

Newport Forest

Sunday January 23 2011

2:00 - 5:10 pm

weather: precip. 5 mm; RH 65%; BP 102.6 kPa; clear; calm; T -14°

purpose: Stewards meeting & site visit

participants: Heather Campbell; Erin Carroll; Jane Bowles; Kee Dewdney; Pat Dewdney; Terry Keep; Bruce Parker

It has been (shall we say) more than one year since our last Stewards Meeting and it was difficult to play catch-up in a 1.5 hour meeting. We did however succeed in deciding on a few elements for the 2011 Action Plan, as well as adding some detail to the Annual Operations Plan. We were all gratified by the attendance and enjoyed the hospitality of the Keep family. We were also happy to be joined by a new Steward, Erin Carroll. We thank Pat for keeping the minutes of the meeting.

Four of us drove over to the site following the meeting: Pat and I, Bruce, and Erin. I did a short practice run into the now-thick & crusty snow and decided that discretion was the better part of valour, so we walked in, leaving our vehicles up on Fleming Line.

The trudge to the trailer was just that. I fired up the gas stove and Bruce and I warmed the snow bucket to get a liquid volume reading. Erin watched for birds outside. The results of our brief visit were hardly worth recording: Black-capped Chickadee, Dark-eyed Junco, Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch.

The only exciting nature observation was made in the Upper Meadow, as we came in. It looked like an owl attacked a Meadow Vole.

IMAGES



Probable owl strike: The predator may have detected motion under the snow, then came in on a low glide to snatch Meadow Vole (most likely victim) in its underground runway. Note drag marks of tail feathers and holes made by talons. (Erin steps in for scale.) This is not typical behaviour for a hawk because they depend on visual recognition of prey. There is no way a hawk could visually detect motion under a foot of snow. However, it is consistent with an owl attack, as the Great Horned Owl (for example) has very acute hearing, its main source of prey information.



Ice-cakes left by massive winter floods of 2008 squish saplings, as here. Cake is 2" thick.

If the regional snowpack continues to build, it would take less than a week of warm-ish weather to set off a major flood -- with results similar to this.