

Newport Forest

Tuesday January 18 2011

2:25 - 5:40 pm

Weather: precip. 11 mm; RH 100%; BP 11.7 kPa; ovcast; lt rn; calm; T + 2° C

Purpose: to walk Thames River Trail

Participants: Kee, Brian

We roared through the thick, heavy snow of the track under a light rain, down to the Lower Meadow, the van slewing a bit, but staying on course. Once again, the van disturbed a Red-tailed Hawk which flew off toward the river. We at once turned the van around, setting it at the end of the road on the “launching pad”. As soon as we got out to set up camp, I spied a small face watching us out of the Raccoon nursery box. It turned out to be an Eastern Gray Squirrel. Perhaps it has taken up residence “upstairs” in the box -- which has two “floors.” Average snow depth in the vicinity of the trailer was 9.7 cm.

After taking the weather and putting out winter rations, we set out along the Thames River Trail, walking it clockwise, instead of the usual direction. We looked for the deer kill of last week, but found only remnants of the stomach. Another few inches of snow had fallen since. (No human tracks were encountered on site this time.)

Deer tracks were almost continuous along the whole stretch of trail, with occasional Coyotes following it as well. One set of tracks in the Blind Creek Forest had one hoof printing blood. Unknown wound. Other tracks included two Raccoons and, toward the camp, a lone Wild Turkey, fresh today. At 3:45pm a very light snow replaced the almost nonexistent rain.

Back in The Hole, I stopped to change the batteries on the trail cam and attempted to reset the clock, failing miserably until I realized I had the wrong manual! For the time being we'll have to use the reset time of 3:45 pm to calculate a new offset for the time-stamps. We closed camp and got set for "launch". You pick up speed very slowly, but always accelerating. It helps to have front-wheel drive and big-lug Hankook snow tires, but velocity is everything.

Birds: (6)

Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Northern Cardinal (GF); Red-tailed Hawk (LM); Tufted Titmouse (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (LM)

IMAGES:



Yearling deer slipped yesterday, fell on side, got up and went back. Weak?



Blind Creek has several oldpools open, here and in the distance.



View of river, now mostly open again, through screen of trees on Hogsback slope. Note Beeches in foreground. The Beech, Ironwood, and Blue-beech tend to retain dead leaves over winter.

Note: Given the forest type, it is easy to predict that the American Beech will once again become a co-dominant tree in the Riverside Forest. Already many young trees line the Hogsback slope, ready for a re-invasion. Harvey Newport told me once that there used to be lots of beech there, but they cut them all to make room for more commercially valuable trees like Maple and Walnut. (good management practice, that!)



Trail cam catches buck (?) reacting to faint noise from camera: “What the . . . !”

[ignore time stamp]