

935

Newport Forest
Monitoring Nature

My29/14

Date & time: Thursday May 29 2014 2:00 - 9:30 pm

Weather: Pr 0mm; RH 62%; BP 102.3 kPa; NE 5-15 kmh; clear; T 23° C

Activity: More ATBI and Mammal Monitoring

One of today's mini-projects was to determine the "identity" of the female raccoon currently with kits in the nursery box. I remained until sunset, obtaining several images of her, as well as an "auslander" from the Fleming Creek area. The image below shows the mother wolfing down cat kibble at the base of her tree.



We will call her "Two-stripe" for the distinctive double peak above the eyes. She also has a solid, narrow mask and white fur on forelegs, cheeks and eyebrows. In short we can now identify her as an individual. We also have some trail cam imagery of her from early May. As for Wendy the Weasel, the whimsical name will do; the presence of other adult weasels in the area is unlikely, given the sparse distribution pattern of these mammals.

Driving into the property was once again a delight as the "mudhole" (a seep that crosses the track) has now all but dried up. The trailer is becoming more habitable.

I added a protective plastic sleeve to the seat cushions of the tiny dining area and brought in a new propane tank and supply hose as “someone” had gnawed through the old one — for what purpose one can only guess at.

I walked the old watering trail through the Regeneration Zone (RZ), a one-hectare section of the Lower Meadow (LM) that we have planted rather thickly with a great variety of deciduous trees. Before deeding the property to the TTLT, our purpose was to make this a “demonstration forest”, a bad idea that we (and everyone else) must now live with. The forest will mature into something rarely to be seen in North America or anywhere else, for that matter. But looking on the bright side, maybe it could still serve as some kind of teaching tool: Bigtooth Aspen; Black Walnut; Boxelder; Chinkapin Oak; Eastern Cottonwood; Quaking Aspen, Red Ash; Red Oak; Shagbark Hickory; Silver Maple; Sugar Maple; Tulip Tree; White Ash; White Elm, etc. are all doing well up to this point. As for the watering trail, we have been using it in recent years as a point-count trail for the “bee protocol” — counting Honeybees during the peak of the Aster-goldenrod bloom.

Later I went into the Blind Creek Forest armed with my aquatic net, only to discover that the ponds I had intended to sample have pretty well dried out, leaving ponds A and B, which remain deep yet yielding no invertebrates. The surfaces were covered by cottony masses of light green *Mougeotia*, a common alga. Due to my initial disappointment and the heavy concentration of mosquitoes, I decided to return to camp. On my way out I was astonished by a giant Swallowtail butterfly passing right in front of me, sporting its brown and yellow pattern.

Back in camp I descended the bluffs to visit Fleming Creek, still with the aquatic net. The Lower Rapids were almost back to their usual depth so I decided to go kick-fishing. In this method, one uses the rectangular form of the hoop: Jam the (straight) outer edge of the net into some rocks while facing downstream. Kick any of the larger rocks in front of you, dislodging smaller stones and any minnows or darters that happen to be hiding near the bases of larger rocks. The current sweeps them into the net. On my third effort I captured a darter (small member of the Perch family) in my net. It looked like a Johnny Darter, common in the rapids, but I took several images anyway. Later at home I discovered that it wasn't a Johnny Darter at all, but a Fantail Darter, a new species for us — as below.

Back in the trailer for another repair session, I heard a kind of chittering hum from the box under the window seats. Was Wendy the Weasel singing some kind of mustelid lullaby to her blind, hairless and still rather tiny young? Get real! Today I suddenly realized that the major contributor to the weasel scat may have been us,

so to speak. Rather than go about her assigned role of preying on Meadow Voles and other small mammals, Wendy has been consuming the kibble with which we sometimes bait the trail cams. What did we expect, with food and housing laid on?

In the late afternoon I walked along the edge of the Gallery Forest, hoping to run into more spiders. I had stopped to admire one of my favourite trees, the American Basswood, when I noticed a shiny metallic green beetle on one of the leaves. It seemed completely unafraid of me and allowed several closeups before retreating to the other side of the leaf. I thought it was perhaps in the Soldier Beetle or Leaf Beetle family, but once again received a surprise when I got home to examine the imagery more closely to determine family. Blister beetle? Some species of Meloid appear in the spring, apparently. This one was a beautiful metallic green. Further on I spotted a Leaf-footed bug flying restlessly from leaf to leaf. I followed it, but barely needed to take a picture of this common insect: *Acanthocephala terminalis* that flies away twice. I returned to the Nook to take a rest when I spotted another insect, this time a Soldier Beetle (Cantharidae) marching across the floor of the Nook. Apparently our second species of *Podabrus*, as below.

As the sun lowered in the sky, strange things began to happen. At 7:29 pm by my Swiss Army Watch a rather loud screaming roar came from Eva's Woods, north of where I sat in the Nook. "What the hell," I asked myself, "was that?" The expletive seemed warranted. It could only have been made by a large mammal. It's a good thing I didn't identify the sound until I got home. I heard the *same* "roar" as the third vocalization into the tape below. This isn't good.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVZCAQP6eQM>

The sense of mystery deepened at 8:12 pm, when I heard a single shot of a high-powered rifle from Ruth Ann Newport's property off to the east. Then silence, as night crept stealthily into the camp. Was it connected to the roar from the north?

By sunset I had nearly forgotten the mysterious sounds as I watched the mother Raccoon feeding on the kibble I had put out for her. I took several mug shots for our Raccoon file. Which takes us full circle to the beginning of this Bulletin. I drove out along the ghostly track, relieved somehow when I got to the gate once again — and the road to home.

Birds: (12)

American Crow (TR/E); American Robin (GF); Baltimore Oriole (Nk); Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose (LM); Common Flicker (GF); Great Blue Heron (FC/EW);

Northern Cardinal (EW); Red-winged Blackbird (EW); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (HBF); Song Sparrow (LM); Turkey Vulture (LM) [higher winds in late afternoon seemed to inhibit birds]

New Species:

Fantail Darter	<i>Ethiostoma flabellare</i>	LR/FC KD My29/14
Metallic Green Meloid	[<i>lytta</i>] sp.	GF KD My29/14
Shortneck Soldier Beetle	<i>Podabrus brevicollis</i>	Nk KD My29/14

Notes: Besides *Lytta*, one other possibility is *Nemognatha* sp. Imagery has been sent to our entomology consultants. There are 68 species of *Lytta* extant.

Announcement: The number of entries in Kingdom Animalia just passed the 1000 mark, even as the total ATBI count of species nears 2000.

IMAGES:



The Lower Rapids of Fleming Creek are home to many species of smaller fishes, including four species of Darter: Johnny Darter; Rainbow Darter; Greenside Darter, Logperch, and now the Fantail Darter. The small dark green patches will slowly enlarge over the coming weeks, forming trailing tresses of an alga known as *Cladophora glomerata*.



The Fantail Darter appearing in this less-than-impressive image, has two somewhat diminutive dorsal fins, here collapsed by surface tension. The tail is narrowed by the same force. Darters and Logperch belong to the Perch family (Percidae). Fleming Creek also hosts the much larger Yellow Perch, not to mention eight other species of fish, large & small, discovered to date.