

Time: 2:40 - 6:40 pm

Weather: PC 0 mm; RH 58%; BP 101.3 kPa; sn/cld; SW 10 kmh; T 33° C

Activity: checking property, sweeping for arthropods

Parking by the trailer, the first member of the Greeting Committee arrived, a Hummingbird Moth that zipped from flower to flower. I assembled my kit and set out on the Thames River Trail (TRT), first passing through The Hole (as below)



Once at the River Landing, I dared not to descend to Mussel Beach in such hot weather. The “double sun effect” guarantees a quick burn, with both direct rays and ones reflected from the water. Thus I continued on the main trail up to the bluffs, where I sat on a rest bench that overlooks the river.

A large shadow on the water caught my eye, but I did not look up quickly enough to make out the dark silhouette that disappeared behind the trees overhead. Was it a young Bald Eagle? As if to compensate for this teaser, the next offering was a

smallish duck paddling in leisurely fashion toward the mouth of Fleming Creek. Out came the binos. My goodness! A Hooded Merganser.

As far as I could tell, the entire area was largely mosquito-free. Again, as if to compensate for this easement, the trail was decorated, every few metres or so, with annoying *Micrathena* webs that had to be ducked under, walked around, or swept aside. (*Advice*: If you must destroy a web, try to leave the “bridge line”, a horizontal strand which supports the structure. It probably takes more time to set up the bridge line than it takes to build the entire web.) By the end of the walk, the count of webs stood at 72, well ahead of the 54 that Dan Bickel and I counted during our walk two weeks ago. Interestingly, I found two webs constructed by the brilliant green and black Orchard Spider (*Leucauge venusta*).

Once into the Riverside Forest, I was startled by a large, bright green insect flying across the trail. I stumbled after it into the brush, finding it after some trouble, then taking a poor photograph of our first Katydid of the season: Who can work under such conditions? I was surprised, as I continued, to find lots of fungi growing here and there along the trail. It must have been the result of last week’s plentiful rains. *Trametes* spp were everywhere, as well as Orange Mycenas and the alien-looking Netted Rhodotus that resembles someone’s brain transplant attached to a log. (See below.)

On the Hogsback I collected a *Russula*, despairing of ever ID-ing it properly. In the Blind Creek Forest, I continued to dodge spider webs, spotting a small American Toad along the way. The front half was coloured normally, but the back half was completely black!

Back at camp, I recovered in the shade of the Nook, gradually building up the courage to sweep for insects in the hot sun of the Lower Meadow. Given that the vast majority of species on site are arthropods, it would appear that the most efficient way to build the onsite ATBI list is to look for new insects. And one of the simplest ways to get them is to sweep with a butterfly net in the areas where flowers are in bloom. A chipmunk watched me leave from the feeder above.

Swish-swish-swish, forward and back, never mind the damage. Inspecting the net after each such sweep, there were invariably arthropods at the bottom or climbing the sides. Ants, plant-hoppers, spiders, beetles, micro-moths, a who’s who of arthropods that make their living in the high-altitude world of meadow plants. Among the finds to emerge in a half hour of sweeping were a *Xysticus* crab spider (already recorded), a colourful Bumbling Flower Beetle (new) and our first

Philodromid, another kind of crab spider.

My final task on site was to change the sd cards on the trail cams, pondering the recent dearth of imagery in the process. The cams were taking very few pictures. Were there fewer animals about? It suddenly struck me that a camera that operates on infra red from the subject would not detect it nearly as well against a “hot” (high infra red) background. It was one of these “aha” moments. Maybe.

Birds: (16*)

American Crow (BCF/W); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose (TR); Common Grackle (RL); Common Yellowthroat (LM); Eastern Towhee (GF); Field Sparrow (LM); Gray Catbird (RB); Hooded Merganser (TR); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (EW); Northern Flicker BCF/E); Red-tailed Hawk (PL); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (UM) *includes list of J127

Leps: (9)

Black Swallowtail (LM); Cabbage White (LM); Common Buckeye (LM); Eastern Tailed Blue (LM); Giant Swallowtail (BCF); Hummingbird Moth (Tr); Lesser Grapevine Looper (LM); Monarch (RB); Northern Crescent (LM);

New Species: (ID materials available)

‘Decorated Philodromus’	<i>Philodromus imbecillus</i>	LM/HBF KD Au02/12
‘Iridescent Flower Beetle’	<i>Euphoria fulgida</i>	LM/HBF KD Au02/12
Lesser Grapevine Looper	<i>Eulithis diversilineata</i>	LM/HBF KD Au02/12

Note: For new readers, we point out the use of made-up “common names”, enclosed in single quotes. Our database has a field for common names, so we use descriptive names that tend to distinguish the organism from others.

Phenology: Goldenrod (*S. nemoralis?*), Wingstem starting to bloom, Bandwing Grasshoppers out, First Katydid

Precipitation summary:

The table below shows total january-to-July precipitation for each of the last ten years, along with the corresponding annual totals: (in mm)

year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	1010	2011	2012
July	334	310	397	557	379	600	559	387	782	350
Total	730	617	667	1020	674	1227	926	744	1243	???

One can see a certain correlation between the two amounts. The years 2004, 2005, and 2007 were exceptionally dry and we spent enormous amounts of time watering newly planted trees in the Regen Zone. Now the trees have deeper roots.

Readers Write:

Bill Taylor, a protozoologist at the U. of Waterloo and a microbial consultant, comments on our find of Euglena forming an algal bloom in a beach lagoon:

“I have seen green scums that turned out to be *Euglena*; I can recall a recurring one on a stormwater retention pond on campus. I don't know all the *Euglena* species, and have forgotten much of what I once knew. But your description and photos do agree with the description in Leedale (1967) Euglenoid Flagellates.”

Patty Frank is a naturalist and financial consultant for a Native American band in California. She writes about her discovery of an unusual wasp.

“This is a photo I took of a wonderful insect that hangs out on the rez. The Tarantula Hawk (*Pepsis formosa*) has a metallic blue body and reddish antennae, which separates it from *Pepsis thisbe*. Its sting is powerful. The female attacks a tarantula, paralyzes it, drags it back to her hole, deposits an egg on it's belly, then covers the hole. When the wasp larva hatches it eats a hole in the tarantula's belly, devours it, pupates in the spider's belly, and then bursts through the belly, sorta like in Ridley Scott's Alien...cool, huh! The tarantula hunters are the females looking to deposit their eggs. Males are nectar eaters.” (See IMAGES below.)

Eric Dewdney, musician and Dirrector of Music at Trinity Anglican Church in Cambridge, Ontario, mentions our “paradise”. (also a cousin)

Your bulletins are most interesting and enlightening. Keep 'em coming. One of these days, when the planet cools, I will betake corpus-cum-Corolla in your direction for inspection of your piece of paradise . . . mid September?

IMAGES:



The Netted Rhodotus and the Orange Mycena (below) are both wood-digesting fungi that are fairly common in the woods on site. The Netted Rhodotus cap is about 8 cm across, the Mycena cap about 2 cm.





The Tarantula Hawk rests on flowers of a Bricklebush (at a guess). Patty encourages readers to learn more about this fascinating wasp. Here is an excerpt from Wikipedia: "Tarantula wasps are also nectarivorous. The consumption of fermented fruit sometimes intoxicates them to the point that flight becomes difficult.

“The male Tarantula Hawk does not hunt; instead, it feeds off the flowers of milkweeds, western soapberry trees, or mesquite trees (females feed on these same plants, as well) . . .The tarantula hawk is relatively docile and rarely stings without provocation. However the sting . . . is among the most painful of any insect . . .”