

Date and time: Sunday April 20 1:55 - 6:15 pm

Weather: Pr 5mm; RH 48%; BP 102.7 kPa; calm; sun/haze; T 22° C

Activity: Monitoring new growth and cleaning up (Pat & Kee)

The cool wet spring that we anticipated has not yet materialized, at least not the “wet” part. The area was drivable and there was no problem getting down to the Lower Meadow. At the trailer we found numerous honeybees feeding on the sweet sap that oozed from the old Black Maple that shades the Nook, as below.



Eagerly we looked around the trailer for spring ephemerals only to be mildly disappointed by half-grown leaves of Trout Lily, and no blooms. The story was repeated everywhere we went today, but is not conclusive: our coverage was limited to the Lower Meadow and the east end of Blind Creek Forest. As well as Trout Lilies, only Wood Violets and Garlic Mustard could be added to the list of emerged species started by the volunteers on Work Day. (See below for Report)

The bud-break story was hardly better. Only a Gooseberry bush by the trailer and a young willow by the River Landing showed buds that were even half unfurled. We hasten to add that there were surely other species in this condition or more

advanced, but they weren't very noticeable. We wondered why everything was so late, given the recent warm days. "Must be the cold nights," remarked Pat.

As we left the Nook for a walk to the River, we heard the gobbling of male Wild Turkeys in Fleming Creek Forest down by the creek behind us. In the Blind Creek Forest where the vernal ponds of Blind Creek were still fully charged, we heard very few frogs calling. But every now and then a mysterious, sharp "cluck" would sound from the other side of the ponds. It was a sound we had never heard before. Consulting the Cornell Bird Lab at home we realized that it was probably the location call made by a Wild Turkey hen as a guide to nearby males.

The river is now less than a metre above normal levels and soon Mussel Beach will be exposed. Fleming Creek now runs freely, although still high. The Lower Rapids, a favourite sampling area, have emerged once again

The winter had been hard on both Pat and me, so we soon walked back from the river to sit once more in the Nook to watch what birds might be visiting the feeder in the old Black Maple. This was luxury birding! Our best birds of the afternoon, the Ruby-crowned Kinglet and the Yellow-rumped Warbler, were both ID'd by Pat.

We continue to clean up Newport Forest. Today we removed all the old drip cans from the Regeneration Zone. These were installed during dry years, but they are now rusted away. There also remains an unsightly pile of metal and wood scrap by the main gate. This material should be gone soon, along with the watering tank.

We had a supper of weiners & beans on site, then gathered our stuff and drove out.

Birds: (23)

American Crow (BCF); American Robin (BCF); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Brown Creeper (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (GF); Canada Goose (TR); Common Flicker (LM/HBF); Dark-eyed Junco (Hole); Downy Woodpecker (BCF); Field Sparrow (LM); Great Crested Flycatcher* (EW); Mourning Dove (BCF); Northern Cardinal (FC); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (Rd); Tundra Swan* (TR); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nut-hatch (GF); Wild Turkey (FCF); Yellow-rumped Warbler (GF) and a *possible* Great Crested Flycatcher* (EW)

***Notes:** Swan reported by Darren Jacobs (See IMAGES below) Fly-catcher's "weeb" heard from Eva's Woods. This would be an unusually early arrival.

Trail cam report:

Cam1 Ap15 9:12 am WT; 4:53 pm WT (snow on ground - melting)

Ap17 5:18 am Raccoon

Ap18 10:46 am EGS/blk

Ap19 12:30 pm EGS/blk

Cam2 Ap15 4:37 pm VD

Ap19 7:55 am VD

[WT = Wild Turkey, EGS = Eastern Gray Squirrel, VD = Virginia Deer]

Snow phenology: snow covered the area early on April 15, but was gone next day. This is a new record “last snowfall” for the winter/spring period since the 2000.

Workday Report:

Some 20 or so volunteers showed up on April 13 last Sunday to work on a warm and windy day. The two main jobs accomplished were to clear brush and weeds away from the old line fence by the road to prepare for installation of a new one later this spring. Donald Craig and Stan Caveney did a great job, using their chain saws to clear all the deadfall from all 1.86 km of the Thames River Trail. In the course of their duties, naturalists spotted many animals and emerging plants:

Birds: (15):

American Crow (BCF); American Robin (UM); Belted Kingfisher (LM); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (UM); Common Flicker (BCF); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Field Sparrow (LM); Northern Cardinal (FC); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (UM); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr)

Note: A ‘Sandhill Crane’ was also reported. We are currently checking this item.

Herpetofauna: Brown Snake, Eastern Garter; Spring Peeper, Western Chorus Frog, Wood Frog

Emergence: (leaves) Trout Lily, Virginia Bluebell, Wild Leek, Wild Strawberry

Invertebrates: Wood Tick, Green Tiger Beetle, Black Pond Leech (sp. unkn.)

Trail cams: #1 two raccoons, deer at night; #2: two deer (not shown below)

IMAGES:



Male Virginia Deer caught on Trail Cam #2 pauses by Edgar's Elbow at 4:37 pm on April 15. Large dimples in coat of neck and forequarters may indicate the beginning of spring molt. Property was snow-covered that morning but snow had all melted by the next day,



Tundra Swan, photographed by Darren Jacobs on river bank across from the River Landing, may have been injured, he thinks.