

**Date and time:** Sunday May 14 2017 12:55 - 5:35 pm

**Weather:** Pr 2 mm; RH 67%; BP 101.0 kPa; cloud/sun; NNW 20-30 kmh; T 15°C

**Contents:** The Great Annual Newport Forest Spring Wildflower Walk



A few minutes after the official start of the event, walkers assembled for this picture at base camp. Left to right they are: Harriet Rueggeberg; Ron Martin; Will Van Hemessen (Consulting Botanist); Pat Fyfe; Carolyn Beecroft; Peter Andreae; Kathie Lambert; Andre Lachance; Erin Carroll (Leader); Muriel Andreae (Leader); Winnie Wake and Marg Hulls.

Although the sun had been slowly emerging from behind the cloud, an at-times fierce wind was beckoning in a new high and only the forest saved the walkers from this discomfort. While the walkers proceeded from flower to flower, Pat and I remained close to camp. I took advantage of the solitude by sweeping the foliage nearby for insects. Perhaps because of insect decline (see below) or perhaps because of the wind or perhaps because of the relative immaturity of most vegetation, my net would come up empty sweep after sweep. But I finally succeeded in getting one new insect, a Picture-winged Fly. (See below.) The other arthropods were both spiders, a Marbled Orb-weaver and a Bowl-and-Doily spider.

By the time the walkers returned some two hours later, Pat and I had added eight

birds to our day-list. But the walkers returned with nine more birds recorded and tales of adventures in the woods. First, the Virginia Bluebells were peaking and put on a resplendent display. The patch has been expanding year after year and now occupies about half a hectare! Other blooms were found by botanist Will Van Hemessen who clambered up the steep river bluffs forest to find an Eastern flowering Dogwood in full bloom. (See below for images of both blooms.)

Walkers reported other plants that had greeted them along their way, including Bloodroot, Yellow Pimpernel, Cream Violet, Golden Alexander, False Mermaid, and Dutchman's-breeches, and the rare Green Dragon, to name a few of the more interesting ones. Walkers enjoyed some fruit juice or water, along with assorted cookies and dried apple rings, courtesy of Marg Hulls. It was a chance for all of us to catch up on our doings and to rub the remaining hibernation crust from our eyes. Ron Martin and I enjoyed a slippery stroll down the Fleming Creek bluffs, joined presently by Will Van Hemessen. I had been meaning to ask Will to look at the grasses growing in the mysteriously "bare" meadow mentioned in a previous issue. He agreed to check them out when they go into seed.

One by one the walkers followed the old farm track back to the gate. Then Pat and Kathie and I cleaned up camp and drove out ourselves. On the way home I thought we were lucky not to have encountered any Wood Ticks. Wrong. Over the next 24 hours I found three ticks on my person, one of which had already plunged her beak in. We got her out using the dull knife method. Oops! Just found a fourth!

**Birds:** (17)

American Crow (EW); Blue Jay (GF); Cliff Swallow (TR); Common Yellowthroat (HBF); Eastern Bluebird (FCB); Gray Catbird (BCF); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF); Northern Oriole (TR); Northern Parula (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-winged Blackbird (RL); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Turkey Vulture (LM); Yellow Warbler (BCF); White-breasted Nuthatch (HBF); White-crowned Sparrow (GF).

**Phenology:** Virginia Bluebells just passing peak bloom; Bloodroot, Yellow Pimpernel, Cream Violets, Golden Alexander, False Mermaid, and Dutchman's-breeches all in full bloom. First Green Dragon sprouting.

**New Species:** (25% new)

'Three-banded Otitid Fly'      *Chaetopsis [fulvifrons]*      GF/LM KD My14/17  
(For repeated species see the end of this Bulletin.)

**Species Notes:** The Otitid Fly is only our second species in this family. One of

them has three diagonal bands across the wings, while today's specimen has strictly lateral bands. Both are small flies, about six to seven mm in length.

### **Readers Write:**

Thanks to naturalist Bruce Parker for sending this fascinating report of big cats in the Windsor area:

#### **Second Cougar Sighting In Amherstburg**

*Windsor Star*

<http://windsorstar.com/news/second-cougar-sighting-in-amherstburg>

Thanks to entomologist Dan Bickel for this less dramatic but more ominous report:

#### **Where Have All The Insects Gone?**

*Science*

<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/05/where-have-all-insects-gone>

### **IMAGES:**



Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), the star of the show. These plants like the sandy soil of the point-bar forest habitat. S-rank is S3 or rare to uncommon.



photo: Winnie Wake

Will Van Hemessen photographs blooms of the Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*) high on the river bluffs. This dogwood is S-ranked as an S2.

**Ontario S-ranking system:**

S1 extremely rare; S2 very rare; S3 rare to uncommon; S4 common & secure; S5 very common.

**Note:** Images in the small sampling below were drawn from the NF Bulletin archives.





Dutchman's-breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*) is ranked S5



Cream Violet (*Viola striata*) is ranked S3



Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) is ranked S4

**Arthropod Reappearances:** Northern Paper Wasp (*Polistes fuscatus*); Bowl-and-Doily Spider (*Frontinella communis*); Marbled Orb Weaver (*Araneus marmoratus*).