

Date and Time: Sunday May 5 2013

Weather: Pr 0 mm; RH 38%; BP 102.2 kPa; haze/sun; SSE 5-10 kmh; T 24° C

Activity: Spring Wildflower Walk

Some 16 people showed up for the TTLT Spring Wildflower Walk, 14 arriving by car and two by motorboat on the river. The weather was perfect, with a light haze to screen the sun glare and a breeze to cool the brow. Once a reasonable-sized group had assembled, Erin Carroll took them off along the Thames River Trail.



The departure of the walkers gave Pat and me time to get our act together. She set up the refreshments in the Nook, while I added a seat to the bench recently installed deep in the Blind Creek Forest. No chorus was going on today, whether of frogs or toads. Ah! Here came Muriel Andreae a naturalist with the St Clair Authority, along the trail and looking to catch the main group. She told me that the Orioles were back. Pat and I had already seen the newly arrived Rose-breasted

Grosbeaks.

Back in camp, Marg Hulls arrived. She, Muriel and Pat headed out for a separate walk to the River Bluffs. I took advantage of the solitude to sit back in the Nook and contemplate the Black Maple overhead. The half-emerged leaves were a light shade of green, dangling with delicate, pale green flowers. Other trees were also in flower, including the Wild Plum and Serviceberry.

The reverie was broken by the arrival of walkers, returning in twos or threes and bursting with tales of discovery. Dave and Winnie Wake are pillars of the community of naturalists and nature lovers. Dave, an expert birder, reported a Brown Thrasher across the river. Winnie added the Eastern Comma and Cabbage White to the phenology list. Many walkers brought cameras. Andrew Dean showed us blossoms of a Wild Plum. Tim Carroll took a great close-up of a Six-spotted Tiger Beetle, while wife Wendy showed us the image of an unfamiliar orange fungus growing by the trail. Could it be a new species? Someone brought in a wee sample of False Mermaid from the Hogsback. We marveled at its incredibly tiny flowers, barely a millimetre across. Erin spotted an Eastern Garter and Pat reported an Eastern Chipmunk and a Spring Azure.

The exchange of stories and finds all took place in the Nook (See cover image.) while walkers rehydrated with juice, pop or water. Even as the walkers were leaving, someone said, "Who's that coming in across the field?" It was Darren Jacobs and young Talon Bressette, up by boat from Moraviantown. "We parked in the creek," explained Darren. The river is still relatively high. Darren told what a luxury it was to motor up the river without hitting rocks all the time.

About this time, I felt itchy under my watchband. Holy Moly! A wood tick had already implanted there under my skin. I showed it to Erin, who uncharacteristically went "Ugh!" Using my buck knife, I showed her how to remove a dug-in tick. (A credit card or dental floss will also work.) Draw the sharp edge forward under the creature to hook it behind the blood-sucking beak-head, then bring the edge sharply forward to jerk the tick right out. If you break it off instead, the head remains inside to produce a festering sore that can last a week or more.

When it came time for Darren to get back to the Rez, I gave him two copies of *The Inconvenient Indian* by Thomas King, one for Darren and one for Kimberly Snake, a friend of Newport Forest. This is a great read, not only for First Nations, but for Second Nations people, as well. I would describe it as "seriously funny" and leave it at that. I went down to the river to watch Darren and Talon zoom past

downstream from the mouth of the creek, wake lapping the shore at my feet. On my way back, I changed the sd cards on the trail cams. Later they would prove to be full of walkers, but no animals. Passing the vernal ponds near The Hole, I distinctly heard a Green Frog call several times. This species usually inhabits flowing waters like the creek. Of course, I thought, it couldn't breed *there* without having its eggs wash down to Detroit.

Alone at last, Pat and I luxuriated in relative peace. But, ever restless, I decided to inspect the trees in the Regeneration Zone, fearing the worst. During the winter I had seen every single terminal bud nipped off the smaller trees by deer. How would the young trees cope? Amazingly, rather than start new leaders from lateral buds, they had all grown new terminals! Now leafing out as though nothing had happened. After the inspection, we packed up, closed up, and left

Post script: Later I examined Wendy Carroll's fungus image closely. One can't always identify a fungus from imagery, but this case seemed a slam-dunk, with only one lookalike to contend with and readily distinguished. Well done, Wendy!

Birds: (28)

American Crow (GF); American Goldfinch (UM); American Robin (GF); Baltimore Oriole (HB); Belted Kingfisher (TR); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (LM); Brown Thrasher (TR); Chipping Sparrow (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Bluebird (Rd); Eastern Towhee (Nk); Field Sparrow (LM); Gray Catbird (LM); Great Blue Heron (EW); Great Crested Flycatcher (Sng); House Sparrow (Rd); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (GF); Red-tailed Hawk (UM); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Rd); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (FCF/E); Yellow Warbler (LM)

New Species:

Orange Peel Fungus

Aleuria aurantia

RSF wc/KD My05/13

Phenology: Maple spp in flower and early leaf, Tulip Tree and Ash spp in early leaf, Hickory spp and Buckeye in bud-break, Walnut in early bud, no frog/toad chorus; Grosbeaks and Orioles back, first Wood Tick. First Eastern Comma and Cabbage White.

IMAGES:



Wendy Carroll



Andrew Dean

The Virginia Bluebells (above) were not quite in bloom, but one-in-ten is better than nothing. This Wild Plum (below), on the other hand, was in full bloom.



Wendy Carroll

We would have liked to use this space for a third wildflower image, but new species trump all else! Here is the new fungus found by Wendy Carroll. The Orange Peel Fungus begins as a cup, but eventually spreads out to an irregular shape, living up to its name. Relatively common, it fruits on bare soil, often by trails. It belongs to a different class than most mushroom and bracket fungi (called Basidiomycetes). It's an Ascomycete, the class that contains cup fungi, morels, some jellies and a host of mostly smaller bodies.