

Newport Forest

Tuesday December 26 2006

2:30 - 3:10 pm

Weather: prec 29mm; RH 100%; ovcast; 0-10kmh; LM 1C; GF 1C

Purpose: two-day stay for WENC Christmas Bird Count

Participants: Pat & Kee (are we crazy?)

We could not go down to the trailer immediately because Pat and Nina had to drive over to Shannon Newport's place to check out a large hawk seen by Nina. Pat ID'd it as a Northern Harrier. Meanwhile, I attended to the raccoon roadkill that I had left lying on the grass near the TS. I covered it with black damping cloth held down by the weight of two 2x4s. It is only fair to have Ken or Nancy come to identify this individual as Sonny - or not. I also cleaned the TS drain channel, noticing as I passed it that the game trail past the water tank looked as well-used as ever.

We parked about 50m uproad from the trailer, the ground being very soft now. After filling several feeders, Pat got down to birdwatching while I walked the TRT, primarily to bait the area around the game trail that Steve and I came upon in the RSF last week. I noticed that a Pileated Woodpecker had debarked one whole side of a dead Bitternut by the RSF trail. I baited the area around old half-dead Basswood at the terminus of RSF game trail (observed by Steve and me last visit). There is a perfect "raccoon hole" about 4m up the side of one dead trunk. Nearly out of the woods, I passed a dead willow that Pat had told me about. The ground was covered by coarse chips and a nearly square hole about 5cm x 7cm (long) pointed to the "digging" of a Pileated Woodpecker.

Supper was heavy so we snoozed a bit after which I went up to drop some kibble by the TS game trail, close the gate, and visit Edgar & Nina for a while. On the way back, it appeared that no one had passed along the game trail in that period. Later I walked the TRT into the RSF, creeping as silently as I could to see if any raccoons were in the area I had baited earlier. The air temperature was -1C and twigs concealed by the wet leaves kept snapping underfoot. No raccoons in the area.

Next morning, Pat went down to the river shortly after dawn. She spotted two black-phase Eastern Grey Squirrels on the way to the RL, where a large number of Canada Geese flew overhead. She then spotted a Northern Harrier looking for mice and, after that, a Great Blue Heron. The cold and humidity combined to "freeze" Pat's eyes. After breakfast, Pat walked up to Nina's for a CBC driveabout, while I busied myself with cleaning up.

I closed up camp while Pat was still out with Nina, taking a sample from the bottom/shore of VP3 just before departing. The departure was delayed by getting stuck while trying to turn the van around. It took half an hour to extricate myself.

Although the WENC Bird Count does not look as though it's headed for record numbers, today's list Newport shows the difference an extra effort can make.

Birds: (17)

American Crow (BCF); American Goldfinch (Tr); American Tree Sparrow (Tr); Black-capped Chickadee (ET); Blue Jay (Tr); Canada Goose (TR); Dark-eyed Junco (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Great Blue Heron (TR); Hairy Woodpecker (Tr); Northern Cardinal (Tr); Northern Harrier (TR); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Song Sparrow (Tr); Tufted Titmouse (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (RSF)

New species:

(Tipulidae)

'Eyed Limonia'	<i>Limonia</i> [<i>cinctipes</i>]	RL nz/KD J131/05
Crane Fly	<i>Tipula</i> [<i>duplex</i>]	RL nz/KD J131/05

(Asilidae)

'Erimine Robber Fly'	[<i>Machimus</i>] sp.	RL nz/KD J131/05
----------------------	-------------------------	------------------