

Date and time: Wednesday May 23 2018 2:00 - 5:50 pm

Weather: Pr 4 mm; RH 61%; BP 102.0 kPa; clear; N 5-10 kmh; T 25° C

Contents: Training a budding entomologist.



The property was an easy drive because the site received far less rain than it should have the day before. The same pattern of drought that has prevailed for years seems to be continuing into the current year.

We came with assistant Layla Amer and her young nephew Noah who has recently lost interest in dinosaurs in favour of insects. He's there on the left, net at the ready to catch anything creeping, crawling or flying. It was surprising how, even though he slowed the day's ATBI effort down somewhat, we still emerged with a respectable count at the end of the day. As for Noah, he went home crammed with new knowledge, already dreaming of his next visit.

Before we even gathered at the Nook, I spotted what looked somewhat like a Clover Looper moth in the long grass of the track. I was pleased to see that it was actually a Chickweed Geometer, a rosy band and renal spot against a yellow background. After a conference in the Nook, we decided on a foray to the river. Our first stops occurred at a small tent made by Eastern Tent Caterpillars. Noah enjoyed letting them crawl on his hands. We then visited an ant mound that, as far as we could tell, was not inhabited.

Further along, it took a while to get to our first sweeping site because Noah kept screaming, "ANT!" every time he spotted one on the trail. How many entomologists do you see doing that! Soon, Layla spotted a spider on a trailside plant. It

led me on a merry chase for focus, but I finally got it, a common, rather small Orb Weaver called *Mangora placidus*.

The first sweep at The Elbow (a bend in the river trail) was so depauperate, I felt a wave of alarm. Admittedly, it was early in the season, but this was not good. Another sweep garnered a few ants and a small spider. Pat stayed at the Elbow to look for Green Dragons, another Newport Forest specialty. (This is an uncommon plant closely related to the Jack-in-the-pulpit.) Meanwhile, Layla and I continued to the river with Noah in tow — or should I say that Noah had us in tow. “C’mon faster” was the cry from his retreating figure. The sweep at the River Landing proved more successful, with several Marsh Lady Beetles in the net, along with a few smaller beetles of a featureless type that I often ignore.

The river was back down to normal levels and Noah wanted to go down to the water, but Layla forbade him. On the way back we kept our eyes on leaves for “parked” insects. Bingo! There was a large “fly” with patterned wings, the word “Panorpid” coming into my head out of nowhere. Was it really a Scorpion Fly? Yes, a male with its “stinger” curled up over its abdomen. (See IMAGES below.) Back at the Elbow, Pat proudly displayed the Green Dragon she had expected.

Repairing once more to the Nook, we discussed where to sample next, knowing that the plan had better include our young entomologist. I proposed the creek. It would be an easy matter to catch a crayfish or two so that Noah could see that arthropods lived in water, as well as land. Down the bluffs we went, greeted at the rapids by a bank of bright yellow buttercups. I swear the rapids “migrate” downstream by a foot or more every year! We waded in (Noah too) to dislodge a few rocks, the aquatic net with a crayfish at the bottom two times. I put one on Noah’s hand. He seemed not a bit squeamish, but fascinated.

Regaining the heights, we did a few more sweeps along the Gallery Forest, finding few insects each time, but doing enough sweeps to compensate. In this manner we caught a bright green nymphal Assassin Bug (*Zelus luridus*) and then a Stilt Bug, our very first one. This would bring a whole new family (Berytidae) into the ambit off the ATBI database. A *Hentzia* jumping spider and a Dwarf (Linyphiid) spider, common on plants and in the litter, rounded out the day. Good heavens! It was nearly six. We had better be off.

Birds: (10)

American Crow (TR); American Robin (BCF); Baltimore Oriole (RZ); Grey Catbird (BCF); Great Crested Flycatcher (BCF/LM); Northern Cardinal (BCF);

Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); Tree Swallow (Rd); Turkey Vulture (BCF).

Phenology: Wild Geraniums in bloom; maples fully out, hickories half, walnut 1/4. no Tiger Beetles, no Bee Flies, one Bumblebee, a few skippers.

Biological Inventory (ATBI)

New Species: (11.1% new arthropods)

Spined Stilt Bug *Jalysus [spinosus]* LM KD My23/18

Species Notes:

The only alternative to *Jalysus* species in our area is *J. wickhami* which has a narrower thorax and no Bugguide specimen (yet) in Ontario.

Recurring Species:

‘Red-headed Dwarf’ (*Hypselistes florens*); ‘Placid Mangora’ (*Mangota placida*); ‘Longarmed Jumper’ (*Hentzia palmarum*); ‘Green Assassin Bug’ (*Zelus luridus*); ‘Clearwing Scorpionfly’ (*Panorpa claripennis*); Marsh Lady Beetle (*Anisosticta bitriangularis*); Chickweed Geometer (*Haematopsis grataria*); Eastern Tent Caterpillar Moth (*Malacosoma americana*).

Deferred or Discarded:

possible Cuckoo Bee; small dark beetles, small ants.

Readers Write

Entomologist Stan Caveney writes about the dragonflies at his site — Meadow Woods. “I really appreciated reading your list of Odonata seen at Newport Forest. The real difference between the taxa seen at NF and Meadow Woods appears to be related to the fact that here we have no large flowing ("lotic") aquatic habitat such as the Thames River but lots of still ponds ("lentic") habitat. So we lack gomphids, many calopterygids and dancers (part Coenagrionidae), which are largely lotic specialists. That said you have a great list, although I feel a need to query the Horned Clubtail and Beaverpond Clubtail listings. Paul Pratt does not list them for SW Ontario (but that doesn't mean they don't occur here).” This missive comes in two parts, with more to come in the next Bulletin.

Image Gallery

The star of the show, Noah Amer, inspects a tent caterpillar on his hand, assisted by Pat. Adults must remember that if Noah is only 1/3 of their height, every insect must look three times larger. No?



Image by Layla Amer



A young Green Dragon (*Arisaema dracontium*) plant is displayed by Pat to show the serial branching on one of the double stems. Later this plant will erect a long “spadix” like a dragon’s tongue. Its cousin, the Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), also has a spadix and both plants belong to the family Araceae.



The Scorpionfly *Panorpa claripennis* (above) is a male, owing to its scorpion-like appendage, as shown more clearly in the lower image. This functions as a sexual attractant. One previous record dates to 2007.



Not a Dipteran (fly) but a Mecopteran
Source: Bugguide.net