

Date and time: Sunday October 23 2016 2:00 - 5:00 pm

Weather: Pr 21 mm; RH 59%; BP 101.4 kPa; sun/cloud; SW 5-10 kmh; T 17°C

Contents: Trail lining with Steve, with some fungal ATBI on the side.



These colours greeted our arrival in the Upper Meadow. The high end of the Gallery Forest usually has brighter colours than these rather dingy oranges and reds at this time of year. Could the drought-like conditions of 2016 be responsible?

As we drove down the first hill right past these colours, we were met by our hawk escort, a Northern Harrier that flew ahead of us almost to the trailer. Years ago a Red-tailed Hawk used to do much the same, on occasion. We took it as a good omen. At the trailer, we discovered that the heavy leaf-fall had made silent walking (and stalking) impossible. Crunch-crunch-crunch at every step. But you could hear things coming, as well, as when a series of mini-crunches betrayed the presence of an Eastern Striped Chipmunk.

“Look at these mushrooms.” Pat called from the Nook. She pointed to a row of small conical mushrooms sprouting from the giant log nearby. Greg Thorn, our mushroom consultant, would later guess, on the basis of my unclear images, that they were a species of *Coprinus* in an early stage. Greg is much on our minds these days, as we prepare for the Annual Fungus Workshop. (See Announcement below.)

Steve rolled into camp a few minutes after we arrived. After a brief sit-down with Pat in the Nook, we headed for the Blind Creek Forest to start lining the Thames River Trail. This section of Newport Forest has been suffering an extensive dieback since the early 2000s. We lost about 100 Butternut Hickories and five giant Black Willow (crosses) that used to line the creek before it found a new outlet into the river upstream, probably in historical times. The limbs of these and other dead species litter a forest floor that is lit by the sunlight now broadly penetrating the re-opened canopy. We would roam the thick brush (resulting from the re-opened canopy) hunting for “good” branches that could be converted easily to liners — relatively straight or gracefully curved pieces to fit specific sections of the trail. Before joining Steve in the process, I visited the river to check the water levels and retrieve the sd card from the trail cam stationed there.

One of the delights of trail lining is to find a liner log that fits a bend in the trail perfectly, only to be asked by a visitor on a subsequent walk. “How did you bend the branch to fit like that?” “I’m sorry I can’t tell you. It’s an old secret method.”

As Steve laboured mightily to drag a promising limb out from the bush, I stared at a thatch ant mound, dumbfounded. It looked normal, except this one had a crown of what appeared to be bark chips all concentrated at the top. Why would ants decide to add bark chips to their mound? The chips seemed too large for ants to carry. Steve dropped his branch to wander over. “What are all these bark chips doing on top of the mound?” I asked. Steve picked one of them up and sniffed it. “Not bark. Walnut husk,” he stated dryly, then added. “A squirrel brought this walnut.” he said, bending over to retrieve a discarded shell. “To the top of the mound and peeled it there.” Okay, problem solved; ecology on the fly.

We lined all the way to the base of the Hogback. On the way back, Steve kept his eyes peeled for fungi, bringing to my attention specimen after specimen. Here was one of my favourites, the “Flesh Bracket”, looking like it came from a recently slaughtered animal. (See IMAGES.) And more fungi appeared as we made our way back to the trailer. Here was a strange purple disk and there was a brown mushroom that looked like a Honey Mushroom, a species with many lookalikes. More came, including a dark Bird’s Nest Fungus spotted by Steve (See IMAGES), a troop of tiny trumpets, a bold raft of Turkey Tails sprouting from a log, a large white bracket fungus with bumps instead of pores.

Then back to the Nook, back in the shade of the Black Maple wolf tree. Pat remarked, “There must be a good ten species of fungus within view of the Nook.” She had cleaned the trail down the creek bluffs and spotted fungi on her way back.

We chatted about the Fungus Workshop, approaching fast. On November 6, a Sunday, fungus fans and mushroom lovers will congregate at Newport Forest to learn about fungi from UWO mycologist Dr. Greg Thorn. (See the Announcement below.)

I am trying to learn more about the plant life of Newport Forest and I had brought back a small Aster for her to identify. "It's not an aster," she said. "It looks like Philadelphia Fleabane, but I'll have to check." After Steve left, we made sure that all was in readiness for the Workshop. This included a card table to hold specimens that will be brought in by fungus hunters on the day.

Phenology: Fall colours approximately half present.

New Species: (17% new)

Smaller Yellow Ant *Lasius [claviger]* RSF/W KD Oc23/16
(For "old" species see the end of this Bulletin.)

Species Notes: If my images of the ant had been in sharper focus, I would have nailed the ID — or known for certain that it was *another* species of Citronella ant.

ANNOUNCEMENT The Annual Fall Fungus Workshop

The fungus workshop will be held again this year, featuring the ever helpful mycologist, Dr. Greg Thorn from Western University. Greg will lead one of the walks and then stand by to receive and analyse specimens that attendees bring back.

To whet your appetite, we have included the link below. It leads to a web page about the largest living creature on the planet — a fungus!

<http://www.businessinsider.com/largest-organism-on-earth-year-old-honey-mushroom-2016-10>

People who would like to join the fun of the Fall Fungal Foray are invited to register by contacting Pat Dewdney at <dewdney@sympatico.ca>. A fee of five dollars will apply on site. Registration has already started, so ensure yourself & friends a place by registering now.

Place: Newport Forest 22130 Fleming Line (West Elgin Co.)
Time: 1:30 - 4:00 pm Sunday November 6 2016

IMAGES:



The Deadly Galerina mushroom (*Galerina autumnalis*) is every bit as bad as toadstools. We are well advised not to pick or eat any mushroom that resembles this one. The field marks are the dull orange colour, shiny cap, size and orangey ground colour, not to mention the all-important veil ring that surrounds the upper part of the stem. The hole in the cap (upper image) is accidental. As with any mushroom, caps are normally whole.

Readers may learn more about which mushrooms not to eat or pick by attending the workshop.



The Dark Bird's Nest Fungus (*Cyathus striatus*) does not expel spores as most fungi do with clouds of individuals, but with a small number of "eggs", each packed with spores and sitting at the bottom of its "nest." The eggs above have been mostly liberated, as one can see from empty or near-empty "nests." There is a similar species of Bird's Nest Fungus on site which could be called the 'White Birds Nest Fungus.' The "nests" are smooth rather than striated.



Phlebia tremellosa is a fleshy bracket fungus that grows on dead wood, especially logs, as here. Because it resembles a festoon of cuttings from a slaughterhouse, we call it the ‘Flesh Bracket’.

Reappearances:

Red-legged Grasshopper (*Melanoplus femurrubrum*); Boxelder Bug (*Boisea trivittata*); Sweat Bee (*Augochlora pura*); Aerial Yellowjacket (*Dolichovespula arenaria*).

Holdovers: Possible Tachinid fly.