

Date & time: Thursday November 29 2012: 1:50 - 5:35 pm

Weather: Pr 7mm; RH 78%; 102.5 kPa; SW 5-10 kmh; Sun/cld; T 9° C

Activity: No snow, but Kee “tracks” anyway

According to our trail cam records, it snowed twice on the 25th of November (last Sunday), once over the previous night, then again around noon. Here is the scene at 4:16 pm last Sunday. You can see earlier tracks in the snow-covered trail now somewhat filled in. Why didn't we come here last Sunday? Some people may stay



WILDVIEW

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at home during the winter, there being seemingly little to do in the woods. We have a different view; our major winter sport is tracking!

Today the property was snow-free, except for a reclusive patch here and there. The air seemed cold in spite of the 9° C reading. After warming up in the trailer, I donned my parka and headed for the river. There, at Mussel Beach, I could at least do some tracking in the soft mud that always follows a snow melt. I was pleased to find a semi-soft coating that took prints vary well, What sort of tracks

did I leave? None! The clayey mud simply congealed on my shoes, forming gigantic 20-pound clods. I would shed these every five or six steps, leaving a trail somewhat like that of a manure-spreader.

The most plentiful tracks were made by Coyotes, several individuals at a guess. The next most plentiful were made by Whitetail Deer (one of which drank from the river), both bucks and does. Then came a couple of Wild Turkeys and a lone Virginia Possum. I had just reached the end of the beach and had turned around to go back when I heard a loud “skree” noise behind me, looking up to see a beautiful Bald Eagle swooping low over my head, then soaring up into the empyrean to join what appeared to be two large hawks. But these were probably immature “baldies” accompanying their mother. Together all three circled high above me. (Would that be called a “Kettle”, as with hawks? Anita Caveney would probably know.)

Back at the trailer I busied myself with setting up the “weather station” for its winter duties, namely snow collection. After each snowfall, the pail is heated in the trailer, its contents converted to liquid, the volume of which is then measured in cubic cm and divided by the area of the pail’s opening in square cm. The result is the equivalent rainfall measured in cm -- converted to mm for the record.

My final bit of work on the property involved the installation of another section of treadway for the Fleming Creek Trail to make it that much less treacherous during the spring “seeps”. Then came sunset.

Birds: (10)

Bald Eagle (TR); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose (TR); Common Flicker (BCF); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (HBF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (MB)

Phenology: first snow cover Nv25/12, melted on following day

Trail Cams:

Cam #1: Raccoons: Fri 2 am, Sun 9:30 pm Cam #2: three deer on Sat and two later (images accidentally deleted from sd card -- so no time stamp)

IMAGES:



I must admit to a partiality for Possums (upper middle above). They trundle about their business cloaked in sparse hair and humility, living by no man's leave and accepting "food" that few other animals would eat. (Don't ask!) Prior to about 1987, we saw no Possums anywhere in southern Ontario, although they must have been here. Has their range expanded or only their population?

Animal tracking has three main components: identification, interpretation and following. The first component means identifying the species that made the track, "interpretation" means telling something about the animal: sex, age, condition, direction, etc. "following" means simply following the tracks, fore-tracking or back-tracking, to find out what it was up to, where it came from or went to, including possibly (possumly) where it is currently staying. It was hardly possible to carry out the third option today!



Weather station is now ready for winter data collection: addition of snow gauge (silver pail) completes instrumentation (such as it is): weather vane/velocimeter at top (bad design), hooded thermometer set (in white box), rain gauge in background. Barometric pressure and humidity are garnered from the Weather Network (Wardsville). We have accumulated over 800 sets of observations, from 2000 to 2012.