

Newport forest

March 29 2003

3:40 - 6:20 pm

Weather: overcast; NW < 10 kmh; LM 4 C; FCF 4 C

Purpose: birdwatching

Participants: Pat, Kee

After a visit to the Logans at Moraviantown, we arrived late at the property. We began by cleaning out the three bird boxes presently in the "bluebird trail" along the road allowance, as well as installing two new ones. These will be the last bird boxes we put up. Driving down the track through the meadow, we spotted a Red-tailed Hawk flying from its perch near the west ravine.

At the trailer, Pat filled the bird and suet feeders, while I went down to the creek to see what the water was doing. The level has now dropped to well within the banks, revealing the two pipes splayed out from where the far trestle used to be and extending down into the murky runoff. (P) The midstream trestle had apparently been swept away by the irresistible pressure of the ice. Going up to the east bluffs, I spotted it through the binoculars about 150 m downstream and resting against the far bank. One of the legs appeared to have broken. About this time, Pat spotted a pair of ducks, possibly Black Ducks, swimming in Fleming Creek not far from where I later spotted the trestle.

Pat found a Comma Butterfly struggling in a remnant spider web of the bathroom window. She freed it and put it on a nearby tree. I took two roadkill corpses (a possum and a raccoon) that I had used for an "experiment," down to the creek flats and gave them a proper burial, thanking them for their help. While I was completing this unhappy task, Pat saw some first-timers for the new season, including a Brown-headed Cowbird and across Harvey's Bean Field, a Yellow-shafted Flicker.

After a bite of lunch, we set out for the river along Edgar's Trail. As we passed the downed willow, we both spotted a squirrel running along a log, but it was very red and ran differently than our usual Eastern Grays - without any pauses. This squirrel also appeared bulkier/fatter than our usual squirrels and it had bright, white underparts.

At the river we noted that the drop in water level has continued, although it is not yet down to the beach. We took the new trail up over the bluffs, noting the extensive growths of moss along the trail. We decided we would collect as many specimens as we could for Frank Cook, once a majority are fruiting. We also

noted a nice little stand of Red Osier Dogwood about half way along the trail. As we neared the old leaning oak tree, Pat spotted something flitting in branches somewhat downslope from us. The small size, shape and yellow patch on the crown gave it away. (See bird list below.) We followed the trail as far as the RSf, then turned around. On the way back we heard a Catbird and a Red-winged Blackbird calling from across the river. “We can include these,” said Pat. “After all, we include the river.”

Returning along Edgar’s Trail, we heard Canada Geese flying downstream past the river landing. Then, in the lone Walnut tree at the foot of the LM, we heard and saw a Song Sparrow.

New species:

Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* ET/BCF

Birds: (19)

American Crow (2 HBF); American Robin (1 GF); Black-capped Chickadee (1 Tr); Blue Jay (1 Tr); Brown-headed Cowbird (1 Tr); Canada Goose (2 TR); Gray Catbird (TR); Downy woodpecker (2f Tr); Gold-crowned Kinglet (1 RBs); Mourning Dove (2 FCF/ET); Northern Cardinal (1 FCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (1m Tr); Red-winged Blackbird (1 TR); Red-tailed Hawk (1 UM); Slate-colored Junco (1 Tr); Song Sparrow (1 LM); Yellow-shafted Flicker (1 ET); White-breasted Nuthatch (2 Tr) [18 spp.]

Notes: We need a new bench up by the river Bluffs trail at a good spot for bird-watching.