

**Date and time:** Thursday July 30 2015 pm

**Weather:** Pr 0 mm; RH 49%; BP 101.4 kPa; sun/cloud; NW 0-10 kmh; T 29°C

**Activity:** ATBI takes a back seat to maintenance

When we arrived on site, Steve Logan had already been there for an hour, using his weed-eater to groom the main trail. It was to be a maintenance day, leaving little time for biological inventory or other projects. Nearly an hour later, we could hear the whine of the weed eater as Steve approached the camp. Trails are key elements for site access. If all grooming were to cease, trails would be difficult to follow in one year and in two years completely lost, except for the borders. We mark the trail borders with liner-logs. These also make trails easier to follow in winter.



When Steve finally arrived at the camp, his coveralls were plastered with grass and plant debris. He reported four trees that had fallen across the main trail, two large trees and two medium-sized ones, as he put it. (Four more down. Sigh!)

Following a break, I led Steve along the old watering trail through the Regen Zone. I needed to guide him, cutting overhanging branches from the more advanced trees as we went. The trail was lost in places and had to be reconstructed. Although we don't water young trees anymore — they don't need it — the trail is still key to the annual Bee Protocol, a point-count of insect pollinators conducted at ten-metre intervals along the length of the trail. Finishing that, we went down to the creek, where I clipped more overhang from a young Sycamore while Steve groomed the Fleming Creek trail, all the way to the edge of the Lower Rapids. The entire two-km trail system at Newport Forest should be good for the rest of the year.

After Steve left, we had about an hour to find more arthropods. In the Nook a Deer Fly began to eat my right hand, while I patiently took multiple images with my left hand. That's dedication for you! Ouch, you little &#%\$@\*. Near the end of our stay, Pat found a beautiful White Cobweb Spider hiding inside a Hickory leaf which it had spin-curved over to make a retreat.

Between times we swept along the newly groomed watering trail and elsewhere, finding nothing new: A *Bombus* sp Bumblebee, an Andrenid Bee, two grasshopper nymphs, probably *Melanoplus*, a Sarcophagid fly and two spiders: an unusually dark red Orb Weaver, *Neoscona arabesca* and a nearly all-black colour morph of the large Jumping Spider, *Phidippus audax*. In any case, nothing new. On the way out we saw another Monarch fluttering over a patch of Milkweed by the gate.

### **Birds (9):**

Blue Jay (GF); Common Yellowthroat (LM/GF); Eastern Kingbird (UM); Eastern Towhee (GF); Gray Catbird (FCB); Northern Flicker (GF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (UM).

### **New Species:**

'Yellow-sided Deerfly'                      *Chrysops callidus* (group)                      GF KD J130/15

**Phenology:** Milkweed bloom ending, Monarda still in full bloom. Mosquitoes absent from open areas, still plentiful in the woods.

### **Health of the Landscape — an aerial view:**

TTLT Property Manager has sent out a link to the video made recently by Joseph O'Neill, who operates a drone-mounted camera. The video takes us over much of the property, with a vulture's eye view of the track from the gate down to the lower meadow and then a slow pan of the Blind Creek and Riverside Forests, the Hogsback, and then the Fleming Creek Forest:

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRI471ZpzbM>>

Watch for the patches of dead vegetation along the track. These resulted from a spraying program to control a specific invasive grass. We're not sure if the cure isn't worse than the cold, so to speak, since a great many other plants were also destroyed in the process, not to mention the insects that depended on them. Later in the video, watch for the multitude of trees that are either dead or have dead tops. The dead vegetational patches may recover in time, but it's not clear what direction

the tree death is taking. Is it winterkill? invasive grasses in the woods? toxic aerosols? destructive insects? So far we have lost 100 mature Bitternuts, five giant Black (x) Willows, and many White Elms.

Readers may recall our attempts to get a camera-drone going last year. It flew fine, but the camera mechanism didn't seem to work. Great flights, no images. Thus we welcome the work of Mr O'Neill as an important monitoring tool

### **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:**



Yowtch! This Deer Fly is busy chewing on my knuckle while I try to take its picture. This specimen has faintly yellow bands and side-stripes on the thorax.



Pat unfurls the leaf-retreat of an ‘Oval Cobweb Spider’ (as we have decided to call it), *Enoplognathus ovata*. This species is found across the continent, including southern Canada. Colour morphs include individuals with a central black folium on the abdomen or a cherry-red wreath that borders the abdomen.