

Date and Time: Sunday October 20 2013 1:30 - 5:30 pm

Weather: Pr 22 mm; RH 77%; BP 101.4 kPa; SSE 5-15 kmh; cld/sun; T 14° C

Activity: Trail Opening at Moraviantown & a stop at Newport Forest

Today was the grand opening of the new nature trail at Moraviantown Delaware First Nation. The trail was designed by Darren Jacobs, with help from Sherry Huff and others over the last year. Arriving late, I had to catch up with the walkers, as below (puff puff), a mix of 50 to 60 Moraviantown residents and nature



lovers from the general area. I met some Conservation Authority people, a nature photographer, the Band Council Chief Peters and many other interesting walkers

The rainy, cold and blustery weather predicted for the weekend had given way to sunshine as the walk started. The Creator was smiling on the project, so to speak. The trail follows the river, for the most part, perched at the top of a bluffs system

that extends along the entire shoreline at Moraviantown. As one walks the trail, enjoying the trees (some rather immense), occasional openings to the river provide a refreshing vista. In the early days of 1792 the need for a good defensive position may have been one of the deciding factors in choosing the original townsite on high ground.

The walk took from 1:30 pm until about 3:00, when everyone emerged from the woods. This gave me plenty of time to stop off at Newport Forest, a mere 10 km to the northeast. I arrived around 3:30. All was quiet, except for the stirring of leaves in a chilly breeze. Checking inside the trailer, I noted with dismay some telltale scat on one of the bench seats. Tim the Weasel was back!

I took my microbial sample down to Fleming Creek to dump it back in the rapids, noting that the creek was almost back to normal levels (See image below.) I then set out on the Thames River Trail to change the sd cards on the trail cams and check river levels. I was just passing one of the dried-out vernal ponds of Blind Creek, when I heard a sudden rustle in the leaves on its floor. A glance to my right caught a grey animal trotting away, just short of panic. It had a beautifully bushy tail. Coyote! I thought of going over to check for a kill, but it would be a potential waste of time. Although we see Coyote tracks frequently in the mud after a rain, as well as in occasional trail cam images, this was my first live sighting of one! Generally, they know how to stay out of one's way.

The river was well up today, lapping the base of the bluffs on its way to Moraviantown, some 12 km downstream. Eventually, the Thames empties into Lake St Clair. A beautiful Great Blue Heron soared overhead to the far shore, reminding me that it was time to leave.

Phenology: Trees 50% bare

Pay an e-visit to Newport Forest: In order to familiarize themselves with an overview of Newport Forest, new readers are urged to pay an e-visit to read about the site and the conservation work going on. Past Bulletins are archived there: <http://www.csd.uwo.ca/~akd/conservation/Newport.html>

Who reads The Bulletin? The distribution list now contains 210 readers, about equally divided among biologists, accomplished naturalists, and "nature lovers". (Appealing to all three categories is a challenge.)

IMAGES:



Today Fleming Creek was almost back to normal levels. There used to be a bridge crossing the foreground over to Fleming Creek Forest on the left bank. The bridge was designed to collapse during floods or fast water, with the parts all tethered. This engineering marvel remained in service for about seven years, but finally proved impractical, as the twin folded-steel pipes that supported the decking modules each weighed 355 lbs and were a bugger to deploy each spring, nevermind to haul out each winter!



WILDVIEW

10-20-2013 10:34:22

Five hours before I arrived on site today, this doe began to enter the gaze of Trail Cam #2, then halted abruptly. The next two frames show her slowly backing out of the picture. A wee light goes on when the camera detects something and she may have been reacting to that.

On the other hand, the deer just happens to be looking toward the same vernal pond (nearby) where I would later see the Coyote. Had the Coyote been there that morning? If so, maybe it had a kill, after all.