

Newport Forest

Thursday December 1 2011

2:20 - 5:30 pm

Weather: prec. 87 mm; RH 70 %; BP 102.7 kPa; clear, calm; T 8° C

Purpose: to inspect flooding on property

Participants: Kee

I could hardly believe the rain gauge shortly after rolling into camp. I don't recall a higher reading since we first started visiting Newport Forest back in the year 2000. The end-of-November total now stands at 1156 mm, some 153 mm more than the best statistic to date over the 12-year period.

The canoe was missing from its stand. This alarmed me until I remembered that Bruce Parker had said he would like to take it back to the Novacraft plant to have it assessed for damage from the miniflood of three weeks ago.

Today we had more of a maxi-flood on our hands (or feet). A few small patches of snow remained from the dusting we had two days ago, but floodwater was everywhere to be seen. Looking down the creek bluffs from the trailer, I could see nothing but water inundating the Fleming Creek Forest. Later I headed for the river in my hiking shoes, only to be turned back at Edgar's Elbow: Blind Creek was flowing again, albeit very slowly! I went back for my rubber boots in order to ford the stream and continue on.

At the River Landing I was startled to see the new shoreline just nudging the trail, with an expanse of water stretching to double its normal width out on the river. It would have been an ideal spot to launch a canoe, except that I had promised Pat that I would stay away from dangerous water. Thus I doubled back through the Blind Creek Forest to pick up the trail there, meaning that I would walk (or start to walk) the trail in the clockwise direction instead of counterclockwise. Even on the Blind Creek Trail, I had to detour several spots where the trail disappeared under water.

I passed the honeycomb tree as I began the slow ascent up the Hogsback. All the combs were still in place. On the way up, I noticed once again with sadness the dozens and dozens of dead Bitternuts (now rotting logs) littering the Hogsback slope. When I gained the summit, I could hardly refrain from taking a sneak preview of the trail ahead on the other side of the Hogsback. Holey! The whole Riverside Forest was flooded. My only option now was to march (scramble would be a better word) along the top of the Hogsback and then to descend back into the Blind Creek Forest. On the way I spotted a black squirrel foraging shyly ahead of

me. Then I spotted a raccoon skull and picked it up to examine. The canines were gone, making the skull probably more than a year old. I placed the skull gingerly on a log, recalling Glen Jacobs' admonition: "So its spirit can look around better".

The best exercise I know involves using every muscle of the body to step over tangles of logs and branches, fighting hand-to-hand combat with Multiflora Rose bushes, and "bulling" my way through thickly growing saplings. Not to mention occasional tumbles on the downslope, noting with a certain satisfaction that a large deer had also slipped in one of these spots.

As I entered the open Lower Meadow and approached the trailer, I spotted numerous birds in the bushes surrounding the Maple feeder, but none visiting. They all fled when they spotted me, a highly unusual occurrence. Were they afraid of something? I saw Chickadees and Nuthatches and -- just for a second -- thought I saw a Tufted Titmouse, a bird we have not seen since last January. But I couldn't be sure.

As the sun slowly descended and my favorite time of day approached, there was no doubting the identity of the large birds that flew in a ragged vee overhead. I always get a wee thrill from a wedge of Canada Geese, honking away. That bird has made something of a comeback since the 1970s when wildlife biologists were wringing their hands over seeming declines. Now they're called "sky carp"!

Birds: (7)

American Crow (UM); American Robin (GF/E); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Canada Goose (LM); Common Flicker (BCF); Northern Harrier* (LM); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF) *seen by Bruce

Precipitation report: The recent deluge raises the end-of-November statistic to 1156 mm

Phenology:

First snowfall November 29, last pre-winter (non-meltwater) flood (?)

Trail Cams: #1. (in Hole) I forgot to turn it on last visit

#2. (on creek trail) one squirrel Nv28, one raccoon Nv27

#3. (near Hole) nothing of interest

IMAGES:



FinePix

At first I thought, “That was close!” Imagine the river flood cresting right up to the edge of the trail like that! Around the next bend, where the trail dips slightly, it became impassable.



WILDVIEW

11-28-2011 13:17:08



Trail Cam #2

This trail cam looks up the Fleming Creek trail, with the end of a giant old log up in the Nook silhouetted against the sky.

Eastern Gray Squirrel (black phase) may be reacting somehow to the camera. It seems to be well fed as winter approaches. It should be. The squirrels (three species) are constantly filching bird seed.

It pauses on a Bitternut log that has fallen over the trail, one of the property's 200 or so Bitternut Hickories wiped out by the Scolytus beetle infestation of 2006 - 2008.



FinePix

I'm a sucker for sunsets, even when marred by infrastructure.

The hydro tower was erected in 1947. According to the Ontario Power Authority, these power lines (three strands) were erected in 1947. They have been cut back to half power, since they no longer function as “transmission” lines, but as (local) “distribution” lines.