

Oc31/12

Newport Forest
Monitoring Nature

850

Time: Wednesday October 31 2012 2:10 - 5:15 pm

Weather: Pr 55 mm ; RH 90%; BP 99.9 kPa; ovcast/rain; calm; T 4° C

Activity: maintenance with Pat and Kee

Just before we arrived at the property today, we paused to take this image of the “Witch Tree” along the Beattie Line. It is covered all over with spiky, aborted twigs, possibly the result of road dust killing off young shoots and leaves. In any



case it makes a suitable motif for a Halloween visit. The day was rainy and gloomy to match, thanks to the remnant of Hurricane Sandy. What the hysterical local media had touted as the “Frankenstorm” turned out to be a Frankenflop, at least in our area. However, a steady three-day drizzle made a great contribution to the precipitation records.

We met Edgar at the gate shortly after arriving. He had his tractor out by the road with the engine idling, ready for the great pipe haul-out. The two pipes are 35-

foot long (box-folded) steel beams that once supported the bridge over Fleming Creek, an engineering marvel that got to be too much work to put up every spring and take down every fall. Each pipe weighs about 355 lbs. Would the hauling chain hold? Would his tractor be powerful enough to drag the pipes all the way up to the gate?

Pat watched anxiously from the trailer deck as Edgar and I struggled to get the hauling-chain around one end of the first pipe, not that easy to lift. The tractor roared to life and I stepped well clear of the suddenly slithering steel. The chain was holding and the tractor seemed hardly to labour as Edgar dragged the first pipe past Pat and up the first hill. I followed him on foot all the way up to the gate and once we had unhitched the pipe, I enjoyed a lurching, noisy ride back to camp for the second pipe. By now we were veterans and I let Edgar take that one up alone. "Whew," said Pat. "I'm glad they're finally gone." They had been an eyesore, lying beside the meadow trail all summer.

We walked to the river, where we hauled the canoe higher up on the bank to the landing. There was little danger from the river in any case. It had risen barely two feet since the weekend -- just enough to cover Mussel Beach.

For the rest of the visit we organized the trailer for winter, then departed in the van. In the past we had stayed overnight in the trailer on Hallowe'en, not being big fans of the custom. This time it was just too miserable, so Nina had offered us a nice dinner as compensation. Chicken a la Hurdle. Then home.

Trail Cam Record: (times to nearest hour)

Cam #1: Raccoon 9pm Oc27; Eastern Cottontail 3am Oc28; Virginia Deer (two does) 5am Oc28

Cam #2: No animals due to high water at rapids

Precipitation Report:

Annual precipitation to the end of October now stands at 613 mm, with another 300 mm to go by year end to reach the average. Based on November-December averages over the last six years, we "expect" another 195 mm for a projected total 808 mm, below the average, but just over the drought-line, so to speak.

IMAGES:



Edgar Hurdle begins to haul the first of two heavy steel beams off the property. You can see the imprint left by the beam. It had been lying there since April, when we hauled it out of the creek and up the bluffs with the aid of Steve's "come-along".

BOO!



The Ogre-faced Spider lives in Old World tropical forests. Children will be glad to learn that it doesn't live around here -- *as far as we know*.