

Date & Time: Tuesday January 8 2013, 1:25 - 5:35 pm

Weather: Prec. 2 mm; RH 88%; BP 102.6 kPa; calm; overcast; T +2° C

Activity: Pat and Kee undergo an extreme endurance test

We had expected shallower snow on site, but colder temperatures since the end of 2012 had made a surface crust that resisted collapse. It was tough going walking in, particularly with Pat's disability. The "garboggan" (seen in the foreground by my walking pole) is our own invention, making it incredibly easy to bring in a rather heavy load of supplies. One simply tows the loaded bag behind on a rope.



It slides over the snow with so little friction, you even forget it's there! Pat carries our lunch bucket. We crossed numerous tracks, beginning with those of the Eastern Cottontail, then Virginia Deer, then a Coyote. Arriving at the camp, Pat spotted a large hawk circling the Lower Meadow, not a Redtail (the usual) but possibly a Northern Harrier with its patches of white.

Pat would require nearly the whole time of our stay on site just to recuperate from the walk in, never mind the walk out. I went down to the creek noting tracks of a Virginia Possum and Raccoon on their way down for a drink. I changed the sd cards on Trail Cam #2, exasperated that I had neglected to turn the camera on! Back in the trailer Pat was enjoying the sight of two male Northern Cardinals in full breeding plumage, vying for the attention of a female nearby. She is fairly sure about the Tree Sparrows she saw when we arrived, but not as sure about the House Sparrow. (See Birds below.)

I took a walk along Edgar's Trail, changing the card in Trail Cam #1 at the Hole and noting that it was defective. The river was open and flowing at normal levels, but Mussel Beach was iced over. On the way back, my walkie-talkie rang: Pat was about to leave. I made haste back to camp to see her off, then cleaned up a bit. By the time I got to the Upper Meadow a beautiful sunset had developed, with Pat almost at the gate. When we got home there were no exciting candid images of wildlife to enjoy. However, for the next cycle I had inserted newly formatted cards, new batteries, and added a lot of bait at the Hole. Fasten your Tilley Hats!

Birds: (10)

American Crow (UM); American Tree Sparrow (Tr); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (UM); Dark-eyed Junco (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (GF); House Sparrow* (GF); Northern Cardinal (Tr); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF) *Pat has some reservations about the House Sparrow, rarely seen on the property, but frequently at Hurdle's feeder up by the road

Readers Write:

Bernie VandenBelt, TTLT member and Newport booster writes, "Thanks for your final report of 2012 and for all your reporting throughout the year. Your reports are always an interesting read. Best wishes to you and Pat for 2013; may it hold some pleasant surprises for you as your Newport adventures continue!"

Al McGregor, local historian and former Ch 10 news anchor, writes, "Just a quick note to praise you again for the weekly articles on the Newport Forest. They've made for some very interesting reading especially since this farm is just a few miles away. I also wanted to engage in some shameless self promotion. My book "A Porous Border, a Novel of Canada and the American Civil War" was finally released in the fall. The website at www.almcgregor.com has probably more information than you would even want to know. May our paths cross in 2013."

Wendy Carroll sent us the url for a spider that builds models of itself:

<http://blog.perunature.com/2012/12/new-species-of-decoy-spider-likely.html>

Steve Marshall, noted Entomologist, reacts to the mimicry: “Spiders are endlessly interesting, but I don't know them well. I discovered a comb-footed spider in Ecuador that snatches termites from damaged nests and suspends them in bundles from silken threads (it swings in like Tarzan to grab additional prey). That still is not published, except as an aside in my fly book.” (See Bulletin #855 about book)

Linda McKnight, literary agent and nature lover, is surprised by a bird rarely seen in winter: “I saw a male robin in the bare trees outside my condo - He shouldn't be here! But he looked plump and healthy, so perhaps someone is feeding him.”.

IMAGES:



Possum under the trailer? Muddy tracks of a possum leading from under the deck indicate a possible sub-trailer resident. Possum sightings and signs have been steadily increasing over the last decade.



Sunset is nearly complete by the time I gain the Upper Meadow. Under the snow numerous Meadow Voles scurry along tiny tunnels ("runs") in search of winter forage, while Short-tailed Shrews have tunnels of their own, and Meadow Jumping-mice enjoy (?) a deep winter sleep.