

Date and time: Saturday March 12 2016 2:35 - 5:15 pm.

Weather: Pr 18 mm; RH 71%; BP 102.1 kPa; overcast; calm; T 15°C.

Activity: Rolling logs while Springtails herald spring.

Today's assistant, Laura Lee, turned white as we slewed along the soft ground leading to the Rise in the Upper Meadow. Once there I parked on dry grass for traction getting out again. "Have you never come with us when the property was wet like this?" She shook her head. "Never." I divided the load between us and we walked down to the trailer. With camp all set up, we headed for Blind Creek Forest, while its damp-loving invertebrates waited under logs and branches.



Before we even got to the Hole, however, a newly refurbished ant mound along the trail caught my eye. Spring cleaning? I went over to investigate, finding dozens of mound ants out foraging for new debris. A few careful images served to identify the mound-builders (finally) as *Formica ulkei*, as shown in the image above.

Continuing on to the Hole, I thought to lift some ancient cover boards. These are standard refugia for newts and salamanders to ease the job of counting amphibians. The boards were wet and rotten, but full of interesting invertebrates. Apart from the usual sow bugs, wire worms and millipedes, whitish flea-like creatures were shooting off in all directions. What else could they be but Springtails? A very primitive kind of insect in a class all its own: Collembola. There were dozens, it seemed, some whitish with short antennas, some greyish with long antennas. I took lots of images, lavishing some attention on sow bugs and a nearby slug, as well.

Not to lose touch with the river, we walked out to the landing, finding the water up more than a foot above normal levels. We then returned to The Elbow in the trail, where we rolled log after log, sometimes finding nothing, but sometimes a prize or two, as in the IMAGES below. The first good find came from Laura, who pointed out a small clutch of tiny translucent eggs hiding in the soil. Twice we found ants nesting under logs, tending large quantities of eggs. Another log revealed the larva of a Fire-coloured Beetle, resplendent in red and orange, another new species. We ended with a bottom sample from a pond and a change of cards for the trail cams.

Back in the Nook for a break before departing, we counted the birds we had heard or seen. Just four: American Crow, Blue Jay, Canada Goose, Red-bellied Woodpecker. Is it us or is there a long-term scarcity of some species?

Phenology: property snow-free, creek & river 1.0 - 1.5' high.

New Species: (44% new)

Giant Springtail	<i>Pogognathellus</i> sp.	Hole KD Mr12/16
Fire-coloured Beetle	<i>Dendroides canadensis</i>	ET/Elbow KD Mr12/16
Formica ulkei	<i>Formica ulkei</i>	LM/HBF KD Mr12/16
Citronella Ant	<i>Lasius [alienus]</i>	BCF/Elb. KD Mr12/16

Notes: The Giant Springtail is our second species of Collembola since 2005 when our first species showed up in a malaise traps operated by biologist Nina Zitani. The beetle is our first in the family Pyrochroidae of Fire-coloured Beetles. An early ID of the ant was *F. [exectoides]*, but *F. ulkei* belongs to the exectoides group.

Old Species:

Yellow-soled Slug (*Arion hortensis* gp.); Chimney Crayfish (*Fallicambarus fodiens*); European Sowbug (*Oniscus asellus*); (Para)julid Millipede; Woodland Blue Worm (*Octolasion cyaneum*).

Readers Write:

Butterfly expert Ann White writes about the Recycling Centre: "I found your article on the TRY recycling plant really interesting, and am looking forward to the recycling one as this is something we are personally concerned with, and often wonder about."

Bulletin Archives: To see past issues of the *Bulletin*, visit the archive at <<http://www.csd.uwo.ca/~akd/newport-forest/>> and scroll to the bottom.

IMAGES:



The larva of the Fire-coloured Beetle (*Desmoides canadensis*) sports red & yellow colours. The scale bar implies a length of 2.4 cm. The larva of this species can apparently survive freezing down to -50°C !



Resembling ancient trilobites, these sow bugs, *Oniscus asellus*, often form gregarious little groups. Up close, they are surprisingly attractive.



The Yellow-soled Slug is a native of Europe and, like its cousin the European Striped Snail, dominates the Gastropod fauna at Newport Forest. Here we see an adult in contracted position, clinging to a dead stem. The eggs shown below appear to be slug eggs (1.5 mm diam).



If the eggs came from a slug, as seems likely, then probability would favour a Yellow-soled Slug as the most likely parent — although certainly not the only *a priori* possibility.