

**Date and Time:** Sunday-Monday, August 4-5 2013 1:10-5:30 pm

**Weather:** Pr 3 mm; RH 72%; BP 102.0 kPa; sun/cloud; NW 5-20 kmh; T 22° C

**Activity:** Overnight stay and guided tour

While I set up a new rain gauge, Pat got right down to the business of spotting new species. “There’s a strange horse fly on the trailer deck!” I went to see. Who would have thought that it was actually a large bee-fly? The wing pattern gave us our easiest ID of the season so far. Her next find was a pseudoscorpion on the



trailer window, but it scurried into hiding before I got there. We already have one of these strange animals on the list, but only to family, so it would have been nice to get an image.

Out looking for honeybees, we saw only two or three after a prolonged search. Are there signs of mass bee death at Newport Forest? The tension will build toward the peak of the goldenrod blooming season, when we plan to conduct the annual honeybee count. To that end, I walked through the Regeneration Zone in

the Lower Meadow to reconstruct the old watering trail that we now use for the bee-counting protocol. Re-cutting that trail is just part of a major maintenance operation planned for the coming weekend. (Trail work would have ended by now if it weren't for the unusual surge of rain-driven vegetation.) While I walked the old watering trail, marveling at the height of the Aspens, Walnuts and Tulip Trees we had planted years ago, Pat walked up to the Powerline meadow. She returned an hour later with a dozen specimens wrapped in her "Bowles scroll", a plastic roll into which one may fold plant after plant for compact storage in the field. Continuing with her amazing string of discoveries, she next found an intriguing white Linyphiid spider on a leaf by the Nook. (See New Species.)

After supper in the trailer, I went to visit the river to sit up on the bluffs and contemplate the whole -- if that's possible. The air above the slow brown current was alive with Cedar Waxwings, flying elongated circuits over the river, snapping up whatever flies and bugs there were at altitude. I thought they must have pretty amazing vision to recognize and pick those flies off as they came to them. Luckily, they're equipped with dive brakes!

An impressively red sunset slowly gave way to night as the Milky Way emerged overhead. I sat in the Nook, armed with a flashlight. A lone adult Raccoon was shyly taking up kibbles in its paws, popping them into its mouth. A grey, flitting shape overhead caught my eye. A Southern Flying Squirrel came down the bark like a large insect, with amazing speed and agility. I went to check the second feeder to see if other flying squirrels were about, only to find a Raccoon kit sitting on the tray and munching on birdseed. "That's not for you!" Then a growl from the adult in the Nook. It was the sound of a "food-fight", a growl or sharp barking whine meant to warn the intruder away. From various clues it seemed a kit from another litter -- possibly already motherless, had come to share in the bounty. The adult Raccoon was probably the mother of the kit on the tray. Then another lone kit showed up. At this time in the Raccoon reproductive cycle, it is not unusual for a mother or two to go missing -- less unusual for kits. The most likely suspects are Coyotes. (Nina Hurdle, who lives across the road, is missing two of her cats lately.) Pat went to bed, leaving me in care of the night. "Don't forget to watch for the Perseids." She meant the Perseid Meteor Shower that extends over a week every year at this time.

Full night was upon us. I heard distant yapping and yowling while Pat slept, then the unmistakable glissando of a Coyote song. They all joined in, then stopped abruptly for some reason, perhaps to hunt. An even more distant train sounded its horn every few minutes at each level crossing, a sound just as lonely as the old

steam locomotive whistles of my childhood. Silence for half an hour, punctuated once or twice by a farm dog. Then a Screech Owl started up down in the Fleming Creek Forest behind me, a ghastly whinny, answered by another several minutes later from the Blind Creek Forest. It was all too much for me, so I stepped out into the cool night air, as though to sober up. The stars were magnificent. Every few minutes a meteor streaked silently overhead, emerging from the constellation Perseus -- at a guess.

I may be a night-owl, but Pat is definitely a morning person. So between us we have pretty good daily coverage. Around 8:30 am, she had gone up to her favorite birding spot at the "Snag", when a Whitetail Deer burst out of the Gallery Forest right in front of her, bounding away across the meadow. It "barked" as it went, according to Pat. (Apparently, deer *can* bark!) As if that weren't enough, she saw a Red Squirrel for the first time in about three years. There were dozens of Bowl-and-doily webs hung on the grass, all jeweled with dew. The webs are made by a species of *Frontinella* spider.

