

**Newport Forest**

January 9 2003

3:00 - 5:20 pm

**Weather:** snow cov. 5-13 cm; SW 5-10 kmh; LM 6 C; FCF 5 C

**Purpose:** feeding and tracking

**Participants:** Kee

Coming in, I stopped at the tree station to pick up a large potted White Ash, which I planted in the island nucleus near the trailer and about 20' SW of the Redbud.

Fleming Creek is up about a foot (still iced over except at rapids), the Thames about 2 feet over the clay beach. I filled the two tree feeders with black oil seed and filled the two deer feeders with whole kernel corn. I also distributed a five-pound bag of rabbit food throughout the two forest nuclei in the Lm.

I found raccoon tracks coming up the creek bluff trail toward the old log. It apparently climbed up on the log - found no tracks leaving. Down on the creek flats I dug a grave for a raccoon we picked up from the side of the road last week. I had removed two of the paws of this animal for a small research project which I am undertaking with the assistance of Dr. Tom Daley, a cytologist at UWO School of Medicine. The ground of the flats was still easy to dig and completely unfrozen.

Following Edgar's Trail across the lower meadow, I came across the tracks of at least seven wild turkeys heading toward the BCF. As I entered the BCF I became aware that I had been following the tracks of a dog-family creature which, like the track last week, were double-registered. Coyote. (Come to think of it, I can recall being puzzled by the fact that the deer carcass of two winters ago was invested by some wild animal in the late winter by rear entry. This is a favorite feeding strategy of coyotes.) I also found numerous squirrel tracks along Edgar's trail, as well as elsewhere in the woods, but not one rabbit track! Seems that squirrels are on the increase, even as rabbits decrease. At the point on Edgar's Trail that crosses Blind Creek I found more wild turkey tracks, probably the same flock that had crossed the trail earlier. Also saw tracks of a good-sized deer, possibly a buck, on ET.

I went into BCF proper by way of the BCF trail, walking slowly and observing as much as I could. Nearing the first bench I heard a sort of clucking sound and was startled by the sight of 12 wild turkeys running up the HB, as if for their lives. This must have been the same flock that left the other tracks. I stopped at the

recently fallen (black?) willow and took a photograph (P). The flash went off. On the trail up the HB, I found tracks of wild turkeys, squirrels, and two deer (mother and yearling) making their way upward. I checked Lotor's tree on the HB. No one home.

Coming down into the RSF from the HB, I saw tracks of a medium-sized deer, several squirrels, and one raccoon (crossing the trail). Between the 1000 and 1100 m marks in the RSF, I found a plethora of squirrel tracks crossing the trail, as well as more wild turkey tracks. Coming in view of the Thames, I was surprised (but shouldn't have been) to see that it is now completely ice-free. At the river landing, I startled a Ruffed Grouse which took off with whirring wings. Here I found the coyote trail again, this time on its way in from the river. It had apparently followed the shore very close to the water for at least several hundred metres before heading into the RI and up Edgar's trail.

Back at the trailer, I called Pat on her new cellphone then promptly lost the device! I notice several woody shoots near the trailer had been nibbled by rabbits; the cut was clean across and chisel like, as described in Tracking and the Art of Seeing.

**Birds: (6)**

Northern Cardinal (1F RL); Red-bellied woodpecker (1 trailer); Ruffed Grouse (1 RL); Slate-coloured Junco (1 Walnut feeder); Wild Turkeys (12/HB); White-breasted Nuthatch (1 trailer)

**Additional birding note:** On the drive down today i saw no less than three kestrels spaced out about 20 km apart, perched on the phone lines. The second one had a small mammal in one claw. It bent over to take another rip of it as i drove by - about the size of a shrew - not a Meadow Vole.