Date and time: Sunday October 27 2013 12:20 - 6:05 pm
Weather: Pr 7 mm; RH 71%; BP 101.9 kPa; cld/sun; calm; T 8º C
Activity: Fungus Workshop and Bioblitz with Greg Thorn

The air was chill with a hint of winter, but grey skies would occasionally open to a generous sun as some 25 participants in the largest and most successful "fungus walk" yet took in some opening remarks by Professor Greg Thorn, a mycologist at the University of Western Ontario. We worried that there wouldn't be enough

fungi for a really successful walk. Silly us! We ended with over 50 species, whether fully identified or not, whether on the ATBI list or not. Conditions could hardly have been better for fungi, going in. Prolonged light rains had built up a kind of reservoir of humidity on site.

Almost as soon as we entered Blind Creek Forest the finds began to come in. Perhaps the only way to conduct a workshop of this size is to have participants do the foraging. The large straggling group of fungi walkers would gather in a knot from

time to time on their way to the river as one person or another came out to the trail with a new find. ”Smell this,” said one, of a white bracket with a faint sent of anise. “Aha”, said Greg. “A sweet smelling bracket fungus. *Trametes suaveolens*.” Then came an orange *Pholiota*, *Panellus serotinus*, *Bjerkandera fumosa*, and a peculiar troop of pink balls on wood betraying a mold with the common name “Wolf’s Milk Slime”. This is a slime mold and not a fungus per se. In the course of multiple foraging other slime molds showed up but it was only possible for Greg to make a good guess as to genus without taking the samples back to the lab.

The River Landing produced two jelly-like fungi: *Dacrymyces* and *Tremella* (both Basidiomycetes). Not to mention the first of several encounters with eyelash cups, small, red cup-shaped Ascomycetes, some sporting “eyelashes”. The trail over the river bluffs revealed several mushroom species growing under a White Oak oak: an *Inocybe*, a *Lactarius* and two species of *Hygrophorus*. Greg would occasionally stop in the midst of examining a specimen to reveal yet another facet of the world of fungi. Under the oak he explained how “mycorrhyzal” species, such as the ones just found, lived by a form of commerce with the overhead tree, mycelia trading nutrients with roots.

The group trickled into the Bluebell Woods section of the Riverside Forest, branching out to forage. By the time I arrived, they were coming in from all directions, new finds in hand. It was here that Gordon Price found The Recluse hiding in a log and Diane Lynn Ayotte found the True Elm Oyster sprouting on a living trunk, both of Boxelder and both new species for the ATBI list. Displaying the ingenuity born of years in the field, Greg used a dead branch to reach the oysters high on the trunk. Several years ago we had found the “False Elm Oyster”, *Hypsizygus tesselatus*, a native to North America and Eurasia (and a delectable).

At this point Pat called on the walkie-talkie, wanting to know where we were and reminding me to bring Greg back to start the ID process, while remaining walkers could complete the trail to search for more specimens. Greg always has some interesting information about fungi. On the way back he pointed out that when a mushroom first sprouts, it has already completed most of its cell divisions. The mushroom spends the rest of the time simply pumping water into itself, inflating like a balloon! That would explain why mushrooms are so sensitive to (and dependent upon) dampness and humidity.

By about 3:30 everyone had emerged from the forest to gather in the Nook for hot coffee, chocolate or cider, while Greg sat at a table spread with specimens, examining them with a pocket magnifier. Several people took notes and photographs

during the ID session, while Greg kept up a lively running commentary on the finds. At one point, he explained how one of the species had received some five different scientific names over several decades while taxonomists revised, then re-revised its classification. What would us poor amateurs do in the face of such uncertainty? Greg explained that the latest names could always be found by checking a website called Index fungorum (which sounds like a species itself).

By five pm Pat and I were alone on the site once more. We wouldn't know for a day or two just how productive the Workshop had been. In the meantime, large flocks of Robins flew restlessly about. Time for them (and us) to leave. Besides, the deer could probably use some quiet-time.

Special thanks go to Steward Erin Carroll for organizing such a successful event. Check her website at http://erintown.blogspot.ca/ for more images from the day, not to mention her Father's website at http://chocodaddy.blogspot.ca/

Birds: (14)

American Crow (TR); American Robin (UM); Blue Jay (TR); Canada Goose (TR); Cedar Waxwing (TR); Common Grackle (UM); Downy Woodpecker (RSF); European Starling (Rd); Gold-crowned Kinglet (RL); Red-bellied Woodpecker (TR); Red-tailed Hawk (TR); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF)

Phenology: Creek and river both 1 metre over normal due to recent light (but prolonged) rains; trees 90% bare of leaves. Robins massing for fall migration

New Species:

Physarum slime	*Physarum* sp.	Loc GT Oc27/13
Black Knot	*Apiosporina morbosa*	Loc GT Oc27/13
Skinny Dead Man's Fingers	*Xylaria hypoxylon*	BBW GT Oc27/13
Big Smoky Bracket	*Bjerkandera fumosa*	ET GT Oc27/13
True Elm Oyster	*Hypsizygus ulmarius*	BBW dla/GT Oc27/13
'Russulalike Hygrophorus'	*Hygrophorus russula*	RBT GT Oc27/13
The Recluse	*Ossicaulis lignatelis*	BBW gp/GT Oc27/13
Elegant Trametes	*Trametes elegans*	Loc al/GT Oc27/13
Winter Polypore	*Polyporus brumalis*	Loc al/GT Oc27/13
'Fibrous Inocybe'	*Inocybe* [*lacerata*]	RB GT Oc27/13
'White-rumped Weevil'	[*Conotrachelus elegans*]	LM KD Oc14/13

Notes:

1. There may be some corrections and a possible addition or two to the list above. Four of the species lack location data, calling for some detective work.
2. Individual weevils of the same species can have varying patterns and colouring. This one had a conservative character consisting of a crenelate light patch on the rear of the wing covers found on all other examples of the species and shared by none of the other several dozen species examined. The species named attacks Walnut trees. (an overlooked August find)

ATBI Counts: Eubacteria 22 Protista 194 Fungi 233 Plantae 481 Animalia 993

IMAGES:

Fungus-walker Gordon Price examines a Hygrophorus mushroom new to the ATBI list. (The cap looks like one of his fingers.) Further on he would turn up a little-seen mushroom called The Recluse because of its habit of hiding from view. Gordon would find that one inside a log!

Image: Anita Caveney

Greg holds up the largest specimen we have ever seen of the Artist's Conk (*Ganoderma applanatum*), a bracket fungus. Here the lower pore-surface is exposed to view -- an artist's sketchpad, as well. Drawing any fine point, even a sharp stick, across this surface results in a thin, black line that remains indefinitely. Leonardo would have loved it.