

Last Visit of 2009...

Newport Forest Tuesday December 30 2009 2:45 - 4:30

weather: prec. 26 mm; RH 78%; BP 99.9 kPa; calm; ovcast; T -1° C
(av. snow depth 3.5 cm)
purpose: year end visit
participants: Pat, Kee

The ground was frozen & firm, with very little snow on site, so we decided to drive in. No problems.

We did not stay long on the property, just long enough to take the weather, put out a little feed, and walk to the river to check conditions there. Pat did a fair amount of (deluxe) bird-watching (from the trailer as a blind), spotting a Brown Creeper (best bird). But she also observed two species that should be off to the south by now: the Field Sparrow and the Common Grackle. This was the last day to report any unusual birds for the Christmas Bird Count held last weekend. For our money, the most "unusual" bird was the starling. We almost never see them there. The CBC people will probably accept the Brown Creeper, instead. Pat remarked that the Field Sparrow was unusually bossy around its feeding tray, probably grumpy because he had missed his flight south (?)

Walking to the river, I logged the following tracks: Eastern Cottontail; Eastern Gray Squirrel; Feral Cat; Meadow Vole; White-tailed Deer; Wild Turkey, but -- amazingly enough -- no Raccoons! The river was at normal levels and this allowed a large island of grounded ice to collect in mid-river, while an extensive upriver jam by the mouth of Fleming Creek bend has gathered virtually all the ice coming downstream. The creek, meanwhile had a higher than average flow, submerging the rapids in a mini-torrent.

I changed cards on the trail cam and we left after barely two hours on site, owing social visits to some local rural folks.

birds: (15)

American Crow (LM); American Tree Sparrow (Tr); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Brown Creeper (GF); Common Grackle (BCF); Dark-eyed Junco (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); European Starling (LM); Field Sparrow (TR); Hairy Woodpecker (GF); Mourning Dove (LM); Northern Cardinal (trail cam); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (EW)

supplemental: Blue Jay; Red-tailed Hawk (Furnival Rd/Fleming Line)

new species:

Yellowjacket Hover Fly *Milesia virginiensis* RSF SM J129/09

Fungus Gnat *Keroplatus* sp. RSF SM J129/09

'Three-banded Otitid' *Tritoxera incurvata* NF SM J130/09

(still digesting the Marshall list from last July)

IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)



Ice-jam upriver by the mouth of Fleming Creek

(click on image to enlarge)



A mature doe looks over her shoulder eight days ago . . .

(click on image to enlarge)



. . . while, five days later, a young deer wonders where the snow went.

(click on image to enlarge)



Yellowjacket Hover Fly: A Syrphid Fly that resembles a wasp (don't they all?) Flies can always be distinguished from wasps by looking for the typical Hymenopteran (elbowed) antennae. Flies have a pair of vibrissae (like small antennae) arising between the eyes -- as below. pinned specimen courtesy BugGuide.net (click on name)