

Newport Forest

Wednesday August 10 2005

5:30 - 4:35 pm

Weather: prec. 0 mm; RH 80 %; ovcast; NE \leq 10; LM 24 C; FCF 24 C

Purpose: watering trees

Participants: Kee

Since there was not enough time in one visit to double-water the trees (after my deliberate non-watering for a week to encourage root development) I stayed overnight. I arrived late on the property owing to a visit to Ray Axford to inspect his cedar nursery. I will pick up a dozen cedars to plant by the river this fall. While on his property, we spotted a White-striped Black, a small, distinctive geometrid moth fluttering about in the clover of his lawn.

At the property, Eva & the GGCs showed up as I was preparing to deliver the first load of water. During the visit, it rained very lightly for a minute or two. After she left, I watered the trees in the GF and most of the SC, then returned to the tank for another load which I had time to half-deliver before the impending sunset forced me to abandon the effort for the morning. There was just time to make supper, then go down to the creek to rescue the trestle and wrestle it up to the far bank for placement next week.

Walking up to the gate to close for the night, I was delighted to see a (subadult) deer bound across my path about 50 m in front of me and off across the UM into the BCF. I visited Nina & Edgar briefly, only to hear Nina's wisdom on deer that are shot and wounded; "There's no need for those hunters to chase that thing up and down the county. It'll always come back to where it was shot. Maybe it wants to get its life back."

I walked home in the dark, watching the slow descent of the crescent moon in the west. Katydids were calling loudly everywhere, filling the descending dark with their metallic chorus. Back at the trailer, I spotted a young raccoon enjoying the last of the DBs. I had earlier made a new feeder for the flying squirrels, setting a small plank on the outer branches of the hickory tree to foil raccoons who would predate the squirrels at the tray feeder. (The outer branches are too weak to support them.)

I listened for a while to the sounds of the night. Beside the katydids, I could hear field crickets, bush crickets (in the LM) and tree crickets, an orthopteran symphony that continued (as it would turn out) for the duration of this warm night. The sound of an apparently young Screech Owl caught my ear; it would

begin its descending whinny, but the note would trail off uncertainly and comically, even rising on occasion. The warble was equally uncertain. As if the teach it the proper notes, a mature SO called back from EW. A Great Blue called out suddenly from the mouth of FC, first squawking, then croaking, followed by a dreadful rasping noise, as if something had caught it and was busy breaking its neck. Throughout, "Mr Banjo," the Green Frog twanged every five minutes or so from the creek below. The sound of a distant diesel train horn would occasionally punctuate all of this from the west. Occasional flying squirrels would land on the roof of the trailer, patter quickly across, then off into the night.

The sky cleared to reveal the sparkling heavens. A small bat twinkled by a few times. Then a meteor streaked across. Then, later, another. Then two more. Again and again. I sat on the trailer deck, enjoying the show. It wasn't until I got home that Pat told me the Perseid meteor shower is now "on." The radiant appeared to be in the east, behind the trailer. The summer triangle was directly overhead, the stars Deneb (in Cygnus), Vega (in Lyra), and Altair in (Aquila) all burned brightly.

As I worked at the laptop on the trailer table, I had left the door open the better to hear the night sounds. A Katydid flew into the trailer, settled on a near wall and, presently, began to sing. How loud! I could see the wings vibrate together each time. The insect suddenly flew to a shopping bag that was perched near the coal oil lamp. I gently took it out into the night.

Next morning I discovered that the flying squirrels had either not discovered my new feeder or had no interest in the sliced apple & rice I had placed there. (We're out of bird feed.) After breakfast, I poured the rest of the water, completing the SC and most of the NC before I ran out. I delivered the final load to the remainder of the NC, then watered *all* the smaller trees again.

As I returned with the last load of water, I spotted what looked like a deflated white balloon fluttering from a distant thistle in the UM. I stopped the van to walk over, fantasizing that another balloon from Greenville Texas had landed on the property. It turned out to be thistledown that had been caught in a large orb-web. There in one corner of the web, a brilliantly coloured Black-and-Yellow Argiope waited for me to leave.

During the afternoon, there was time to go down to the RL and change that sample bottle on the malaise trap in the BCF. There were butterflies everywhere, including what is turning out to be an increasingly common sight this season -

Giant Swallowtails. Down by the creek, I disturbed a Wood Frog another increasingly common sight this year - perhaps to balance the almost complete absence of Leopard Frogs (so far). Although the day began with sun, it clouded over before I left, the air temperature dropping to 28 C.

Birds:

American Crow (EW); American Robin (BCF); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (Tr); Canada Goose (flock) (BCF); Catbird (RL); Common Grackle (GF); Eastern Towhee (ER); Field Sparrow (LM); Great Blue Heron (FC/TR); Mourning Dove (HP); Northern Cardinal (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Rock Dove (LM); Screech Owl (BCF); Song Sparrow (LM); Turkey Vulture (HBF); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wood Thrush (FCF)

Phenology: occasional fireflies through the night