

Weather: prec. 6 mm; RH n/a; BP 101.5 kPa; calm; ovcst, T 20° C

Purpose: to retrieve scat for analysis

Participants: Kee

I hadn't intended to visit Newport Forest today, but the threat of rain made it crucial to pick up the large animal scat observed during our visit last Sunday. It wouldn't do to have it wash away in the heavy rains predicted for the overnight. I measured two of the droppings, then used a shovel to scoop up everything, scat and grassy substrate altogether in one piece, placing it carefully in a special lined box for later examination. (See the pdf entitled "Scat Report" for more details.)

Relaxing in the Nook later, I happened to be staring at the old log at the end of the Nook, when I noticed a Chipmunk emerging from underneath. Wait a minute! It had no stripes -- and much too long for a Chipmunk. "A weasel!" It was only in view for about 5 seconds, then it noticed me and scurried back under the log. As I



Sort-tailed Weasel image: Steve Hillebrand

always do when seeing a new animal, I quietly called out relevant field marks to myself. The memory of words seems to reinforce visual memory in such cases:

“tail 3-4 inches, body 5 - 6 inches, white underparts, uniform dark brown above.” That’s all I had time for, except for noticing that it was definitely a small weasel. But that was enough. (See New Species below.)

My main objective for today’s visit having been accomplished, I changed the cards on the trail cams (now all functioning once again), cleaned up around camp and drove up to the gate. Whatever animal made the scat, the weasel alone made the trip worthwhile!

New Species:

Short-tailed Weasel *Mustela erminea* Nk KD My31/12

ID Notes: The Long-tailed Weasel does not have white underparts, the Least Weasel has a very short, stubby tail. These, along with the Short-tailed Weasel, are the only species of small weasel-like animals in our area.

Correction: Dave Martin kindly relayed our image of the *Gomphus* dragonfly to expert James Holdsworth. He identified it not as the Pronghorn Clubtail (uncommon), but as the Midland Clubtail (less common and a very close lookalike). Had we known just how incomplete our area dragonfly guide was, the entry in our last Bulletin would have appeared as below -- now replaced on our ATBI list by the entry below that:

Pronghorn Clubtail *Gomphus [graslinellus]* ET/BC pd/KD My27/12

Midland Clubtail *Gomphus fraternus* ET/BC pd/JH My27/12

Trail Cam Report: We adopt a revised format: name/date/list of numbers (counts of animals present in the image).

Cam #1: Virginia Deer My31 1

Cam #2: Eastern Cottontail My28 1; Virginia Deer My29 1

Cam #3: Eastern Gray Squirrel My31 1; Pileated Woodpecker My29 1;
Raccoon My28 1*, 1, 1*, 3*, 1, 1, My29 3*, 2*, 1*, 1, 4*, 3**, 2*
My30 3**, 2**, 2**, 1*, 1*, 1, 2*, 1, 1 My31 2*

* = at least one kit in image; ** = only kits in image (1* = one kit)

IMAGES:



FinePix

Spring Flower Series: The Ninebark bush puts out white flowers in globular clusters like these. In a month they will all turn dark red!



Lumix

Site of droppings: The small yellow flag in foreground marks the deposition site of the scat. Lower Rapids in background make a good place for an animal to ford the creek, especially an animal that does not like wet feet. The main “forensic” question that arises is probably unanswerable at this time: Did the animal do its business before or after crossing the creek? Speculations are welcome.