

Date and time: Sunday May 17 2015 2:00 - 5:45 pm

Weather: Pr 4mm; RH 93%; BP 102.3 kPa; SE 20 kmh; T 26° C

Activity: Ponds, picnic & photography.

Once again access by van was easy, not to mention by the family vehicle of Heather Greenwood and her husband Mousheer Amer, along with 4/5 of their offspring. The oldest of these, Sarah, is seated in the centre below with baby Noah. (Heather is on the left, Pat on the right.) The family had come to enjoy a walk to the Bluebells, followed by a picnic. Before joining the walk, son Omar had accom-



panied me down to the Vernal Ponds in the Blind Creek Forest. There, he filled a large pickle jar with pond water and bottom debris. While Pat took the visitors to the Bluebells I sat in the Nook, pouring the sample into white trays where little creatures from Vernal Pond A might show up more easily. I had hoped to find more beetle larvae, but ended up only with tiny crustaceans like Amphipods, Copepods and Ostracods. When the walkers returned I had to close up shop and pop all the little guys into a vial for the trip home.

Sarah's younger sister, Aisha, is studying photography at Fanshawe College and offered to accompany me on a quick foray for insects. A few sweeps brought us a Two-lined Soldier Beetle, a plant hopper, a dwarf spider and a larger spider, rather pale, which I thought would be an Agelenid. It wasn't. In fact it turned out to be *Tibellus oblongus*, our second find of this species of Running Crab Spiders (Philo-

dromidae). Unfortunately, Aisha had not brought her macro lens, so the images were hardly better than the ones that ended up in my Lumix.

I forgot to turn off the portable trail cam when we gathered later for a picnic in the Nook. Consequently, I ended up with nearly a hundred images of people seemingly jumping from spot to spot. Mousheer enjoyed the warmth and relaxation of the afternoon, along with his two sons, Omar and Junus.

Once home, we found a message from Donald Craig describing his finds on the property, including two species of turtles in the river, neither of them new, but welcome records, nevertheless. (See IMAGES below.)

Phenology: Most trees in half-leaf; half of Virginia Bluebells still in full bloom.

New Species:

‘Round Seed Shrimp’

Cyclocypris sp.

VPB KD My17/15

Species Notes: Before I looked at it under the binocular microscope, I was sure the Seed Shrimp (Ostracoda) was some kind of water mite. It is our second species of Ostracod.

Birds: (11)

American Crow (EW); Baltimore Oriole (RB); Blue Jay (GF); Common Yellowthroat (BCF); Killdeer (TR); Northern Cardinal (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Turkey Vulture (BBW); Wood Thrush (BCF)

Readers Write:

Donald Craig, a Newport Forest Steward and professional forester, has been searching for the Flowering Dogwood that we spotted several years ago when it was in full bloom. He finally found it, not to mention two turtles we haven’t seen for a few years: “I went around by Newport Forest, looking for the Flowering Dogwood. I have never seen so many white violets and the violet violets were the closest to purple I have ever seen. [Out on the river] one 25-30 cm map turtle, 2 spiny soft shells . . . part way up the almost vertical face (of the Hogsback) I saw 1 petal and knew it was [the Dogwood]. The bark is not normal. It is misshapen because of an entanglement with a hawthorn and the branching habit is not normal - but it has lots of flowers.”

The appearance of two “mystery animals” in the last Bulletin set off the following flurry of guesswork and professional opinion:

Hugh Casbourn: “The mammal looks foxy to me especially with its dark legs but my ID is just a guess without a leg to stand on. For your mystery bird, I asked our resident Wood Thrush expert who pointed out that none of the Turdidae have wing bars which this bird does. Garth's guess is a Brown Thrasher with the caveat that the shorter tail may be because of the angle at which the photo was taken.”

Suzanne Frank: ”The mystery bird looks like a brown thrasher to me. Here's a link to more information: http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/brown_thrasher/id“

Heather Greenwood: “In last week's Newport Forest report : The image in the trail cam is in my opinion surely a fox. Bushy tail and slender darker legs, no doubt a fox.”

Dave Martin: “Your mystery bird looks like a Brown Thrasher. There is lots of suitable habitat at Newport for this species. They arrive in mid April and generally are not very conspicuous except for their song which is loud and far carrying and consists of a series of repeated notes. PS: We often visit a site near Sparta which is mostly floodplain habitat next to Catfish Creek. The site is called Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area and is managed by Catfish Creek CA. One of the dominant trees is Sycamore and on the slopes there are a few Blue Ash so in many respects it is similar to Newport [Forest]. We were there on Sunday morning to look for birds but did take a moment to check the patch of Virginia Bluebells which were in full bloom, as were the ones at Newport.”

Allen Woodliffe: “My guess for the mammal is a white-tailed deer, based on the apparent length and slim appearance of the legs, nothing else. For the bird, it is most likely a Wood Thrush. Normally they might appear to be a little more rusty brown on the back, but it isn't that far off, and the heavy speckling visible on the underside at the base of the tail certainly fits Wood Thrush.”

Our take: We think the “foxy” image is a Red Fox. The black legs, along with the bushy tail and a shoulder height of about 2’ seem to nail it. As for the mystery bird, we’ll go with the majority opinion (the democratic approach to identification).

IMAGES:



Photo: Aisha Amer

This image of the Philodromid spider, taken through a regular lens from a distance of more than a foot, suffered an enlargement of ten-to-one while staying in focus sufficiently for identification. The forward curvature of legs, along with the size, shape and markings on the dorsum, place it in the family of Running Crab Spiders — Philodromidae. It had been hunting in the new grass when we captured it.



In these two images, both taken by Donald Craig, a Northern Map Turtle basks on a sunken log in the middle of the river, while two Spiny Softshell Turtles rest on the far shore.

