

Newport Forest

Wednesday November 8 2006

2:35 - 10:15 pm

**Weather:** prec. 10mm; RH 85%; calm; cld/sn; LM 14C; GF 14C

**Purpose:** animal tracking

**Participants:** Kee

As I approached the tree station in the van, I was startled to see a Great Blue Heron rise up from the edge of the bluffs to my right, winging right across the road in front of me - heading west.

I stopped just beyond the TS to lay down the first two of seven "bait-rings," a method for discovering which animals are about. A bait ring consists simply of a ring of corn starch with a small pile of kibble in the middle. The idea was to see which paw prints are left in the corn starch. I placed one ring in the game trail by the tank, the other out on the road, where the trail crosses it. In camp, I filled the tray feeders, took the weather, put four rolls of TP in the john, and brought two new coal oil lamps into the trailer.

Starting at 4pm, I went on the TRT, putting down bait rings as I went and sawing through the odd branch to clear some of the remaining blockage. I put one bait ring at the skunk release site near the RL, one in front of the bench in the RSF, one in front of the HB bench, one in front of the BCF bench, and, when I got back to camp, one on the trail by the Nook and another down on the bridge.

I buried the raccoon we think is Thelma near the lumber pile. A screech owl started calling, appropriately enough, as I threw on the last of the dirt.

After dark, I waited until nearly 10pm, then retraced my previous step, checking each bait ring. At the TS the kibble on the road ring was all consumed, but the kibble in the adjacent ring (a mere 5m away on the trail itself) was untouched! The kibble at the RL was untouched, as was the one in the RSF. However, both the HB and BCF sites had been consumed. Back at the camp, the kibble at the Nook, as well as on the bridge, had been eaten.

I never saw a single mammal all evening - except for a mouse that scampered across my arm during supper in the trailer and a flying squirrel at the Hickory tray feeder later on.

It was nearly impossible to make out tracks in the corn starch, partly because of overprinting and partly because the starch, being hygroscopic, had clumped in the

humid air. Next time I will try polyfilla.

The ring on the bridge bore the best results because of the even wood surface. I could see some raccoon forepaw prints in the starch but, best of all, I could see prints leading away from the ring, headed toward the trailer side of the creek. There was one definite set, showing both hind and fore paws, as well as a second, much fainter set, both heading in the same direction. (Possibly siblings of our friends - or, who knows?)

I decided that future rings would consist of polyfilla on a portable surface, like plastic or cloth.

**Birds:** (9 - very few about)

American Crow (HB); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (BCF); Dark-eyed Junco (Tr); Eastern Screech Owl (FCF); Great Blue Heron (UM/Blfs); Northern Cardinal (FCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (BCF)

**New species:**

Kidney-shaped Tooth      *Mycorrhaphium adustum*      RSF KD Nv 08/06  
(This specimen should be revisited.)

Sand-wasp      [*Liris* sp.]      LM nz/KD J131/06  
(Larrinae/Sphecidae)