

Newport Forest Bulletin Annual Report to Readers

January 28 2014

This is our first detailed summary of activities at Newport Forest over the 2013 calendar year. As such, it supplements the Annual Report filed with the Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT) on October 5 2013. By special arrangement with the TTLT we act as local managers in our capacity as co-chairs of the Newport Forest Stewards Committee (see below) which reports to the TTLT Property Management Committee. In this unique context Newport Forest is the most actively managed property of the many TTLT holdings, hosting monitoring activities and special studies initiated and maintained by the Dewdneys since the year 2000. We feel that the information thus acquired enhances the conservation and scientific value of the property and we hope that it may contribute to similar developments, over time, in other TTLT holdings.



Fleming Creek one year ago to date

The report is divided into five main sections: Site Statistics, Events, Monitoring, Special Studies and Other Matters. This being our first such report, we apologize for any inaccuracies or editorial flaws.

Kee Dewdney

Site Statistics

Over 2013 we made 56 site visits, 2 of them for overnight stays for a total of 58 days on site. The bar chart below illustrates the annual pattern, with each site visit on a given month indicated by an asterisk

Jan ***
Feb ***
Mar ****
Apr *****
May *****
Jun *****
Jul *****
Aug *****
Sep *****
Oct *****
Nov ***
Dec ***

Note (coincidental) symmetry of distribution!

Precipitation: On-site precipitation for the year totaled 852 mm, somewhat short of the regional average of 973 mm.

Site Events

Maintenance operations

Feb 25 Steve Logan fixes trailer, grooms trails in May, Jun, Jul, & Aug
Apr 21 volunteers clear trails of deadfall, remove invasive trees, remove tree station in Upper Meadow, pile scrap. (See TFLT Work Day below.)
May 02 Steve Logan and Will Cable work on trailer and build new rest bench in Riverside Forest .
Aug 17 Darren, Glen Jacobs, and (our) son Jonathan groom trails
Nov 16 Bruce Parker, Erin Carroll install signs along eastern boundary

Visitors:

Jan 25 Marg Hulls & friends in for a walk, also in Feb, Mar, Apr, Aug, Dec
Mar 17 Darren Jacobs and Kim Snake visit by boat from Moraviantown
Apr 04 Nic Mihlik and Sara Papas (Nic was an early assistant 2000-2005.)
Apr 14 Nic Mihlik brings mother Virginia to site
Aug 05 Yolanda Moreby and Chris Gugliamos come for site assessment
Sep 01 Annegret Nicolai (UWO Biology) does preliminary snail survey

Sep 14 Picnic with five naturalist friends
 Oct 14 Annegret Nicolai returns for nocturnal land snail survey

Floods:

Because the Thames River and Fleming Creek are at almost the same level, floods in the river are automatically floods in the creek. Crest heights are approximate.

<u>date</u>	<u>crest</u>	<u>comments</u>
Feb 08	4m	some floods may have been misjudged due to our absence
Feb 10	1m	
Apr 14	4m	two boaters seen in Fleming Creek Forest among treetops
Sep 24	3m	
Oct 10	2m	
Oct 27	2m	

Annual Events:

Apr 21	TTLT Work Day	23 volunteers
May 05	TTLT Spring Wildflower Walk	15 walkers, Erin Carroll leads
Jul 07	Annual Butterfly Count	7 counters, Ann White leads
Sep 28	Stewards Committee meet on site	7 stewards attend
Oct 27	Fungus Bioblitz 70 spp, 10 new	27 attend, Greg Thorn leads

Site Monitoring

All Taxa Biological Inventory (ATBI)

New species: Plantae 5, Animalia 101, Fungi 21, Protists 5, Eubacteria 0
 Total 132
 Current counts: Plantae 481, Animalia 997, Fungi 233, Protista 199, Eub. 22
 Total 1,932

Notable new species found in 2013

Rock Elm (Donald Craig)	Mar 30
Winter Wren (Ann White)	Apr 21
Dreamy Duskywing (Kee Dewdney)	May 18
Map Turtle (Darren Jacobs)	Jul 07
Yellow Perch (Darren Jacobs)	Jul 16

