

**Time:** in 2:40 pm on 10th, out 5:45 pm on 11th

**Weather:** Pc 22 mm; RH 47%; BP 102.5 kPa; sun/haze, SW 0-15 kmh; T 27° C

**Activity:** two-day stay with Pat & Kee

After the business of setting up the trailer for a two-day stay and after another round of the Bee Protocol (see later), we felt sufficiently energetic to make the long-awaited trip to Clam Island, about a kilometer upriver from Newport Forest. We carried the canoe, paddles, and lifejackets down to Mussel Beach, where we put in. The current was strong enough to provide a little exercise, but worth the



Pat ships her paddle while I photograph a magnificent old Sycamore

effort, considering our destination -- a malacologist's Shangri La. But when we arrived at the point where we thought the island should be, we found only a few snags of the young Sandbar Willows that used to grow there. So much for the new species we had visualized. The next itinerary item was to paddle up the mouth of

Fleming Creek just upstream from the Beach. In that project we got about 80 m before being blocked by deadfall across the creek. Was there a beaver dam just beyond that? We drifted out to the river again and back to the beach.

Resting after the unusual exercise, I was startled by a beautiful orange and green leaf hopper that flew into the Nook to land on a chair beside me. I got a very clear photograph. It reminded me of another fly-in during the Bee Protocol earlier on; a large brown (European) Praying Mantis flew into a small bush right beside me.

We had a late supper in the trailer, following which I walked through the gathering twilight to close up for the night. I paid a quick visit to the Hurdles, learning from Nina that the swallows (both Barn and Tree) had migrated out about two weeks ago. Back at the trailer, I went out to the Nook to discover three subadult Raccoons foraging there, accompanied by a larger, bear-like adult that I took to be the mother. The Milky Way was especially clear this night, so I brought Pat out to witness the spectacle. I explained how this was our “home” galaxy and how our particular solar system was situated toward its edge. It takes just a little imagination, as you look up at this vast panoply of stars, to grasp the whole. Then you gasp “OhmiGod” as the scattered, off-galaxy stars suddenly suddenly integrate into the immense wheel of light.

Around midnight, the air temperature had dropped to 11° C and I went out to look for Southern Flying Squirrels on the tray feeder of the old Shagbark Hickory. As often as we see flying squirrels on such occasions, we see Raccoons hunting them. To catch a flying squirrel, a Raccoon glues itself to the tree just above the tray, waiting for a flying squirrel to appear. With surprising speed, it traps the squirrel under a paw, dragging it to its mouth for a killing bite, then descends the tree, prey in jaws. On this occasion, I saw a Raccoon hunting in this manner. Disturbed by the flashlight, it stepped down onto the tray, turning enough to see me. “Oh, it’s just him!” I grabbed my camera and caught the Raccoon as it was turning back to its hunting stance. (See below.)

Sleeping in the trailer is an uncertain affair, so I got up even before Pat, making a pancake breakfast for the two of us, then wandering outside at 7:00 am. There was no dawn chorus of any description and the dewey meadow sported a blanket of mist, even as the rising sun caught treetops across the way. Then I became aware of several grey patches in the meadow, a few beside the track for easy inspection. These turned out to be spider webs outlined in dew! In one bush I found two such webs, but made by different spiders. One web had been made by a rather small orb weaver and the other by a line-weaving spider. That would be all I would

know until I inspected the photographs at home in the company of our spider manuals and various (reliable) internet sources.

While I went back to sleep, Pat explored the track up to the Old Bitternut Snag and beyond to the Powerline Meadow (that portion of the Lower Meadow under the power lines). When I woke up she reported “thousands” of Painted Lady butterflies out there. I may well have seen a hundred during the bee count on the previous day. Where did all the Painted Ladies come from? Until Erin saw one last week, neither we nor any of the butterfly people visiting over the last 13 years had ever seen one on the property!

In the early afternoon I carried out a second Bee Protocol to see whether I would get higher counts than yesterday. But the wind was stronger and the counts even lower. Pat pointed out that because of the wind, bees and other pollinators were probably flying lower, between plants rather than over them. That would have resulted in a lot of missed bees, simply not seen from the counting points.