Right after my breakfast a car rolled into camp. It was Yolanda Moreby and her husband Chris Guglielmo, along with their two kids, for a courtesy tour. The parents are Biologists at Western University, Yolanda studying fish, Chris specializing in birds. The children, Linus and Nora, seemed keen for the adventure. We began the tour by walking out to the river, accompanied by Pat. Along the way we encountered a curious sight. In the middle of the path were parts of a Giant Swallowtail butterfly while, beside the trail, an intact (and living) Giant Swallowtail perched near the ground. I touched it and it reacted torpidly. Someone asked what was wrong with it. "It must be mourning for its friend," said Pat, no stranger to the Beatrix Potter School of Ecology.

When we arrived at the River Landing, we showed our guests some more river daisies, including the giant Cup Plants that crowded the trail, "cups" all full of rainwater. Pat returned to camp to examine yesterday's plant specimens while I continued the tour up to the bluffs. I had mentioned a trend to "species gigantism" on the property even before we descended into the Riverside Forest, stopping abruptly where the trail came closest to the river. "Could that be Giant Hogweed", wondered Chris, pointing to a plant that stood well over his six-foot frame. I took several images to examine at home. "Don't touch it, kids!"

Along an increasingly choked-up trail we made our way finally to the Hogsback, resting at the top. I showed Yolanda the Old Chinkapin Oak, one of the property's brag items. Then down into the Blind Creek Forest where I sketched an imaginary

Indian village by the creek that once flowed there. We came out for drinks and cake, relating our adventures to Pat. She reported on finding Small-flowered Agrimony, Spring Vetch, Cow Vetch, American Germander and a species of River Daisy that she's still working on. (Later she explained to me that a useful ongoing project is the continuing study of what's already there, the better to recognize new species.)

Our first set of visitors had hardly departed when Steve and Karen Logan drove in to bestow some birthday presents on me and to enjoy some Timmie's muffins & coffee they had brought with them. How old am I? A mathematician would "decompose" my age into primes:  $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 3 \times 3$ . That makes me feel younger.

**Birds: (20)**

American Crow (FCF); American Robin (EW); Canada Goose (TR); Cedar Waxwing (TR); Common Flicker (Tr); Common Yellowthroat (BCF); Blue Jay (GF); Common Grackle (RSF); Eastern Screech Owl (FCF); Eastern Towhee (LM); Field Sparrow (LM); Gray Catbird (LM/BCF); Mourning Dove (BCF); Northern Cardinal (HBF); Northern Rough-winged Swallow (LM); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Rose Breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Song Sparrow (HBF); Tree Swallow (Rd); Yellow Warbler (LM)

**Leps: (13)**

Dun Skipper; Eight-spotted Forester Moth; Giant Swallowtail; Great Spangled Fritillary; Hackberry Emperor; Hummingbird Sphynx Moth; Little Wood Satyr; Monarch; Pearl Crescent; Red-spotted Purple; Summer Azure; Wood Nymph

**New Species:**

'Pale Linyphiid Spider'	[ <i>Nerienne</i> ] sp.*	Nk KD Au04/13
Say's Trig (cricket)	<i>Anaxipha exidua</i>	Nk KD Au04/13
Tiger Bee Fly	<i>Xenox tigrinus</i>	Tr pdKD Au04/13

\* If this spider is not in the genus *Nerienne*, then it is probably in *Linyphila*, a closely related genus of Linyphiid (Sheetweb) spider. It may be an exceptionally pale morph of *Nerienne radiata* (Filmy Dome Spider).

**Note:** Giant Hogweed would be a new species, but not a happy find. It seems to be a Cow Parsnip (same genus), but we'll check it again.

**IMAGES:**



A dramatic sunset marked the beginning of a strange and beautiful night, punctuated by distant trains, Coyote songs, Screech Owls making ghostly wails and visits from Southern Flying Squirrels. Overhead the Milky Way was exceptionally clear, with occasional meteors streaking across the sky.



The Moreby-Guglielmo family catches its breath after the tour. Left-to-right: Yolanda Moreby and Chris Guglielmo, with children Nora and Linus clutching their walking poles. The mosquitoes were rather kind to the barelegged neophytes.