

Newport Forest

April 24 2004

3:25 pm - 2-night stay

Weather: prec. 14 mm; sunny/hazy; NE < 10 kmh; LM 15 C; FCF 14 C

Purpose: three-day stay

Participants: Pat, Kee (plus a visitor - Daria Kocsinski)

Coming in, we spied a Northern Harrier swooping low over the UM. We stopped at the TS and took 3 OBs up to Catalpa Hill, where we planted them. (Catalpas planted last year seem not to have taken.) As we were finishing, Steve and Karen drove in and walked up to meet us.

At the trailer, Steve and I went to the mouth of the creek to retrieve three of the deck sections that Steven and Darren had fished out of the creek last week. We dragged and carried the sections somewhat laboriously over to the trailer, then crossed Fleming Creek and went to Eva's Hairpin, where we fished another section out of the creek. We thus now have 6 bridge deck sections, and the far side trestle, all intact. While Steve and Karen walked the FCT, I installed the keeper on the peg trestle on the near side. When Steve and Karen returned, they reported seeing a mink on the outside bank of FC, near the shore. We had a break in the nook, enjoying some venison that Steve had smoked and salted. Excellent taste!

After supper, I examined all the trees in the two meadow cores, surprised to see how many appeared healthy. Several trees that I had thought were dead, including some rather severe deernips, have come back and show clear buds further down their stems. I feel very optimistic about the kind of growth we might expect this year.

Around sunset I walked along the shore of the first pond by Edgar's Trail and heard about 7 Spring Peepers calling, as well as two Northern Leopard frogs, with their irritable croak. I could see how much canopy was still open at that end of the BCF and realized how much more planting was needed. I walked to the gate to close it, then visited briefly with Edgar, across the road. He told me of the time in 1974 when he first moved to Clay Knoll. The FCF was pasture, looking for all the world like one gigantic golf green.

At night one or two raccoons showed up for DBs and, much later, I was awaked by the sound of a raccoon dispute coming from the general direction of EW, near the creek mouth.

April 25/04

We began the day with a visit from Ken Wilton, who had come to replace the valve on the Droughtbuster. I met him up at the TS in a light drizzle. After some struggle, we got the old, cracked valve off the tank using two pipe wrenches. Ken promised to return in a few hours with a replacement valve.

Pat & I began the day's work with a visit to the north core in FCF, with a bucket of american Beech saplings (barely more than seedlings), planting 8 of them in favorable locations in among the other trees. For these trees I used the "bamboo tipi" method, as I had for other small saplings recently. Pat found a whole colony of Dutchman's Breeches and spent some time pulling all the Garlick mustard in the immediate vicinity of these native plants. In the process, she uncovered a new scarlet cup fungus. Pat went for a walk when her part was done. Somehow she became disoriented after leaving the trail and began bamboo tipi walking the wrong way. She went through an immense patch of Garlick mustard (probably in the thorn woods) and returned in a state of near-exhaustion. Then Ken called on the WT to say he was back with the valve. I walked up to watch the completed installation and to receive the invoice. After he left, I planted a White Ash in the group by Lorne's sign.

During the morning we had received several five-minute accumulations of light rain which gradually turned into "scotch mist" as the wind slowly swung around from the NE to the SE. Gradually, the air temperature warmed from about 8 C to 15 C by 1:30 pm.

While Pat birdwatched, I took the remaining 7 beech saplings and planted them without tipis in the east core of the BCF (there is no west core yet). I protected them by piling small logs and branches around them. I was pleased to see that many of the deernipped trees were regenerating despite their setbacks.

While Pat took her afternoon nap, I went for a walk in the RSF (vaguely hoping that there would be another abandoned raccoon kit near Plot #8). On the river bluffs, I spotted what appeared to be a few male Orioles (Baltimore or Orchard, I couldn't tell) In the RSF near Plot #8, I encountered a very strange "bush." It consisted of several inch-thick "canes" (light, pithy wood) many of which were

sprouting tightly clustered compound leaves (looking almost like White Ash) from nodes near or above eye level. I took a sample, but left it on the bench on the HB.

After supper, our guest, Daria Kocsinski arrived. She is a grad student in the E&E division who works with herptiles, specializing in frogs. She put on her headlamp, gathered an aquatic net and accompanied Pat & me into the BCF, where Spring Peepers called regularly and Western Chorus Frogs only intermittently. She captured two Wood Frogs (these being first-timers for her) and we spent a lot of time probing the bottoms of several vernal pools, hoping to bring up a salamander. We also rolled about 50 logs of one description or another, hoping to spot a newt or salamander, but with no result. In the course of all this dipping, I kept noticing what looked like decayed tree buds, perhaps fallen from Black willows nearby. But the “buds” were so uniform that I could hardly believe they were all from the same kind of tree. Every pond contained hundreds of these things, at a guess. It was only when I realized that they occasionally moved that I realized they weren’t decayed buds at all, but caddisfly larvae. Daria gasped when I pulled the end off one of the cases to reveal the business end of a caddisfly larva, waving its forelegs and palps vigorously.

While climbing over an elm log, I discovered my first ever Little Nest Fungus. (See new species.) It looked like a faded version of one of the illustrations in the Audubon fungus guide.

By the time it was fully dark, we had worked our way almost to the end of the ponds at the edge of the big Black Willow swamp. Here, quite at random, we came upon a very large frog that reminded me immediately of a bullfrog. While she held the animal, I flipped back and forth between two sections of her field guide, reading descriptions of the “dorso-lateral ridge” and other field marks until she was satisfied that we had a large, female Green Frog in our possession.

April 26/04

On our last day, I went into the BCF pools to collect some of the casemaker caddisfly larvae for Stan Caveney, hoping that he might be able to tell us the species. I stopped and stood in the water of one of the pools and watched what I thought were minnows for several minutes, wondering if they had come in with the March flood and were now trapped. However, I noticed strange, forward-moving waves along their “bellies” and suddenly realized that they were fairy

shrimps. (The previous evening I had seen two fairy shrimps in the western pools that had purple tails, not like these.) I planted my last tree for this visit, a Yellowwood, in the north core of the LM, along the side of the road.

Birds: (21)

American Crow (UM); American Goldfinch (UM); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (Tr); Brown-headed Cowbird (LM/HBF); Brown Thrasher (LM/HBF); Canada Goose (BCF); Common Flicker (LM); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Eastern Towhee (CH); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (Tr); Northern Harrier (Hy); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Red-winged Blackbird (Tr); Song Sparrow (HBF); Tree Swallow (UM); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); White-throated Sparrow (Tr); Wild Turkey (HBF)

Note: Kee may have seen some Baltimore Oriole males

New species:

Scarlet Elfen Cup	<i>Sarcoscypha coccinea</i>	FCF pd/KD
Little Nest Polypore	<i>Poronidulus conchifer</i>	BCF KD

New Species Notes:

In the BCF vernal ponds there are at least three spp. of fairy shrimp, one sp. of leech, one sp. of casemaker caddisfly, and one sp. of pointed black winkle.

In the RSF near the river, there is a woody bush consisting of tall, single canes with wide (1") smooth stems marked by small brown spots and perfect ringlike joints - almost like bamboo, but with no swelling at nodes. The plant has opposite (probably compound) leaves.