

Date & time: Saturday/Sunday May 18/19 2:10 arr/dep 1:50 pm

Weather: Pr 0 mm; RH 36%; BP 102.4 kPa; sun/haze; calm; T 28° C

Activity: Two-day visit with a focus on species inventory

It would be difficult to imagine finer spring weather. A Black Swallowtail greeted Pat at the gate and things just got better from there. We offloaded the van, set up housekeeping, and started the record. Pat needed rest, so I went to the river alone, noticing that a crab spider had crawled up to the top of my walking pole. My other hand had to juggle the camera to get some images. Later it would turn out to



the first new species of our visit, a crab spider in the genus *Mecapesa*. Since no common names exist for this genus, I dubbed it the Bishop Crab. It has a bishop's mitre clearly portrayed on its abdomen. Moving on, the walk to the river was warm and pleasant. I paused at the landing to admire the view, then plunged anew into the forest, following the trail up to the bluffs where it levels off. I knew of a

rather large Eastern Flowering Dogwood near the top of the bluffs and directly above. Was it now in bloom? Curiosity got the better of me. Holy Moly! I had forgotten what a fierce climb that is, fighting through thick thorn scrub and ricocheting off Multiflora Rose, finally with some large showy blossoms in my face.

I returned to camp to join Pat in the Nook. She told of male and female Baltimore Orioles flirting shamelessly and scouting for nest sites. We have never had as many of these birds as we seem to this year. Later one male chased another right through the Nook, both chirping angrily as they flew. (Not sure why that seemed so funny.) Up in the Raccoon nursery box, we heard the tiny rustlings and burbling noises of young kits. Would they be out tonight?

Pat had to save her energy, so I ventured down the trail to Fleming Creek alone, flushing a Great Blue Heron from the rapids as I got to the bottom. Always a magnificent sight. Had it been fishing for darters? Then a large fish shadow shot upstream through murky water. Behind me an Eastern Gray Squirrel (black phase) prowled fallen trees.

Back in camp, I began a tour of the Regeneration Zone (RZ), while Pat went to the "Snag", a dead tree just up the track from the trailer. This is her most frequent birding spot, as she often sees her favorite bird here, the Indigo Bunting. In the RZ, the word "yellow" recurred; two Yellow Buckeyes were doing well, but two Yellow Birches (2-3" dbh) were deader than doornails. Returning to camp to get the butterfly net, I found Pat with a secret smile on her face. "You didn't!" "Oh, yes I did," she replied. She had just seen an Indigo Bunting once again, a bird that she thinks must have a favoured nesting area very close to the The Snag.

Sweeping and taking photographs in the Lower Meadow. The two phases settled into a dogged rhythm as I built up a gallery of spiders, katydid nymphs, ants, bees, nondescript moths, nymphal bugs, and tiny beetles. How many would I be able to ID later? Already the anticipation was building.

We had dinner (baloney & beans) after eight pm and soon it was time to head for the entrance gate to lock up for the night. I took the van instead of walking, as that seemed the only way to flush any woodcocks that might be out on the evening track. Not surprisingly, I flushed one. Closing the gate, I paid a visit to the Hurdles before returning to camp. Edgar is now too stiff and sore to play golf, his favorite summer pastime. Nina, now in her 80s, is also limited. She related some passive birding adventures fueled by her backyard feeder and a pond at the top of the ravine behind their house.

There was still light in the sky as Pat sat in the Nook to watch for Raccoons and kits. I ventured once more to the creek with uncertain purpose, only to be astonished by another fish shadow, this one a good two feet long and with a long, narrow snout. Was it possible? Our first (and only) previous sighting of this ancient wonder took place on June 6, 2002, when Darren Jacobs showed me a migration of Longnose Gar. They swam slowly upstream, forming a nose-to-tail train, right along the shore of Mussel Beach.

Night descended stealthily, held at bay only by a brilliant half moon. The first Raccoon to show up at the Nook was not our resident mother, but an auslander. It had the solid black face and grey eyebrows of what locals call the “Swamp Coon”, possibly a distinct race of the critters. Only later did the (much lighter) resident mother show up in the company of another female, possibly a sister. The second female had a mask shaped just like aviator sunglasses. Perhaps we will her “Sky”. No kits. Later I spotted one of the two females hunting for Flying Squirrels that come down to glean the trays at night. You can tell they’re hunting by their posture: belly flat against the tree, nose up, paws extended to trap the unwary visitor. We saw a kill several years ago. Snatch-and-bite-dead, bad news for the Beatrix Potter School of Ecology. Let’s not forget that Raccoons are officially carnivores.

