

Date and time: Saturday May 25 2013 2:00 - 6:20 pm

Weather: Pr 2 mm; RH 48%; BP 102.7 kPa; sun/haze; N 5-30 kmh; T 16° C

Activity: Property inspection & walkabout

I had several things to inspect today, including the condition of the trails and the damage to foliage from last night's frost (a record of -1° C for this date). The Tulip Tree below was typical of the young trees that were most severely affected by the frost, even as other Tulip Trees suffered very little damage. Hardest hit were



Ashes, Walnuts and Oaks, while Maples and Hickories were least affected. Mature trees in the area (all species) suffered little visible damage.

I set out to walk the entire trail. Passing through the Lower Meadow I noticed what looked like a Spring Azure, then spotted a curious caterpillar I had never seen before -- a white-and-yellow "wooly bear". (See IMAGES below.)

Arriving at the river bluffs I scanned the beach for Spiny Softshell turtles, always a possibility when the weather turns sunny. The trail was illuminated by many Yellow Pimpernels, now coming into full bloom. Passing through the Riverside Forest, I found the Virginia Bluebells still in flower, with about 20% now senescing. Along the trail leading up the Hogsback, I searched carefully for remains of the “Orange Peel” fungus found by Wendy Carroll during the Spring Flower walk. Greg Thorn, our fungal consultant, wanted a sample to examine. Passing through the Elbow, I spotted the first dragonfly of the season: clear wings with two (or three?) spots each and a dark brown body. I didn’t stop.

All along my walk I had noted trail conditions and decided it was time for its spring haircut from Steve’s weedeater. Back in camp, I was delighted to hear for the first time this season the “Rain Crow” or Yellow-billed Cuckoo, cooing from the Gallery Forest off to the west. I went down to the creek, noticing that our tallest planted Tulip Tree doubled over with a splintered stem. Ice damage. I made a crude splint, with little hope that it would save the tree.

Birds: (15)

American Crow (EW); Baltimore Oriole (GF); Blue Jay (LM); Brown-headed Cowbird (Tr); Common Grackle (BCF); Field Sparrow (LM); Great Crested Flycatcher (RSF); Northern Roughwinged Swallow (TR); Red-bellied Woodpecker (HB); Red-winged Blackbird (FC/TR); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (PL); Yellow-billed Cuckoo (GF)

Note: Fewer birds were out because of the wind on site. I saw no chickadees or nuthatches, which usually show up, even when nesting. On the other hand, two birds seen/heard less commonly were out today, the cuckoo and the blackbird.

Phenology: Yellow Pimpernel near full bloom, Virginia Bluebells past full bloom Six-spotted Tiger Beetles and bee flies still around, first dragonfly

New Species:

‘Gray Fishing Spider’	<i>Dolomedes [vittatus]</i>	MB KD My19/13
‘Pale Grass Spider’	<i>Tibellus</i> sp	LM KD My18/13
Least Skipper	<i>Ancyloxypha numitor</i>	LM PD My18/13
Dreamy Duskywing	<i>Erynnis icelus</i>	MB kdEC My19/13
Roesel’s Bush Cricket*	<i>Metrioptera roeselii</i>	LM/GF kdSM My19/13
Strawberry Rootworm**	<i>Paria fragariae</i>	LM/GF KD My18/13

*replaces tentative ID of Shieldback in previous issue, with thanks to Steve

Marshall. The species is native to Europe! ** Several adult beetles of this larvae were found clinging to the trailer door. Easily recognized, they have a reddish head, black pronotum and bronze elytras, with a red stripe down the middle of the dorsum and two blackish “elbow-marks” right behind the pronotum.

Readers Write: Romancing the Duskywings!

In the previous issue of the Bulletin we put out a call for assistance with a very difficult “moth” photographed on Mussel Beach last Sunday. With no obvious antennal clubs in the image, a moth seemed the best bet, but no matches so we offered a prize. When local experts roared to the rescue, we learned immediately that it wasn’t a moth at all, but a Skipper. (The clubs were there, after all). Dave Martin was first off the mark, suggesting a Juvenal’s Duskywing. Stan Caveney came in next, saying it might be Juvenal’s, but that the Dreamy Duskywing was also a possibility. Erin Carroll leaned toward the Sleepy Duskywing, but mentioned the Dreamy Duskywing as a possibility. Later still, Caveney and Martin had pretty well zeroed in on the Dreamy, Martin citing habit & habitat as two telling lines of evidence. Meanwhile we had sent an image to Ann White, dean of the local Butterfly hunters.

Next day, we received two congratulatory messages, the first from Caveney: “Assuming the ID is correct, your photo record of a Dreamy Duskywing at Newport Forest is pretty special. There are two "official" locality records listed in Layberry (*Butterflies of Canada*) for Middlesex County (neither one all that close to Skunk's Misery), and no specimens listed for Elgin County.” [He then gives two websites to visit] “Congratulations.”

The second message was from Ann White: “...therefore I would say you have the Dreamy in your picture. This is AMAZING! We had one at Skunk's several years ago, Gavin found it. But that is all the records we have for [this part of] Middlesex. And you are just over the river. Congratulations!”

All things considered, the prize should go to Stan. Congratulations to Stan!

Mourning a Great Wildlife Biologist: We were saddened to learn of the recent death of Dave Ankney, a Biology faculty member at UWO for many years and perhaps best known for his leading role in reintroducing the Wild Turkey to southern Ontario. They are now everywhere, a living memorial to Dave’s work.

IMAGES:



We have no intention of making a practice of offloading ID problems to the readership, but I must confess, this one has us stymied as well. The identifying features would include a) size and shape (identical to a wooly bear) b) white ground colour, c) light yellow band circling mid-body, and d) the bright, brownish-red head capsule.

The image could have been better. Here, I was trying to photograph the caterpillar before its head was lost under the grass. When I tried to move it into a more open area, it curled up, never to unroll. Here, the middle of the body seems narrow, an artifact of the arching front half.

Isabella Moth sp? No prize will be offered on this query! I examined hundreds of images in our book and internet sources, with no success.



I've been getting better with my closeups after switching to the Lumix. Here we see two copulating Six-spotted Tiger Beetles. Images like this are common on the web, given a) the high abundance of this species, & b) its propensity to copulate in the open. The Beatrix Potter School of Ecology has suggested miniature trail signs:

**TIGER BEETLES AND OTHERS ARE
REQUESTED TO RESTRICT PUBLIC
DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION TO OFF-
TRAIL AREAS**