

Newport Forest Thursday January 11

2:20 - 5:15 pm

weather: prec. 55mm; RH 83%; ovcst; SW 0-10kmh; LM 4C; GF 4C

purpose: animal tracking

participants: Pat & Kee

The rain continues and the whole area remains soggy, so we walked down to the trailer, noting as we went that the ground had not yet frozen even though there was no snow: hollows where water collected had frozen over, then evidently drained away, leaving windows that shattered into emptiness. Hoping to do some animal forage mapping using snow cover as my record of comings & goings, I was disappointed.

We put up a lot of bird feed, but saw few spp. during our visit. Pat searched for lost peanut feeders, but raccoons have evidently dragged them off somewhere. Later, she planted sycamore seeds in HBF.

I went off on the TRT to map the recently discovered raccoon trail, pausing to collect Sycamore seedballs from below two of our larger trees in the RSF. Having investigated the trail from the TRT down to the old Basswood tree, I now trekked up the HB, pausing at “overpasses” (branches or logs where users of the trail had left the ground to follow the wood) to pick up the trail again. It turned out that the trail visited four of our largest trees en route, starting at the aforementioned Basswood, then cutting to the right after the first overpass (now at the top of the HB), leading directly to the large Black Maple (where we would often spot “Lotor” sunning himself in years past). From there the trail led across the HB, angling east to the Big Chinquapin Oak on the south edge of the HB. The trail immediately disappeared over another overpass (old log), then reappeared to descend the HB south slope, angling down to one of the giant Black Willows that had fallen over two years ago (one stem still upright). One of the fallen trunks now made yet another (very long) overpass and I had somewhat more trouble picking up the trail here, finally discovering it sneaking out from *under* the overpass, heading for a vernal pond, then angling off to the left. I decided to finish mapping the rest another day.

Examining the trail closely as I went, I had seen few tracks, thanks to the frozen surface, although I found jumping-prints, where a raccoon had planted its hind paws in the mud to make a leap to a log at the last overpass. Elsewhere I found occasional forepaw prints, all seeming a bit small for adults.

Returning to the TRT just short of ET, I discovered two mussel valves in very good condition lying forlornly amid the leaves & twigs. I collected it as a curiosity. It looked like a Mucket. (Later, when we got home, I discovered to my great surprise that it was not a Mucket, but a new species for us: As a “floater,” it had evidently floated into the BCF on last year’s flood, only to be stranded and (no doubt) eaten)

During my foray, I discovered no less than four Pileated Woodpecker digs, all on Bitternut Hickories. It had reduced one of the stumps to a HUGE pile of chips. (Those *Scolytus* larvae must be really delicious.)

It was a lousy birding day.

Raccoon trail map (next page)

birds: (7)

American Crow (EW); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Dark-eyed Junco (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Northern Cardinal (Tr); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr);

new species:

Common Floater	<i>Anodonta grandis grandis</i>	TR/BCF KD Ja11/07
Filamentous cocci	filamentous cocci* (1-1.5)	VP3 KD Dc27/06
Vibrio	motile vibrio (1-2 mu)	VP3 KD Dc27/06
Filamentous bacillus	filam. bac. (1 mu arb. long)	VP3 KD Dc27/06
Star Amoeba	<i>Dactylamoeba stella</i>	VP3 KD Dc27/06
Red Stentor	<i>Stentor igneus</i>	VP3 KD Dc27/06

phenology: first ice: ponds partially covered with a layer up to 1cm thick, no snow cover yet.