

Date and time: Thursday July 24 2014 1:50 - 6:45 pm

Weather: Pr 16 mm ; RH 43%; BP 102.1 kPa; sun/cloud; N 0-5 kmh; T 23° C

Activity: “Collecting” arthropods and examining fungi

Our Field Assistant Laura Lee accompanied me for today’s ATBI safari. After cleaning up the mess left by Raccoons (a trail cam tripod toppled and an aquatic sample jar broken), we made a series of forays into the Lower Meadow, with Laura sweeping the net and me recording frantically whatever I could inside it. Later we literally beat the bushes — into a white ground sheet. This gives one an idea of who’s crawling about on the leaves and branches. A hard knock dislodges them.



When searching “by hand” as I call it, one may notice insects like this Long-horn Beetle that happens to be a new species for us. Laura continued to spot insects that I had walked right past. A good assistant certainly boosts output!

After a break in the Nook, we set out for Fleming Creek on the trail that leads down the bluffs. Along the way we were diverted by a variety of fungi that had sprouted following the recent rains. Having familiarized herself with the general appearance of various types of fungi, Laura spotted a small scarlet cup, then a

larger one, neither new. Then we came upon a troop of tiny club-headed fungi emerging from an old log liner that their mycelia were busily digesting in its hidden recesses. Could it be the long-awaited Fairy Fans? Then I found some Carbon Balls (*Xylaria*) and several Black-footed Polypores, while Laura found what appeared to be a *Xerula* mushroom.

Arriving at the rain-swollen creek, we found it too deep to wade, our intention being to look for arthropods in the Fleming Creek Forest. I showed her how to take a kick-sample with the aquatic net, bringing up an early instar of the Northern Clearwater Crayfish and a minnow that turned out to be unidentifiable. Somewhat discouraged, I decided to go back up and beat the bushes instead.

At the end of our stay, we worked through the Lower Meadow along the old watering trail. Laura spotted a large Star-bellied Orbweaver, a bizarre spider with an abdomen studded with blunt spikes. (Not new.)

New Species:

Velvet-stalked Fairy Fan	<i>Spathularia velutipes</i>	FCT LLKD J124/14
‘Reticulate Theridion’	<i>Theridion theridioides</i>	LM KD J124/14
‘Ornate Neoscona’	<i>Neoscona arabesca</i>	LM KD J124/14
‘Prison-jumper’	<i>Sitticus [pubescens]</i>	LM KD J124/14
‘Champlain’s Longhorn’	<i>Brachyleptura champlaini</i>	LM/Nk LLKD J124/14
‘Colander Fruit Fly’	<i>Eutreta [noveboracensis]</i>	LM KD J124/14
Grapeleaf Skeletonizer	<i>Harrisina americana</i>	LM KD LLJ124/14

Notes: 1. We remind readers that names in quotes are cooked up to provide entries for the “common name” entry in the ATBI database when no regular names are available. 2. The *Sitticus* spider provides an example of the ID process. I examined dozens of images of *Sitticus* and their lookalikes, noting variations in patterns, and so on. It is fascinating that while some arthropod species are distinctive and stable, others may be highly variable, some looking like different species! An important step is to determine variability as part of the process. Even with the genus known, one might still have to guess the [species] closest to the specimen at hand.

ATBI Nears Landmark 2000 spp.

The ATBI count now stands as follows: Plants 483; Animals 1051; Fungi & Lichens 237; Protists 199; Eubacteria 22 Total species = 1992. Another visit or two should do it!

Where is Newport Forest?

For readers outside our area, not to mention those in other countries, the geographic point (42 37 47 N, 81 46 43W) lies close to the centre of our 47-ha natural site. Three of the boundaries are contiguous with adjacent properties, while the third boundary is formed by the river.

Readers Write:

Bruce Parker, a Monarch butterfly research worker, responds to our report of a few Monarchs in the last issue of *The Bulletin*: “I appreciate any report on Monarchs, as the lowest overwintering population of 2013/2014 has to replenish the entire species of the Eastern Monarch butterfly. So far, things look good. No unexpected winter storms or dramatic temperature drops in Mexico during the species season of diapause. Our late but temperate spring was a good start for reproduction in the American Midwest, and on a personal level, I have been able to replenish the [ongoing] Monarch culture at the Landon Library with many specimens. I have seen over 40 adult Monarchs at a region where I monitor over 1500 Milkweed plants. I have gathered about 20 larva for Landon as well as a few eggs and first instars for monitoring at home. Out of sheer optimism, I have ordered 250 tags for the fall migration.”

Dave Martin, a professional birder, calms our fears of an early out-migration of Common Grackles in this summary of a longer report on grackle behaviour: “And so, in short, Grackles are conspicuous in the spring, nest in open areas and are rarely found in woodland habitats. Grackles are inconspicuous after July, spending most of their time in woodlands foraging on the ground under leaves, gathering in larger and larger groups throughout the summer until they number in the 1000s in September and migrate in the tens of 1000s in late October.”

Ann White, a local butterfly expert, gracefully brings our attention to a misprint in the last issue of *The Bulletin*: “Well, I can just imagine you bending your *pants* backward trying to get low enough to photograph a nodding flower! Now that would make a great picture, maybe not educational but interesting.”

IMAGES:



Theridion theridioides was formerly called *Tobesoa theridioides*, in any case a member of the Cobweb Spider family, Theridiidae. Two other spp of *Theridion* have reticulate abdomens, but not to the extent of this one. Other abdominal markings are highly variable along the medial line. As one can see from the millimetre-sized mesh of the insect net, this is a small spider barely half a cm in body length. We are definitely getting down to the “shorter strokes”!



When hand-searching it is always a good idea to glance at the flowering heads of Queen Anne's Lace (Wild Carrot). The two cases at hand are the Longhorn Beetle in our cover image and the Grape-leaf Skeletonizer, as shown here. This moth, bearing a superficial resemblance to a large fly, belongs to the mainly tropical family Zygaenidae. The Skeletonizer lays its eggs on leaves of *Vitis* spp, including the River Grape, with which Newport Forest is well supplied in both forest and field. The larva chews on the leaves, but eschews the veins, so to speak, leaving only a "skeleton" in its wake. Don't eat the larvae! They are heavily laced with hydrogen cyanide to discourage predators.