

Date and time: Saturday September 16 2017 2:00 - 5:30 pm

Weather: Pr 0 mm; RH 71%; BP 102.1 kPa; sun/cloud; winds calm; T 26°C

Contents: Sampling edge habitat.



Blind Creek Forest meets the Lower Meadow in the distance.

Today's assistant, Yunus Amer, is a computer science student at Western on his first stint as our assistant on site. I was not surprised to see some of the trees grown redder — or yellowing more — than had been the case when Pat and I visited the site last Monday, but I was shocked to see the goldenrod already well into senescence. That has never happened this early in the season.

Today's plan involved an extended sampling foray along the edge off Blind Creek Forest to see what sort of different species mix might result. Things did not go quite the way I had imagined before we set out. Instead of a clear way forward we encountered massive growths of Gray Dogwood and other shrubs hard against the forest. This meant frequent detours with stops to perform a sweep between outgrowths. Along the way I was pleased to show Yunus some typical features of Newport Forest, including two rather massive ant mounds. The first of these was heavily overgrown with grasses; the second was much "fresher" with a new covering of "ant cement" as I call it: grains of sand sticking together to make a crusty surface. I showed Yunus the nature of the interior of the mound by poking the cement at one spot, initiating a collapse of the ceiling of a surprisingly large chamber — a concert hall, perhaps.

Not surprisingly we found several mound ants in the take, *Formica exsectoides*, as well as the Tree Hopper, *Ceresa alta*, the strikingly coloured ‘Emerald Soldier’, a ground beetle called *Calleida punctata*, and the Silver Long-jawed Orbweaver, *Tetragnatha laboriosa*, none of them common in the meadow areas. The remainder of the catch will be found in the Recurring Species list below. My general impression at the end of the foray was that insects were not as plentiful as they had been last week. This was mostly the result of the loss of goldenrod blooms. The “sea of yellow flame” mentioned last week had turned yellowish brown.

Although Yunus seemed indefatigable (being young) each stop seemed to leave me slightly wearier than the one before. By the time we got to the Power Lines, my proposed limit to the foray, I could hardly get up off my knees after examining the sweep net and photographing its contents. I had given Yunus our spare camera and he became adept at squeezing occasional good images out of a camera that was never meant for pseudo-macro photography like my Lumix is.

Wading through 150 m of goldenrod in the Powerline Meadow on the return to camp, we encountered a low bush with a perfect orb web decorating its branches. It didn’t take long to find the orb weaver’s retreat inside a curled brown leaf. Try as I might, I could not persuade the creature to leave its retreat so I contented myself with getting a clear image of the pattern on its abdomen, betraying a Marbled Orb Weaver, as shown in the Image Gallery below. Continuing on, we arrived finally at the track, then walked easily back to camp for refreshments in the Nook.

Our next foray took us to the River Landing to check the river and change the sd card on the camera there. Along the way, we noticed clouds of midges, tough to photograph even after Yunus scooped a netful from the air around us. The only expedient was to hold the bag upside down (causing the flies to migrate to the top). I then stuck my head (and camera) inside the bag to get a few clear shots. It worked, at least to the extent of obtaining a new species of Chironomid for the list. At the landing I photographed the beach, changed the sd card and made one last sweep of the day. We carried the net back to the Nook where a Shortwinged Meadow Katydid emerged, our second one ever. Yunus managed an image in perfect focus, worthy of the gallery below. Since the only other specimen of this species was also captured at the river, I began to wonder if it favoured that habitat.

As for any distinctive attribute of the insects and spiders, the majority were already known to be common on the meadow areas. However a new spider seems to have emerged from behind the species curtain, as below. Before leaving, we cleared a few more invasive Walnuts from the Regen Zone, then headed for home.

Drought Report:

I attribute the goldenrod senescence to the excessive dryness of the general area over the last year. (See precipitation data since the year 2003 below.) On the way in I photographed a panorama of dead treetops, mostly White Ash, at a guess. White Ash has recently joined a growing list of tree species that have died back rather heavily. I attribute that to what is essentially a low-level but extended drought.

03	730	07	674	11	1243	15	683
04	617	08	1227	12	704	16	596
05	667	09	926	13	682		
06	1020	10	744	14	768		

Current year-to-date 467 mm

Regional average: 969 mm

Precipitation deficits: -239 -352 -302 +51 -295 +258 -265 -287 -201 -286 -373

Trail Cams Report: The three trail cams on site never fail to show at least one or two animals passing by. Lately, Trail Cam #1 has revealed the presence of at least one Raccoon litter of half-size young, as well as a Virginia Possum on Sp12.

