

Newport Forest

Tuesday July 8 2008

3:45 - 5:05 pm

Weather: prc. 0 mm;; RH 76%; BP 99.28 kPa; SW 5-15 kh; hz/sn; LM 33°C

Purpose: to retrieve a game camera

Participants: Kee

Joe Belanger of the Free Press rang me this morning to describe a recurring cougar sighting in the Port Franks area. A cottager has been putting out food which the same cougar has come to eat about half a dozen times. I suggested a game camera on site and Joe concurred. I decided to use our most reliable camera, Cam#1.

At the property I took down Cam#1 but, instead of leaving immediately, I lingered for a rest in the Nook, watching as the young, sickly raccoon of last week came out of the box and descended to the tray, where he proceeded to eat bird seed AND the kibble I had put up there. I was glad he had survived this long. His coat had a bit more shine in it and he trembled very little.

In any event, this little guy performed a maneuver I hadn't seen since we raised Ratty: the propellor-tail. Young raccoons have the ability to "twirl" their tails, holding them straight, but pivoting them at the base -- like a propellor. The sight is somewhat bizarre, even amusing. It seems to express pleasure or anticipation of same, like a dog wagging its tail.

A Blue Jay waited patiently on a nearby branch all this time, glancing occasionally at its watch. I left about 5pm and headed to Port Franks, where I met a Mr Bob Rutledge, the cottager who has been feeding a cougar. Track casts taken by Rutledge could not be verified, owing to the substrate being loose topsoil and wood-chip mulch, about the worst medium in the world. However, the pads were clearly separated and not canine. They measured a good 4" across, indicating a full grown animal in the 140-160 lb range, possibly a male. I took down other particulars, noted the feeding area, and selected a small spruce 25' from the feeding area. New batteries, new film. Didn't want to miss this opportunity.

Besides the black animal which Rutledge, his wife, and a neighbour or two have seen so often, there appears to be a tan cougar in the area as well.