

Newport Forest

Saturday March 26 2005

2:20 - 7:30 pm

Weather: prec. 3 mm; calm; sun/haze; LM 9 C; FCF 10 C

Purpose: to survey vernal pools for aquatic invertebrates.

Participants: Kee

The ground at Newport Forest is even wetter than it was last time and the thaw has now penetrated from 3 to 5 inches below the surface. Coming in, I thought I heard a spring peeper, but it may have been a bird. Given the fact that most of the pools are still mostly ice-covered, it is perhaps too early for the chorus to begin.

As I filled the two trays and the feeder at the corner, I could hear Chickadees making (what I interpret as) territorial calls - a descending cadence, like the first half of a White-throated Sparrow call. At the top of the Shagbark Hickory by the trailer, a Robin called from the highest branches - "cheerilup-cheerilee."

After a sandwich & a coffee, I set out to survey the vernal pools (report follows). The term "ice-covered" means that I had to break the ice to get at the inverts. On the way from VPH to VPI, I found water flowing along the old creek bed.

VPA: ice-covered; fairy shrimp abundant under ice (S)

VPB: ice-covered; fairy shrimp present under ice (S)

VPC: small opening; fairy shrimp abundant under ice

VPD: large opening; fairy shrimp present in free water column (P)

VPE: ice-covered; no fairy shrimp found (shallow 1.5' - dries early?)

VPF: partly ice-covered: few fairy shrimp, few amphipods (also 1.5' deep)

VPG: partly ice-covered; some amphipods & fairy shrimp

VPH: partly ice-covered; fairy shrimp present under ice

VPI: ice-free; no fairy shrimp found

Back at the trailer, I went down to the FC floodplain by the bridge to survey the ice damage from the December flood. The fallen ice-sheets had disappeared and the near bank had long scour-marks, where ice blocks had scraped the ground; dead grasses and sedges were all "combed" in the downstream direction. The two tulip trees, however, had miraculously survived, although the leader for the eastern sapling had snapped. However, it can be repaired as there is still continuous cambium on one side.

After supper in the trailer, I went to VPD to search for salamanders by flashlight, but it's probably too early in the season. The air temperature was -2 C by sunset

and -4 C when I came out again. I put the rain gauge out, hoping it would be safe to do so.

Birds:

American Crow (BCF); American Robin (GF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Canada Goose (LM); Dark-eyed Junco (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Mourning Dove (BCF); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Red-tailed Hawk (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr)