

Date and time: Thursday September 24 2015 1:25 - 7:30 pm.

Weather: Prec. 0 mm; RH 52%; BP 102.9; sun/cloud; SE 10 km/h; T 25° C

Activity: A long search of Mussel Beach and much to celebrate in the Nook.

On arrival we made two decisions: I decided to do no sweeping today, but just let the species come to me. Pat decided that we should visit Mussel Beach and spend some time there searching the place more thoroughly. The two decisions meshed. Before we had even left the camp, I came across a dead Snowy Tree Cricket in the seat of a chair in the Nook — as though placed there for me to see. On our way through the Lower Meadow, I spotted a dark Tree Hopper on a leaf.



Mussel Beach stretches along the near shore in this image taken from the river bluffs. At the far end of the beach one can see lagoons coloured green with algal blooms.

The trail down to the clay beach (aka Mussel Beach) has become more difficult, thanks to a large drift pile deposited by an early spring flood. When we finally got out on the beach proper, there was plenty to see. There were empty Mussel valves everywhere, with wolf spiders scooting furtively from rock to crevice, a Spotted Sandpiper pecking along the shore, and even a Wood Frog squatting shyly inside an isolated grass hummock. (These erosional hummocks, both large and small, slide down the bluffs by fits and starts over a period of days to months.) Near the end of the beach, we searched the lagoons for trapped fish.

While on the beach I continued our program of photographing plants at Newport Forest, in the process of assembling an image gallery to accompany the ATBI files. Today, we covered the ClotBur, the grass *Poa compressa*, *Aster laevis*, and *Coreopsis*. On the way back, we saw a beautiful little orange wasp that later turned out to be a new species of Braconid for us. But that could not beat the surprise that awaited us.

While Pat's fatigue slowly dissipated in the Nook, my eye was caught by a slight movement from an orange "thingy" on a nearby bench. When I inspected it closely, I could hardly believe my eyes — a Monkey Slug! Having seen pictures of this outlandish moth larva, I had decided long ago that I was destined never to see one. But there it was. Pat thought I should pick it up to inspect it more closely, but I declined out of a slight sense of squeamishness. It turned out to be a good idea not to pick it up, as a certain number of the hairs that cover its back are stinging hairs, each one capable of delivering a sting equivalent to that of a bee. We watched it for a while as it "sluggishly" made it way across the bench, down one side, then under.

We had barely recovered from our visit to Mussel Beach when two loud, sharp screams pierced the quiet air, seeming to come from the Fleming Creek valley below. Pat announced, "'I'm going to the trailer!" (Later that evening at home I decided to check out the sound made by a vixen calling her mate. Bingo. That may have been a female fox!) A little later, friends Steve and Karen Logan rolled into camp. Pat had brought a cake along to celebrate Karen's birthday. We were already in a celebratory mood, thanks to the Monkey Slug. We all left as the sun set.

Birds: (7 - about half the number of birds than we normally get in September.) American Crow (FCF); Bald Eagle (TR); Blue Jay (RB); Common Grackle (RSF); Spotted Sandpiper (TR); Turkey Vulture (GF); Wild Turkey (FCF).

Phenology: Leaf fall starting, an extended dry spell now threatening some trees.

New Species: (Percent of new species: 38%.)

'Checkered Pardosa'	<i>Pardosa milvina</i>	MB pdKD Sp24/15
Hag Moth - Monkey Slug	<i>Phobetron pithecium</i>	GF KD Sp24/15
German Yellowjacket	<i>Vespula germanica</i>	GF KD Sp24/15
'Banded Yellow Braconid'	<i>Cremnops desertor</i>	RT KD Sp24/15
Autumn Meadowhawk	<i>Sympetrum vicinum</i>	LM KD Sp24/15

Old Species: (Observed on this occasion but already logged.)

White-banded Crab Spider (*Misumenoides formosipes*); ‘Shore Spider’ (*Arctosa littoralis*); Snowy Tree Cricket (*Oecanthus fultoni*); Asian Lady Beetle (*Harmonia axydris*); Green Blowfy (*Lucilia sericata*); Aerial Yellowjacket (*Doichilovespula arenria*); Gray Tree Frog (*Hyla versicolor*); Wood Frog (*Lithobates sylvaticus*).

Species Notes: The *Pardosa* spider was first recorded in 2010, but was entered as *P. [milvina]*, indicating uncertainty about the species. With this clearer find, the square brackets come off, in effect. The Hag Moth larva appears in IMAGES.

Readers Write:

(A congratulatory note and four correct answers to the monkeyvine puzzle.)

Wendy & Tim Carroll, local naturalists: “Thank you Kee and Pat for providing us with so much information. We never would have known about all these things without you both. We always look forward to your Newport Report and our time at Newport Forest. Congratulations on 1002 [issues].”

Suzanne Frank, a local naturalist: “I have a theory about how the vines get so high in the trees without apparent support. I think they begin to grow when the tree is young (and close to the ground) and are taken up for the ride as the tree matures.”

Charlene DeLeary of the Oneida nation: “The monkey vines grew with the tree - they're companions with connected spirits.”

Jonathan Dewdney, a photographic art dealer in LA: “They attach themselves to the tree when first growing and 'hitch a ride'?”

Laura Hyunseo Lee: “Did the vine grab onto the tree when it was a tiny sapling? I'm not sure of the tree's lifespan, but Google says grape vines can live from 50-100 years, so it's a possibility. Maybe a monkey came along and dragged it up the tree, who knows.”

Catching up:

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

IMAGES:



The Monkey Slug (upper image) is the larval form of the Hag Moth (lower image). (Source: Tom Murray's phase Insecta Galleries). The lobes of the caterpillar carry stinging hairs.

ANOTHER ECOQUIZ:

Here is a picture of a giant sycamore in the heart of the Riverside Forest. As one can see from my five-foot walking pole, the tree has a breast-height diameter of about four feet. The Sycamore is very tall, but how did it get that way? Many people in the general community think that trees stretch up as they grow. So I ask them, “If I drive a nail into the trunk at, say, 5 feet above the ground, suppose I come back a year or two later and measure the height of the nail above the ground. Will it be higher than it was at first, or will it be the same height?” Many people expect the nail to be higher. Is that right? If it isn’t, then how on earth could any trees get taller?

