

Newport Forest

August 21 2000

3:00 - 7:15 pm

Weather: cloudy with clear breaks, warm 26C, humid, light breeze

Purpose: to show reforestation project to Glen and Darren Jacobs

Participants: Kee, Glen Jacobs, Darren Jacobs

As I drove along the Beattie Line, approaching Furnival road, I spotted a rather large flock of Sparrows. The flock made a kind of cloud that changed density when all the birds wheeled at once. I watched it as I drove, only gradually becoming aware of a large turkey Vulture that kept getting caught up in the cloud. Then I realized that it was not a Turkey Vulture, but a very large Hawk, quite possibly an Eagle, that was being mobbed by the Sparrows. Eventually, they left it alone and returned to a tree (en masse) just above a herd of cattle resting in the shade of a large tree at the corner of Furnival Road. They descended, in groups, to peck among the cattle (seeds in dung?) The Hawk, meanwhile, continued to wheel majestically, interrupting its smooth flight to perform a strange manoeuvre. It would put on the brakes and flap its wings vigorously in one spot, like treading water, as though preparing to dive, then thinking better of it. The "Hawk" had a very broad tail, broader than most Buteos, so I would lean toward it being a Bald Eagle.

The sun had come out by the time I arrived at Newport Forest. I had little trouble stapling the laminated paper signs to small rectangles of plywood and nailing these, in turn, to fenceposts. Approaching from either direction, the first thing a driver sees is NEWPORT FOREST. Then, about 30-40' further along, he sees CLOSED CONSERVATION AREA. Finally he sees NO TRESPASSING. At the gate I posted a sign which says: NOTICE: THIS PROPERTY, NEWPORT FOREST, WAS PURCHASED AS A NATURAL AREA FOR CONSERVATION RESEARCH AND EDUCATION. ENTRY WITHOUT A PERMIT IS PROHIBITED. INQUIRIES: 679-8105. OMNIBUS RESEARCH, INC. I had added the company name simply to make it clear to those who read the sign, that the ownership had definitely changed, something Nina Hurdle had stressed was important for the locals who have become used to going on the property.

I then went over to the Hurdles to give Nina some books from Pat and to borrow Edgar's brush-whacker. Nina volunteered her long-handled ground-shears. As we all stood in the Hurdles' driveway talking, a grey jeep came along the road, Darren and Glen Jacobs in it. I introduced Nina, then Darren, Glen and I drove down into the pasture, parking by the OCF entrance. We stood for a time, while I explained the plan to reforest the lower meadow and how I had come to the

conclusion that the quickest and surest route to reforestation was simply to dig up saplings from an adjacent forest and to plant them in the open in the spring. The species selected would have to be sun-tolerant, but that was the main requirement. I explained that for such a scheme to work, we would have to tag a hundred or more seedlings/saplings during the late summer and fall because in the spring, we would be transplanting the trees before their leaves were out and if they weren't tagged, we would have no idea what we were dealing with. We all agreed to work together on both projects.

Darren had brought an axe. I took the spade, brush-whacker and long-handled clippers from the van and we carried them down "Edgar's Road" (formerly called "The Track" in these reports). As we rounded the bend in the road, there was a heavy crashing noise to our left. "Big buck" said Darren. "I saw its antlers." As we walked along the OCF trail, Darren explained that deer were quite plentiful along the Thames Corridor forests, especially near and inside Newport Forest.

About 100 metres along the trail, Glen pointed out an immense hornets nest, hanging some 15' above the trail and about 30' to the south. Glen said, "My grandmother told me that in a year when the wasps build high nests, you can expect high snows that winter." Soon we came to the end of the trail, just 30' or so short of the Hogsback summit. Darren chopped roots and pegged in the "railings," I carved a level trail with the shovel, and Glen went ahead, whacking brush to make a preliminary clearing. As we worked, Glen spied a plant that I thought was a kind of Woodland Strawberry (but which Pat later told me was Agrimony). Glen said this plant was good for the treatment of colds. The trail was now so steep that I felt obliged to cut some earthen steps to make the climb easier for less able walkers.

