

**Date and time:** Tuesday May 1 2017 2:20 - 6:30 pm

**Weather:** Pr 5 mm; RH 39%; BP 101.7 kPa; clear; S 10-20 kmh; T 27°C

**Contents:** Monitoring the advent of Spring.



Pat and I were greatly pleased to see the Thames Talbot Land Trust hard at work on a new gate for the property. Daria Kocsinski, along with volunteers Jack Mayos and Douglas Craig, had installed new, heavier swing-posts, along with anchor posts and other guarantees of longevity, to make a handsome new entrance. Congratulations to all three and the TTLT, as well. Daria told us that they were also in the process of stringing new wire along the West Meadow to keep out the ATVs.

Leaving the three to their labours, we drove down to the Lower Meadow on newly dried ground and a firm footing for tires. Steve Logan dropped by for a visit and followed us in. Exalting in the 27-degree heat we sat with Steve in the Nook to catch up on news and then, after Steve left, we set out to see what was “up”. Trout Lilies in profusion, both yellow and white varieties. “I’ll bet you can’t think of three different names for Trout Lilies,” said Pat. I could think of only the name just used and “Dogtooth Violets” which my parents used to call them during walks in the Pottersburg woods. “Adder’s Tongue,” followed by a smile of triumph.

What else? There were very few insects about, perhaps discouraged by the frequent gusts of wind. We had expected to see Beeflies, always common at this time of year, but none were about. Occasional Bumblebees, a few Paper Wasps, a Muscid Fly or two and a Cuckoo Bee made up the day’s record. Earlier we had heard

Western Chorus Frogs calling from the vernal ponds but now the Blind Creek Forest had grown silent, with only the occasional chuckle of a Grey Tree Frog. I made a foray into the ponds, finding them covered by bright green masses of algae. While in the forest, I looked all about for Bloodroot or Spring Beauties. Back in the Nook Pat explained that Newport Forest had very little Bloodroot. However in past years Spring Beauties would be clothing the creek bluffs and all around the Nook by this time.

It was only when I began to feel a little discouraged that a stroke of good fortune intervened. There, on the lens of Trail Cam #2 was a jumping spider — of all things! I recognized the Genus *Hentzia* almost immediately, its forelegs extending almost in the manner of a Crab Spider. It looked new and, later that evening as I was going through what our entomology professor Stan Caveney used to call “mug shots”, I found the species lurking amid a variety of patterns and colours, as below. I descended the bluffs to Fleming Creek to check the condition of the water: running clear and fast, well-oxygenated and bubbling merrily over the Lower Rapids. A very old growth of the fungus Artist’s Conk (*Ganoderma applanatum*) growing out of an old stump caught my eyes. Everywhere I looked there was a cloak of verdure thrown over the clay sediment deposited by the last flood. Further into the Fleming Creek Forest I could see the spot where Wild Turkeys, as pointed out by Steve, had been roaming earlier.

It was time to change all the sd cards, now that all three cameras were functioning properly. After that, a late lunch of egg salad sandwiches rounded out the day and off we went to face the complexities of the Longwoods Road. (See below.)

### **Birds: (8)**

American Crow (LM); American Robin (LM); Blue Jay (LM); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-winged Blackbird (Rd); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (LM); Wild Turkey (FCF).

**Phenology:** Trout Lilies fully out, MultifloraRose leafing out, first Wood Tick

### **Biological Inventory (ATBI)**

#### **New Species:**

|                             |                        |               |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| ‘Red-marked Jumping Spider’ | <i>Hentzia mitrata</i> | GF KD My01/18 |
| Canadian Somia Moth         | <i>Sonia canadana</i>  | Loc ID date   |

#### **Species Notes:**

The handle we have given this spider as a common name place-holder arises from a row of red chevrons along the abdomen, the first one paired. Common throughout E. North America. Leg 1 of *Hentzia* species tends to be longer than that of most jumpers. Specifics on second species to come; see Van Hemessen message below.

### **Leafing Out Phenology:**

**2003** My16 trees in RZ; **2004** Ap15 Blackcaps; **2005** Ap19 small trees and bushes, My01 elms; **2006** Ap27 all trees; **2007** Ap21 trees in RZ; **2008** My01 small trees, My09 trees in RZ; **2011** My19 trees in RZ; **2012** 15% out; **2013** Ap27 small trees, My02 20%; **2014** small trees, larger breaking bud. (With apologies for inconsistent criteria!)

### **Detour Warning !**

People in the London Area who plan to go on the May 13 Flower Walk at Newport Forest are advised to add some 15 minutes to their driving time. Two detours are sure to slow you down; the first is one-way eastbound between Lambeth and Westdel Bourne, with westbound traffic allowed through. The second, longer detour runs from Melbourne Road (in Melbourne) to Thames Road. An alternative route would use the 401, taking the Furnival Road exit, driving to Fleming Line.

### **Readers Write**

#### **The Lock Challenge:**

In the previous issue we issued a challenge to readers to come up with a memorable gate code for the newly installed wheel lock with its limited number of letters. Here are some responses:

Hugh Casbourn:   **WINGS, WILDS, M0THY, WREN5**

Henry Crapo:     **ENT2Y**

Clare Magee:     **S3RVE**

Bruce Parker:    **BLOOM, CROWS, NOOKS, FROGS, MOONS**

Botanist Will Van Hemessen reports on a recent visit to Newport Forest: "I visited Newport Forest today with my girlfriend, Sarah Bonnett. We had an amazing day. Lots of great observations including flowering *Erigenia bulbosa* and a huge flock of Fox Sparrows . . . 14 Fox Sparrows in the immediate vicinity of the trailer. I've never seen so many Fox Sparrows in one place before. We also saw Hermit Thrush, Brown Creeper, Blue Jay, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow and Eastern Phoebe, among other species. [They walk the Thames River Trail.] Wild Leek and Virginia Bluebells are visible. Trout-lilies and Spring-beauties just barely popping out of the ground.

False Mermaidweed developing well with many plants near flowering. Of course the most exciting plant was a single flowering stem of Harbinger-of-Spring. . . . There was a cacophony of Western Chorus Frogs calling . . . in the woods. Also the odd Wood Frog. We got two butterflies: Spring Azure and Red Admiral. We also got one moth: Canadian Sonia Moth. Water levels in both Fleming Creek and the Thames were very high. All in all a great visit, hope you get a chance to see the Harbinger-of-Spring this year.”

Nature lover Aisha Amer writes from Dubai: “I read the bulletin, I'm sad to hear about the loss of your dear friend. [Hopefully] she is in a better place. On a happier note, I usually always enjoy receiving the Newport News letter. It makes me feel closer to home and updated about what you two are up to. I miss you both. Hope spring appears soon so those deer can fatten up.”

### Image Gallery



Harbinger of Spring (*Erigenia bulbosa*) currently grows at base of Hogs-back. Plant is uncommon. Image: Will Van Hemessen



Trout Lily - This white variety comprises some 10% of the Trout Lilies



Dominant alga of vernal ponds is *Mougeotia* sp. Known by an accumulation of pale green cottony masses, some floating, some submerged. Identifying the species is best left to experts on algae, as there are over 200 species of this plant, most of them hard to tell apart.



Only one Raccoon responded to our bait-survey, as far as we know: this rather reddish adult who appears to be in reasonable condition. The only other Raccoon to show up was a very young individual, likely one of the July (!) newborns recorded last summer. The youngster, not even half-grown, appears to be in good shape and may have wintered with its mother.