work on property land snails from about 2002 to 2004, but it was high time to get back to it.

Resting on unearned laurels in the Nook, I was visited by a White-throated Sparrow, a bird that Erin heard last Saturday. I watched through binoculars as it fed on fallen birdseed, noting the little yellow patches on its forehead. When ready, I girded my rusty loins and headed toward the Hole, our gateway to the marvels of Blind Creek Forest. On the way, I nearly stepped on a dead Meadow Vole lying on the trail. What happened? No marks of predation.

I headed for the easiest venue first, the massive drift piles at the river landing are usually full of snails, now mostly dead and easy to collect in the form of their shells. I picked up about 90 specimens of every possible variety, rejecting none and bagging them. At one point I spotted a Pupillid snail. These are small-to-minute snails that resemble some insect pupae. This was the first one I had ever seen (or at least noticed). I also found a live black slug with a yellow/orange "sole" or belly, which I collected.

Returning to camp, I changed the cards on the trail cams, but screwed up the time setting on Cam #2. My remedy for such accidents is to take a picture of myself pointing at my watch, then noting the time I do this, 4:15 pm in this case. This gives me an offset to apply to the time stamp that appears below images.

I next donned rubber boots and headed down to the creek, ruler in hand, to measure the wooden surface of an overhanging snag where Steve and I spotted that giant wolf spider on the 18th. After a little photoanalysis at home, it turned out that the spider was not as large as I had stated, with an overall length of not

7.5 cm, but 5.2 cm. This put it right back in the size range for the guessed species name. (See the *Bulletin* of Ap18 last.)

Following another break where I was entertained by a male and female Eastern Towhee “fooling around” in the bushes beside the Nook, I set out once again for Blind Creek Forest, this time to search further inland for snails and slugs. (For readers without experience in this area, we point out that slugs are essentially snails without their shells. They have a rudimentary shell in the form of a small calcareous plate embedded in one side of the body.)

It didn’t take long, working my way through a rotting log, to come upon my next slug, which turned out to be the same species as the one I had just collected in the drift pile. Here also, I picked up another dozen or so (uninhabited) shells, recognizing the recurring types. A few were already on the ATBI list.

During my last rest in the Nook I was entertained by a male and female Northern Cardinal playing chase -- another form of “fooling around”, if you ask me. Meanwhile the overcast had lowered and the air seemed chillier. High overhead in the Black Maple that shades the Nook, an American Robin began to sing what we call the “rain song”: “Hurry-up, hurry-ye, hurry-up hurry-ye, gonna rain soon, you’ll see!”

New Species: (ATBI total now 1788 spp)

Pupillid Snail	[<i>Pupilla</i>] Fam. Pupillidae	BCF/RL KD Ap25
Yellow-soled Slug	<i>Arion hortensis</i> gp*	BCF/ET KD Ap25
Bristled Slitmouth	<i>Stenotrema barbatum</i>	BCF/RL KD Ap25
Hairy Helicellid	<i>Trochulus hispidus</i>	BCF/RL KD Ap25
Pillsnail	<i>Euchemotrema [leaii]</i>	BCF/RL KD Ap25
Golden Ambersnail	<i>Succinea wilsonii</i>	BCF/RL KD Ap25
Hammer-jawed Jumper	<i>Zygoballus rufipes</i>	BCF/RL KD Ap25

The last species is not a snail, but a small jumping spider that crawled out of one of the snail shells on my specimen table at home. Noting its distinctive marks, I decided to ID it. As I got up to get the spider book, I swear the little guy tilted his head upward to look up at me with his pair of large black eyes. Creepy!

*This is actually a group of three species that can only be distinguished by dissecting the animals and inspecting their sex organs. This group is native to western & southern Europe, but now widely distributed in North America.

Leps: (4)

Cabbage White (Nk); Anglemwing (Nk); Mourning Cloak (ET); Red Admiral (Tr)

Birds: (14)

American Crow (EW); American Robin (HBF); Blue Jay (GF); Common Grackle (GF); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Towhee (BCF/Ho); Field Sparrow (GF); Hairy Woodpecker (GF); Mourning Dove (FCF); Northern Cardinal (BCF/LM); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); White-throated Sparrow (Nk); Wild Turkey (BCF/W)

Phenology: Wild Strawberry & Apple spp. in full bloom; first *Coprinus* spp up

Trail Cam Record:

#1: Virginia Deer Ap25 (1)

#2: Eastern Cottontail Ap22 (1) Ap23 (1/2) Raccoon Ap22 (3) Ap24 (1) Virginia Deer Ap22 (1) Wild Turkey Ap22 (1)

#3: out of operation (to be replaced)

Readers Write:

(Patty Frank is a nature lover who lives in San Diego and does fund-raising work for local Native Americans.)

“Your big spider reminds me of the big one I found in my living room early one spring morning a few years back. It was still somewhat dark when I entered the living room and saw the cats surrounding what looked like a balled up sheet of paper. As I got closer my jaw dropped. It was a huge spider raised up on its legs, really a big guy [with a] very aggressive stance. I grabbed a large glass, shoed the cats away, trapped the spider, and removed him to the slope behind my home. Later identified it as a male trapdoor spider, probably washed down the slope in the previous night's rain. He seemed to be just a bit smaller than the size of my fist, like a small tarantula. I haven't seen him or any of his relatives since.”

IMAGES:



FinePix

Continuing our spring flower series, we present these blossoms of the Wild Strawberry. Never mind those giant California strawberries that taste like cucumbers! No strawberry in the world is as sweet-tasting as our native variety. Here the blooms are fully out.

The hole beside the plant is either a dig or a burrow, possibly that of a Meadow Vole. Who doesn't like a nice flower at their doorstep?



FinePix

A small troop of *Coprinus* mushrooms sprouting at the base of an aging stump have the typically inky gills of this genus. (See the inverted cap above.) The species shown here could be the Mica Cap (*C. micaceus*) or the Inky Cap (*C. atramentarius*). Mice have nibbled a few of the caps.



FinePix

The total sample is shown here to illustrate this kind of species-search. Variations in colour, pattern, and age, as well as bleaching effects, give one a sense of the variation within a species, enhancing the ID process. Note that the European Striped snail was collected sparsely. Damaged specimens were removed from the sample.

Recorded

New

1. Forest Snail
4. Whitlip Globe
5. European Striped Snail
6. Northern Three-tooth

2. [Lowland?] Pillsnail
3. Hairy Helicellid
7. Bristled Slitmouth
8. Golden Ambersnail

Top shell for each species is inverted to show details of aperture, teeth, lips, and umbilicus (hole in middle, if present) Note that snails already recorded were largest. Most snail species are less than 1 cm in diameter!