

**Date and time:** Monday August 7 2024, 1:55 - 4:00 pm

**Weather:** RH 74%; BP 100.5 kPa; Pr 38 mm; T 20° C; winds calm.

**Contents:** Visit from an old friend of Newport Forest.



The Elbow — a rich habitat and “home” of Say’s Trig.

In the days prior to the visit of one of Newport Forests’ greatest fans, namely the entomologist Dan Bickel, we kept a close eye on the weather for August 7, the only day that Bickel would be available. For several days prior, the forecasts were terrible, including 90% POPs. However, when we met Steve Logan at the gate, there was no rain — or mosquitoes either. “Why are there so few mosquitoes?” I asked “They don’t like the wind,” was Steve’s laconic reply.

We chatted in the Nook for a while, re-acquainting ourselves, when Steve remarked, “We had sightings of a cougar a couple of weeks ago.” That would be in Moraviantown, a Reservation about 20 km to the south of Newport Forest. I have wondered why most sightings of this elusive mammal seem to occur in late summer or fall. Perhaps that is when cougars relocate in search of fresh habitat. They are, in any case, a roaming species, never staying in one locale (like Newport Forest) for long.

Dan was happy to be back in one of his favourite natural areas after a long hiatus. Dan works as an entomologist at the Australian Museum in Melbourne. As a native

of Detroit Michigan, who returns home almost every year, Dan has been ever mindful of another visit, even though he can't always make it.

Not to waste any opportunity for more sampling, we all set out with nets, sweeping the Lower Meadow trail first, then heading for the river. The meadow samples seemed rather sparse. There are good days for collecting and not-so-good days. As I went through the first bags, I muttered an irritated remark: "Why are there so many little flies? I just don't do them!" (I cringe at the amount of work I would have to do just to become familiar with the most abundant small flies)

"Well, you'd be missing a lot of new records," remarked Dan. "They are a very biodiverse group. "

As we made for the river, Dan looked around him with a critical eye. "You know, there are times when this place seems almost tropical to me." At the river we changed the sd card for Trail Cam #2 and took a lengthy sweep of the unusual vegetation there, then headed back to sweep the Elbow, where the trail crosses Blind Creek. It then bends abruptly north. Steve examined the edge of the trail, looking for Green Dragons, a rather exotic plant that sports a long red tongue.

At the Elbow we took a second sweep, retrieved the sd cards from Trail Cam #1 and returned to the Nook to inspect the two bags. All the identifiable images are listed below. Several near misses included a Broadnose Weevil, a leaf-tier moth (Spaganothis?), a small Ichneumon wasp, and a small black beetle.

### **Biological Inventory (ATBI)**

#### **New Species:**

Meadow Spittlebug	<i>Philaenus spumarius</i>	LM kd/SM Au07/23
Skirted Stinkhorn	<i>Phallus duplicatus</i>	GF KD Au07/23

**Species Notes:** One insect and one fungus made up today's finds.

**Recurring species:** 'Painted Harvestman' (*Odiellus pictus*); *Xysticus* sp.; 'Yellow-backed Theridion' (*Theridion albidum*); Two-striped Planthopper (*Acanalonia bivittata*); Buffalo Treehopper (*Stictocephala bisonis*); Diamondback Spittlebug (*Lepryona quadrangularis*); 'Dark Greenhead' (*Chlorotettix [tergatus]*); Shortwinged Meadow Katydid (*Conocephalus bnrevipennis*); Say's Trig (*Anaxipha exigua*); Small Eastern Milkweed Bug (*Lygaeus kalmii*).

## Images



Net in hand, Dan Bickel is an entomologist with the Australian Museum, where he specializes in Dolichopodid flies. At Newport Forest, however, his view widens to take it all in, plants, animals and even fungi. His interests extend even to local history, extending right back to the ice ages!



The 'Painted Harvestman' (*Odiellus pictus*) is one of the most common harvestmen at Newport Forest. The class Arachnida includes not only harvestmen, but spiders, ticks and virtually all eight-legged arthropods. Harvestmen differ from spiders in having a body that is all of a piece. They also differ in having only two eyes instead of eight. The eyes are perched forward at the top of the 'head'.

Two reddish jaws can be seen at the front of the animal. Harvestmen can be predators or scavengers, especially common under leaf litter.



The Skirted Stinkhorn (*Phallus duplicatus*) is only the second stinkhorn species to be found on the property. The 'skirt' consists of a circle of filaments hanging below the cap. Stinkhorns attract flies to deliver their spores, using a putrid smell to draw them in.



Our drone-based aerial mapping of Newport Forest last May shows the mouth of Fleming Creek in the upper left corner of this image. A few hundred years ago, this opening would be absent, when Fleming Creek bent southward, with its former mouth a good kilometre downstream. The abandoned watercourse is now called Blind Creek.