Steve’s truck rolled into camp. Apparently his arrhythmia has been largely tamed and he looked much better. We swapped Newport news (hmm) for Rez news, then discussed a trailer-painting project. After Steve left, Pat and I returned to the river for another go at the beach.

Both along the way and at the Beach, Pat collected several different species of River Daisies (local generic term), along with other “asteroids”. She is determined to sort these flowers out for good! I found the plant I had photographed on the previous visit (misidentified as *Coreopsis*) and we collected that as well. The stem clearly had “wings” running down its length and was therefore not a *Coreopsis*, but Sneezeweed! At the far end of the Beach, Pat drew my attention to two rather large spiders with webs among the tentative young willows that grow there. One was a Shamrock Spider and the other was a Black and Yellow Argiope, both handsome critters!

There was little time now left to us, as we had arranged to visit Eva Newport. An Eastern Gray Squirrel and a Striped Chipmunk watched from the Gallery Forest as we loaded the van and left the property. It was great to see Eva after such a long time. She is now 86 years old, still relatively spry and determined to stay in the family “home” until someone drags her out. One remark stuck in our memories: “I don’t know what those Thames Talbot people are up to, but the place is just going to ruin. Have they never heard of a brush-hog? It used to look so beautiful, with lots of green grass and cattle grazing!”

## **Birds: (17)**

American Crow (HB); American Goldfinch (HO); American Robin (LM); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (TR); Canada Goose (LM); Common Flicker (TR); Common Grackle (GF); Common Yellowthroat (LM); Eastern Screech Owl (BCF); Gray Catbird (RB); Great Blue Heron (TR); Mallard (TR); Mourning Dove (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-tailed Hawk (FCF); Turkey Vulture (LM)

**Note:** Pat thought she heard an Ovenbird making its “Teacher, teacher-teacher” call from one of the (now dry) vernal ponds, then again from higher up.

**New species:** (ID materials available on request)

Bowl-and doily Spider	<i>Frontinella pyramitela</i>	LM/Tr KD Sp11/12
‘Missing Sector Spider’	<i>Zygiella</i> sp.	LM/Tr KD Sp11/12
‘Eight-lined Leafhopper’	<i>Gyponana octolineata</i>	Nk KD Sp11/12
Western Conifer Seed Bug	<i>Leptoglossus occidentalis</i>	LM pd/KD Sp11/12

**Notes:** 1. There are two species of *Zygiella* that make “missing sector” orb webs. Since we did not see the animal itself, we are left only with an ID-to-genus. The remaining finds are shown and explained in IMAGES below.

2. We have received word from Mike Oldham, MNR Botanist, that what we thought was a *Coreopsis*, as pictured in the last Bulletin, is probably Sneezeweed, a plant already listed several years ago. The ID was made in the absence of a specimen and under a certain pressure from me.

## **Phenology:**

One mosquito observed during entire visit; Black Maple and other trees starting to drop leaves; walnut drop has begun; surge in Painted Lady population

## **Bee protocol:**

Estimated Honeybee population in one hectare of Lower Meadow  $\approx$  2407. This is definitely an underestimate, considering the difficulty in seeing them today.

## **IMAGES:**



The Western Conifer Seed Bug is a leaf-footed bug (Coreidae) that has spread from the west coast of North America to the east coast and even beyond, as far as Greece and Turkey! The pattern of Ws that crosses the middle of the dorsum is diagnostic for this species. Since there are no conifers to speak of at Newport Forest, It may well have flown over from the pine plantation on the Janik property, immediately to the west.



Just one species of spider makes this distinctive bowl-and-doily web, as spider experts call it. The structure consists of a bowl-shaped snare above a flat, irregular sheet resembling a doily. We never saw the spider itself!



Being a night-owl has its advantages. How else would I ever have discovered that Raccoons -- at least our highly intelligent Newport Forest Raccoons -- have a predatory side? They not only trap earthworms under their paws after a rain, but trap much larger prey like the Southern Flying Squirrel (also nocturnal) when it visits the bird feeding tray on the old Hickory near the trailer. To hunt, the Raccoon hugs the tree with its nose pointed straight up the trunk, until a flying squirrel comes creeping down for some seed. I witnessed at least one kill made by this method.

The question is whether such behaviour is built-in somehow, or is rediscovered when opportunities arise. Does it become part of the local “culture”, passed along as a lesson from mother to kits?