

Site Visit on the Last Day of February

Newport Forest Sunday February 28 2010 2:20 - 6:45 pm

weather: prec.14 mm; RH 75%; BP 101.5 kPa; NW \leq 30 km/h; ovcst, T +3° C
purpose: winter walk
participants: Kee

When I arrived at the farm gate, the Upper Meadow looked the same as it did last visit when I arrived at the farm gate. I was about to swing it open when Lyle Mann came along the road and stopped to chat about some deer he had seen nearby. "How are your bluebirds," I said in joking reference to the plethora he enjoyed around his farm every spring. "They're all in the fridge," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

Driving the track down to the trailer quickly revealed a major difference from the last visit; Another snowfall had added to the pack, but above-zero temperatures had caused a slump back to previous levels, but now the pack had a higher density and a very damp bottom, causing the van to slew mildly out of control from time to time.

Gathering the weather report, I calculated the water equivalent of the last snowfall, pleased at the 14 mm of new precipitation. Few birds were about but everywhere I looked, Small Winter Stoneflies were crawling over the snow to no clear purpose. I only know them as indicators of unpolluted waters, since they have a high oxygen requirement in the aquatic phase of their life cycle. The average depth of the snowpack around the trailer was 13.6 cm. The wet bottom means that infiltration into the soil has already started.

At about 3:30 pm the sun came out for a while and I decided to walk the TRT. In the BCF (Blind Creek Forest) I spotted the raised white tail of a deer racing through the woods about 200 m away -- always an inspiring sight. Just past the River Landing I cam across a pair of subadult raccoon tracks leading under a woody jumble that might just be the ground den for Two-stripe's kits that I've been keeping an eye on since last summer. In the Riverside Forest my attention was drawn by the tapping of a Hairy Woodpecker overhead. Moments later, I spotted another deer, about 150 m away, bounding up the slope of the Hogsback.

Back at the trailer, I made some coffee and watched an Eastern Gray Squirrel (black phase) at the Hickory feeder as the sun set red behind the Hogsback.

new species: (all protists)

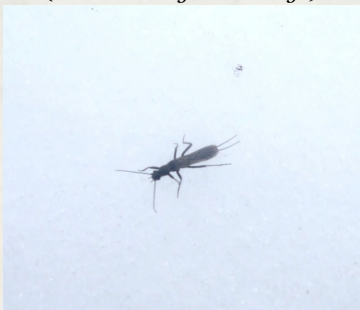
'Ribbon Amphilept' *Litonotus* [armillatus] BCF KD Nv29/09
'Jumping Jack' *Halteria grandinella* BCF KD Nv29/09
crenellated *Arcella* *Arcella gibosa* BCF KD Nv29/09

This ends the hay infusion series which we started last December. Although *Halteria* is a fairly common organism in ponds, we had not seen this species until now. (more below) The *Litonotus* individuals all had acuminate posteriors, but definitely in the genus. *L. armillatus* was the only sp. of *Litonotus* with this feature that I could find in my references, although I can't rule out other spp. like it. *Arcella* is a testate amoeboid with a variety of toroidal shells, one smooth (*A. vulgaris*), one spiny (*A. stellata*) and one crenelate (*A. gibosa*). Tests are a light yellow-brown.

IMAGES:

I call *Halteria grandinella* individuals "Jumping Jacks" because in the midst of a rather slow progression across the field of one's microscope, they will suddenly "jump," appearing elsewhere up to 100 microns away without having visibly traversed the distance. Protist physiologists have measured the beat frequency of *Halteria*'s cilia during these jumps at 105 beats/sec. (6300 beats/min sounds more impressive)
courtesy Y.Tsukii ("Protist Images")

(click on image to enlarge)



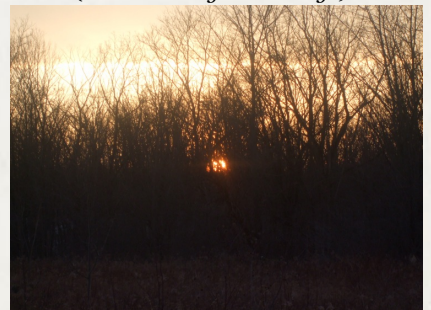
Small Winter Stonefly *Allocaenia* [*pygmaea*] is about 1.2 cm long (no attempt at close up)

(click on image to enlarge)



doe & yearling visit trail cam (last week)

(click on image to enlarge)



Sunset behind Hogsback 6:01 pm; true sunset 6:15 pm