

## The Japanese Knotweed by Jim Saunders

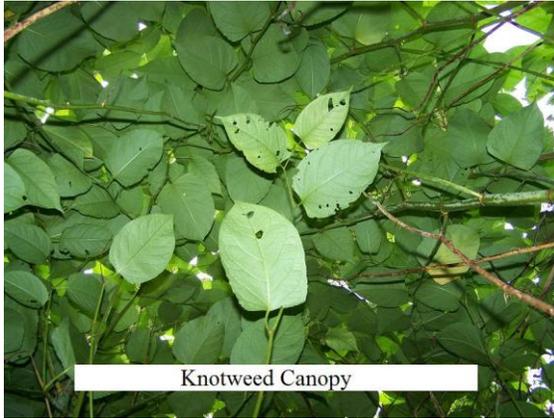
One of the great banquets of the summer for some members of our insect population is now being served by the flowers of the Japanese Knotweed. Among the many visitors are the Honeybee, American Hover Fly, Yellow Jacket, Bald-faced Hornet, Bumblebees and Flies. There are so many insects at times that there is a constant hum of wings. Hummingbirds also visit.

Japanese Knotweed, also known as Mexican Bamboo, is native to Eastern Asia. It is not a bamboo but resembles bamboo with its hollow stem and horizontal nodes. It was brought to America in the 1800's for use as an ornamental and in erosion control. It is now known as an invasive species that is proving impossible to eradicate. On a website *davesgarden.com*, comments range from the following by *dmith7777*: "*Welcome to the terrorist king of all Invasive plant species, It laughs at Roundup, pulling it up just spreads it, It readily chokes out anything in its path. I can not believe anybody could actually want this plant.....*" (July 22, 2010) to "*Yes, this plant is invasive - around Dutchess county, NY it is a roadside weed. We have controlled it by mowing and pulling up new shoots in spring. That being said, the plant makes a great instant screen, growing 10' or more in about a month. Late summer. Another bonus - bees love the small white flowers that appear.*" by *mamapajama* (April 17, 2007). Also on the positive side, it was reported recently on a CBC radio programme that the stems are being used to make lightweight bicycle frames.

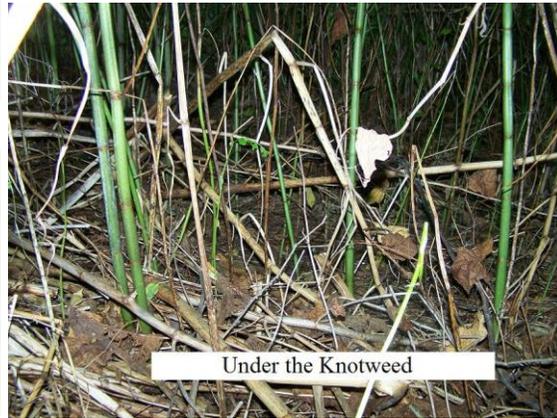


The Knotweed is not uncommon in the Miramichi area. It appears to be more prevalent on the south side of the river. However there is quite a large patch on the south side of the King George Highway opposite the former St. Mary's Convent. There is a large patch along the RV trail behind the Portage Restaurant that is approximately 200 feet long. This trail is the one that goes in a northeast direction. It crosses another trail that goes northwest / southeast just after you leave the Portage parking lot. There is also a number of patches in the vicinity of the Napan River where it is crossed by Route 11.

This plant produces such a closed canopy that it blocks most of the sunlight from reaching the ground. Consequently it is very difficult to impossible for other species to become established underneath it. The only species visible under the patch by the RV trail behind the Portage is White Spruce. The photo of the canopy shows much more light because of the camera flash.

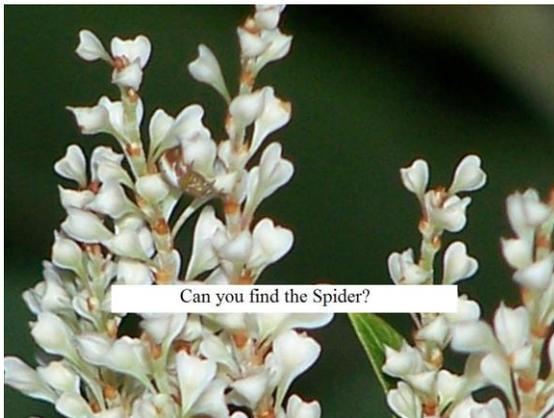


Knotweed Canopy



Under the Knotweed

As *mamapajama* says "bees love the small white flowers that appear". When visiting early in the morning, standing on the side opposite the sun, it is possible to see clearly the constant arrivals and departures of the backlit insects. It is a fact of nature that wherever there is prey there is sure to be predators. Dragonflies see this as an excellent opportunity and can be seen patrolling overhead to chase down whatever they like. Also hidden in the flowers are spiders. My search for one was finally rewarded. It was difficult to photograph because it blended so well with the flowers. Some birds in addition to the Hummingbird were observed visiting the Knotweed. One in particular in a clump near the Tasty Treat ice-cream stand was having a great time gathering insects. Its movement could be tracked by the leaves shaking as it moved from stem to stem. It popped up shortly to look around but not long enough to photograph.



Can you find the Spider?



Knotweed Flowers

I don't believe that the Knotweed can be eradicated but it probably can be controlled. One way to minimize further spread is to burn any foliage and roots in cases where it is dug up. I understand that even small pieces of root can

regenerate a new clump



Thanks to Dave McLeod for his assistance in identifying the American Hover Fly.