

Newport Forest

Wednesday March 28 2012

2:10 - 8:10 pm

**Weather:** prec. 0 mm; RH 50%; BP 100.5 kPa; W 5-30 kmh; sn/cld; T 22° C

**Purpose:** Maintenance

**Participants:** Kee

At the beginning of today's visit, I thought it would be a repeat of previous visits when the weather was supernaturally warm. But what started as a 22° C day turned increasingly nasty, as the temperature slowly dropped to barely 10° C by late afternoon. Gusts of cold wind blew increasing overcast into the area, terrible birding weather. But I wasn't there to birdwatch, instead to clean the trailer and remove debris from the surrounding woods, scrambling down the creek bluffs at one point to retrieve an unsightly white plastic shopping bag. Since few readers want a blow-by-blow of how I cleaned the trailer, this report will be short, describing a limited walkabout, instead.

I walked to the far end of the vernal ponds to see if there was any chorus going on. Nothing! The shallower vernal ponds are now rapidly drying up. This is consistent with a rather gloomy long-range weather prognosis that accompanies this issue. (Readers will note the rather low relative humidity above.) I found several crayfish chimneys near one of the remaining vernal ponds.

Exploring around the trailer, I saw that the trout lilies (both yellow and white varieties) were coming into bloom, as well as a small patch of what I thought was Bloodroot, but didn't check the leaves. The flowers of this plant are easy to confuse with those of Twinleaf. I also tested a metal detector that we intend to use to locate survey stakes along the east boundary of the property in the Fleming Creek Forest. We used this device several years ago to see what would turn up: We got a strong signal just inside Harvey's Beanfield (HBF), dug a bit and came up with what a gunsmith friend (also an expert on historical firearms) says was a 50 calibre musket ball, probably fired from a Brown Bess musket. The ball was somewhat flattened as though it had struck a tree, instead of its intended target.

Just before leaving, I spotted this years "resident" female raccoon gleaning birdseed from the ground below the Hickory feeder. She looks very healthy. Then I heard the one-note calls of newly returned Towhees in the Blind Creek Forest.

As I drove through the Upper Meadow toward the gate, the van flushed a large ground bird, possibly a Woodcock, that flapped vigorously up in front of me into the semi-dark.

## **Birds:** (10)

American Crow (ER); American Robin (BCF/LM); Blue Jay (LM); Canada Goose (LM); Eastern Towhee (BCF); Northern Cardinal (BCF/LM); Northern Flicker (FCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (BCF); White-breasted Nuthatch (BCF); Wild Turkey (EW);

**Phenology:** Towhees back; Bloodroot? in bloom; Trout Lilies in bloom; first crayfish chimneys

**Long Range Weather Prediction.** I have included the pdf of an analysis of how well first quarter precipitation patterns predict the total for the coming year. Well enough for us to say that we “expect” 570 mm. This is a very low figure.

**Readers Write:** (time to play catch-up in this department)

Borers get a bad rap: (Natalie Helferty, Ecologist at Natural Heritage Consulting) “One thing though, remember your comment about the borers, well. . . the fact is that the borers are just eating the dead wood, which is why they are called borers. The fungi eat the dead organic matter and the pileated woodpecker eats the borer. That is the cycle and it's all because the tree is already dying. So, could you please have the poor borer removed from the Most Wanted list of insects because the emerald ash borer is taking the opportunity to eat already dying trees, and when we stop polluting our air and water then the emerald ash borer population will decline too.

Hand-feeding birds on Long Island: (Jonathan Piel, longtime friend and former editor of *Scientific American*) “Madelaine and I spent the day out on the east end of Long Island . . . As we walked north to the bay shore through a Federal wild life refuge we were able to feed from our hands black-capped chickadees and a pair of black and white feathered birds, the male sported a red spot, yarmulka-like on his head. Great to feel the dry, little claws take delicate hold as the beak deftly picks up a seed. Also saw in a group five cardinals. They must have just blown in from the south. The late afternoon light selectively illuminating tree trunks and vines as well as patches of forest floor explain why generations of American painters have inhabited this glacial leaving.” (Piel later ID'd the Downy Woodpecker)

MNR says Cougars in Ontario: (from Joe Belanger, reporter for the *London Free Press* and early proponent of a cougar presence) “Just saw the media coverage

confirming cougars in Ontario by the MNR after several years of research. Rosatte [MNR senior scientist] says he thinks there are "several hundred" cougars in the province. Yes! Vindication!" [Joe had to endure some ridicule early on after writing about local cougars.]

Visit the following website to see what Belanger is talking about:

[http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Wildlife/2ColumnSubPage/STDPROD\\_068840.html](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Wildlife/2ColumnSubPage/STDPROD_068840.html)

IMAGES:



FinePix

The vernal ponds are drying up faster than expected. The alga called *Mougeotia* (moo-go'-sha) turns from light green to white when it dries out. Soil in foreground, under several inches of water only a few days ago, is now almost dry! Remaining vernal pond is in background.



FinePix

White Trout Lilies are a Newport Forest Specialty. They grow among their yellow cousins all over the Fleming Creek Bluffs.





**WILDVIEW**

**03-28-2012 08:51:34**



Trail Cam #1

Just before 9 am this morning, a yearling (buck?) Whitetail passed Trail Cam #1, looking for breakfast.