

Date and time: Monday September 21 2015 1:30 - 7:45 pm.

Weather: Prec. 18 mm; RH 55%; BP 102.4 kPa; clear; calm; T 24°C.

Activity: Walking the Thames River Trail and thinking about ecology.

Yesterday, Pat and I attended an open house fund-raiser for the Thames Talbot Land Trust's latest proposed acquisition on the shore of Lakes Erie. The Hawk Cliff property is a prime birding area adjacent to a major flyway for migrating hawks. It is not unusual to see a "kettle" of 100 Northern Harriers fly over during hawk migration. Below, a member of the Hawk Cliff Raptor Banders Association demonstrates the field marks of the Red-tailed Hawk to a crowd attending the open house. Attendees later toured the large wooded area of the proposed land purchase.



On today's visit to Newport Forest, I came alone, determined to walk the entire 1.5 km Thames River Trail. It was high time I did, since my recovery from major surgery now seems 99.9% complete. I made a rest stop on each of the five benches set along the trail, From the first bench on the river bluffs I scanned the far shore for turtles or water snakes, noting with a feeling of despair that the river is still muddy.

Moving on down the bluffs and into the Riverside Forest, I enjoyed the cool of the woods, with majestic trees towering overhead. I stopped to photograph the trunk of a giant Sycamore, some four feet in diameter at breast height. Further on I came to a Mica-cap mushroom that had already started to deliquesce, gills forming a filigree of black lace. Then, further along, a rotting log invited some exploration, bringing to view a new millipede. Still further along, I spotted several tall trees

sporting “monkey vines” as they call them in Moraviantown, thick woody vines of River Grape. I remembered puzzling years ago how they got that way.

I took another brief sit-down on a set of benches on the trail up the Hogsback, then another sit-down at the top. From the Hogsback bench I could see the river peeping through branches toward the SW. Wandering about, I spotted many young oaks springing up, mainly Chinkapin and Bur Oak. I continued along the Thames River Trail down into Blind Creek Forest, stopping to visit a mound of thatching ants and a fallen Butternut trunk riddled with the “digs” of a Pileated Woodpecker, large squarish holes left by this bird after digging out the rotting wood to get insects.

Back in camp, I noted dozens of Hickory Nuts scattered about, with unusual activity among the squirrels, scrambling up into hickories and calling to each other, “Never mind the walnuts, the hickories are ready!” Speaking of walnuts, I recalled that the Black and other Walnuts produce a substance called juglone that is toxic to many other plants. Checking out the Regen Zone, I discovered that the only planted trees not doing well grew next to a volunteer walnut sapling. I took out seven saplings, with only about a hundred to go. The parent tree is a huge Black Walnut growing next to the waste field we call Harvey’s Beanfield.

On my way through the Regen Zone I spotted a Brown Stink Bug and later did some sweeping along the edge, picking up a *Lepryonia* Spittle Bug, a Tarnished plant bug, and a Northern Crab Spider, all of them very common.

After six pm I made my way down to the creek to fish with my aquatic nets. I captured two minnows, one of them an Emerald Shiner. Trying to catch a Water Strider, I was reminded of playing with friends (“bad boys” in my mother’s estimation) down at the Pottersburg Creek when I was 10. Sometimes we would try to whack the Water Striders with sticks. Desperately hard work, the striders kept re-appearing after each whack! (As a result, my respect for these bugs is sky-high.)

Lingering until sunset, I decamped under a fading reddish sky.

Phenology: Hickory nutfall in process, asters in full bloom.

New Species:

‘Yellow-eyed Crabronid’	<i>Aphilanthops</i> [<i>hispidus</i>]	Tr KD Sp21/15
‘Brown-banded Millipede’	[<i>Julida</i>] sp.	RSF KD Sp21/15

Notes: The Crabronid Wasp has a yellow band encircling the back of the eye. The

only Crabronid with that feature is the species named. Hesitation is due to the fact that Bug Guide has received (at least one) specimen only from California — so far.

Old Species:

Mica-Cap (*Coprinus micaceus*); Northern Crab Spider (with a Mirid prey item) (*Mecaphsa asperata*); ‘Shore Spider’ (*Arctosa littoralis*); Diamond-back Spittle Bug (*Lepryonia quadrangularis*); Brown Stink Bug (*Euschistus servus*); Tarnished Plant Bug (*Lygus lineolaris*); Water Strider nymph (*Aquarius* sp.); Syrphid Fly (*Syrphus* sp.); Crane Fly (Tipulidae); Potter wasp (*Polistes fuscatus*); Thatch Ant (*Formica* sp.); Emerald Shiner (*Notropis atherinoides*).

Notes: Today’s percentage of new species was about 14%.

Readers Write: (More congratulations and a note on Monarch rearing.)

Stan Caveney, entomologist and TTLT Board member: “Congratulations on reaching Bulletin #1000. What a remarkable achievement.”

Erin Carroll, aquatic biologist and Newport Steward: “Way to go!!! 1000 posts is incredible!”

Jonathan Piel, former Editor of *Scientific American* and Catskill cottager: “Bravo Kee and Pat!”

Allen Woodliffe, Former MNR officer and expert naturalist: “Congratulations, Kee and Pat on your 1000 and counting NF Bulletins . . . it is always a pleasure and privilege to read of your forays to this wonderful site.”

Bruce Parker, Monarch expert and Newport Steward: “The controlled burn at Newport Forest within the milkweed patch has produced over 450 new milkweed plants. I have liberated 24 4th and 5th instar Monarch larva to be reared by a young man in Byron who has raised over 60 this year to help improve the second lowest population of the Eastern Monarch on record. Newport Forest has certainly earned its status as a Monarch Waystation.” {BTW} “Belated congratulations on your 1000th report! “

Readers who would like to read past issues of the *Bulletin* may visit the Archive at <<http://www.csd.uwo.ca/~akd/newport-forest/>> and scroll to the bottom.

IMAGES:

ECO-PUZZLE

Readers who enjoy sharpening their ecosystem skills can have a go at this brain-tickler:

The vines dangling from this tall tree in the Riverside Forest belong to Riverbank Grape, aka *Vitis riparius*. At Moraviantown, natives call such them “monkeyvines”, being thick enough for monkeys to climb. Unfortunately, there are no monkeys in Newport Forest — or at Moraviantown.

Question: How did the grape vine ever get up that tree without climbing the trunk? The first reader to send in the correct answer will win an all-expenses-paid vacation for two on Mussel Beach by the beautiful Thames River.





Fleming Creek Forest: Looking from the rim of Fleming Creek Bluffs in the Upper Meadow, we see many Ash, Elm, and Maple trees poking up through the canopy of thorn trees (*Crataegus* spp.) that made the primary successional stage. That stage has now nearly died off as the larger deciduous trees take over. The unevenness of the newly developing canopy tells of a third stage yet to come, mature deciduous forest.

Amazingly, according to local memory, this forest was once pasture land for a beef herd. According to Nina Hurdle, a mere 50 years ago it looked like a “golf course” — as did the Upper Meadow some 15 years ago.