

**Date and time:** Sunday May 24 2015 2:40 - 5:30 pm

**Weather:** Pr 0mm; RH 32%; BP 102.6 kPa; cloudy; S 10-15 kmh; T 26°C

**Activity:** Hunting arthropods.

We brought our sharp-eyed assistant Laura Hyunseo Lee with us on today's visit, our purpose being to collect arthropods. Unloading at the trailer, we noticed that a Silver Maple we had planted many years ago in the Regeneration Zone (RZ) was not doing well, with only a few leaves, near the top. Pat pointed out that the lack of wet ground (preferred by the Silver Maple) may have finally caught up with it.



However, the problem may be more general. We took a panorama of images of the Blind Creek Forest (above) as part of a long-term tree-monitoring project. Several of the bare-looking trees above are still in the process of leafing out, while at least two appear to have dead tops. (See below.)

The three of us set to work. While Pat examined the bark of dead trees for beetles, Laura and I swept the meadow with a net, later going through leaf litter. There were certainly more arthropods out since our last visit, but still not enough to make new species much more likely.

Pat had terrible luck with the beetles until she chanced to move the garbage pail and discover a large Ground Beetle, later identified as *Carabus nemoralis*, a common species in our area. In the Lower Meadow and along the track, Laura and I ran across two common caterpillars, the Eastern Tent Caterpillar (*Malacosoma americanum*) and the Yellow Bear (*Spilosoma virginica*), not to mention the jumping spider *Phiddipus audax*, its two white marks barely visible. We also found

several individual *Leptoterna* nymphs. Later we went through a garbage bag of leaf litter, finding several sow bugs, a red-headed bug that just might be the Mirid *Rhinocapsus*, but was out of focus. (That would be new.) and a beetle that, although it was in focus, had too many lookalikes in two separate families. It was Laura who pointed out a well-camouflaged spider in the litter that I had been looking right at it without seeing it. This was a thin-legged Wolf Spider.

Later we walked along the trail to the Hole (where the Blind Creek Forest begins) in order to change the trail cam mounted there. On the way Laura pointed out what looked like a dead Dandelion bloom. I said, "Look. It's just a dead Dandelion." I touched it. The "Dandelion" disintegrated with lightning speed into a hundred or so spiderlings. Learning more about the subject, it would appear that such arrangement of young are common among the Orb Weaving Spiders (Araneidae).

#### **A Note on Forest Dieback:**

Forest dieback (waldsterben) is a widespread problem in both Europe and North America, with episodes occurring sporadically throughout the 20th century and into the new millennium. Although fungal and arthropod infestations are frequently blamed, most deaths occur among trees already weakened by drought and other environmental factors. Among the trees in the Blind Creek Forest already lost to dieback, we include at least fifty mature Bitternut Hickories and five giant Black Willow (x), all down within the last 10 years.

**Phenology:** Buttercups in bloom, first Ebony Jewelwings out, mosquitoes sparse to absent.

#### **New Species:**

Thin-legged Wolf Spider                      *Pardosa milvina*                      GF lhl/KD My24/15

#### **Species Notes:**

A spider seen in 2010 was listed as *Pardosa [milvina]*, owing to uncertainty about the species. The record above replaces that one, in any case.

#### **Birds: (11)**

Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose (LM); Common Grackle (Ho); Common Yellow-throat (LM); Eastern Bluebird (Rd); Field Sparrow (LM); Great Blue Heron (FC); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Tree Swallow (Rd); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (Ho)

#### **IMAGES:**



These Orb Weaver Spiderlings scattered explosively from a tightly knit ball that I first thought was a wilted Dandelion bloom.



Nymph of the Meadow Plant Bug *Leptoterna dolobratus*; the adult form was first recorded by us in June 2013.