

Newport Forest Wednesday March 26 2008

2:40 - 6:30 pm

weather: prc. 13 mm; RH 52%; BP 99.3 kPa; sn/cld; SSW 10 kmh; LM 10 C

purpose: check property

participants: Pat & Kee

As we approached the property along the Beattie Line, Pat spotted a Horned Lark foraging in a newly thawed field. We walked from the gate down to the trailer, delighted to find the LM sunny and nearly warm. The ground is now soggy and will get soggy as the thaw line sinks deeper into the soil. We put out birdseed in four feeders, as well as a trough of corn for the deer.

We walked to the river, changing the card in Cam #1. Shortly after, we watched a healthy-looking Eastern Cottontail hopping across the old ice on VP 3. Ice on the vernal ponds is now rotting, overlain by water here and there. Pat stopped short at the river, while I went up to the bluffs to sit a spell, then continued on to the RSF, where I changed the card in Cam #2 startling five female and two male Mallards out on the river. I proceeded on to the Bluebell patch, where I spotted the opening buds on old roots everywhere. An Eastern Grey Squirrel (black phase) foraged between the open pools that dotted the forest landscape. I continued on up to the HB, stopping to make a quick assessment of the American Beech. There are three "parent" trees, about a dozen medium height and several dozen saplings. Up on the HB I made a quick search for Harbinger of Spring, finding none. About this time, several flocks of Tundra Swans flew north overhead, whooping as they went. A magnificent sight.

Walking through the lower meadow on the way back to the trailer I noticed a pile of deer (doe) faeces that had been nibbled at by rabbits intent on recycling undigested bits. The scat pile had been converted into a patch of "sawdust" in the process.

While open fields on the property have less than 1 % ice/snow cover left, the woods are 50 (N of HB) to 30% (S of HB) covered. The river is still up about a metre, while the creek is running about 1/2 metre high.

The pipe bridge is entirely gone ! The log bridge has been carried downstream and now rests on a bank within sight of the creek landing.

Walking out, we spotted our first Eastern Bluebird. It would hover in the air, catching insects, then dart down to box #2 to perch a while. Driving back along

the Beattie Line, we saw several Red-winged Blackbirds.

birds: (15)

American Crow (WR); American Robin (HL); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (BCF); Canada Goose (TR); Dark-eyed Junco (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Eastern Bluebird (UM/Rd); Hairy Woodpecker (GF); House Finch (ER); Mallard (TR); Northern Cardinal (ET/BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); Tundra Swan (LM); Turkey Vulture (UM); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF)

phenology:

snow & ice: fields 1 % snow covered; woods 30-50% snow-covered
first & last: American Robin; Turkey Vulture; Eastern Bluebird -- Dark-eyed Junco still here