

Newport Forest

May 17 2003

2:15 - 12:00 pm

Weather: mixed sun/cloud; NE < 5 kmh; LM 18 C; FCF 17 C

Purpose: overnight stay

Participants: Pat, Kee

When we arrived on site, we found Eva and her great grandchildren already there. Jordan and Karissa had brought a Grey Tree Frog with them in the bottom of a coffee can. Eva had told them that they should release it, so I took the GGC halfway down to the creek and we set the frog out on a root of the large BM, just above the trail. (Ps)

I checked the trees in both the North and South Cores, removing the gards from 7 trees in the former (34 viable stems remaining) and 3 in the latter (25 viable stems remaining).

After Eva and the GGC left, Pat and I took a walk to the river and then on to the RSF. Nearly at the forest, I spotted a reddish-brown animal scuttling along the lower trail - a Groundhog. This is remarkable for Newport Forest, as we had not yet seen the animal on site.

After inspecting the Virginia Bluebells (still in bloom), Pat and I made it up to the HB and, to save energy, decided to walk along the Hb and down the east side to ET. Along the way, we spotted an Indigo Bunting, resplendent in a patch of sunlight on a stump. Then it flew away. Pat thought it might have a nest up there.

We followed a narrow and rather shallow drainage ravine downslope to the BCF floor and then out to ET. At the trailer around 7 pm, I sat down, shut my eyes for 5 minutes, and tried to see how many animals I could identify. In order, I heard a Grey Tree Frog (our friend?), a Red-eyed Vireo, a White-breasted Nuthatch, an Eastern Towhee, a Song Sparrow, a Baltimore Oriole, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, an American Robin, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and an american Crow.

After a late supper, we strolled up to the Hurdles', seeing 4 Tree Swallows and a Bobolink on the way. Back at the trailer, as sunset darkened to dusk, we heard something I hadn't experienced since childhood: the call of a Nighthawk!

The stars came out quite brilliantly after nightfall as a shield of cloud drifted slowly off to the east. To the north we saw occasional lightning flashes and distant rumbling. We looked for flying squirrels in the Hickory tree, but saw none.

We conducted occasional animal watches, seeing one raccoon, then two, feeding on the cat kibble we had left out earlier. The kibble works well because the sound of it crunching tells you there's an animal out there. At about 1 pm, Pat shone a flashlight outside, catching a coon's "headlights" in the beam and, later, a young cottontail making its way, well, down the (Fleming Creek) bunny trail.

A cool and misty dawn greeted us. Birds called everywhere.

After breakfast, we forded the creek and walked to the first bench by the Fleming Creek "sand bar." Some 20 metres behind the bench, I laid out a 10m x 10m Garlic Mustard monitoring plot. The idea is to a) make a rough map of the open and closed areas within the plot, b) cut all the GM plants, doing as little harm as possible to the other vegetation, c) observe what plants succeed the GM, whilst keeping any new 2nd year GM cut. We will not cut or destroy the first year rosettes, however.

After lunch, Pat birdwatched at the RL and I planted a TT and a SiM (a gift from Eva) in the South Core. Pat heard a Yellowthroat singing at the BCF edge. We spent a considerable time cleaning up the camp, then left after supper.

Birds: (30 -- incl additional birds below)

American Robin (4 LM); Baltimore Oriole (3m+f LM); Barn Swallow (2 UM); Black-capped Chickadee (2 Tr); Blue Jay (pr+1 Tr); Bobolink (2m UM); Gray Catbird (1 ET); Downy Woodpecker (2 Tr); Eastern Towhee (1 BCF); Common Grackle (2 ET/BCF); Great blue Heron (1 UM); Great Crested Flycatcher (1 RSF); Hairy Woodpecker (1 RSF); Indigo Bunting (1m HB); Meadowlark (1 UM); Mourning Dove (1TR); Northern Cardinal (1 Tr); Red-bellied Woodpecker (1m Tr); Red-eyed Vireo (1 FCF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (pr+1 Tr); Ruffed Grouse (1 HB); Song Sparrow (1 LM); Tree Swallow (4 UM); Turkey Vulture (1 LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (1 tr); Yellow Warbler (1 ET/RL)

New species:

Groundhog	<i>Marmota monax</i>	RB/R/RSF
Common Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	LM

Note: This was probably a Woodcock and not a Nighthawk [struck from ATBI list]

Ethology: Virginia Bluebells still blooming in some patches

additional birds:

Canada Goose (2 LM); Common Yellowthroat (1m BCF/LM); Eastern Bluebird (1 UM/GF); Purple Martin (1 LM); Screech Owl (1 BCF);