

Newport Forest

Sunday October 9 2011

2:45 - 7:15 pm

Weather: prec. 0 mm; RH 47%; BP 103.0 kPa; calm; clear; 32° C

Purpose: explore Fleming Creek

Participants: Pat, Kee

Nina Hurdle thought she saw a “crabapple” tree growing near the top of the Fleming Creek Bluffs by the road. Would we check it out? We did. It’s another case of escaped domestic apples (from long ago) somewhat hybridized, this one possibly with a native crab. The apples were about half the size of a McIntosh and twice the size of a real crab apple.

In camp we gathered our things for a canoe trip up Fleming Creek to a) see how far we could get, and b) collect more plants as we went. We embarked above the Lower Rapids and paddled upstream to the next riffle, where we awkwardly disembarked and dragged the canoe over the stony bed to the next pool. And on we went, for four more pools, coming into view of the high bluffs beside the road (where, by coincidence, Nina’s “crabapple” displayed its wares).

Along the way to that point, we had two mini-adventures. One was to startle a Blue Heron fishing upstream into an irritated “Gronk” and a majestic retreat straight toward us and (barely) over our heads. Later we startled another Blue Heron upstream, quite possibly the same one. The other adventure arrived, as usual, in an unexpected manner. We spotted some immense milkweeds and arrowheads growing on a far bank, so we made over to it, where I stepped out of the canoe, only to sink up to my knees in very soft mud. How far would I sink? Another step had the same result, but now I could reach and uproot the plants in quick succession -- then squidge my way back.

After the next riffle we had a clear paddle around a bend and straight into a dead ash, still rooted in the bank and lying just above the water, too high for a pullover and too low for a duckunder. Impasse! On the way back we spotted what looked to Pat like an enormous species of millet grass, so we collected that, too. Back at the Lower Rapids again, we pulled the canoe up on the landing and dumped it.

While Pat rested from the creek ordeal, I walked to the river landing where I ran into a familiar-looking mushroom that I collected anyway -- just in case. Later at home it keyed out to *Galerina autumnalis* or Deadly Galerina.

We discussed our finds over supper (sans mushrooms) in the Nook before sunset.

Inspecting the plants a little more closely, Pat declared, “They all look like ordinary species to me. The milkweed seems like the common milkweed that grows here, but greatly enlarged by the water nearby.” A scrabbling noise overhead drew our attention to the birdseed tray, where a nearly full-grown raccoon was helping itself to birdseed. Raccoons seem to like birdseed but, when offered an equal choice, will generally prefer dog or cat kibble. (in case you were wondering!)

We drove out behind a blazing sunset that promised another fine day tomorrow.

**Birds: (10)**

American Crow (FCF); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (RB); Blue Jay (UM); Common Flicker (FCF); Eastern Towhee (GF/LM); Field Sparrow (LM); Great Blue Heron (FC); Mallard (TR); White-breasted Nuthatch (FCT);

**Leps: (5)**

Cabbage White (ER/LM); Clouded (?) Sulphur (ER/LM); Eastern Tailed Blue (LM/ER); Red-spotted Purple (LM/ER); Silver-spotted Skipper (ER/HBF)

**New Species:**

Blue Cheese Polypore                      *Polyporus caesia*                      BCF/BC kd/GT Oc04/11

**Note on fungus:** The polypore had me stymied, mainly because of its unusual position. It formed no bracket of any kind. Greg Thorn’s grad students couldn’t make it out either, but Greg (our consulting mycologist) came through, as usual.

**Note on plants:** The ATBI list has 471 plant species on it and we’re getting down to short strokes, as they say. New species are getting harder and harder to find.

**Phenology:** Goldenrod now 95% to seed; 50% of asters still in bloom

**IMAGES:**



Finepix

Canoe parked upstream of Riffle # 4 as we poke around among the stones of the rapids. Like most creeks, Fleming is divided into pools and riffles (rapids) Depending on the grade of a creek, pools may be long or short. Our pools varied from 50 to about 80 metres in length and were never more than thigh deep. The riffles ranged in length from 5 to 10 metres in length, approximately. Fleming Creek is currently running clear.



Nikon 990

*Fall fruits theme:* American Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) has climbed this now-leafless young ash tree and put forth its attractive fruit. Later the orange outer rinds will split open to reveal fleshy red berries inside. The berries are not considered edible, being somewhat poisonous.

This scene was taken at the edge of the property, looking across a neighbouring waste field at Eva's Woods, where the creek runs to the river.



Finepix

Speaking of “poisonous”, one of several Deadly Galerinas on this well-rotted log attest to the longevity of the organism inside the log, namely the mycelium. The same log has sprouted this mushroom in previous years. Symptoms of Galerina poisoning do not occur until 10 or more hours after ingestion, when the victim experiences vomiting, cramps and diarrhea. This is followed by a brief remission when the victim may feel better for a time. Then the liver fails completely and death ensues.



Finepix

While we dined in the Nook a half hour before sunset, one of Lily's kits\*, now a female subadult, dared to go to work early, raiding the birdseed tray before any of the regulars got there. As an experiment, we tossed an almond cookie up on the tray. She smelt the cookie, then took it in her jaws and climbed up to the next fork, where she ate it with seeming delight. It is a general instinct that we have witnessed many times among raccoons, not to mention skunks and squirrels, that when an individual comes across a food item of special interest, it immediately carries the item away from the feeding area, so as not to share it with anyone else -- the raccoon version of altruism.

\*Pat seems quite sure of this, owing to its extra-rufous shoulders and solid mask.