

Date and time: Sunday May 4 2014 1:35 - 4:05 pm

Weather: Pr 33mm; RH 48%; BP 101.2 kPa; cloudy; NE 5-15 kmh; T 8° C

Activity: Monitoring spring growth and weather conditions

When I arrived on site, it was raining, cool and windy. “Why did I come today?” I asked myself. I had to park in the Upper Meadow, the property now being too wet to make it down to the Lower Meadow with any hope of getting out again. Walking down to the trailer, it took no more than a second or two to realize that the Trout



Lilies had started to bloom. About 10% of both yellow and white varieties nodded in their respective patches. “Oh Frabjous Day!” A walk to the river and later to the Blind Creek Forest revealed other flowers also in bloom, including Yellow and Purple Wood Violets. And who will disdain Dandelions after the winter we’ve had?

During that same walk to the river, I changed the sd cards on the trail cameras and noted that a few Western Chorus Frogs were still calling, but nothing else. Thanks to the recent rains, the vernal ponds are as full as ever. I was accompanied on my walk by the sound of a tractor ploughing across the river. Late planting? By the time I reached the Elbow, the rain had let up and the wind had died. I stopped to admire a young Black Ash that we planted a good ten years ago at the Elbow. It is

now easily three metres tall and seems to be not only healthy, but entirely unmolested by deer.

Back in camp I sat on a cold wet chair in the Nook for some casual birding. This entailed a certain risk of hemorrhoids, not to mention wood ticks falling on my person from branches overhead (triggered by my carbon dioxide, apparently. Imagine global wood ticks!) The sun began shyly to peek through the clouds and the place warmed up a few degrees. My best bird was not seen at the Nook feeder, but heard from both the East Ravine and the Blind Creek area, a Red-winged Blackbird. In the Delaware language he is called “Chok-wal-leesh”, imitating the call. Few enough birds showed up, thanks to the uncertain weather.

The greening-up process at Newport Forest has been slow this year, as everywhere in our region. Spotting which herbaceous plants were leafing out was beyond my ability, but a casual survey of woody species was not. Wandering in the Blind Creek Forest, then into the Lower Meadow and down the creek bluffs, I found the following species now well into the process of breaking bud and leafing out:

Boxelder; Crataegus spp; Bladdernut; Multiflora Rose (semi-woody); Chinkapin Oak, Shagbark Hickory, and White Ash (the latter three being young trees in the Regeneration Zone); River Grape (vine).

Late in the afternoon I decided to call it a day and walked up to the van parked in the Upper Meadow. On the way I paused to photograph one of the largest ant mound I have seen at Newport Forest, right beside the road and a metre across.

Birds: (12)

American Crow (EW); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Brown-headed Cowbird (GF); Common Flicker (FCF); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Killdeer (Rd); Northern Cardinal (ER); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-winged Blackbird (ER); Turkey Vulture (Rd); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF)

Trail Cam Report: This will not be a regular feature of this Bulletin, but is included merely as a sample of what a trail camera can pick up. Cam #1 got most of the traffic, owing to our use of kibble as camera bait. Raccoons continually visited, even after the bait was long gone. Note that up to four individual Raccoons can be distinguished on the basis of this imagery, including a pregnant female.

Camera #1: **April 24** 7:47 pm scruffy-looking Raccoon; 7:50 pm healthy Raccoon with double eye-stripe; 7:53 black “Swamp Coon”; 7:58 thinnish Raccoon with white ruff and white pantaloons; 10:32 pm Raccoon “headlights” (also at 10:50 and 10:57 pm) **April 25** 12:50 am Raccoon wading in tub (also at 4:47 am); 8:25 pm Greyish Raccoon at sunset; 9:37 pm Raccoon in tub **April 26** 8:20 pm Raccoon foraging in leaf litter at sunset; 9:05 pm Raccoon “headlights” behind meter stick **April 27** 4:49 pm Coyote walks by into woods ; 6:50 Wild Turkey walks out to meadow; 6:54 Two Wild Turkeys cross trail; 8:34 pm Eastern Grey Squirrel (black) foraging nearby **April 28** 1:33 pm Grey Raccoon heads for tub; 4:45 pm Grey Raccoon walks by into forest; 6:23 pm Female Raccoon (pregnant with young) **April 30** 7:26 pm Eastern Grey Squirrel (black) foraging; 7:46 Virginia Deer crosses trail 7:47 second Virginia Deer crosses trail; 1:44 pm Wild Turkey crosses trail **May 1** 11:50 am Wild Turkey foraging behind meter stick **May 2** 2:14 am Raccoon visits tub

Camera #2: **April 27** 1:18 pm two Virginia Deer pass the Elbow heading south, returning two minutes later. **April 28** 11:18 am two Virginia Deer heading south

Wildflower Walk! The annual Newport Forest Spring Wildflower Walk will be held this coming Saturday, May 10 at 1 pm, *come rain or shine*. For directions to the property, email dewdney@sympatico.ca. Note cards with original wildflower sketches by *Jane Bowles* will be on sale for \$7 a pack.

IMAGES:



Is that the legendary (all-black) “Swamp Coon” on the left or one merely darkened by swimming in the creek or the vernal ponds? (note slicked fur) Raccoon on right shows normal colouring.



New vegetation in Lower Meadow (Regeneration Zone) pokes up through last year’s goldenrod, asters, etc. Forest in background shows little green at this point.