Date and time: Wednesday July 26 2017 1:40 - 6:55 pm
Weather: Pr 4 mm; RH 66%; BP 101.3 kPa; overcast; winds calm; T 24ºC.
Contents: A trek to the Sandbar with Allen Woodliffe.

We arrived at the gate 10 minutes behind schedule and found our guest, ecologist Allen Woodliffe, already there. We wasted no time driving in and, after setting up camp, sat in the Nook to plan the day: I proposed a walk to a place deep in the Riverside Forest; the Sandbar, a massive deposit of river floods over many years, would be wonderful, I said, full of exotic sand-loving plants and insects.

Woodliffe (left) and I ponder the futility of continuing amid a sea of death*.

But reality was destined not to match my memories of the place. We set out for the Sandbar by following the Thames River Trail, first to the river, then over the bluffs and on into the Riverside Forest. At the beginning of the walk we were leaving the Lower Meadow to plunge into the Blind Creek Forest when a warbler flashed by to perch nearby. Allen announced a Blue-winged Warbler, the first of several birds to enhance our day-list.

Once inside the Blind Creek Forest, Layla, our assistant, pointed out some Jewel Weed. “Spotted Jewelweed”, mused Allen. “Do you have Pale Jewelweed here?” We did indeed. He also wondered if we had Giant Swallowtails. Again, a “yes.” I

* Some might call this an exaggeration; I would defend it as standard journalistic practice.

explained that it was almost a trademark of Newport Forest. A few minutes later, at the River Landing, a Giant Swallowtail obligingly flew right past out noses. A quick check of the clay beach from the Landing startled two Spiny Soft-shell Turtles. “Splish-splash.” High on the river bluffs we stared at the subsiding river and the clay beach below, now emerging. We found a rosy *Russula* mushroom fruiting by the trail over the bluffs. I would not try to identify it further because there are about five species of red or reddish Russulas with overlapping appearances. Once we got down into the Riverside Forest, Layla noticed more Spotted Jewelweed growing and, shortly after that, Allen found a beautiful Pale Jewelweed which he photographed. Then he spotted a spider web with what appeared to be a Cross Spider perched on a damaged web. More clicks of the camera. (See below)

The trail I made to the Sandbar several years ago had disappeared entirely, our first warning of coming difficulties. “I think we should go this way.” We all went off-trail to walk gingerly into vegetation that held cleverly concealed branches and logs that we continually tripped over. Allen spotted a Hairy Woodpecker, another unusual birds for the day list. “Not much farther now,” I announced, pointing vaguely ahead. Then we ran into a patch of rather tall Stinging Nettles. “Just bull your way through,“ I advised. Ouch, ouch, ouch, . . . The patch continued so, instead of clearing it by hand, I beat out swaths with my walking pole to make a passage. Layla offered to take over the swathing operation. “Don’t worry we’ll be out of this pretty soon.”

We never did get out of it. We stopped to look around, as shown above. By this point Layla (a nurse) had collected a lot of Jewelweed, crushed it into a poultice, and now applied it to our burning hands and wrists. Frankly I have always been a bit sceptical of the plant’s alleged healing powers, but within less than a minute, the stinging sensation disappeared entirely, never to return. There is something philosophically wonderful about an affliction and its cure growing side by side.

Continuing, we beat our way onto a large mound, entirely overgrown with Stinging Nettles that went well over our heads. Looking down, I spotted some fine sandy soil between the stems. We were there! But instead of mounds of fine sand there was only a sea of nettles, amplified by river-borne nutrients. Then Allen heard a Yellow-billed Cuckoo calling. Was it sounding a retreat? We made out way back the way we had come, back through the Riverside Forest and up onto the bluffs where I spotted what looked like a Dryads Saddle (a bracket fungus on wood) But this was a mushroom on soil, albeit with the same scaly-looking cap. I photographed it carefully, plucked the body and turned it upside down expecting a

surface of pores. What was this! Teeth! Nothing but teeth and clearly a new species. As we passed the Landing, Allen heard an Indigo Bunting call, Pat's favourite bird. At the Elbow just before leaving the forest, I made a sweep of the area, folded the net, and carried it back to camp, where we lunched on Pat's salmon sandwiches and hermit cookies.