Soon we were on the Hogsback itself and moved ahead with increasing speed, clearing only in a desultory fashion, cutting branches and shifting logs. We made our way back under the power lines through dense Hawthorns and came, very quickly, into the west Hogsback Forest. Here things were much more open and we walked easily to a kind of precipice into the RSF. We spied a natural ramp and descended along it into the RSF, noting some mushrooms, which I collected.

We found the RSF trail and were not on it long when Glen spotted a rather mature White Elm. "Boy, that's really something," he said. "It isn't often you find a mature White Elm these days, what with the Dutch Elm disease." He was right. I noted the tree's position, about 20' from the trail, to the north. Further along, near the end of the trail. Glen said, "Look at that." It was a Slippery Elm and a

White Elm, growing side by side, a kind of classroom example of the difference between the two kinds of bark.

We came out, finally, by the River and, instead of taking the trail along the Hogsback Bluffs, we decided to walk the gravel “beach,” instead. Darren and I sat to have some refreshment, while Glen paced back and forth, looking for interesting things. Strangely enough, he found the same heavy red stones that Pat and I had been picking up the last few visits. He announced that they were “thunderstones,” but didn’t explain the significance of the name. Darren nudged me. “You wanted to learn some Delaware. Now’s a good time to ask him.” I wasn’t sure what I wanted to say, so Glen picked something for me:

Anisheek’ (Thank You) Kee’shalimu’kwang (Creator) wa’makwak’ wali’to -- pa’tawi’yang (for all the beautiful things you have given us.)

He told a story that he used in history lessons for kids on the Reserve. The Delaware once had three main clans, Wolf, Turkey, and Turtle. These represented Land (the Wolf), Air (the Turkey), and Water (the Turtle). But of the three symbols, the Turtle was most powerful, as it embraced all three elements. It was clear that it represented the water, for turtles could swim. It was just as clear that it represented land, for turtles could also walk on land. But how did they represent the air? Could Turtles fly? I was puzzled and I’m not sure Darren knew the answer, either. “Because they lay eggs!” Glen cracked up, laughing.

Darren recalled some hunting experiences along the river. He had “rattled out” deer along the banks by banging two antlers together, imitating the sound of bucks in rut. If there was a buck nearby, it would be irresistibly drawn to the sound, often to its doom. “There’s lots of geese along here,” said Darren. Sometimes you see whole flocks of them. We sometimes see White Geese in among the Canada Geese. Further downstream, there’s a kind of warm spot in the river, where the ice never forms completely. That’s where a large flock can be found, pretty much right through the winter, feeding.”

At this point I stretched and suggested supper, so we picked up our tools (except for Nina’s long-handled shears) and headed toward the Landing. Along the way, we ran into the Raccoon scat that Pat and I had noticed on Sunday. I pointed out the seeds to Glen, wondering what the Raccoons had been eating. Right by the Landing, Glen found a bush with bright red berries. “Is that some kind of cherry?” he asked. I tasted one. “Tastes like a Chokecherry,” I said. There was no mistaking the acridic, cloying taste, somewhat sweetish. Glen held up the seeds.

“Maybe this is what the ‘coons have been eating.” Indeed, it was. The seeds were identical. We continued on, back out Edgar’s Road. As we went, Glen said, “Someone’s got a canoe hidden in the brush there, I see.” He had spotted my canoe. I explained that it was just there temporarily.

At the OCF entrance, Glen spotted some Bittersweet, with its orange berries. I was glad of this, because Pat and I had seen some earlier along the Fleming Creek bluff, but I could not reach the boughs to get a sample. This time, I did not fail to get one.

We drove out to the road, returned the Hurdles’ tools (except for the long-handled shears), and drove off to a diner about 2 miles south of Wardsville, where we had hamburgers to the sound of loud rock music, a background that makes you listen twice as hard.

New Species;

Bittersweet	<i>Celastrus scandens</i>	OCF GJ
Chokecherry	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	RL gj/KD
“Ghost Parasol”	<i>Xerula megalospora</i>	RSF KD
Weeping Widow	<i>Psathyrella velutina</i>	RSF KD