

Date and time: Thursday August 29 2013 1:55 - 8:45 pm

Weather: Pr 31 mm; RH 59%; BP 101.9 kPa; sun/cld; calm; T 34° C

Activity: More arthropods and Steve comes to groom trails

I was opening the farm gate on arrival when I heard it. A hum that pervaded the air. On a large stand of fully blooming Goldenrod nearby, I found the source: Honeybees. Dozens? No, *hundreds*, back in numbers not seen for years.

Thus buoyed, I drove down to “headquarters” (a derelict trailer and nearby Nook). The precipitation gauge read “31 mm”, more good news. I looked over the Lower Meadow, finding that the goldenrod there was only about 50% at full bloom. That was enough to restart the ATBI engine. My first new find was a Tachinid Fly that



sported wasp-like markings behind its head, a slate-gray abdomen, smoky wings, and a “tail” that was bright red below. Seeing it from two different angles, I thought I had two different species! But honeybees continued to dominate my concerns at the moment, so I took 15 minutes off to conduct a simple edge count

along the Lower Meadow. My last informal count by this method yielded just seven individuals. Today's count came to 32 individuals, hardly scientific, but still significant.

Then I remembered my sample. I have a fetish about returning everyone back to their habitat, even the little guys. On the way down to Fleming Creek and along the shore, I continued the hunt for arthropods. The trail had gotten rather choked and I found myself nearly arrested by two overlapping orb webs in my path. I examined the web on the right, looking for its owner's retreat. Aha! There it was under a curled leaf: the rarely-seen Shamrock Spider clutched a fresh prey item that was only partially swaddled. While examining the web on the left, I startled a Black-and-yellow Argiope that dashed straight down the web, perhaps to protect a pathetic-looking corpse, shriveled inside its silk coffin.

I dumped the sample and went up to the top again. I was about to resume the search for new arthropods, when Steve's van rolled into camp. Back from the dead? He has been laid up for two weeks now with severe sciatica. He looked wan. "Are you good to go?" Steve explained that the pain wasn't so bad now. He proceeded to mow all the grass around the trailer, then all the way to the River Landing and back. "Gee Steve, it looks like a provincial park here."

Then I remembered the bee protocol. We had to be ready soon! I showed him where the counting trail had been and he reopened it with the weed eater. After that he was grimacing with new pain. He thought he might go back home and lie down for a while. Good idea. With Steve gone, I set about planting counting point flags at 10-m intervals along the newly opened trail.

Resuming my search, I found a Seven-spotted Lady Beetle busily consuming a small, winged insect. (See IMAGES below.) A new beefly also showed up with wings apparently marked with white blotches. These turned out to be the result of reflections from transparent panels that were covered by fine parallel striae, sort of like diffractions gratings.

At about 6:45 pm a light aircraft flew very low (< 200 m) over the property on a northerly heading. It was not the Provincial Police dope patrol plane (which is white). Several years ago the OPP scored a direct hit on a local farmer who was subsequently charged with growing marijuana with an estimated street value of something like \$850K.

I walked to the river to sit on the bluffs bench for a while. A few Cedar Wax-

wings plied their trade upstream, but no other bird life seemed to be present. I collected two small plants with tiny flowers on the theory that these are the ones most likely to have been missed in previous surveys. (They turned out to be Black Medick and Smooth Aster, according to Pat.) On the way back I heard Mourning Doves Calling. Was it the high heat and excessive humidity? These birds had been calling from at least three separate locations all day.

About to emerge from the Blind Creek Forest into the Lower Meadow, I was startled by an Eastern Cottontail that dashed across the trail ahead of me, apparently headed for the meadow. Suddenly, there it was again, dashing back across the trail in the other direction. As if that weren't weird enough, it dashed across the trail a third time, once more toward the meadow. Make up your mind!

Out in the meadow a Brown Snake crossed my path. Then, close to the trailer, a small American Toad dodged my shoe. I walked to the Upper Meadow when it was nearly sunset, in case anything else might be observed. It was already too late, so I returned to the trailer for a (very late) dinner, then sat in the Nook to enjoy the gathering dark. A call came from Eva's Woods -- just off property -- about 200 m away. It sounded vaguely like the complaint call of a squirrel, but not quite. I thought it must be some kind of night bird. Later, checking owl calls at the Cornell Bird Lab website, I heard what seemed to be the identical sound. A Barn Owl. This would be a new species for the ATBI list but I hesitate to claim it without a more expert confirmation.

Speaking of night birds, I was on my way out a few minutes later, when I flushed a ground bird from the track in front of my van. I don't think, in retrospect, that it was an American Woodcock, as we rarely witness them in the fall. Also it was a bit too small, with a fluttery flight instead of a more decisive wingbeat.

Birds: (9)

American Crow (WM); Blue Jay (BCF); Cedar Waxwing (TR); Common Flicker (BCF); Common Grackle (LM); Gray Catbird (GF); Mourning Dove (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Turkey Vulture (GF)

Birding Notes: If I didn't flush a Woodcock in the Upper Meadow on the way out, what was it? Did I hear a Barn Owl calling from Eva's Woods after sunset? Newport Steward Marg Hulls visited the river on site a few days ago and reported a Least Sandpiper that was identified by a competent birder who accompanied her. Steward Erin Carroll had also reported two Least Sandpipers a week earlier.

Phenology: Goldenrod (LM) now approximately 50% in bloom; purple and white asters at low abundance, but now in bloom. This year the asters are in synchrony with the goldenrod, last year they weren't.

New species:

Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	TR MH Au26
'Wide-banded Sawfly'	<i>Tenthredo [basilaris]</i>	LM kd/SP Au23/13
'Four-spotted Beefly'	<i>Exoprosopa sp.*</i>	LM/Tr KD Au 29/13
Feather-legged Fly	<i>Trichopoda [pennipes]*</i>	LM KD Au29/13

* sent out for confirmation

Species Notes:

1. All three arthropod consultants were unanimous in suggesting that the wasp image I sent them a few days ago was a Sawfly and not a Square-headed wasp -- in spite of a great job of mimicry! The only Sawfly I could find with the distinctive dull orange band encircling its lower abdomen was the named species, becoming here our [best guess]. In all other visible characters, we now have a complete match. Steven Palero was first off the mark, so he gets the ID credit (capitalized initials) for the genus *Tenthredo*.

2. An adult caddisfly emerged from its larval case in the water sample taken on my previous visit to Mussel Beach. It strongly resembles species in the genus *Apatania*, but probably isn't even in that family by reason of seasonality. I have sent a good image to Erin Carroll, who specializes in aquatic species.

POWWOW AT MORAVIANTOWN

Don't forget to attend the Powwow at Moraviantown this weekend. It runs all day Saturday and Sunday. You will see colourful Indian clothing from different native traditions, hear singers and drummers, and have the chance to buy handmade traditional jewelry, clothing and decorative items at the many booths in operation at the Powwow.

No More Videos!

The Rain Crow video that we included in the previous Bulletin threw many email systems into confusion, exceeding quotas and blocking the Bulletin. We promise never to do this again.

IMAGES:



A Seven-spotted Lady Beetle consumes a hapless winged whasis. Don't let the genteel name fool you! Lady Beetles are voracious predators. This image also affords us a close-up look at individual blooms on the head of a goldenrod plant.



Who doesn't enjoy a beautiful sunset? In this image, we can see that one of the sun's rays has escaped to seek a new home in Newport Forest.