

Date and time: Tuesday April 18 2017 1:30 - 4:50 pm.

Weather: Pr 02 mm; RH 78%; BP 102.7 kPa; clear; SE 20 kmh; T 15°C

Contents: A spring ephemeral survey and a mysterious open area.

The van CD player had obligingly plunged into Cripple Creek, a lively banjo tune, as I passed the Fleming Creek Bluffs and pulled up to the Newport Forest gate.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofAQotE7zHe0&feature=relmfu>

I had expected to see Steve Logan there and waited several minutes, but he never did show up. So in I drove, finding the ground quite firm beneath the van and with no chance to get stuck. All the way down to the trailer, as in the image below.



What caused this bare open area in the Lower Meadow?

I waited another half hour for Steve, then went out searching for wildflowers. Following the Gallery Forest (to the right of the trailer above), I noticed an extensive area in the Lower Meadow that seemed unusually bare (foreground of image). The contrast between that portion of the meadow and the Regen Zone (line of bushes and young trees to the left) could hardly be greater. We had never planted in this area but, after 17 years one would expect to see a dense cover of thorn trees (*Crataegus* spp.). Nothing. Not one! My mind raced for an explanation as I walked into the area; former nuclear waste dump? walnut poisoning? deer browse? Another weirdness was the complete absence of last year's goldenrod crop — seen as the light brown band that crosses the distant part of the image. What else could it be but deer? Or was it a TTLT remediation project that we forgot about?

As for wildflowers, I found that about 10% of the Trout Lilies that carpet the

Fleming Creek Bluffs were already open — both the yellow and white varieties. Spring Beauties were holding a meeting beside the trailer, while out in the Lower Meadow, small purple “violets” (Cheeping Charlie) peeped furtively from the grass along the path. A few Dandelions sprouted there as well.

Continuing my foray into the forest, I found Yellow Violets, purple Wood Violets and more Trout Lilies. The season’s first observed Cabbage White butterfly fluttered by. At the Elbow I stopped to place a few trail liner logs from the cuttings left by Donald Craig, then continued on to the river.

Once at the Landing, I noted that the river was still running about a foot high. I selected a comfortable log to perch on, determined to try naturalist Winnie Wake’s suggestion of doing the “big sit”, staying in one place for a long period of time to see what comes around. After about ten minutes, I was becoming restive when I noticed that a swarm of dance flies had congregated in front of my face, a swarm of about 30 individuals. Each fly would “orbit” within the group, but the swarm would remain more or less stationary. Apparently, dance flies use a local landmark to maintain the swarm’s position. It’s not my amazing face that drew the swarm. but the fact that the big sit kept it stationary.

Back in the Nook I noticed that Bee Flies were out, but saw no evidence of that other Spring earlybird, the Six-spotted Tiger Beetle. Earlier I had seen a Spring Azure butterfly and now saw an Eastern Comma light on the trailer. As for birds, they had started flying in during an extended lull. I was delighted to see a Tufted Titmouse perching nearby — a bird we do not often see. After a round of sd card changes to the three trail cams, I departed the property without incident. But the drive home was not without incident. Halfway there I felt a tickle on my wrist and nearly went off the road when a Wood Tick crawled out of my sleeve.

Birds: (8)

American Robin (FCB); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Tufted Titmouse (GF); Turkey Vulture (UM).

Phenology: half of trees breaking bud; first Cabbage White, Bee Fly; river up a foot, Trout Lilies and Spring Beauty starting to bloom; Hop Hornbeam in catkins.

New Species: (For “old” species see the end of this Bulletin.)

Pine Warbler	<i>Setophaga pinus</i>	GF pd/DM Ap10/17
Dance Fly	sfam. Empidinae	RL KD Ap18/17

Species Notes: The great majority of “dance flies” that form swarms, according to Marshall,* belong in the subfamily Empidinae, as above. Although I have no idea which of the 2000+ species in N. America the one seen might be, it is, nevertheless, a definite species and the family is currently absent from the ATBI list. Hence, it’s a new species, as above. *Stephen Marshall, 2012. *Flies*, Firefly Books.

Readers Write:

Dave Martin, a local bird expert, chimes in on the warbler seen by Pat on a previous visit: “Pat's warbler is almost certainly a Pine Warbler from the description. The green on top and yellow below is a perfect description for that species. They do have wing bars but on some birds and especially on females, the wing bars are indistinct unless you have a very good and close look. At any distance greater than a few metres the wing bars may not be visible. . . . Most of the warblers show up in May. The Tennessee Warbler is actually one of the last ones to appear, usually after mid May.”

Sandra Eadie, a Toronto naturalist, kindly corrects us on overwintering Red Admirals: “ I do enjoy The Bulletin and read it every time. I feel like I am there with you as you tend the Forest . . . I was under the impression that the Red Admiral was migratory having seen a cloud of them coming from across the lake (Ontario) and landing on the Toronto Islands. I conclude from the Govt of Canada web site . . . that almost all our Red Admirals are migratory. Any that overwinter don't usually survive, so I don't think your comment tells the whole story. (I also double-checked - Eastern Commas overwinter, though some migrate; Mourning Cloaks overwinter.)”

Announcement: (with a correction on the day)

The TTLT Spring Wildflower Walk will be held on **Sunday** (not Saturday) May 14 at 1:30 pm. For directions or more information, contact Par Dewdney at the following address: <dewdney@sympatico.ca>

Reappearances:

Giant Bee Fly (*Bombylius major*); Wood Tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*); Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*); Eastern Comma (*Polygonia comma*); Spring Azure (*Celextrina neglecta*); Paper Wasp (*Polistes fascatus*).

IMAGES:



Bouquets of yellow Trout Lilies are among the many treats that await those who attend the TTLT Spring Wildflower Walk on May 14.



Catkins of the Hop Hornbeam betray this tree's membership in the Birch family (Betulaceae) These catkins carry male flowers.



WILDVIEW

04-16-2017 19:40:58

In the early morning, along Fleming Creek, a Virginia Deer browses in the foreground, with the creek in the background. Many logs and dead trunks decorate its banks. Some may have come down the creek, rafted by floods, but others are part of the extensive local tree dieback that has plagued the site since the drought of 2002 - 2004. Last year's pitiful precipitation came to *half* the regional average!