

Newport Forest

December 27 2002

1:45 - 4:45 pm

**weather:** overcast; W < 5 kmh; LM -4 C; FCF -4 C

**purpose:** Christmas Bird Count

**participants:** Pat, Kee

The deer feeders were empty and, having no corn with us, we filled them with DBs, instead. Fleming Creek has less than 1" of ice on it, being free of ice at the two rapids.

We walked out the River Landing. I saw many squirrel tracks and some deer tracks, but no rabbit tracks! The Thames is now mostly ice-free. While Pat remained in the vicinity of the river, birdwatching, I walked the RCf trail, leaving a generous supply of DBs on each of the three benches. I also checked the Gauthier posts - no hair.

At the east end of the HB under the power lines I found the tracks of at least three Wild Turkeys. I also flushed a Ruffed Grouse. I was dismayed, looking down into the BCF, to see that another giant willow had fallen over. Descending to the BCF, I inspected the upturned roots and soil for clues as to what force or factor was responsible for the tree's toppling. It only came to me that it might be somehow drought-related, the lack of moisture permitting the soil fabric to disaggregate and loosen around three roots. The BCF is a mess!

Deer had already begun to browse on the shoots that had previously been growing upward from the trunk and out of reach. Now, with all three stems/trunks down, they could reach them easily. On the BCF trail I found doglike tracks, but the hind-paws had been placed carefully in the fore-paw tracks, a characteristic of Coyotes, according to Rae Axford, a local hunter. A fox does the same thing, according to Axford. The way you tell the difference is to measure the stride with your forearm. If longer than your forearm, it's a coyote, if shorter, a fox. This was evidently a coyote.

Birds (not counting those seen on way to property)