Brown Bullhead (Darren Jacobs)	Jul 16
Least Sandpiper (Marg Hulls)	Au 29
Chinese Praying Mantis (Erin Carroll)	Sep 29

Notable (non-new) species observed in 2013

Virginia Possum	Jan 08 tracks, Feb 10 tracks, Feb 18 visual
Long.-tailed Weasel	Feb 25 scat, Mar 07, Mr30, Apr04 visuals, Oct 10 scat
Fairy Shrimp	Apr 21 visual in Vernal Ponds
Short-tailed Shrew	May 30 visual nest behind trailer
Eastern Cougar	Sep 13 visual on Highway 2 (Arlene Martin)
Ruffed Grouse	Nov 03 flush at River Landing

Honeybee protocol: Statistically speaking, the Honeybee count has revealed a possibly significant decline in Honeybee presence in the Lower Meadow. Counts were taken during the peak blooming period in each year of record.



2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
4,952/ha	5,957/ha	no count	3,077/ha	2,654/ha

The figures are expressed as bees per hectare, extrapolated from the coverage area of a point count taken along the same trail through the meadow in each year. The numbers are subject to the usual variance errors.

Phenology of selected natural events:

Apr 07	Chorus Frogs in Vernal Ponds (to Apr 18)
Apr 07	Wood Frogs in Vernal Ponds
Apr 21	Fairy Shrimp in Vernal Ponds (Erin Carroll)
Apr 21	Harbinger of Spring, Spring Beauty in bloom
Apr 27	Trout Lilies in bloom
Apr 30	American Toad chorus (to May 02)
May 02	Gray Tree Frogs calling
May 05	Green Frogs calling
May 10	Mother Raccoon in nursery box
May 18	Suckers (& Redhorses?) spawning in river rapids
Jun 23	Black willow deadfall in Blind Creek Forest (irregular event)
Sep 19	Hickory nutfall in progress

Special Studies:

Blue Ash Survey: Donald Craig conducted a survey of Blue Ash on site, finding 222 stems as indicated on a distribution map filed with us on Mar 30.

Hogsback tree survey: Kee Dewdney explored the northern slope of the Hogsback, finding a new stand of Eastern Flowering Dogwood on the River Bluffs and a new stand of American Beech further inland, reporting finds May 18.

River erosional dynamics: The Sandbank on the downstream bend of the point bar (now approx. 13 ha in area) has grown at the expense of the Sittler property directly across the river. It would appear that most of the soil in the point bar forest originated across the river over the last hundred years!

Site phenology (first and last appearance annually for selected physical and biological events): Phenological records are in process of updating and will be released at a future date, hopefully by the end of 2014.

Blind Creek Study: we continue to accumulate evidence that points to a major diversion of Fleming Creek from a previous outlet downstream of the point bar to one upstream of it. The key challenge in this study is to date the diversion event.

Other matters

In Memoriam: We mourn the passing of Jane Bowles on July 27 of 2013. Jane was a noted area Botanist and custodian of the UWO herbarium. We fear she will prove to be irreplaceable, not only as a major contributor to work at Newport Forest but as a staunch friend to all who will miss her dearly. We also note with sadness the passing last May of Dave Ankney, a UWO wildlife biologist who spearheaded the reintroduction of the Wild Turkey into southern Ontario.

Newport Forest Stewards: We thank the Newport Forest Stewards Committee for their generous contributions of time and effort over 2013: Erin Carroll, Donald Craig, Marg Hulls, Nina Hurdle, Darren Jacobs, and Bruce Parker, Pat and Kee Dewdney, Committee Co-chairs

Keep your eye on *The Bulletin*: Like this Northern Greenstripe Grasshopper, keep your eye on *The Bulletin* for future developments at Newport Forest.



Photo taken Jul 07 in Lower Meadow

Looking almost like a cardboard model, this grasshopper sports a “false pupil” that consists of all the ommatidia (discrete eye units) that happen to be aimed in the direction of the camera lens. Many insects display such a dark spot under the right lighting conditions.