

Time: 2:25- 8:00 pm

Weather: P 12mm; RH 44%; BP 102.7 kPa; sun/cloud; NW 0-15 kmh; T 25° C

Activity: Kee walks the Thames River Trail

As I drove through Wardsville just before crossing the river to Newport Forest, my eyes and ears were caught by the Wardsville Jamboree in full swing. I pulled over to catch the action. The crowd was being entertained by a local man who could play the banjo and kazoo at the same time. Every time he finished a tune, the crowd would break into polite applause, thinking he was done. Then he would



start another tune. I ran into Thames Talbot stalwart Bernie VandenBelt, manning a booth for the land trust nearby. Bernie introduced me to Ken Willis, a local historian who runs Wardsville's tiny perfect museum right beside Bob's Cafe -- just off the image to the left. We regard local contact as a *must* for conservation work.

Arriving at the property, I was greeted by a lone Mourning Dove gleaning in front of the gate. It let me get within 10 feet before whistling off. Rumbling through the Upper Meadow often reminds me of adventures filmed from a Land Rover in the Serengeti. Is that a pride of Lions over there under the locust?

At the trailer, I decided to implement the Bee Protocol immediately. Once again, there was enough wind to inhibit the operation, this time from the northwest. As well, the goldenrod is going to seed, with more than half the plants senescing. This undoubtedly contributed to a lower count. (See Protocol below.) The count over, I decided to walk the Thames River Trail.

Viewed from the bluffs, the river rolled by, muddy and silent. No birds called except a distant crow. Moving on to the Riverside Forest, my eye was caught by sunshine illuminating a beautiful orb web close to the trail. It didn't take long to spot the signal line that ran up to a curled leaf, the spider's retreat. I jerked the line tentatively, expecting to see a medium-sized orb weaver of some description. Down roared a gigantic (female) Marbled Orb Weaver, as shown in the IMAGES section below. This is what I love about nature, the unexpected event.

On the way I spotted several new fungi that would be of interest for those attending our planned **Fungus Walk** on September 29. Anyone wanting to learn more about fungi should get in touch with Erin at <erin.carroll@gmail.com> I will not spoil the fun by describing the appearance or location of these growths.

Later in the afternoon, Bernie VandenBelt drove into the property for a visit. We discussed Thames Talbot affairs and Bernie's recent work on behalf of the Wardsville Woods, a recent TLLT acquisition.

At sunset I stood on the trailer deck, admiring the colours and about to drive off. Suddenly, without warning, a Great Blue Heron the size of a 757 flew silently down the track toward me, past the trailer at eye level and no more than ten feet away. Obviously an hallucination. Unexpected events!

Birds: (10)

American Crow (TR); American Robin (HBF); Blue Jay (BCF); Canada Goose (TR); Common Flicker (GF/E); Common Grackle (LM); Great Blue Heron (LM/Tr); Mourning Dove (Rd); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr);

Bee Protocol: we have apparently missed much of the count this year, making a comparison with earlier figures somewhat questionable. Nevertheless, while we estimated 1557 honeybees in the one-hectare Lower Meadow counting zone on September 11, we estimated 2509 today. Will the count continue to climb?.

Phenology: Goldenrod is now 60-70% in seed, a race against dieback!

Precipitation:

Here are the precipitation figures for the last eight years-to-date. The second row lists precipitation to the end of august. All measurements are in millimeters.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| year | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 |
| august | 450 | 877 | 423 | 640 | 689 | 435 | 636 | 421 |
| total | ??? | 1243 | 744 | 926 | 1227 | 674 | 1020 | 667 |

The regional average of 973 mm yields a baseline for comparison, with 2009 2006 being “average” years, 2011 and 2008 being “stellar”, and 2007, 2005 being exceptionally dry years. There is little doubt that 2012 will be equally dry.

Readers Write: (The *Bulletin* now goes out to 160 biologists and ecologists, naturalists and nature lovers, most of them in southern Ontario, but many far flung, as well.) Today’s focus seems to be the Painted Lady butterfly.

Bruce Parker is a Newport Steward and naturalist who bands Monarchs: “Erin and I are seeing more than the usual number of Painted Ladies at Hawk Cliff. Buckeyes, which were uncommon on the cliff, are now in numbers as great as Cabbage Whites. We are also seeing at least half a dozen Black Swallowtails daily.”

Winnie Wake, a leading light in the local conservation scene, adds to Parker: “Enjoyed the *Newport Bulletin* as usual. Thought you might be interested in knowing that we have also been seeing Painted Ladies lately. We saw the first two on September 6 nectaring in the flower border along a sidewalk in Strathroy. During a walk in Komoka Park on September 12, I saw between one and two dozen Painted Ladies. On that afternoon they were by far the most abundant butterfly species encountered, number two being the Northern Crescent.”

IMAGES:



Lumix

Pattern on the abdomen of this spider betrays the Marbled Orb Weaver (*Araneus marmoreus*), first sighted in the Blind Creek Forest along the river trail on September 9, 2001. Web has been damaged, with several sectors missing. Length from “knuckles” to spinnerets, was about 2 cm.



WILDVIEW

09-14-2012 06:59:21



Doe accompanied by two fawns wades the Lower Rapids of Fleming Creek in the early dawn of September 14. As one can see, deer come equipped with headlights in order to see where they are going at night. That's what we tell kids, anyway. Adults get to learn the word "tapetum" for a reflective layer behind the retina, giving rod cells a double dose of photons for better night vision. All nocturnal mammals seem to have this facility. Humans have a reduced tapetum, witness the photographer's bane, "redeye".