

Ap14/13

Newport Forest Bulletin

Monitoring Nature

872

Date and Time: Sunday April 14 2013, 1:45 - 4:25 pm

Weather: Pr 85 mm; RH 63 %; 102.1 kPa; calm; ovcast; T 7° C

Activity: Flood cancels trail maintenance so we make benches

The frontal boundary of a low that took 5 days to pass through the Great Lakes area left a total of 85 mm of rain on site! As well, the flood was cresting as we crossed the Wardsville Bridge. One glance and I knew that we would not have full access today, Newport Forest being a riverfront site. The image below was taken later in the afternoon from the Wardsville bridge, but the appearance is the same.



One can see that woods on both sides of the river are thoroughly inundated. With me was Nic for his final visit to Newport Forest before returning to New Zealand. His mother Virginia had joined us to help with the trail work. Once on site it became apparent that this was the second largest flood we had seen in the 14 years since our first visit in April of 2000. .

I parked in the Upper Meadow on a high spot that was less squiddy, not daring to go further down. Then Steve arrived but, owing to an overabundance of common sense, parked at the gate and walked in to join us. We carried in all the materials we would need for trail work. When we got to the bottomlands we found that Fleming Creek had become a brown lake with a shoreline half way up the bluffs to the trailer. As for Blind Creek Forest, the vernal ponds were completely submerged and the trail descended into the floodwaters a mere 50 m into the woods.

Since there would be no trail work today, we decided to at least make the benches that we had hoped to install. Nic and Steve sorted and sawed the lumber while I went to see who was shouting down by the creek. Two men in a boat were motor-ing among the trees of Fleming Creek Forest in a seemingly playful mood. They spotted me standing at the top of the bluffs and came in close. Who were they? “We came up the river from Thamesville to fish and have some beers.” Their names were Stacy and Alan (Alex?). ”Where the hell are we, anyway?” I told them they were in a closed Nature Preserve and that they were trespassing. Speaking in a kindly way, of course. Goodbye. I took a picture. Visibly.

While Steve and Nic sawed and hammered, I looked for more nails in the trailer. I suggested to Virginia that she patrol the Gallery Forest looking for signs of trees breaking bud. Buds were still swelling but not a hint of green aloft. The components of two benches and the parts for two more had been completed by the time a light rain started and we decided to leave. Speaking of rain, 85 mm is a welcome contribution in spite of the flood.

Leaving the property, I consulted my handbook of astronautics to look up the “escape velocity” for today’s conditions. Forty km/h took us through seeps and sloughs, delivering us safely to the gate for an early departure.

Birds: (9)

Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Common Flicker (GF/W); Great Crested Flycatcher* (GF); Northern Cardinal (EW); Northern Harrier (UM); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF)

*It sounded an awful lot like the “weeb” call of a GCF, but checking the Cornell sightings map, I discovered they are now only halfway between Mexico and Lake Erie on their migration. Is there a “soundalike” sp?

IMAGES:



file image

Just for a break from mundane reportage, we highlight one of our favorite arthropods on site, *Apheloria virginiensis*, a colorful millipede that looks more tropical than temperate. We've observed it twice so far, but not in recent years.



Tim Carroll put Photoshop to work on our washed-out image of the weasel in the trailer bedroom to produce this masterpiece. Tail should be brown, but who cares? When I jokingly offered to name the weasel after Tim, he replied that he'd be honored. So my hand is forced.

“Tim the Weasel” it is.

Tim has apparently vacated the trailer. The cat kibble remains uneaten on the bed. We'll do another test involving weasel kibble, already there.