

Newport Forest

Tuesday December 19 2010

2:20 - 4:35 pm

Weather: prec. 26 mm; RH 100%; BP 102.3; calm; ovcast; T - 2° C;

purpose: to check snowfall on property

participants: Pat, Kee

It was a major operation just to get the property gate open, thanks to county ploughs that had piled snow along the fenceline. We only succeeded in digging out enough of the gate to swing it open about one foot, just enough to squeeze through. All materiel headed for the trailer was put in a large plastic garbage bag. It's a lot easier to tow a garbage bag than a toboggan. Given Pat's MS it was a major achievement for her just to make it to the trailer, even stepping in my tracks. On the way in, we crossed many deer tracks, even as others would parallel our trail for a hundred yards or more, then veer off into the trees. No other mammal tracks of any kind were seen.

Once we got to the trailer, we fired up the gas stove and began another major operation. We heated the snowpail over the stove to release its icy contents, melted the ice & snow in a saucepan, then measured the volume. Dividing the volume by the area of the snowpail opening gives us the liquid equivalent of snow precipitation -- 26 mm, as above.

We put up birdseed in just one feeder, the one visible from the trailer. Pat was delighted, once she settled down to watch, to see two Tufted Titmice show up for winter rations.

Although we did not walk to the river, we saw it earlier as we crossed the Wardsville bridge: a frozen jumble of ice-cakes. The creek was iced over too, except for one open lead at the Lower Rapids. Walking anywhere soaked up available energy pretty quickly, as the necessity of lifting each foot in succession quickly proves wearying. (It makes one thankful for the striding walk we normally employ.)

We had been there barely two hours before we decided to head back up to the gate. Pat had to deliver an elderberry pie to our "neighbour," old Eva Newport. Eva is pushing 90, but she refuses to move into town, as all her friends & relatives have urged. We sympathize with her determination.

Birds:

Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Downy Woodpecker (GF); Northern Cardinal (Tr)
Tufted Titmouse (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF)

Drought Watch:

The year-end precipitation total looks like it may be 743 mm, yielding a benchmark shortfall of 17.4 % and a regional average shortfall of 31.6 %

2010 was definitely another drought year, as I predicted in the March 7 report last spring; precipitation shortfall by March of a given year has been a reliable predictor of a shortfall for the year -- over the entire decade.

Snow: slightly compressed powder; av. depth 8.8"

IMAGES



Winter wonderland: view of Blind Creek Forest across the Lower Meadow

Since our game camera has been stolen, we can use this opportunity to catch up on pictures from previous years. Here is an amusing suite of three images of a deer passing the game camera at night in the winter of 06, puzzled by the flashing box:



“What the . . .



. . . hell . . .



... is that?"