

Newport Forest

June 21 2003

2:00 - 7:30 p,m

Weather: prec. 11 mm; clear; N < 5 km/h; LM 27 C; FCF 23 C

Purpose: visit from a forestry consultant

Participants: Pat, Kee, Bruce & Maureen McGauley

We assembled at the trailer, deciding that Pat and Maureen could walk to the river, while Bruce and I went to the RSF. As soon as they got to the river, Pat and Maureen heard a loud splashing noise from the far shore. It was an animal with brown fur and the noises it made were quite energetic. Not only splashing, but the sound of “sticks banging together,” were heard. They saw the same or a similar animal swim the river in a matter of seconds. Could this be our long-awaited River Otter? Later, the two found a dead Groundhog on the point bar near the eastern corner of the RSF. That might well be the same groundhog that I saw two weeks ago in the same general area. The Groundhog had not been eaten to any visible degree, but the decay process was already well under way and the corpse quite smelly.

During a brief tour of the North and South Cores, Bruce checked the twin to Lorne’s maple, discovering that it had been largely girdled by mice. That explains why it has not been more robust. He also advised that, when planting we should leave a de-vegetated wider circle around each tree, changing it from the present one-foot radius to a two-foot one. We have a tendency to plant too high, he opined. This is due to our doing the soil fill loosely in order to water in. After that, we should add more soil to compensate for the slump. He felt that, in general, it would be better to put the SM closer to the gallery forest by the trailer.

By the gallery forest, I showed Bruce the Sassafras that had resprouted. He suggested that I cut the top off, as that would prevent the entry of diseases in the dead portion of the young tree. We also discussed water contaminants. Was Carruthers’ water chlorinated? I told Bruce about the petroleum residues in the tank. He could think of no immediate problem caused by that.

We walked the Thames Trail, from the river to the RSF. Bruce was impressed by the ecotone between the riverine forest and the Beech/maple component just inside it. Not far from the bench, he remarked that this would be a good place to plant some beech trees. We had walked about half way up the HB trail, when I pointed out to Bruce some members of the “One-metre Club,” including what turned out to be a massive Basswood about 20 metres below the trail at the 744-metre mark. While admiring the Basswood, I suggested we visit an even larger tree another 20

metres toward the river, in fact, nearly at the shore. This turned out to be a Blue Ash! Bruce proved this by shimmying about 20 feet up the tree to snap off a branch and bring it back down: *Fraxinus quadrangulata*. (This could be our seed tree when it produces next.) The circumference of the ash was 114", for a diameter of 36".

On the HB we inspected the bitternut trees afflicted with crown gall. Bruce inspected the trees and declared that most of them were already dead, the rest dying. This would be the combined effect of the disease and the drought. I described how Pat and I had visited the beech/maple forest at A'nowaghi just the evening before only to find all the middle-aged beech trees dead. "Beech have very low drought tolerance," declared Bruce. I showed him the old Chinkapin Oak by the HB slope. He said it was not lightning that sheared off one side of the tree, but a large side limb, combined with some rot in the heartwood. We found some *Ramaria* growing in a cleft in the tree. At home I identified it as *R. stricta*, one of the few *Ramarias* that eats old wood.

As we descended the HB into the BCF, we encountered a flock of about a dozen Grackles. (Leaving the property much later, Pat and I witnessed another flock of about 20 Grackles in the UM.)

Back at the trailer we had a picnic, then repaired to the bridge so that I could show Bruce how it worked. Pat noticed a flycatcher at work on a limb not far from the bridge. It would fly up in a looping path to catch an insect and return to its perch. We watched it do this several times. We could not decide if it was a Least Flycatcher or a Wood Peewee. As we watched the bird, a Ruby-throat zinged into and then out of the scene.

Bruce and I then walked the FCT. I showed him the GM plot in the extensive thorn woods. He said that Beech might do well at this stage of the succession. One could knock down several thorn trees in a circle to make a little clearing, then arrange the dead wood in a rough circle, planting a new Beech in the middle. Later, in Harvey's Beech wood, Bruce pointed out how all the trees had heavy scars and wounds on one side. "Those are wounds on the trees caused by skidding logs that would have rubbed against the Beeches as they slid out of the woods, pulled by a tractor. Bruce wondered if the loggers had cut Beech everywhere else in the woods to "make room" for more commercially valuable species.

Birds: (no counts)

American Robin (FCF); Blue Jay (Tr); Bobolink (UM); Catbird (RL); Common Yellowthroat (BCF); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Grackle (HB); Mourning Dove (UM); Northern Cardinal (FCF); Red-eyed Vireo (FCF); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Tr); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (FC/br); Song Sparrow (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wood Pewee (?) (FC/br); Wood Thrush (BCF/HB); Yellow Warbler (BCF);

New species:

“Straight Ramaria” *Ramaria stricta* HB

Phenology:

field goldenrods now waist-high