

**Newport Forest**

January 2 2002

2:30 - 5:00 pm

**Weather:** snow 3-4 cm, LM 1C, FCF -3C, occas. cld., light winds var. NW

**Purpose:** logging animal tracks

**Participants:** Kee, Nic

Just inside the gate, we found Snooper's tracks in the UM, but never straying far from the gate. Further on, by the tree station, we found the tracks of a domestic cat that led all the way to the trailer, also the tracks of a young deer that followed the same route.

We set up the two bird feeders, attracting one WBNH, a pair of Downys and two Chickadees.

In the BCF along Edgar's Trail, were numerous Cottontail tracks, presumably not all made by the same individual. We also found several Squirrel tracks, at least two sets of deer tracks and more domestic cat tracks.

At the River Landing, we observed the shore ice was forming, extensively over the partially submerged gravel bars and more tentatively from the other shorelines.

Along the river bluffs (E/HB) a deer had followed the trail much of the way before heading up into the HB. Just inside the entrance to the RSF were numerous tracks of squirrels and rabbits. Further along we discovered curious tracks with star-shaped prints, either a skunk or a possum, at a guess. In the middle of the RSF, Nic spied a pair of RBWPs (male and female) and, on some snow covered logs further in, several sets of raccoon tracks. In the deepest part, the tracks seemed to peter out, except for a deer following our trail up to the HB.

Up on the HB, we found Lotor sleeping peacefully in his hollow, while below his depredations of the food drop were quite thorough. We followed his tracks through and under brush piles to the south slope of the Hb, where they seemed to continue on. "We'll pick them up when we get down there," I said. Along the way, we had been replenishing our five food drops with shelled corn and DBs, just a few handfuls in each spot. By now most of the drops had been scavenged to one degree or another.

On the frozen surface of one of the BCF swamps, we found a great many squirrel tracks, Nic remarking once again that he could "smell the willows," which, he

said, “smelled kind of sweet.” We picked up the coon tracks again, presumably still Lotor’s. Nic followed them deep into the BCF where they terminated under an old fallen willow, the one Pat and I had cut wands from last October. By the BCF bench, our final food drop, we found a plethora of tracks, mostly squirrels. In addition, we found some (to me) utterly mysterious tracks consisting of two roughly parallel marks in the snow, with one end occasionally widened. What kind of animal walks on such narrow feet. Or were they wings? (P)

A new set of tracks joined the BCF trail further along, either a large dog or a Coyote. It was gratifying to see how many animals had come to favour the trails we had so painstakingly made over the last two years.

Back at the trailer, we had a light snack of coke and cookies (al fresco) before heading down to the creek to inspect the bridge. Everything in that department was fine. I walked out on the ice to test it. A bit thin, so a few more days of sub-zero temperatures should make the ice firm enough to cross the creek safely. The rapids were still running nicely, however, and the creek remained open there.