

Newport Forest

Tuesday December 27 2005

2:35 - 5:10 pm

weather: prec. 16 mm; RH 80%; calm; ovcst; LM 2 C; FCF 2 C

purpose: Christmas Bird Count

participants: Pat & Kee

After filling the bird and deer feeders, I went down to the creek to inspect the pipe-bridge. Fleming Creek is up nearly a meter, thanks to the recent thaw. Large polygonal cakes of ice several metres across and about 10 cm thick crowded the surface of the creek, one lodged against the midstream trestle, but no threat at the moment, thanks to the gentle current.

We had noticed a clear set of possum tracks following the edge of the road by the trailer. Intrigued by the possibility, I backtracked the possum while Pat set out for the river. The tracks led me across the LM to the BCF, down to Edgar's Trail, following the trail to the bend, where they left the trail to follow the old creek bed. I followed the tracks to the west, where they left the old bed to trend upward toward the LM. I stopped the operation just short of the LM - about 150 m from where the tracks first emerged from the LM. The possum had therefore come from the LM further west, gone down into the BCF to follow the old bed until it came to ET, followed ET almost to the Hole, but angled up into the gallery forest lining the LM, then across the LM to the trailer, etc. Total length of trail followed: ab. 250m (It was a large, adult possum.)

During her walk, Pat noticed small, black spiders with one-line snares set on old vegetation. These may be Micryphantid spiders, some sp. of which are active in the winter. Our list of birds was miserably short. (Pat will file a separate list.)

It was, however, a good day for animal tracks. I walked the TRT, noticing the following suites.

	BCF/ET	RSF	HB	BCF/W
Eastern Cottontail	√		√	√
Eastern Gray Squirrel	√	√	√	√
Raccoon		√	√	√
Virginia Deer	√	√	√	√
Wild Turkey	√			

Note: Squirrels have been digging frequently into the soft, wet forest soil.