Monitoring Nature

Date and time: Saturday July 11 2015 1:30 - 5:50 pm
Weather: Pr 10 mm; RH 60%; BP 102.2 kPa; cloud/sun; S 5-10 kmh; T 29ºC
Activity: Three arthro-forays, including a visit to the West Meadow.

We made three collecting forays today, one along the (former) farm track, one to the River Bluffs and one to the West Ravine in the Upper Meadow, pictured below: a mini-ravine leads down to the larger one. The West Ravine drains both the Upper Meadow and the West Meadow, fuelled by both ground seepage and surface runoff.

Most of today's collection of insects and spiders, including three Mangora spiders, came from the first foray along the edges of the track. As we walked the road, we noticed several mushrooms that had sprung up since the last rainfall. I spotted several Russulas (which I normally neglect, owing to so many lookalikes among the red Russulas.) Then we found a beautiful yellow Amanita growing next to the Jane Bowles memorial Sassafras tree. (See New Species.)

In the middle of a break after the first foray, a grey van rolled into camp. Out got Steve Logan and his brother, Dean. Steve regaled us (if that's the word) with the Adventures of Little Bear, his extremely large and shaggy dog of unknown breed. Little Bear goes after any and all animals on the Rez, from snakes to Possums. Recently it killed two baby Red Foxes. Sad, but that's Little Bear. Dean is an artist. He showed us a few of his recent works, including a highly stylized Cougar, the "Protector of the Forest", as he called it.

After our guests departed, Pat and I headed for the river, noting immediately that the mosquitoes were still out in force, being much thicker in the forest. Before we got to the elbow in the trail, however, I just had to stop. A beautiful, boldly marked Haploa Moth had caught my attention. I stalked it very slowly and with great care, even as I was being eaten alive by the little %^#$@&. Further along the trail to the river, we noted that the Michigan Lilies had begun to shrivel.

The River was still up from the recent rains and only a small part of Mussel Beach, at the foot of the bluffs, had yet emerged from the water. The River Bluffs proved to be less productive than I had imagined. The soil is sparsely covered by vegetation, mostly Dogbane. I spotted a few spiders on the ground, but they ran too fast for the camera.

After a second break, we drove to the Upper Meadow, then walked across to the West Ravine. While Pat waited, I descended into steep, lumpy terrain that was heavily cloaked in vegetation. At the very bottom I found a damp, muddy runnel. It was sobering to realize that the entire eroded mass represented by the ravine had travelled along such a narrow bed to the river. On the way up I swept frequently with the net, finding a few old friends, including another *Mangora* spider.

On our way back to the van and the long drive home, we passed through several areas “burned” brown by poison spray that had been applied by the TTLT to control an invasive non-native grass.

Among the more interesting finds of ”old friends” on the day were more colour variants of the Orb Weaver, *Mangora gibberosa* — three females and one male. I also found a late instar of the Two-striped Grasshopper, *Melanoplus differentialis*, the Alfalfa Plant Bug, *Adelphocoris lineolatus*, the Tarnished Plant Bug, *Lygus lineolaris*, the Black Damsel Bug, *Nabis subcoleoptratus*, and many others. As usual, we also recorded a number of unidentifiable arthropods.

Birds (9):

American Crow (UM); Blue Jay (GF); Common Grackle (BCF); Common Yellowthroat (LM); Eastern Towhee (GF); Field Sparrow (HBF); Gray Catbird (BCF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Song Sparrow (LM).

Phenology: Michigan Lilies peaked around July 5, now over. Monarda in bloom.

New Species:

Girdled Leafhopper	*Aphrodes bicinctus*	LM KD Jl1115
Leconte's Haploa Moth	*Haploa lecontei*	BCT KD Jl1115
Basswood Olethreutes	*Olethreutes tilianum*	LM KD Jl1115
Parrot Wax cap	*Hygrocybe psittacina*	GF/Nk pdGT Jl02/15
Yellow Patches	*Amanita* [*flavoconia*]	GF/LM KD Jl1115

Species Notes:

Our Mycological consultant Greg Thorn was able to identify two of the three mushroom images that we recently sent to him: "Number 3 is *Hygrocybe psittacina*, the parrot wax-cap. Once bright green, fades to orange, with the green remaining in bands as shown" We have also sent him a collection of imagery for the yellow Amanita in today's species list. Can we take off the brackets from "flavoconia" or is it another species of Amanita, such as The Blusher?

Readers interested in any of the species listed above merely have to enter the species name along with the word "bugguide" into their browser to see what we've been seeing. For example, if you google "bugguide" along with "Olethreutes tilianum", you can click on the "images" option as soon as you get to Bug Guide. Then you will see a host of different images that convey an idea of the variations in pattern and colour that characterize this species. Clicking on the "info" option gives you the full taxonomy, additional references, food plants, and so on. Clicking on "data" will result in a range map.

Weasel Update: Weasel signs have been absent from the trailer for over two months now. Has Wendy vacated the premises?

Catching up:

Readers who would like to read past issues of the *Bulletin* are welcome to visit the archive at <http://www.csd.uwo.ca/~akd/newport-forest/> Scroll to the bottom.

IMAGES:

These Parrot Waxcaps found by Pat are rather tiny members of the genus Hygrocybe, our seventh species in the family Hygrophoraceae or Waxy Cap family, now undergoing a thorough revision based on DNA studies.

One can readily make out the remnants of a veil that covered this yellow Amanita mushroom when it was first emerging from the soil. Some cling to the stalk, others to the cap.

Laconte's Haploa Moth has bold markings and is very easy to spot if one happens to be around. There are two other species in this genus that have similar but distinct patterns. This moth is a Noctuid in the subfamily of Tiger Moths.

Use Google according to the recipe in the Species Notes and you will find out quite a bit about this Basswood Olethreutes. The moth belongs to the family Tortricidae.