

Newport Forest

Monday December 26 2011

Weather: prec. 5 mm; RH 60%; BP 102.5 kPa; clear; SW 3-30 kmh; T 6° C

Purpose: year-end visit

Participants: Kee

A large white-and-black bird flew across the road ahead of me as I approached the property gate. It swooped over the Upper Meadow and settled in a large tree overhanging the creek bluffs in the distance. "That wouldn't be an Osprey would it?" I reached for my binos but just as I got focused on the bird, it flew off down the creek. Now I'll never know for sure.

It was a good day for raptors, judging from the two seen on roadside wires on the way down to Wardsville. The sky was clear and the sun was bright. At the trailer I found a balmy 6° C on the meadow mercury. I changed the cards on the trail cams, startling a small flock of Mallards on Fleming Creek in the process. Then I set out on the Thames River Trail, taking the clockwise direction, rather than my usual counterclockwise one. I did this hoping to find a walking pole I had left by the vernal ponds last week. No such luck.

Ascending the switchback trail up the south slope of the Hogsback, I noticed that the large honeycombs spotted by Greg Thorn nearly two months ago were still intact and in place. On the Hogsback, a number of Wild Turkey tracks showed up to accompany my own tracks through the thorn forest under the power lines. I spent a few minutes searching for another walking pole I had mislaid several months ago, ending up at the giant Chinkapin Oak -- which I decided to photograph for the record. On the other side, descending into the Beech-maple section of the Riverside Forest, I counted the American Beech trees, since they all sported the same copper-coloured leaves and stood out nicely: 21 stems, from 10 to 40 cm dbh. A little later I spotted some large bracket fungi off-trail, only to discover aging specimens of the Ling-zhi brackets I had found early last spring.

Closer to the river I spotted a young Bald Eagle cruising past the bluffs and, when I got up to the bluffs bench, I sat to watch a mixed flock of Common Mergansers and Common Goldeneyes swimming near the mouth of the creek, possibly on a stopover before continuing their migration to the south.

Back home I examined the images from Trail Cam #2, not too surprised to see many raccoons by night and many squirrels by day. (See Cam List below.) I had baited the area before my last departure to see what showed up. We do this two or

three times a year. The only surprise was to see an Eastern Gray Squirrel with a grey coat phase. We have seen a grey-phase squirrel only once before this. Back home in London the ratio of greys to blacks in our neighbourhood is about 50/50. Also one squirrel showed up with a dark rufous coat, but not a Red Squirrel.

Birds: (9+)

American Crow (HBF); Bald Eagle (TR); Canada Goose (TR); Common Goldeneye (TR); Common Merganser (TR); Mallard (FC); Mourning Dove (BCF); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (BCF/W)

Trail Cams: (#1 had dead batteries.); #2 on Fleming Creek Trail near Nook:

Raccoons

Dc17 7:51 pm, 8:13 pm, 8:18 pm, 8:21 pm, 8:43 pm, 9:59 pm

Dc18 1:13 am, 8:24 pm, 9:04 pm, 10:49 pm

Dc19 8:57 pm, 9:44 pm Dc20 4:02 am Dc22 5:41 am, 11:46 pm

Dc24 10:30 pm Dc26 1:53 am, 2:06 am

Eastern Gray Squirrels

Dc18 2:47 pm, 2:51 pm, 3:57 pm Dc19 3:40 pm, 3:44 pm, 3:58 pm, 4:40 pm

Dc20 8:07 am, 9:52 am, 9:54* am, 11:31 am, 1:36 am, 3:30 am

Dc22 2:02 pm, 4:06 pm, 3:22 pm, 3:32 pm Dc23 3:17 pm

Dc24 12:51 pm; 12:56 pm Dc25 3:57 am

*gray coat phase; rest of images show black phase squirrels only plus one rufous.

Weather Note: I simply don't believe the 5 mm depth of rain that showed up in the snowpail. The property looked more as though it had received something like 20 mm. Some raccoons must have been drinking from the pail! In view of the weather trend I have reinstalled the rain gauge.

Note for Newcomers: The Newport Forest website will be found by clicking on that name at <http://www.csd.uwo.ca/~akd/> where you will find a description of Newport Forest. Scroll to the bottom to see the latest Bulletin or click on a year for past Bulletins. The archives are now complete back through to 2007, about 300 Bulletins.

Phenology: last snow-free day (i.e., not covered) has yet to occur. Winter has not yet visited the property in any meaningful way

IMAGES:



FinePix

Another member of the One-metre Club, an exclusive society of trees that have equaled or exceeded one metre in diameter. Here is a giant Chinkapin Oak growing on top of the Hogsback (downsloping to the right) with my shadow at 1:1 scale.



FinePix

My guess for this gnarly-looking polypore is *Ganoderma lucidum* or Ling-zhi, a fungus used for thousands of years in Chinese traditional medicine. The latter name means “divine fungus” -- or something similar. This is a rather old specimen of the fruiting body, first observed April 12 last, when the shelves were deep red and shiny with a yellowish margin.

According to Wikipedia, “*Ganoderma lucidum* produces a group of triterpenes, called ganoderic acids, which have a molecular structure similar to steroid hormones.”

Would that have something to do with the medicinal value?

It must be added that the Asian variety is slightly different from the North American one.



WILDVIEW

12-20-2017 09:54:24



Trail Cam #2

Grey-phase Eastern Gray Squirrel pauses on old Bitternut log as it considers where to go next. This is only our second observation of this colour in 12 years on site

Note wrong year on cam time-stamp. On the setup display the right-hand digit is partially masked!