

First Visit of 2010

Newport Forest Wednesday January 6 2010 2:20 - 5:10 pm

weather: prec. 6 mm; RH 81%; BP 98.7 kPa; calm; ovcst; T -2 °C

purpose: winter walk

participants: Kee

I entered the property with a roar, eager to test my brand-new snow tires, but there was no real challenge for the deep-lug treads as only 6 cm of snow (average figure) covered the property. After taking the weather and setting up the feeder trays, I carried half a bag of feed corn to the deer trough. The idea behind the deer trough is to protect the trees in the Regeneration Zone (RZ). However, it may not always prevent deer from snacking on some hors d'oeuvres before dinner. I changed cards on the trail cam, then returned to camp to prepare for the day's walk.

Walking the TRT, I immediately noticed the tracks of two coyotes walking together. The tracks followed the main trail to the river, then over the bluffs and into the RSF (Riverside Forest), where they diverged for a while, with one coyote returning to the trail as it ascended the HB (Hogsback). Here, in slightly deeper snow, it reverted to a practice that is common to coyotes, according to Ray Axford (a.k.a. the Great White Hunter). Ray tracks & hunts coyotes. Anyway, by walking in its own tracks, an animal can save a lot of energy. (And energy is at a premium this time of year for virtually all birds & mammals.)

Inside the RSF I also heard a slow, irregular knocking sound that came from a Pileated woodpecker hunting along the upper branches of a large Hackberry near the river. Although the bird was distant, the crest was clearly visible. After every few pecks, this bird made a satisfied "cluck" sound. ("Gotcha!") I passed a mature Black Walnut tree that suffered a strange misfortune. (See image below) Two major branches were down, but in opposite directions. Not the result of a single wind, I thought. The presence of so much splintering around the breaks made me wonder if it had a disease something like heart rot. (Perhaps Don Craig has an idea or two.)

I completed the walk through the BCF and returned to camp to close up, this being a short visit. The river ice has expanded downstream another 50m or so fro the jam at the bend, the rest being still open. The creek is mostly frozen over, with a few open leads remaining.

animal tracks:

Coyote; Eastern Cottontail, Eastern Gray Squirrel; Feral (?) Cat; Virginia Deer; Wild Turkey

birds: (few about)

Black-capped Chickadee (BCF); Dark-eyed Junco (Tr); Downy wodpecker (GF); Pileated Woodpecker (RSF); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (Rd)

new species:

'Dagger Crane Fly' *Tipula caloptera* NF SM J130/09

IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)



Stealth Cam 12/30/2009 23:59:17 ● 21F

looks like three (four?) of Two-stripe's kits made it to the end of 2009, anyway

(click on image to enlarge)



What happened to this walnut tree?

(click on image to enlarge)



The Riverside Forest, looking toward the river; note beeches in foreground

(click on image to enlarge)



double-registered coyote tracks: note deep foot drag, often made by a tired animal. (snow depth < 8 cm)