

Newport Forest

February 11 2002

2:30 - 5:45 pm

**Weather:** Lm 2C; FCF -1C; sunny, calm, snow cover: opn 5%; wdd 70%

**Purpose:** to replenish feeders, continue tracking program

**Participants:** Pat, Kee

The snow cover (where it could be found) was only a few cm thick with a hard crust and about 1 cm of powder on top. Thus made the snow exceptionally good for details, although the lack of depth makes it hard to make out canid nails. We filled both the deer feeders (with help from Eva's corn), both bird feeders, and both suet feeders.

While Pat watched for birds, I went into the BCF, finding Cottontail Rabbit tracks, as well as those of the Eastern Grey Squirrel in great numbers, all along Edgar's Road. I then returned to the trailer from which Pat and I set out along the creek bluffs eastward. We followed the edge of Harvey's bean field until we came to the mouth of the creek, following the riverbank back to the landing from there. At th landing, Pat spotted five northern Cardinals.

From the RL, we headed back along Edgar;s Trail and into the Blind Creek Trail. We spotted what are almost certain to be Red Fox tracks (perfect match with book), as well as more rabbits and squirrels. Then we came upon what appeared to be tracks of a very young Wild Turkey, too small to belong to any Wild Turkey since last year's young are now essentially adult birds. The imprint of a wing near one of the tracks gave a clue: Ruffed Grouse, also a perfect match with the book's drawings. The best find of the day, however, were the tracks of a White-footed Mouse, our first real evidence od what we were already sure must be on the property.

On the way up to see if Lotor was in his tree, we passed an old willow just beyond the BCF bench and Pat spotted a Raccoon up in the tree. Could that be Lotor? We went on up to the Hogsback, only to find that Lotor was not in his accustomed tree. Before taking up Lotor's tracks, I went over to check the trees infected by the fungal galls that I spotted last time up on the HB. There were only two infected trees, both Bitternut Hickories!

So, back to lotor: I followed his game trail (now more worn than ever) that leads from the base of the Black Maple where he normally sleeps, across the Hogsback to the large Chinkapin Oak. The trail looked like it might continue on down the side of the Hogsback toward the BCF but there was no snow on the slope. So I

lined up the trail with the BCF below, finding that it aimed directly for the old Willow in which that raccoon now slept. Who could it be but lotor himself? (or “herself,” as Pat points out)

Our bird count for the day was very low. We saw scarcely one bird the whole time we were there.

**Birds:**

1 American Crow (H) FCF; 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker (H) BCF; 5 Northern Cardinals RL; 1 Chickadee RL; 1 Hairy woodpecker BCF.

**New species:**

White-footed Mouse

*Peromyscus leucopus*

BCF 200 m