

Oc17/12

**Newport Forest**  
*Monitoring Nature*

# 848

**Date and Time:** Wednesday October 17 2012 2:25 - 7:25 pm

**Weather:** Pr 11 mm; RH 71%; BP 100.9 kPa; calm; clear; T 22° C

**Activity:** maintenance visit; Kee throws a party for raccoons, but nobody comes

A backward glance as I drove into the site gave me a nice view of the Upper Meadow, including a water tank for watering newly planted trees and the Hurdle house and tractor shed just across the road. Two corn fields that figure in the coming narrative can be seen as thin, light brown strips across the road, one to the left of the shed, the other in a clearing far to the right. I wondered if the raccoons



were still raiding the corn fields. Today's visit was largely about maintenance, as it turned out. The trailer, having just been freshly painted, looks great. Now it needed to be cleaned up inside. Both trail cams had to be replaced with newly purchased ones, the tray feeder on the old hickory by the trailer needed to be remounted on the tree, and so on.

I was fascinated by the large number of wasps crawling on the outer skin of the trailer. Mostly Paper wasps, but some other species as well. What brought them there? The 22° C heat? There were also the inevitable Box Elder Bugs and their lookalike (Lygeid) colleagues crawling over the hot surface.

Apart from a walk to the river and another to the creek, I confined my activities to the Lower Meadow, looking for new arthropods between tasks. Having decided to remain until sunset, I thought I might throw a party for the Masked Marvel Gang, thinking to take a fall census.

Sunset brought two old friends into view. A Great Blue Heron flew along Fleming Creek, heading for his overnight roost. “Gronk, gronk.” (It’s how I imagine dinosaurs used to sound.) And a Little Brown Bat flew up and down the track beside the trailer, catching everything from small Dance Flies to straying wasps.

I put out kibble and some fresh water in a tub and waited. And waited and waited and waited. Reluctantly I concluded that the raccoons were all up in the corn-fields. When I got home: “Of course, they’re still up in the corn. Where did you think they would be?”

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

Wolf Spider

*Schizocosa* sp.

Nk KD Date/12

**Notes:** The spider was in an image taken earlier this year. I just examined it closely the other day, satisfied about the genus, but uncertain about the species.

**Corrections:**

1. Issue #846: The female Pisaurid (Nursery Web) Spider carries her egg sac attached to the sternum. The female Lycosid (Wolf) Spider carries the sac attached to her spinnerets. I had it backwards.
2. Issue #847: The volunteer named Susan has the last name “Jepkemoi” and works as a research assistant in the UWO Biology Dept. (I must be going deaf.)

**IMAGES:**



Lo! What monster this way comes? These tracks were apparently left by an animal climbing onto Mussel Beach out of the river. Is it a Snapping Turtle? The tracks are too large to be those of a Spiny Softshell Turtle.

Then again, it might be Justin Beaver, who is in the process of cutting down all the *Populus* spp. that grow on the River Bluffs.



Continuing the theme of destruction, a farmer somewhere in the US surveys devastation wrought by raccoons. Same deal here. Edgar Hurdle, who has harvested corn many times, recalls seeing the critters in his field, even in daylight. “You can see them from the cab of the combine, running along the rows ahead of you.”

From a raccoon’s point of view, corn and bean fields are very important resources when it comes to building up layers of fat to survive the winter months. They’re not taking food from anyone’s table, since most of the feed corn and soybeans grown locally goes into the production of gasahol. On the other hand, the farmer is definitely out of pocket.