Phenology: Goldenrod flowers dying back early.

Biological Inventory (ATBI)

New Species: (10% new arths)

Green Midge	<i>Axarus</i> sp.	BCF ya/KD Sp16/17
Sac Spider	[<i>Cheiracanthium</i>] sp	LM/BCF KD Sp16/17

Species Notes:

Although the species named for the "Sac Spider" is closest to our specimen, I am not confident of the ID. That's what the square brackets mean.

Recurring Species:

Silver Longjawed Orbweaver (*Tetragnatha laboriosa*); Northern Crab Spider (*Mecaphesa asperata*); Marbled Orb Weaver (*Araneus marmoreus*); 'Crenellated Nursery Spider' (*Pisaurina mira*); Buffalo Treehopper (*Ceresa alta*); 'Black-backed Treehopper' (*Pubilia concava*); Northern Flatid Planthopper (*Flatormenis proxima*); Shortwinged Meadow Katydid (*Conocephalus brevipennis*); Tarnished Plant Bug (*Lygus lineolaris*); Say's Trig (*Anaxipha exigua*); Three-spotted Leaf Beetle (*Trirhabda borealis*); Seven-spotted Lady Beetle (*Coccinella*

sempunctata); Japanese Beetle (*Popilla japonica*); ‘Emerald Soldier; (*Calleida punctata*); Allegheny Mound Ant (*Formica exsectoides*); Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*); Two-spotted Bumblebee (*Bombus bimaculatus*); Common Aerial Yellowjacket (*Dolichovespula arenaria*); Northern Paper Wasp (*Polistes fuscatus*).

Deferred or Discarded:

Stink Bug nymph; unid. brown hopper; red bug nymph; green crab spider.

Readers Write

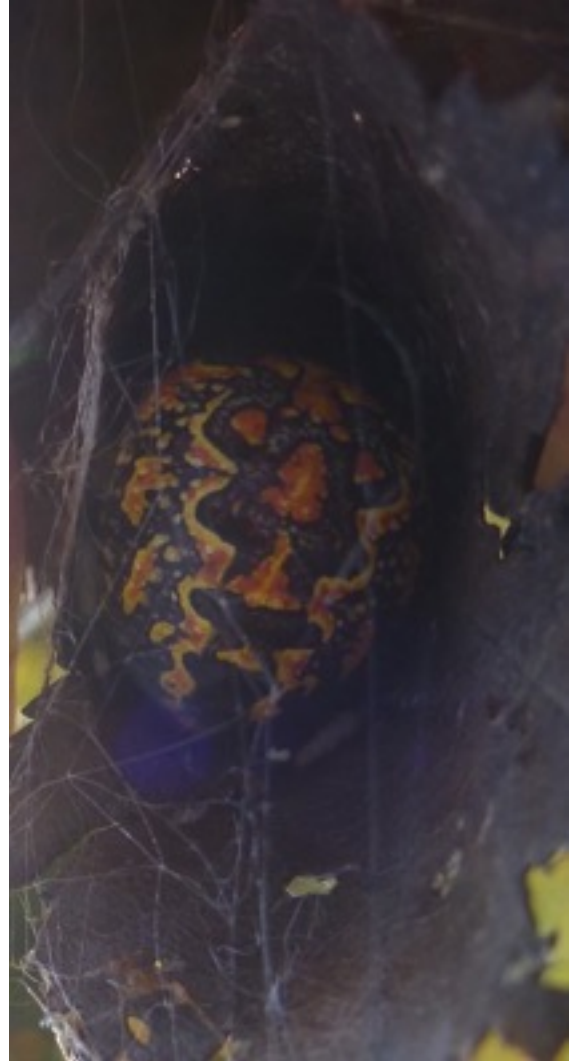
Bernie Vandebelt, an early supporter of the TTLT, writes, “It’s always a delight to receive and read your Newport Bulletins. Now that I’ve retired from teaching, I hope to come by for a visit sometime this fall. Thanks for your inspiring dedication to this monitoring project!”

Image Gallery



photo: Yunus Amer

The Shortwinged Meadow Katydid seems to favour the riverine habitat over any of the “meadow” areas further inland. Both the beach and near shore plants might be thought of as another kind of meadow, however.



The Black-horned Tree Cricket (left) would favour the trees and bushes at the forest edge, while the Marbled Orb Weaver (right) would favour the fly zone in open meadow just above the plant tops. The abdomen shown here sports the latest colour variation to appear on this species locally, this being the wildest mix of colours yet!