

Date and time: Friday July 11 2014 2:30 - 9:30 pm

Weather: Pr 47mm; RH 47%; BP 102.6 kPa; calm; sun/cloud; T 25° C

Activity: ATBI, electronic archaeology, and waiting for the mysterious call

I arrived later than usual in the company of a young friend who was keen to know more about nature. I was eager to show him the clay beach but when we arrived at the river, the beach was submerged once again. Area rains had been heavier than I realized, with 47 mm showing in the gauge. Fleming Creek was also swollen by the recent rains and some planned aquatic sampling was ruled out by turbidity.



The friend, Oussama Abid by name, was pressed into service to assist in the hunt for arthropods in the Lower Meadow. As with our earlier student visitor, Laura Lee, young eyes proved superior to old. Except for brief visits to river and creek, we spent most of the afternoon sweeping with the net or searching by hand.

The results showed the usual mix of species: 1. identified but already listed, 2. identified and new, and 3. those which I failed to identify. The ratios of these categories seem rather similar from one visit to the next, causing some reflection on abundances, as described below under **New Species**.

Later in the afternoon, with Oussama at loose ends, I suggested he scan the immediate area for buried metal. He took up the project with enthusiasm as I handed him an old, second-hand Garrett metal detector. Soon the quiet air was punctuated with howls and whines from the infernal machine. He was delighted to turn up an old shell casing, then another. He also found the half-buried grill of a suet feeder, a pegboard hanger, and a 2.5” spiral nail left over from the trailer deck construction.

The result was a small exercise in archaeology. What about those shell casings? I described them to a reader who is expert in firearms. Both were casings of .270 Winchester cartridges. This was a popular hunting cartridge in the 50s, 60s and beyond, used mainly by deer hunters. We can therefore relate these finds to other information about the property; the Newport brothers were avid hunters and, in the fall, often sat up in a deer blind overlooking the Lower Meadow. The blind was removed in 2001. We surmise that they used the Winchester .270 cartridge.

Earlier in the afternoon, I heard the see-saw call of a female weasel. Later in the afternoon, Oussama just happened to be looking in the right direction when he saw “a weasel” dash from the edge of the meadow, across the track and under the trailer deck. Sceptical, I questioned him about the appearance of the animal. As soon as he described the slender, brown body and the black-tipped tail, I was surer than ever. Wendy is still around. Will we ever see her young ones?

Bigger game was afoot, however. I had brought my mini-recorder to catch those mysterious cries that Pat and I heard for several hours during our overnight stay last Saturday. On this occasion Oussama and I remained until sunset, not hearing a single call. Well, that’s field work for you. We left as the sun set and a full “super moon” rose. On the track in the Upper Meadow, we almost ran over a Bobolink. That’s conservation for you!

Birds: (15)

American Crow (BCF); American Robin (BCF); Blue Jay (GF); Bobolink (UM); Common Flicker (GF); Common Grackle (BCF/LM); Eastern Towhee (GF); Field Sparrow (LM); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (BCF); Red-winged Blackbird (HBF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF)

New Species:

‘Two-rowed Green Orb Weaver’	<i>Araneus [cingulatus]</i>	LM oaKD J111/14
‘Green-eyed Mayfly’	[<i>Stenacron</i>] sp.	LM oaKD J111/14
‘Black Mirid’	<i>Capsus ater</i>	LM oaKD J111/14

The Asteroid (larva)
'Red-thigh Ichneumon'

Cucullia asteroides
[*Sinophorus*] sp.

LM oaKD J111/14
LM oaKD J111/14

Notes: The Ichneumon might be *Glypta*, instead, but an un-named species of *Sinophorus* shared more characters with our specimen.

The Accumulation Curve:

Population biologists have long sought the correct formula for the curve that yields the expected number of species for a given (long term) sampling effort. It is suspected to be logarithmic. In any case we appear to be on that part of the curve where the arthropod finds in category 1 (See above.) have begun to equal the finds in Category 2. Given a logarithmic form however, that ratio continues to climb as the amount of sampling effort per new species continues to increase, seemingly without limit. Later on there is visit after visit with nothing new. Then maybe something new. Sigh. That's ATBI for you.

IMAGES:



This file image of the Two-marked Tree Hopper by Stephen Cresswell is far superior to any of my images. It reveals finer detail of the Tree Hopper, from the frontal "horn" to the low-set eyes and thicker legs.



Best image of the day portrays our second encounter with the Cobweb Spider, *Theridion albidum*, here trying to escape the net. As one can see from the size of the mesh, our specimen is only a few mm long. The genus *Theridion* is cosmopolitan and huge, with several hundred species worldwide.