

Weather: prec. 7 mm; RH 68%; BP 102.3 kPa; sn/hz; SE 0-30 kmh; T 24° C

Purpose: two-day visit

Participants: Pat. Kee

The weather seemed rather iffy when we arrived, with ominous skies and sudden heavy winds, but we decided to visit the river, despite our fears of a deluge. Following Edgar's trail, we (Pat) spotted an unusual dragonfly lurking on a leaf near the ground. I thought it was an ideal opportunity to try my new Lumix camera, capable of closer images than the FinePix had been. We were surprised



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later to discover that we had a new species of *Gomphus* for the ATBI list. We felt somewhat cautious in this case, owing to its “uncommon” rating for S. Ontario. It will be our third *Gomphus* species, the Pronghorn Clubtail. (See New Species)

The bad weather we had feared never materialized. By the time we reached the river, the afternoon had settled into a sullen, grey warmth. From the observing bench high on the River Bluffs we watched through binoculars as a large turtle swam in leisurely fashion out in the river. It would paddle on the surface for a time, then slowly submerge into a dark shadow, then become definite as it rose again. At one point it raised its head to reveal the unmistakably pointed nose of the Spiny Softshell -- our second sighting in less than a week!

Growing near the bench was a plant with clusters of white flowers and perfoliate leaves. "What's that? Is it new?" Pat examined it. "Black Snakeroot. We already have it."

By the time we got back to the trailer a light rain began, then stopped in a few minutes. Bits of blue sky peeped out, then disappeared. While a Hummingbird Moth visited flowers beside the Nook, I went down to the creek to check the trail. I had fallen badly on my back during a previous visit, thanks to slick clay on a sloping section near the bottom. Armed with my favorite shovel, I cut some new steps in the trail, then paid a quick visit to the Lower Rapids, where I noticed a pile of very large scat deposited near the water's edge. Not only was it unusually large, but it was quite a different colour from Coyote scat, which is usually very dark and coated with self-licking hair. Pat became nervous when I told her about the find. But she was happy to have spotted her first Indigo Bunting of the season while bird-watching at the Snag, a dead tree just up the road from the trailer.

After a late supper, we heard a chorus of Coyotes off to the east near the Furnival Road. I walked to the Upper Meadow to close the gate, dropping in for a quick visit to the Hurdles. Edgar was watching the Memorial Cup game on TV. (Knights vs Cataract tied at 1-1) Nina told me that the walk scheduled for the Wardsville Woods that day had been canceled. I returned to camp through the gathering dusk and a clearing sky. "There are lots of fireflies out", reported Pat through the walkie-talkie. The scene in the Lower Meadow was pure magic. All over the meadow, hundreds of faerie lamps winked off and on against a backdrop of ghostly light from the Moon of Rajab. A meteor streaked across the sky from east to west. Pat was eager for news from "civilization". (You'd think I'd been gone for a week.)

It was time to take our census of the local Raccoon families. We scattered kibble loosely over the track and in the Nook. The first Raccoon to show up was Rusty, the male "Swamp Coon". He kept his distance. In a normal year we have one or two females (with their kits) show up for this exercise. But now we had three! We

attribute the higher number to an exceptionally mild winter that allowed more Raccoons to survive. The mothers had already been tagged “Amy”, “Betty”, and “Celia”, (A, B, and C) on previous visits. Amy is using the nursery box high in the Black Maple over the Nook. She has six small kits. Celia, who has her den under the trailer, has only two kits, also small. Betty’s den is somewhere else. She also had just two kits, but well-grown. Raccoon mothers nesting on the ground would be more likely to lose kits, so perhaps Betty also had a ground nest. In any case, we thought the attrition rate was unusually high. Normally, only one or two are lost by August.

Night deepened to the sound of some ten kits churring and burbling all around the trailer. Occasionally, a mother would growl and snarl at a kit from another litter that had gotten too close. “What was that?” from the bedroom. “Nothing!”

Pat got up before I did, going out under sunny morning skies for more bird-watching, netting three more for the visit. She cut a Russian Olive and found Blue-eyed Grass in bloom beside the track. After I had arisen, she found a new spider on the trailer. It turned out to be the common cellar spider! We were fascinated to learn later how this spider had spread from its original tropical habitat to cellars all over North America, not to mention the occasional trailer! There were Giant Swallowtails everywhere. A red-spotted Purple flew by. We decided not to go after lepidoptera today, as we had forgotten to bring our butterfly guides with us.

I set to work on the Fleming Creek trail project, half-building a new treadway for the seeps and cutting step-boards for the new steps. As I did so, I would glance up occasionally at three Eastern Gray Squirrels chasing each other around the Gallery Forest. A little late for mating, I thought. I took the boards down to the creek, followed by Pat who clipped overhanging branches as she went. We went out to look at the pile of large scat. “Ohmigod!” Somewhere a Green Frog said “Yup”.

By 4:00 pm the humidity was very high and the air temperature had soared to 34° C. I went to the river for a last look, while Pat started to load the van. There were lots of dragonflies, including what I thought was a new one parked right under my nose: Chocolate and mustard stripes. But it was a female Whitetail, looking nothing like the male at all. I changed the trail cam SD cards with little enthusiasm. With each operating cycle, they seem to deteriorate further, causing more images to be lost.

