

Newport Forest

Thursday May 3 2012

2:10 - 7:35 pm

Weather: prec. 14 mm; RH 78%; BP 101.6 kPa; SW 15-30 kmh; sn/cld; T 30° C

Purpose: maintenance

Participants: Kee, Steve

When I got to the property, I found the gate wide open, so I knew Steve was already there. I was surprised that he had gotten both heavy steel pipes up the 60' slope of the Fleming Creek bluff, threading them between trees and bushes, damaging none. We hooked the pull chain to the trailer hitch on the back of my Freestar, the 4.2 litre engine roared to life and the BFG all-terrains dug in. I towed the pipes out onto the open track. Steve explained how he would haul the pipes down to the scrapyards in Rodney.

We had a sit-down in the Nook before I drove him back to Moraviantown. We both had (left) hip problems, so two invalids chatted while Gray Tree Frogs called from various locales, near and far. Later I would hear the trilling of American Toads deep in the Blind Creek Forest.

Back from the Rez a half-hour later, I decided to visit the creek, noting that the *Cladophora* (a filamentous green alga) was about half grown on the rocks of the Lower Rapids. On the bank of today's creek I found a large number of Buttercups growing in a patch that Pat had sampled last week. Are they a new *Ranunculus* species? Pat thinks they are *R. hispida*. We await confirmation from Jane Bowles.

Earlier I thought I had heard a Common Yellowthroat calling. Back up in the Lower Meadow, I saw the bird itself, flying into a bush on the meadow border.

Sitting in the Nook, I felt a tickle on my neck. Not a Wood Tick, but Phiddipus the Jumping Spider. It leapt from me to the floor of the Nook, scurrying under a bench. There I spotted another jumping spider that I had learned only a week earlier, readily recognizable by his smaller size and all-red abdomen: the "Hammer-jawed Jumper". Above me a pair of Blue Jays chased each other from branch to branch. (Please don't make more Blue Jays!)

I had just changed the trail cam SD cards, replacing the batteries on #2, when a familiar song drew my attention to the Hickory feeder tray. There, resplendent in his "bleeding heart" cravat, was the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, back from Peru -- or wherever. And there, high in the gallery forest, another song drew my attention to a flash of Orange and the Baltimore Oriole, also back.

Ever since my arrival I had seen an unusually large number of butterflies for this time of year. I decided to walk to the river. My first stop was just inside the Hole, where a Bladdernut in bloom seemed covered with fluttering insects. I noted the species. Continuing along the trail I was startled when a familiar orange-brown pattern crossed my path. Monarch? Whoa! It's way too early for Monarchs. (Must be an hallucination.) At the river a pair of Mallards strutted over one of the gravel bars. Back in camp, another "Monarch" fluttered past. Should I get my eyes checked? Later at home I learned that others had been seeing them, as well.

Birds: (16)

American Crow (LM); American Robin (GF); Baltimore Oriole (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Common Yellowthroat (LM); Field Sparrow (LM); Kinglet* (ET); Mallard (TR); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (FCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (LM); Turkey Vulture (EW); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF)

*could not see crown

Leps: (5)

Cabbage White (ET/VP); Eastern Question Mark (Ho); Monarch (ET); Mourning Cloak (ET/VP); Red Admiral (ET/VP)

Phenology: Gray Tree Frogs and American Toads in chorus, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, Common Yellowthroat all back, first Monarchs.

Readers Write: (Donald Craig, an area conservation officer, naturalist, and Newport Steward, adds to the fawn-spot discussion.):

"I agree they are probably a doe and 2 yearlings. However the light spots on the flanks are where the winter coat has already fallen out to expose the light coloured part of adjacent hairs. . . I have never seen a fawn with spots myself or on my trail cameras after the 1st of October. Remember, the spots were part of a summer coat which is replaced in the fall with a thicker darker coat."

Trail Cam Record:

#1: Virginia Deer My01/12 (1)

#2: Shots of Pat and Kee, but no other animals.

#3: Eastern Gray Squirrel Ap30 (1); Raccoon Ap29 (2) Ap30 (3)

IMAGES:



FinePix

Steve untangles “come-along” before dismounting it from Black Maple. Heavy pullchain is in his left hand and lighter winding chain is in his right hand. The winding chain is a loop that drives a gear train, producing a 50-1 ratio of pulling force. Every four feet of winding chain travel produces about one inch of pullchain travel.

During winter, Steve is often called upon to pull cars out of snowdrifts using this powerful device.



FinePix

Pendulous blossoms of Bladdernut shrub attract many butterflies and moths. I could barely count the number of leps fluttering all over this tree, nectaring at the flowers. About half of them were Red Admirals. (with apologies for bad focus)

Global Entomology Page

The Weta is the world's heaviest (if not largest) insect. Our early Newport Forest volunteer, Nic Mihlik, moved to New Zealand in 2005 and soon informed us about this fascinating creature.



Weta eating carrot

Source: *Gizmodo*

The Weta

I once had a brush with a weta
That landed one day on my sweata
I feared it might linga,
So brushed it away;
Now I'm minus one finga
And all I can say (is)
I seem to be feeling much betta.

(poetic license recently expired)