No owls called in the night and the regular Coyote Choir practice was apparently canceled. But what was that strange burbling chatter I heard inside the trailer in the middle of the night? Was it Tim the Weasel? The promise of another beautiful day dawned, but the “dawn chorus” that Pat had hoped for turned out to be weak and sporadic. Nevertheless, lots of birds were about. Strolling up the (former) farm track, I located the young tree we call Jane’s Sassafras, found by Jane Bowles several years ago and since replanted near the trailer where we could keep an eye on it. Now a good two metres tall and sporting clusters of fresh new leaves, we’re slightly surprised that it’s doing so well on the clayey soil.

Pat reported seeing a Least Skipper in the Lower Meadow, a find at least as good as the Black Swallowtail she saw yesterday. I tried to have a coffee in the Nook, but it was raining maple flowers everywhere, including the coffee. Pat then reported a Great Blue Heron overflying the trailer. The only way I could beat that was to flush a Meadow Jumping Mouse in the RZ an hour later. All this time an Eastern Chipmunk was running a shuttle from the seed tray to his food cache deep underground, somewhere east of the Nook.

Our final foray of the day was to walk to the river. Two Canada Geese croaked in alarm as we approached them on Mussel Beach. Loud splashes from the rapids

nearby signaled another spawning season for members of the Sucker family. I took images of a few cursorial spiders, including an all-grey Wolf Spider with two rows of faint white dots on the abdomen. Just then Pat called out two new birds for the list: “There’s a Killdeer. There goes a Spottie.” (Spotted Sandpiper).

Overnight stays tend to leave us a bit weary. Thus we were packed and gone by two pm. Would tomorrow be as nice around here? Apparently it was.

Birds: (31)

American Crow (BCF); American Robin (ET/VP); American Woodcock (UM); Baltimore Oriole (Nk); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Canada Goose (TR); Common Flicker (FCF); Common Grackle (LM/HBF); Common Yellowthroat (BCF); Downy Woodpecker (GF) Field Sparrow (LM); Gray Catbird (LM); Great Blue Heron (FC); Great Crested Flycatcher (GF); House Sparrow (Rd); Indigo Bunting (Sng); Killdeer (MB); Mallard (VPB); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (EW); Northern Rough-winged Swallow (TR); Red-bellied Woodpecker (BCF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Spotted Sandpiper (MB); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (EW)

New Species:

‘Bishop Crab Spider’	<i>Mecapesa asperata</i>	LM KD My18/13
‘Black and Red Dwarf’	<i>Hypselistes florens</i>	LM KD My18/13
‘White-margined Jumping Spider’	<i>Eris [aurantia]</i>	LM KD My18/13
American Shieldback *	[<i>Atlantiscus americanus</i>]	LM KD My18/13
‘Three-banded Andrenid’	<i>Andrena [hippotes]</i>	LM KD My18/13

A very useful source for arthropod imagery is Tom Murray’s website at pBase: http://www.pbase.com/tmurray74/arthropods_arthropoda It has become an important resource for much of our ATBI arthropod work.

* out if its official range -- sent away for confirmation

Phenology: Some spp of *Crataegus*, Eastern Flowering Dogwood, and Bladdernut in full Bloom; False Solomon’s Seal in full bloom; River and creek both running relatively clear; Sucker sp spawning in rapids. (spawn of 2012 noted on My17)

IMAGES:



An Eastern Flowering Dogwood high on the River Bluffs has already peaked in its bloom cycle. These thin branches extend out from a tree, that is off-camera to the left.



This moth is driving me crazy. It doesn't appear in any of our regular ID sources, from Marshall's Insect's to Tom Murray's moth pages on the web. (See above.) I'm not even sure if it's a Noctuid or a Geometrid! The principal field marks would be the three rows of eyed dots on the forewing, the innermost eyes being blue. Provisional name: "Blue-eyed Beach Moth" We found it puddling on the wet clay of Mussel Beach, as above. (At first I thought it was a butterfly.) In any case, we are offering the reward of a \$10 gift certificate at Tim Horton's to anyone who can identify this moth or point us to a successful source. American winners will receive a gift certificate for Dunkin' Donuts.

We realize that the reward is extravagant, but we're desperate!