

Newport Forest Sunday February 24 2008

2:55 - 5:30 pm

weather: prec. 131 mm; RH 72%; BP 98.98 kPa; cld/sn; calm; LM 2 C

purpose: put out food, check conditions

participants: Kee

I was both pleased and disappointed to find the property virtually free of snow when I arrived. At least the meadows were. Pleased because it would make driving in easy & secure. Disappointed because there was no snowpack to speak of awaiting the spring thaw. Nevertheless, after melting the gigantic ice core in the snow pail in a sauce pan on the trailer stove I could measure the depth of the water in the pail, calculate the volume and convert the reading depth of 172 mm to the true depth of 131 mm.

As a result of the snow/sleet/rain combination delivered over the last week or two, the creek had flooded, stabilized at the upper bank rim long enough to develop a 6 cm covering ice, then subsided to leave the ice draping the landscape in a broken, slippery sheet. I could just get safely close enough to the bridge to see it entirely gone. No great surprise there, but it stirred thoughts of new approaches to bridge design.

Birds flocked to the feeders, obviously hungry. I was surprised to see chasing behaviour (mating) by two pairs of Downy Woodpeckers, as well as by a pair of Brown Creepers.

There was about 2 cm of snow on the road in and also on Edgar's trail, about 4 cm in the wooded areas, and almost none in the open meadow areas.

Coming in I took the weather and put out bird seed in four feeders, including one by The Hole. I also put out several blocks of suet. Mary Shamley and her sister Frances (both members of the newly formed Newport Stewards Committee) had walked the property earlier. I followed their trail to the river (noting their boot size & tread patterns) and passed over the tracks of many White-tailed Deer, a myriad of Wild Turkeys, and occasional Raccoons, Coyotes, Eastern Cottontails, and Eastern Gray Squirrels.

The river appeared to be completely ice free, with rare and occasional ice cakes drifting around the bend and past my gaze. I placed a feeding area of kibble at the RL, another at the beginning of the RSF, another on the HB and a fourth in the BCF near the shoulder of the HB. I also moved camera 2 from the copse to

the RSF, strapping it to a tree that had a good view of the bend in the trail where it winds into the RSF from the bottom of the bluffs. Both cameras had their batteries replaced and their data cards exchanged.

In the BCF I came across a pile of Wild Turkey feathers, some smeared with grease and blood. The corpse had evidently been carted away. Although I would come across Raccoon tracks occasionally, the tracks of a coyote were often on the trail, following it. (There's no question that the mammals of Newport Forest finds these trails handy.) It may have been a coyote that caught the turkey-- or possibly a Red Fox.

birds:

Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Brown Creeper (GF); Canada Goose (TR); Dark-eyed Junco (GF); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Hairy Woodpecker (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr)

phenology: river ice-free, meadows snow-free.