

Newport Forest

Thursday May 10

2:30 - 9:20 pm

Weather: Prec. 7 mm; RH 62%; BP 101.3 kPa; clear; NNW 10-40 kmh; T 15° C

Purpose: clean trailer and look for new plants

Participants: Kee

Today's visit began with a partial cleaning of the trailer in preparation for a weekend stay. Once free of that, I changed the SD cards on the trail cams and set out to walk the Thames River Trail.

As I passed a few of the vernal ponds on my way, I noticed that they are drying out fairly quickly most at half the depth they had a few weeks ago. Out at the river, I inspected Mussel Beach both from ground level and from the bluffs. No Spiny Softshell Turtles were at their favorite basking spot. Did I arrive too late?

Further on I came to Bluebell Woods, noting that the blooming period for the Virginia Bluebells was just about over, with only a small percentage of plants having any of the little blue flowers still hanging on. Leaving Bluebell Woods, I came upon a large yard-waste bag stuffed full of garlic mustard and too heavy to carry, or even drag, back to the van a good 2 km away. I decided to leave the bag where it was, letting the plants dry out thoroughly to lighten it.

Ascending the Hogsback slope, I noted that the Trilliums were also just about done, with a few pinkish flowers showing here and there. But I just happened to notice one or two very humble little plants with small red flowers borne on serial petioles along the stem, and a pair of small strap-like leaves arranged oppositely. Although the find excited Pat, she could make very little headway. The flowers seem to be imperfect with a few pistils, and the three petals are actually sepals. The flowers are pinkish red, darkening with age and otherwise resembling those of Cutleaf Toothwort, with smaller narrow bells about a cm long.

On top of the Hogsback, I left my backpack on the bench to go off and photograph the large Flowering Dogwood that grows at the far end. I had forgotten what a long walk it is, as well as the difficulty created by crowded Prickly Ash and jagged Hawthorns, impeding progress with nearly every step. At one point I tried the Viking "berserksgangr" method -- just bull my way through. Bad idea! I ended up with some rather deep punctures on one hand and leaving a trail of blood that might interest some predator. Tired by the time I got to the Dogwood and still bleeding, I made my way back to the main exit trail and on to the trailer, where we keep a bottle of peroxide. Later, I walked back to the

Hogsback through Blind Creek Forest to retrieve my backpack.

Returning to camp, I was assaulted by a small number of mosquitoes. A dry summer will do a lot to lessen their effect. I stayed well into the evening, having a snack in the trailer and checking out our evening visitors, probably nursing mothers, along with the mysterious “Swamp Coon” mentioned in our last Bulletin.

Driving out across the Upper Meadow, I started a Woodcock that flew in front of the van long enough for me to see it clearly. Driving back to Wardsville a few minutes later, I spotted a Striped Skunk by the side of the road. Skunks are a rather rare sight in the area generally. There are probably more possums.

New Species:

‘Abbreviated Actinopod’	<i>Choanocystis</i> sp.	VPC KD Ap29/12
‘Two-spined Coleps’	<i>Coleps hirtus</i> *	VPC KD Ap29/12
Tadpole Snail	<i>Physa gyrina gyrina</i> *	FC pd/KD Ap29/12

*The count does not go up for these species because they were already listed to genus. The new records merely replace the older ones.

Birds: (14)

American Crow (LM); American Robin (HBF); American Woodcock (UM); Brown-headed Cowbird (GF); Canada Goose (TR); Common Yellowthroat (LM)/HBF); Eastern Towhee (Ho); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (FCF); Northern Flicker (BCF/Ho); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GCF) Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (LM/N); Tree Swallow (UM/Rd)

Phenology:

Mosquitoes “out”, end of Trillium and Bluebell bloom, Wild Geranium in bloom, vernal ponds half dried up.

Trail Cam Record:

#1: Virginia Deer My09 (1)
#2: Eastern Cottontail My06 (2) My07 (1); Raccoon My09 (2) My10 (1)
#3: Eastern Gray Squirrel My08 (2); Raccoon My06 (3) My08 (1)

IMAGES:



FinePix

Spring Flower Series: One of the next plants to bloom is the May Apple. The flowers are very hard to photograph *au naturel* since they are hidden by the large, umbrella-like leaves of the plant. The specimen shown above belonged to a large patch of about 100 plants on the Hogsback top.



image courtesy Erin Carroll

This handsome Northern Brown Snake (*Storeria dekayi dekayi*) was caught in Erin Carroll's camera at the River Landing during the recent Wildflower Walk. Identification is made on the basis of size, ground colour, details of the head (partially visible at bottom of image), and rows of black dots running the length of the body. The snake ranges from Southern Ontario and the eastern US south to the Carolinas.



FinePix

Twilight lingers as the days lengthen. Angle of image shows up a young Bigtooth Aspen in the foreground (in the Regen Zone) against the distant backdrop of Blind Creek Forest. Ragged canopy was left, in part, by the loss of over 100 mature Bitternut Hickories in '05 - '06.