

A Tree Walk at Newport Forest

Newport Forest Monday September 21 2010 2:10 - 5:30 pm

weather: prec. 0 mm; RH82%; BP 102.1 kPa; clear; calm; T 23° C

purpose: tree walk

participants: Kee, Heather Campbell

Heather Campbell is a member of the Newport Stewards Committee who wants to know her trees a little better. So today we took a "tree walk" in which we examined both the leaves and bark of about 25 different species. Heather will be one of the people giving tours at the Tanager Tract. now in the process of acquisition by the Thames Talbot Land Trust.

She brought a looseleaf binder and attached a leaf or two to every page with notes about the species, appearance of the bark, etc. Along the way we visited the river bluffs, where I spotted a Wood Frog hiding under some leaves. This was a nice sighting because we hadn't seen a Wood Frog in about 3 years! At the same time, we scanned the shoreline for basking Spiny Softshell Turtles. None of these for about three years, also.

The weather was superb (albeit dry) and the first leaves crunched underfoot. Looking up as much as we did today, I became more aware of just how many of our trees have dead/dying tops. Not just the Bitternut Hickories (which are mostly down anyway) or the White Elm (with endemic problems) but Beeches and Maples, as well. On the Hogsback there is even less moisture and, consequently, even more dying tops. Down in the Blind Creek Forest, Heather pointed out an interesting mushroom that I had walked right by. (S) Earlier we had found a troop of Agarics with short, stubby stalks and a double ring growing on the grassy track near the trailer.

I showed Heather some of the pitfalls of identifying-by-bark, such as species in which the bark changes dramatically from a young tree to an old one: Sycamore, Walnut, and Hackberry, among others. She was particularly impressed with some of the giant Sycamores, many of which have \geq one-metre diameter. Our tour was a bit rushed, as we both had things to do after the walk.

Coverage: (in no particular order) Black Walnut; Oaks: Red Oak, Chinkapin Oak, White Oak, Bur Oak; Elms: White Elm, Slippery Elm; Hackberry; Maples: Sugar Maple, Black Maple, Box Elder, Ashes: White Ash, Blue Ash; American Beech; American Basswood; Black (x) Willow; Understory: Muscledwood, Ironwood, Dogwood(s), Ninebark, etc.

new species:

Sidewalk Mushroom *Agaricus bitorquis* Track/LM KD Sp20/10
&Freckled Cort & Cortinarius [*phollideus*] BCF/HB KD Sp20/10

Notes: 1. The Sidewalk Mushroom does not actually grow on sidewalks, but any firmly packed soil, such as the farm track where we found it. 2. Doubts [square brackets] about the Cort specimen arise only from the habitat notes for this species, which is supposed to grow "under birches." If we take that as "birch family," we may be off the hook, since there are many Ironwoods and Muscledwoods in the area. Until we know, the square brackets stay on.

bee protocol: (goldenrod now about 75% in seed)

HB BB OB SF LF SW LW

38 17 1 3 2 4 5

(52 36 1 11 8 0 1) << previous count

Note: the counts have been steadily dropping over the last three weeks. This makes sense, since the main attractant (goldenrods) are going to seed and no longer supply pollen. Next: a comparison of this year's counts with last year's.

IMAGES:



Most of the Milkweed Bug nymphs photographed three weeks ago have completed the transition to adults, as here.



A wild Clematis called Virgin's Bower festoons a young Walnut (?)



The Wood Frog is one of our more "valuable" amphibians. (Look closely. It blends in pretty well.)