

Date and time: Sunday April 17 2016 2:35 - 7:10 pm

Weather: Pr 2 mm; RH 12%; BP 102.3; clear; S 5 - 10 kmh; T 26°C

Activity: Monitoring the onset of spring & collecting arthropods.



April 12: Eight Wild Turkeys forage along the trail at The Hole. A ninth pecks just off-camera.

a firefly larva (not a sowbug) looking rather like an ancient trilobite. When I teased it with a stick, it even began to enroll, just the way a trilobite would. One can hardly help imagining a Palaeozoic genetic link between the two organisms.

The property had dried out nicely for our visit and we drove down to the Lower Meadow without incident. Right away we encountered insects everywhere, including early spring perennials like Six-spotted Tiger Beetles, the Eastern Comma Butterfly, Paper Wasps and Beeflies. We rested in the Nook, gearing up for a walk in the Blind Creek Forest. Pat spotted our first Trout Lily bloom (var. yellow) of the season and an Eastern Striped Chipmunk showed up to see if we had filled the bird feeder yet.

As we entered the forest through The Hole, we heard an insistent clucking noise mingling with a rather sparse chorus of Western Chorus Frogs. “Is that a Wood Duck, I wonder,” said Pat. I recorded the sounds on my pocket audio recorder. The vernal ponds were all fully charged, with excess water spilling over the Elbow. We stopped there while Pat found a nice log to sit on, then I headed out to the river. The Thames, now receding just covered the clay beach, thanks to the dry weather. I visited the old willow log nearby to see what beetles might be about and found

On my return leg, I collected a vial of floating algae from the surface of Vernal Pond B and, together with Pat, returned to camp for a dinner of wieners & beans. Later, a Wood Duck took off from the creek below, “wheep-wheep”, announcing the end of the dinner hour and reminding us to resume the search. All day I had hoped for a spider or two and finally got my wish when Pat found one spinning an orb web by the Trailer Door. It resembled *Neoscona arabesca*, but turned out to be a similar Orb-weaver, the most likely species being *Araneus nordmanni*, as below.

I was also careful to visit the Raccoon corpse that I had left outside the trailer to rot last fall. The idea was to see what arthropods that decaying flesh might attract. The corpse had recently been scavenged by Coyotes that typically eat away the rectum of a corpse (scavenged or predated) then drag out the intestines and eat them next. I found several Carrion Beetles crawling over the fur and into the mouth of the corpse, all one species — and new. Already the experiment was paying dividends.

The sun, we thought, was just high enough to make it back home before it set.

Birds (14):

American Crow (EW); American Robin (FCB); Bald Eagle (LM); Blue Jay (GF); Killdeer (HP); Field Sparrow (LM); Northern Cardinal (FC); Northern Flicker (FCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Song Sparrow (HBF); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (LM/HBF); Wild Turkey (UM).

Phenology: First Trout Lilies in bloom; Tiger Beetles and Bee Flies out.

New Species:

‘Nordmann’s Orb Weaver’	<i>Araneus [nordmanni]</i>	Tr KD Ap17/16
‘Red-handled Diver’	<i>Acilius semisulcatus</i>	VPB KD Ap17/16
Margined Carrion Beetle	<i>Oiceoptoma noveboracense</i>	GF KD Ap17/16

Old Species:

Eastern Comma (*Polygonia comma*); Paper Wasp (*Polistes fuscatus*); Giant Bee Fly (*Bombylius major*); Six-spotted Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela sexguttata*); Firefly larva (*Photuris* sp.); ‘Rock Horn’ (epiphytic diatom) (*Rhoicosphenia curvata*); Pale Pond Alga (*Mougeotia* - pronounced Moo-go’-sha).

Species Notes:

Whimsical pseudo-name for the Predacious Diving Beetle of this species was inspired by the image of a red “handle” on its pronotum! Our specimen of the orb weaver was unusually dark, although it had the right pattern on its abdomen.

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:



The Margined Carrion Beetle, *Oiceoptoma noveboracense*, crawls over the fur of a dead Raccoon, looking for a point of entry into the corpse. We deliberately left a dead Raccoon to rot behind the trailer to see what insects might be attracted, especially new species like this one. The find brings the count of Silphid (Carrion) beetles on site up to five: two *Necrophorus*, two *Oiceoptoma* and one *Silpha*.



A yellow Trout Lily marks the beginning of the spring ephemeral flowers, while this Giant Bee Fly takes a break from constant hovering in search of nectar, proboscis always at the ready.