

Newport Forest Sunday January 21 2007

1:35 - 5:00 pm

weather: prec. 37mm; RH n/r; ovcast; calm; LM -2C; GF -2C

purpose: animal tracking

participants: Kee, Brian, Diana (Doxtator)

As we pulled up to the gate, Diana (wife of Brian) spotted a Red-tail Hawk perched on one of the bluff-edge trees. It took off, swooping low to flash its red tail before soaring up again over the FCF. Tracks of a local barn-cat led from the gate down to the trailer, then continued on into the BCF. We looked around the trailer, finding tracks from a Raccoon, a Chipmunk, and Eastern Grey Squirrel.

We set out along ET, surprised to see several sets of what can only be described as Striped Skunk tracks along ET. They led to the RL, then off into the woods near the original release point (where I left some kibble). Here, also, an Eastern Grey Squirrel had been foraging.

On the River Bluffs, we found tracks of Virginia Deer (buck & possible doe), as well as those of Wild Turkey, and White-footed Mouse.* In the latter case, a virtual highway of tracks led across the trail, appearing from under the leaf litter on one side and disappearing in like manner on the other. I looked back along the trail to see a Great Blue Heron flying upstream along FC. It made a gronking noise.

We followed a lone Coyote into the RSF, where tracks of a large buck led toward Janik's. Suddenly, a beautiful large Eastern Cottontail took off across the trail. I had trouble distinguishing Raccoon tracks from those of the Striped Skunk on the game trail that we have been visiting over the last month or so. This trail continues to be well used.

On the HB, it began to snow pellets at 3:45 pm. We descended into the BCF, where we found tracks of Virginia Deer, Coyote, Eastern Grey Squirrel and Striped Skunk (again!). And here, we found several congregation sites for Wild Turkeys, the tracks covering the ground everywhere.

As we left the property, the Red-tailed Hawk swooped low over the van. Diana said that would be very good luck for us, according to native tradition.

*These might also be Deer Mice.

Mammals: (9)

Chipmunk (Tr); Coyote (RB); Domestic Cat (LM); Eastern Cottontail* (RSF); Eastern Grey Squirrel (RSF); Raccoon (RSF); Striped Skunk (ET); Virginia Deer (TRT); White-footed Mouse (RSF); *tracks plus 2 live sightings

Birds: (8)

Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Great Blue Heron (FC/EW); Northern Cardinal (RL); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Red-tailed Hawk (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (RB);

New species: (Malaise)

Finland Dart	<i>Actebia fennica</i>	RL nz/KD Au11/05
Small Brown Quaker	<i>Pseudorthodes vecors</i>	RL nz/KD Au11/05

Phenology: ice to 4 cm thick on VPs, river and creek largely ice-free, snow covering to 2 cm, but patchy.