

Newport Forest

July 18 2001

12:45 - 4:35 pm

Weather: sunny/hazy, hot 40C (!), still

Purpose: environmental scan

Participants: Pat, Kee

I installed a “weather station” during my last visit. From now on, we wouldn’t have to rely on memory or guesswork for the temperature. Shortly after coming in, we read the thermometer (which had been placed to face the north) and were astounded to see it reading 40C. The station also has a rain gauge which read empty. The drought of the last four years has now become more pervasive than ever.

Coming into the property, we saw a Bobolink take off from the fence line and occasional Monarchs down to the trailer, where Pat spied a Common Wood-nymph. The Monarda is now blooming everywhere. (As soon as the Goldenrod comes out, we’ll be ready for a Bumblebee census.) We walked the FCT down to the bridge and beyond, right to the end of the trail near Harvey’s Forest. On the way we heard Robins and Catbirds.

On the way back, Pat spied a small gravel bar along the near edge of the creek and very close to the trail. We were glad we went down. There were several species of clams, as represented mostly by single valves, including White Heelsplitters and Deer Toes. There were coon tracks here and there and, in one spot, the tracks of a fawn. At the downstream end of the bar, Pat found several Saggitaria growing in the sandy clay sediment. The flowers had three white petals with notches and the fruit is round and bristly (?). I took pictures of another plant with yellow flowers. Pat said it was a Fringed Loosestrife. On the same bar, we found a pile of yellow feathers with dark bands. Pat fears it was the yellow mystery-bird which she saw bathing in the creek the previous week. As I sat looking around, I spotted an Amber Jewelwing sitting on the same leaf as a Lady Beetle. I couldn’t resist a photo.

Along the Fleming Creek Trail there is a series of wolf trees. Going in, the first is a Beech which consists of a trunk and some lower limb snags. Another hundred meters along is a much older Beech snag which consists of the trunk alone, about 12’ high. Another 20 m beyond that is a Hickory wolf, still very much alive. I supposed it must be a Bitternut, since it clearly wasn’t a Shagbark, but the bark was not like that of a “mature” Bitternut. On the other hand, the tree was close to one metre dbh, so perhaps on the largest Bitternuts, it develops a lot of parallel

fissures, whereas in the former case, the fissures are interlaced.

While Pat sat at the end of the bridge to watch for wildlife, I took four jugs of water up to the trailer for later watering. Pat, meanwhile, saw what she thinks was a Tailed Blue. As she sat and watched, a Chipmunk approached her along a well-worn miniature trail of its own, arriving nearly at her feet and looking up only at the last moment to be startled by a giant mammal, whereupon he scampered off.

We went to the river along Edgar's Trail. The mosquitoes were somewhat troublesome, but we heard a Song Sparrow, a White-breasted Nuthatch and saw four Summer Azures (or thought we did).

At the river I photographed an emerging new terrace, now about 6" above the waterline. It was hot as hell out on Mussel Beach, the clay baking to porcelain. But Cedar Waxwings were still flying about and Pat found a new plant: Eleocharis. I found a live clam, a probable half-grown *Quadrula* sp., with two broad, attractive green rays extending from the beak nearly to the margin. More birds showed up: Two Goldfinches flew upriver, then we heard a Yellow Warbler behind us.

Just out of curiosity i measured the depth of one of the larger cracks in the clay, now becoming increasingly extensive in the drought. It swallowed my 8-inch ruler!

On the way back along Edgar's Trail, Pat saw a Silver-spotted Skipper and also spied some Baltimore Orioles out with their young. Back at the trailer i watered the trees, then those parked along Harvey's Beanfield. We packed up and drove up the trail to the gate, stopping only to water the trees along the bluff. The Tulip Tree and Kentucky Coffeetree are still doing very well. Both were planted in the shade. Perhaps they don't need much sun and lose less water that way. Several Towhees were calling by the time we left. On the drive home, Pat found a curious beetle with the most extraordinary markings, climbing on her clothes. We put it in a bag and home it gave me much trouble. Perhaps it's a Shield-backed Bug. It turned out not to be a beetle at all! the drawing at right shows the body.