936 Newport Forest Je02/14

Monitoring Nature

Date & time: Monday June 2 2014 11:35 - 3:45 pm
Weather: Pr 0mm; RH 62%; BP 101.8 kPa; S 10-35 kmh; sun/cld; T 28º C
Activity: Visit from a high school, special trees, and more ATBI work

Today we had the honour of hosting a group of high school students along with friends from the Thames Talbot Land Trust who came to help out and renew their acquaintance with Newport Forest. Fears of bad weather reduced the class size.

The lucky west Elgin high school students enjoyed a nearly two-to-one ratio of guides to students: (left to right) Donald Craig (TTLT Steward), Michael Van Dyk (Teacher), Dylan Clark and Steven Carter (students), Sarah Hodgkiss (Carolinian Canada), Annie Holland (student), Stan Caveney (Biologist and TTLT Board), Daria Kocsinski (Ecologist and TTLT Property Manager). A key role of places like Newport Forest is educational, learning about native life forms and ecology.

The group set out for the river, Caveney and I being delayed by a white Geometrid moth parked on a leaf by the trail. In an email consultation later, we agreed that I

had photographed a “White Slantline” as the moth is known. Tree expert Donald Craig took us all off trail to examine a Butternut that he had found recently on the slope of the Hogsback. The gps location was recorded, as well as that of several other interesting trees during the walk. We continued on to the river bluffs where Craig, Caveney and Sarah Hodgkiss went upslope to find the Eastern Flowering Dogwood that I discovered there several years ago. Somehow they missed it. They then rejoined the main group for the 1.8 km Thames River Trail walk.

While the visitors were still on the trail Pat and I went to the Blind Creek Forest to search along the trail for spiders. She found a small but colourful Orchard Spider (not new). As we continued our search, we heard the distant voices of returning walkers. Back in camp we discussed everyone’s discoveries and learned more about the place of Nature Studies in the West Elgin curriculum from teacher Michael Van Dyk. Then a long walk back up to the gate for all to the yellow school bus waiting by the road.

We were alone again. Pat busied herself applying mulch to Jane Bowles’ memorial Sassafras tree. In the process, she noticed a honeysuckle growing near by that we hadn’t recorded yet. I searched the leaf litter along the trail down the creek bluffs to look for ground spiders, finding two possible new ones and a small broadnosed weevil. The spiders, I decided, were best left for experts, being small, darkly pigmented and almost entirely lacking in distinctive markings. I changed the sd cards on the trail cams and we departed in winds gusting up to 50 kmh and skies darkening with new systems from the south.

Birds: (13) (High winds may have inhibited bird life once again.)

American Crow (GF/E); Blue Jay (GF); Common Grackle (LM); Common Yellow-throat (LM); Field Sparrow (LM); Great Blue Heron (BCF); House Sparrow (Rd); Northern Cardinal (GF/E); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (UM); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (UM)

Trail cam Report:
To summarize a busy night with over 80 images taken by Trail Cam #2 at The Nook, we can now report the presence of at least three adult Raccoons in the immediate area and not one, but *two* litters of young. One litter consists of at least three kits still with their mother in the Black Maple. The other litter consists of two or three larger “teen-agers” from an unknown den site nearby. It may be that other kits have already been picked off by Coyotes — or by the creature that made that roaring sound last thursday evening. Trail Cam #1 at the Hole picked up a few

visits by Raccoon kits and adults. An emaciated Virginia Deer also showed up Saturday morning. How long will it last in this condition?

New Species:

European Fly Honeysuckle	*Lonicera xylesteum*	LM/GF PD Je02/14
Elm Sawfly	*Cimbex americana*	LM/GF pd/KD Je02/14
White Slantline	*Tetracis cachexiata*	BCF/EE SC/KD Je02/14
Hairy Spider Weevil	*Barypeithes pellucidus*	GF/FC KD Je02/14

Notes: The White Slantline is a Geometrid moth and the Hairy Spider Weevil is in the Broadnose Weevil family.
Correction: The beetle tentatively identified as a species of Meloid in the previous *Bulletin* was actually a Tenebrionid — with thanks to entomologist Steve Marshall for pointing this out. The corrected entry now reads as follows:

Long-jointed Beetle	*Anthromacra aenea*	GF kd/SM My29/14

Marshall's massive but reasonably-priced book *Insects:Their Natural History and Diversity* has been out for several years now. Profusely illustrated with a myriad of images and loaded with useful comments, this book should be on the shelf of every biologist and nature lover. Call your local bookstore or check amazon.ca. ($50+)

Readers Write:

(I asked Donald Craig if he had noticed any tree dieback resulting from our harsh winter.) " . . . there has been some dieback, mostly with planted trees. I have not seen any evidence of mortality or even dieback on natural stock. The most obvious damage is to road side conifers which were desiccated by the salt as well as the extremely long period of cold dry winds. There is some needle browning of white pine in particular but again it is either along roads or [on] planted trees."

Weaselmania Department: if "Tim" is not the mother, then he must be the father.
"Baby weasels are so exciting! Looking forward to photos in future reports."
Erin Carroll
"Congratulations to the new parents of baby weasels! The more the merrier!"
Andy Szilard
"I've been enjoying the Newport Forest Reports. One thing I've been wondering is whether the offspring of Tim and Wendy should be known as Timbits."
Winnie Wake

IMAGES:

Pat found this large Elm Sawfly (*Cimbex americana*) clinging to a grass stem. We brought it to the deck railing for a fast-focus background. One has to work quickly with insects to get a decent image before they crawl or fly away. It looked like a black horsefly, but the long antennae and two pairs of wings told us that it wasn't a fly at all. Sawflies, along with bees, wasps and ants, are a division of the Hymenoptera.

Trail cam at the Nook reveals three Raccoon kits heading up the Black Maple in the wee hours last friday morning after dining on kibble. Year on time stamp should read 2014, not 2013.