Leaving the property, we spotted a Bobolink flying across a meadow nearby.

New Species:

‘Double Spirogyra’	<i>Spirogyra dubia</i>	TR/MB KD My22/12
‘Long Spirogyra’	<i>S. [longata]</i>	TR/MB KD My22/12
‘Weber’s Spirogyra’	<i>S. Weberi</i>	TR/MB KD My22/12
‘Triple Spirogyra’	<i>S. [triplicata]</i>	TR/MB KD My22/12
Pronghorn Clubtail	<i>Gomphus graslinellus</i>	ET/BC pd/KD My27/12
Long-bodied Cellar Spider	<i>Pholcus phalangioides</i>	Tr KD My27/12
Brown Crab Spider	<i>Xysticus ferox</i>	Nk pd/KD My28/12
Round-necked Longhorn	<i>Clytus ruricola</i>	Nk pd/KD My28/12

We are now well past the 1800 species mark.

ID Notes: The species of *Spirogyra* were identified from Prescott’s *Algae of the Western Great Lakes*. The clubtail was identified by comparing our photos with Carmichael’s *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Southern Ontario*, then later with numerous web images. *Pholcus* was identified (Kaston’s *How to Know the Spiders*) on the basis of abdomen size shape & colour, length of femur I compared to length of carapace, etc. This is the common basement spider, originally a tropical species adapted to damp, dark forest settings. The folium pattern on the abdomen of the Brown Crab Spider is highly variable, but includes one matching our specimen, other visible characters being identical. The pattern on the elytra of the longhorn (Cerambycid) beetle is distinctive.

Birds: (25)

American Crow (LM); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (TR); Baltimore Oriole (GF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (Tr); Canada Goose (TR); Common Grackle (LM); Common Yellowthroat (LM/HBF); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Screech Owl (BCF); Eastern Towhee (EW); Field Sparrow (TR); Gray Catbird (Nk); Great Crested Flycatcher (GF/E); Indigo Bunting (Snag); Killdeer (TR); Mourning Dove (TR); Northern Cardinal (GF); Northern Flicker (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (LM)
Refer to pdf in message.

Supplemental: Birds seen within a few hundred metres of the Newport Forest boundaries: Ruby-throated Hummingbird at the Hurdle feeder; Bobolink in Blaine’s pasture on the Beattie Line and a Red-winged Blackbird nearby.

Phenology: Fireflies mating, Blue-eyed Grass in bloom, Hop Tree flowers breaking bud, *Hesperus* (sim. to *Phlox*) has spread throughout the forested areas.

Readers Write:

Erin Carroll, a wildlife biologist with the St Clair Regional Conservation Authority and a Newport Forest Steward, responds to our report of fish spawning in the river rapids (NFB # 817, May 17/12)

“ . . . I had seen a similar sight in the Sydenham and based on feedback had assumed that I had seen common carp spawning (even though I was sure I saw short dorsal fins). Now I know I was much more likely to have seen one of our native fishes - probably a white sucker. After reading a little more I agree that common carp are more likely to spawn in backwater areas and pools. Here is a link that suggests that a few Asian Carp species spawn in rapids: http://meeting.ijc.org/sites/default/files/workgroups/RapidResponseAssessment_Final-8-3-11.pdf I don't think that it is likely that these are the species you saw, but it is probably a good thing to keep an eye out for them.”

Bill Taylor, a protozoologist at the University of Waterloo also responds to the spawning report, referring to alternate names for the White Sucker:

“Seems late for what anglers affectionately call the ‘Great White’, ‘Bugle Trout’, or ‘Hoover’. Did you check the various redhorse spp.?” *Reply:* I found a few web references to Redhorse species spawning in rapids, so we may have to add this genus to the list of possible spawners.

Trail Cam Record:

Cam #1: card faults
Cam #2: Coyote My19 (1); Eastern Cottontail My19 (1); Raccoon My 18 (1) (1/3*) (2), My 19 (1); Virginia Deer My22 (1)
Cam #3: card faults

*two kits

Newport Forest Website: Don't forget to visit the Newport Forest on the web at: <http://www.csd.uwo.ca/~akd/conservation/Newport.html>

IMAGES:



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Spring Flower Series: The Yellow Flag (*Iris pseudacoris*) is not a native species, but it's certainly more attractive than Garlic Mustard! This bunch was growing beside the River Landing.

WARNING: Do not scroll down unless you have a strong stomach!



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Mystery scat found near creek is about 50% larger in diameter than Coyote scat and has the wrong colour and composition, in any case. This scat is human-sized but not human -- unless he/she has a very strange diet. Unlike most Coyote scat, these leavings had a bad smell.

There are at least three carrion beetles visible on the scat, *Necrophorus americana*, at a guess. They have all flown in on the scent of carrion or rotting carrion, as here. If this is the reason, then the perpetrator of this mess is a carnivore. One of the carrion beetles had its head buried in the scat, mining for goodies!