

Newport Forest

August 20 2000

2:30 - 6:10 pm

Weather: mixed sun/cloud, later clear, calm, 23C

Purpose: to explore Newport Forest by water

Participants: Pat, Kee

We arrived at the site about an hour later than we anticipated, visiting the Hurdles to load the canoe. Edgar, as usual, was most helpful. We drove slowly down to the OCF entrance, unloaded the canoe, and made the Landing in two trips, given all the paddles, life jackets, lunch bag, haversack, etc. At the Landing, we were surprised by the sudden appearance of a Giant Swallowtail, very large with its indubitable brown bands. (Where are the Prickly Ash trees?)

We launched the canoe into a moderate current, the river now exposing a broad expanse of gravel bars, and drifted downstream to look at the RSF from the river. Just looking from the river, it's usually difficult to tell whether you're looking at a strip of trees with a field behind them, or an extensive forest. The RSF section of bank was no exception. Along the way, we had hoped to spot a Green-backed Heron, but perhaps did not spend long enough looking.

With a bit of difficulty we manoeuvred our way upstream past the gravel bars and on to the mouth of Fleming's Creek, which we found partially blocked by overhanging boughs and dead branches. Pat clipped industriously until we had room to bull our way into the quiet darkness of the creek. Steep clay banks, marked with Raccoon and bird tracks, wound their way into the forest gloom. We paddled quietly upstream, rounding several bends, until we came to a gravel riffle, where I had to get out and tow the canoe upstream a few metres. We also had to duck under two fallen trees that would otherwise bar our progress. We came, finally, after about 150 metres, to another gravel riffle that blocked us, so we pulled into a little notch adjacent to one bank and got out to stretch and look around on a gravelly island beside the riffle. It didn't take Pat long to find our first new species of the day, a curious clam with a ridge running obliquely from the beak to the posterior margin. This later proved to be a "Wabash Pigtoe" S2-S3 on the NHIC Mollusc list!

From the island, we spied a large twig nest in one of the nearby trees on the left (upstream) bank, the size normally constructed by large hawks or Great Horned Owls. No bird was visible in the nest.

We decided to explore just a bit further, so we had to portage the canoe about 10

metres over the island, then proceed around the bend only to discover all further travel blocked by a fallen tree that was simply too low to duck under. Turning the canoe around, we thought to “shoot” all the little rapids all the way to the mouth of the creek, but the riffles were simply too shallow and twice I had to get out to help the canoe along. Finally, we fairly shot out into the river and soon were landing the canoe.

We wandered the extensive “beach,” looking for interesting things. Beside the usual, assortment of Devonian fossils, we found some more of those curious, reddish, heavy stones that Nick and I had picked up yesterday. They seem to be metallic, but there is no rust on the surface. On the clay near the water we found tracks of White-tailed Deer, Raccoon, Sandpiper, and Great Blue Heron. We watched a Spotted Sandpiper “fishing” at the water’s edge and tried to take a close look at a small school of minnows that were swimming in one of the “lagoons” between bars. We remarked that the gravel bars were approximately evenly spaced along the Hogsback Bluffs, as though they had leaked out of the clay hills in long strands. This is very unlikely, of course, so some force in the river must be at work to concentrate them into discrete zones, a kind of wave phenomenon.

We set out chairs down by the river and enjoyed a peaceful lunch, watching the brownish (now clearing) water roll by at a walking pace. Twice fish jumped at floating flies and a few Cedar Waxwings were out, performing their aerial dance over the water. Reluctantly, we gathered out things, stowed the canoe in some heavy vegetation near the landing, and made our way back to the van. A few minutes later, we visited Edgar and Nina who had just finished their supper.

New Species:

Wabash Pigtoe	<i>Fusconaia flava</i>	pd/KD FC
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ps: don’t forget the Giant Swallowtail, not “new,” but another sighting date.