

Newport Forest

Thursday May 17 2012

3:00 - 9:10 pm

Weather: prec. 3 mm; RH 58%; BP 102.5 kPa; calm; clear; T 21° C

Purpose: general monitoring

Participants: Kee

The first surprise of today's visit came at the river. Walking Mussel Beach, I became aware of frequent sounds of splashing coming from the rapids. Looking downstream, I could see white water emerge at each episode. What was going on? I happened to witness some of these churnings relatively close to my vantage point on the shore, suddenly realizing that these were fish spawning. The dorsal fins were always black or very dark, and somewhat pointed. The backs were dark. The sides were rather silvery and reflected the light. As we shall see, this was enough to make a good guess as to the species involved.

Back in camp, I changed the SD cards on the trail cams and set to work going through the Regen Zone to collect old drip-cans. We plan to remove these and all survey flags over the coming weeks. It has occurred to us that the latter, with their steel masts, might be hazardous to fall upon. In Vernal Pond B, now almost dry, I dumped the sample taken two weeks ago and acquired a second, larger sample.

After some passive birding in the Nook -- by both ear & eye -- I decided to visit the Copse, a small clearing in the upper Gallery Forest. I spent a lot of time looking for the Alternating Dogwood that is supposed to be growing there and decided to remove it from the ATBI list if no other specimens could be found on the property. In the middle of this search I came upon three honeysuckle plants with beautiful pinkish flowers arising from what appeared to be a circular leaf clasping the stem. I photographed them as well as I could without the Nikon handy, thinking I would make them this week's entry in the Spring Flower Series and assuming that they were already on the list.

Back in the Nook, a rather large male Raccoon arrived to glean birdseed. He may have been one of the two males attempting to raid the seed pail during our recent overnight stay. Apart from this individual, the only other mammals seen today were the "Swamp Coon", an Eastern Chipmunk in the Nook and two Eastern Gray Squirrels foraging in two separate forests.

On the way out, shortly after sunset, I flushed not one, but two American Woodcocks from the track that crosses the Upper Meadow. They seem to like wandering the road.

The second surprise came when I got home to compare today's Honeysuckle images with those of the two species already on the ATBI list. Neither! Thus, the flower is as new to us as it may be to some of our readers.

New Species:

Trumpet Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i>	Copse kd/PD My17/12
'Slender Eunotia'	<i>Eunotia bilunaris</i> *	VP-B KD My17/12

*an abundant vernal pond diatom

Birds: (18)

American Crow (LM); American Robin (LM/HBF); American Woodcock (UM); Baltimore Oriole (BCF/LM); Belted Kingfisher (TR); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Canada Goose (TR); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Gray Catbird (BCF); Mourning Dove (BCF); Northern Cardinal (FCF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (TR); Spotted Sandpiper (TR); Tree Swallow (Rd); White-breasted Nuthatch (BCF); Wild Turkey (EW)

Leps:

Cabbage White (UM); Clouded Sulphur (LM); Eastern Tailed Blue (LM); Giant Swallowtail (RL); Pearl or Northern Crescent (LM); Red Admiral (LM/HBF)

Phenology:

Stinging Nettle almost mature, Maples almost fully leafed out, Walnut buds starting to open, White Suckers (?) spawning in river rapids

Trail Cam Record: (1/m = m individuals in image)

- #1: bad SD card
- #2: Raccoon My13 (1/2) My14 (1) My15 (1) My16 (2); Virginia Deer My15 (1/1); Wild Turkey My15 (2)
- #3: Eastern Gray Squirrel (1); Raccoon My13 (3) My14 (1) My16 (3) My17 (3)

IMAGES:



FinePix

Spring Flower Series: Trumpet Honeysuckle grows in the Copse, a small clearing in the upper Gallery (creek bluffs) Forest that is a great source of fungi. I thought this was one of the two Honeysuckle species already recorded for the property, but it turned out to be new! Caught here near the end of its bloom, with red fading to pink, the flowers emerge directly from a vein in the fused leaves that form the base.

Pat would like to confirm this find by a) visiting the specimens herself and b) hearing from our plant experts about possibilities of hybridization of this species with related ones.



FinePix

Today at any given moment I could spot up to five separate spawning groups of fish. The groups consisted usually of one female (a larger fish) and up to four or five smaller males, nudging her to get more eggs released. This resulted in a kind of brief merry chase, resulting in a tight one-second circle that involved much thrashing and splashing. According to an authoritative source on Great Lakes species, “Only lake sturgeon, white sucker, sauger and walleye are reported to spawn in rapids.” Based on dorsal fin size and shape, as well as what I could make out of the general colour scheme, I would have to vote for the White Sucker. (already on the ATBI list)

I witnessed far more than I could photograph because the chases rarely lasted more than two or three seconds, hardly time to aim the camera!