

Date and time: Thursday June 21 2018 2:30 - 5:30 pm

Weather: Pr 16 mm; RH 55%; BP 101.1 kPa; sun/haze; winds calm; T 24° C

Contents: Searching for new arthropods while the trails get trimmed



A “bud buck” passes Trail Can #1 at The Hole. Probably a different male than the skinny one that showed up last week. This one seems well fed.

I was delayed by detours and various road construction projects on Highway #2 and arrived on site half an hour late to meet Steve. The track in had been freshly mowed by neighbour Alex McIntyre, thanks to Daria Kocsinski of the TTLT. As things turned out, I needn't have worried about Steve, who had come much earlier to get the Thames River Trail half mowed before I showed up.

We held the usual exchange of news in the Nook: the black bear sighted near Chatham-Kent had apparently ambled off toward Wheatley and would not be a problem on site; a man who calls himself The Happy Camper has made his way by canoe down the Thames River to Lake St Clair, planning to write a book about his adventures; Steve's wood-hauling trailer had a bent axle and he needed to buy a new one; and so on. While this was going on, a Virginia Ctenucha Moth landed on Steve's overalls. “Species are where you find them,” as I often say.

Before Steve took his weed-eater down the trail to Fleming Creek, I decided to test the pepper spray which has sat unused in my backpack for some 16 years! I aimed at an old log, surprised to see a jet of yellowish fluid shoot out and splash onto the

log. I went over for a sniff. Hardly any smell. “Must be stale,” said Steve. So much for protection from bears!

I took the weather readings and had a short walkabout to see what level of insect activity to expect. I was astonished to find an Eastern Eyed Click Beetle struggling in the rain-filled auxiliary tray-gauge on the trailer deck. (Species are where you find them.) I rescued it and took several images while it recovered. (See below.) I found that many of the plants currently in bloom had insects visiting them. I also spotted several day-flying moths, both out in the meadows and, later, in the woods. A Great Spangled Fritillary fluttered along the bushes beside the trail.

When Steve returned from grooming and clearing the trail to the creek, he had to leave. I stayed to play catch-up in the arthropod department. Two successive sweeps of the Lower Meadow brought in several Meadow Katydid, a small beetle, a jumping spider, a black and red bug, and what appeared to be two fireflies. A second sweep, this time in the Regen Zone, produced several more nymphs of the Spined Assassin Bug, a beautiful large leaf-footed bug that I recognized immediately, more fireflies, several hoppers and an assortment of small bugs and beetles that I normally do not try to identify. Things were looking up. Trying my luck in the Blind Creek Forest, I went in through the Hole and swept along the trail to the Elbow, finding a soldier beetle, two hoppers, a firefly and assorted small beetles. I sampled again at the Elbow, but neglected to record the bag.

On my way back to the trailer, I happened to glance at the head of a Black-eyed Susan, delighted to see what appeared to be an unusual blister Beetle feeding on the pollen. This turned out to be a new such beetle for us, our fourth species in the family Meloidae. These are the Blister Beetles, also called Oil Beetles. All in all, it turned out to be a productive day with a few good finds to highlight the adventure. Soon we expect some bat experts to visit, thanks again to Daria. Not to waste a visit, we hope to run a light trap after the bat people are done.

Phenology: Bladdernuts shedding seed capsules, mosquitoes and jewel wings continuing scarce since beginning of warm weather.

Biological Inventory (ATBI)

New Species: (10% new arthropods)

‘Convergent Firefly’	<i>Pyractomena</i> sp.	BCF KD Je21/18
‘Red-striped Oil Beetle’	<i>Zonitis (vittigera or perforata)</i>	LM KD Je21/18

Species Notes:

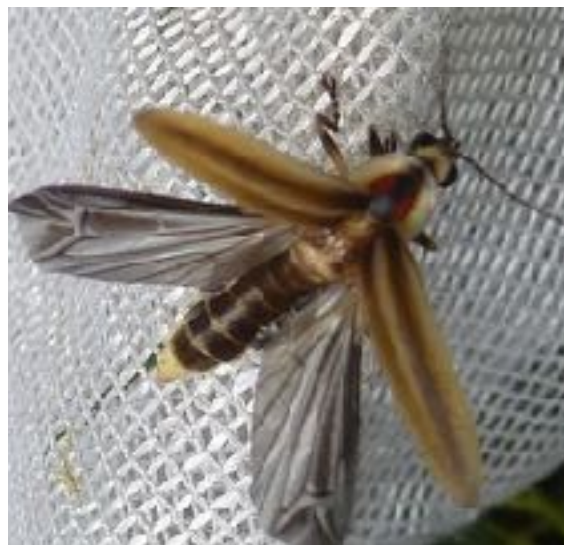
The ‘convergent’ part of our temporary handle for the firefly refers to the rather strongly tapered abdomen, a frequent character of this genus. But I was unable to distinguish species. The parenthetical choice for the second find was lifted right out of the BugGuide description, as the entomologists at Iowa State (owners of the website) couldn’t decide which of the two possible species their images pointed to.

Recurring Species:

Northern Crab Spider (*Mecaphesa asperata*); ‘Miniature Jumping spider’ (*Pelegrina proterva*); ‘Black-banded Harvestman’ (*Leiobunum vittatum*); ‘Red-headed Dwarf Spider’ (*Hypselistes florens*); Common Whitetail (*Plathemis lydia*); European Earwig (*Forficula auricularia*); Meadow Katydid (*Conocephalus* sp.); White-margined Burrowing Bug (*Sehirus cinctus*); ‘Two-lined Mirid’ (*Stenodema vicinum*); Tarnished Plant Bug (*Lygus lineolaris*); Helmeted Squash Bug (*Euthochtha galeator*); Spined Assassin Bug (*Sinea diadema*); Eastern Eyed Click Beetle (*Alaus oculatus*); ‘Fairchild’s Firefly’ (*Photuris fairchildi*); Peck’s Skipper (*Polites peckius*); Virginia Ctenucha Moth (*Ctenucha virginica*); Crocus Geometer (*Xanthotype sospeta*); Northern Paper Wasp (*Polistes fuscatus*).

Deferred or Discarded: (“unID’d” means unsuccessful attempt to identify) UnID’d small black wasp; green hopper nymph; unID’d Crane Fly; black and brown bug; small brown mottled beetle; mosquito, unID’d small fly; dark Mirid nymph; unID’d green hopper.

Image Gallery



A Fairchild’s Firefly at the very instant of take off, caught by sheer luck.



The Eastern Eyed Click Beetle that showed up in the auxiliary rainfall tray is shown here drying out just before it nimbly scurried away with a prod from me. Loose leaves are debris from Steve's weedeater.



The Helmeted Squash Bug (*Euthoctha galeator*) is a fairly common insect in the Leaf-footed Bug Family called Coreidae. The femurs and/or tibia of these insects, especially on leg 3, are swollen or inflated.



A rain-soaked coyote checks over its shoulder as it passes Trail Cam #1. This is our most productive trail cam on site. Since our previous visit a week earlier, there was light traffic that included a feral cat with a bushy tail (night), a Coyote (night), the “bud buck” seen on page 1, the Coyote above, a Raccoon (night), another Raccoon (night, 2 days later), a third Raccoon (night, another 2 days later), and a fourth one (night, one day later).