

Newport Forest

February 17 2002

2:15 - 5:05 pm

Weather: mainly cloudy, strong NW wind, LM 4 C; FCF -3 C; 100% snow cover.

Purpose: to study animal tracks

Participants: Kee, Nic

We filled the feeder on the creek bluffs, as well as both bird feeders near the trailer and one of the suet feeders. In the trailer, we discovered that mice had gotten into a bag of bird food left on the table. They scattered the stuff all over the table and one of the bench seats. Nic discovered that both of his wading boots were more or less full of dead Lady Beetles, which ended up on the floor, along with the bird food. We decided a general cleanup was in order.

Tracks: Snooper left some tracks inside the gate. We could see where she had wandered around in the upper meadow, rarely more than 50 m from the fence. (So we figured that the doglike tracks seen on site to-day were not hers.) Coming into the BCF along Edgar's trail, we saw the first set of doglike tracks (5 cm x 7.5 cm or 2" x 3"). We thought these might be a Red Fox because the pads were fully rounded and nearly meeting, whereas a Coyote's pads are well-separated. Most gratifyingly, most of the tracks we saw to-day followed the trail for good distances, a sign that the animals find it convenient. The blowing snow had obscured all tracks made up until about noon, so any good tracks were made just an hour or two before we arrived. The old tracks all belong to squirrels and rabbits.

Both on Edgar's trail and along the first two hundred metres of the BCF trail, we found the same flock of Wild Turkeys. Eventually, they wandered off the trail and up into the hogsback, where we picked up their tracks again, later on. We decided to follow the fox as far as we could. It used the trail right up to the rim of the HB, then continued along the rim, instead of followed the trail's direction back the other way. Then the tracks descended back down to the BCF. We followed them back across Blind Creek, then gave up when it appeared the animal had doubled back. The tracks were so fresh, we had to believe the animal had heard us coming and even as we followed its tracks up to the HB, it was already running in the opposite direction below us and a bit behind. While down in the BCF, I picked up a bracket fungus that just might be new. (S)

Up on the HB, we checked Lotor's Black Maple and found the Raccoon "at home" in its little hollow in the tree (P). We left some DBs, then went exploring the HB all the way to the end of the thorn scrub at the lip of the river bluffs. On the way,

before we left the upper forest, I noticed that not just two trees, but SEVEN have the crown gall disease! The ones with the worst cases were Bitternut Hickories, leading me to believe that the infecting organism (according to Westcott's Plant Disease Handbook) is probably *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* - Crown Gall of Hickory.

We found the "fox" tracks up on the HB, wandering about a spot where the Turkeys had evidently congregated for some time. (Looking for a meal?) I passed a couple of Large-toothed Aspens along the north ridge, wondering if I had noted that species anytime in the last year or so. (Just checked -- apparently not)

Down in the RSF (continuing along the trail) we checked out the Nicamore, finding that it was in the process of engulfing a Black Maple that was growing much too close to it. (P) Near the base of the maple, the cortex of the Sycamore has surrounded about 3/4 of the trunk!

We followed the trail along the river. The water is still up but has receded to the very base of the bluffs. Along Edgar's Trail, on the way out, I picked up a branch with a remarkable growth of yellowish parchment fungus on it. (S)

Fleming Creek still runs fully, but has now receded to about 4 1/2' below the bridge pipes. We did not see a single deer track to-day. Perhaps they've all "yarded up" somewhere (Harvey's Woods?)

New Species:

Crown Gall of Hickory [*Agrobacterium tumefaciens*] HB

Large-toothed Aspen *Populus grandidentata* HB

Birds:

2 White-breasted Nuthatches; 2 Downy woodpeckers; 3 Chickadees; 1 Red-bellied woodpecker; 1 American Crow (H)