After refreshments I caught up with a bit of Allen's extensive background as an ecologist. He had served in the Ministry of Natural Resources for some 36 years, first as the Park Naturalist at Rondeau on Lake Erie, then as the District Ecologist for the "super Aylmer District" an vast area within SW Onrario. In that capacity he took a special interest in the Chatham-Kent/Essex area, dealing with the challenges presented by a natural areas coverage of about 5%. Allen also served as a member of the Committee on the Status of Species at risk in Ontario.

After this we finally went through the net bag. Although we had garnered a few arthropod species with Allen's help, we were well behind the day's schedule. Our take from this one sweep included a new moth, the Oak Leafroller, as below. We also found a green Leaf Hopper that turned out to be new.

After Allen left, we did no more sweeps but wandered in the vicinity of the camp. Layla got great closeups of a Common Eastern Bumblebee (*B. impatiens*) then paused to pet it, a trick learned from her mother. She also got a nice image of a Damsel Fly that turned out to be new. My worries of a reduced ATBI take had been unfounded. We cleaned camp and departed into the early evening.

Birds: (11)
American Crow (UM); Bald Eagle (LM); Blue Jay (BCF); Blue-winged Warbler (LM); Cedar Waxwing (TR); Common Yellowthroat (GF); Hairy Woodpecker (RSF); House Wren (Rd); Indigo Bunting (TR); Pileated Woodpecker (FCF/FC); Yellow-billed Cuckoo (RSF).

Biological Inventory (ATBI)

New Species:

'Scaly Sarcadon'	*Sarcadon imbricatus*	RBT KD Jl26/17
'Long-armed Jumper'	*Hentzia palmarum*	LM KD My27/17
'Black Dwarf'	[*Erigone atra*]	RZ KD Je03/17
'Striped Sharpshooter'	*Draeculacephala* [*constricta*]	BCF KD Jl 26/17
Powdered Dancer	*Argia* [*moesta*]	BCF La/KD Jl26/17
'Four-spotted Green Bug'	*Phytocoris tibialis*	Loc aw/KD Jl26/17
Oak Leafroller	*Argyrotaenia quercifoliana*	BCF KD Jl26/17

Species Notes:
Two of the new species above are holdovers that I had been working on on the meantime. The sharpshooter (a kind of leaf hopper) could also be *D. mollipes*. A leaf-roller is a moth that, in the larval stage, builds a shelter by spinning a web inside the leaf that causes it to curl into a cylinder.

Recurring Species:
Orchard Spider (*Leucauge venusta*); Cobweb Weaver (*Enoplognatha ovata*); Cross Spider (*Araneus diadematus*); Leaf Hopper (*Chlorotettix* sp.); European Alder Spittlebug (*Aphrophora alni*); Red-collared Cantharid (*Podabrus* sp.); Common Eastern Bumblebee (*Bombus impatiens*); Crabronine Wasp (*Ectemnius* sp.); Anglewing (*Polygonia* sp.); Deerfly (*Chrysops* sp.).

Holdovers & Discards:
Ground Cricket nymph; two unid. green plant bugs.

Image Gallery

The Cross Spider (*Araneus diadematus*) works at disentangling its web damaged by our passage, an excellent macro image by Allen.

Since this new species of Mirid (*Phytocoris tibialis*) has no common name, we have followed our usual practice of giving it one. Who knows? Some day one of our "common names" might catch on. How does "Four-spotted Green Bug" sound? Would "Victory Bug" be too obscure? (i.e, V for Victory) This image is an enlargement from one of Allen's macro shots.

This damselfly, a Powdered Dancer (*Argia moesta*) had lighted on the trailer deck to sun itself just before Layla spotted it and did my Lumix camera proud.

Some people are surprised, when looking closely at the eye of an insect, even a dead one, that its gaze seems to follow them wherever they go. The phenomenon is called the “false pupil” effect. It is caused by the collective presence of hundreds of narrow light-gathering cones called ommatidia. They gaze outward in all directions. The ones looking toward the camera are all close together and the camera, in looking down them, sees only the darkness of their depths