

**Date & Time:** Monday January 28 2013, 2:45 - 6:15 pm

**Weather:** Pr 13 mm; RH 97%; BP 101.3 kPa; calm; overcast; T +4° C

**Activity:** An all-too brief, somewhat befogged visit by Kee

Having kept a weather eye on Google Earth cloud systems & weather radar, I had been tracking the incoming storm and had an accurate idea of what to expect: a property with frozen ground, but covered with a thin (7 cm) layer of slushy snow. I could probably have driven right down to the trailer but, owing to a bad case of creeping prudence, left the van on the Upper Meadow and walked on down, towing my supply-filled garboggan behind me.

I went (carefully) down to the creek, finding it shrouded in a light fog that



reduced distance to a mystery. I noted with surprise that the trail cam was still in position, although no longer functional. I removed it for later replacement. The sd card proved to have three images on it, all night views of falling snow.

On the way back up the creek bluffs, I noticed an odd-coloured lichen, almost glowing blue-green, encrusting a nearby tree. With some trouble, I dislodged some crustlets (well overhead) with my walking pole.

Time was growing limited and I had yet to visit the river. Whether at the trailer or on the river trail, I saw very few birds, not even one Canada Goose when I got to the river! I left the property as night fell and the fog thickened to less than 100 m visibility. An icy Fleming Line going out was actually trickier than the property!

**Birds:** (10 -- supplemented by Marg Hulls' report below)

American Crow (BCF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (BCF); Canada Goose (TR); Downy Woodpecker (RB); Northern Cardinal (BCF); Pileated Woodpecker (BCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Red-tailed Hawk (BCF); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr)

**Phenology:** new snow cover begins Ja20, washed out by 30th; prec. ytd 68 mm (Rain is always welcome but frozen soil will cause much of the rain to run off, doing nothing to help the critical groundwater deficit.)

**Medical Bulletin:** Newport Forest Steward Nina Hurdle suffered an accident at home on the 16th, breaking her hip. She was operated on at the Strathroy General Hospital, then moved to the Four Counties Hospital at Newbury. I visited her today, finding patience and good spirits. "Can I tell everyone that you're knitting well?" I asked. "More like crocheting", she replied.

**Readers Write:**

Marg Hulls, Chair of the West Elgin Nature Club and a new Steward, visited the property with Andrea Arsenault on Jan. 25, filing the report excerpted here:

"What a wonderful aft.! A light snow was gently descending as we began. Temperature 4 degrees C . . . A very large cottontail rabbit bounded out from behind the trailer, past The Nook and into the shrubbery. The brook [Fleming Creek] was babbling along down at the bottom of the hill. We entered the Hog's Back Trail . . . saw 3 cardinals, 4 black-capped chickadees and a black squirrel. We heard 3 crows and a blue jay. I was impressed that even with the snow cover of approximately 8 cm the trail was easy to follow due to the branches placed along its edges. Climbing up the slopes was tricky with the wet snow so eventually we both picked up branches to use as walking sticks. [crossing the Hogsback and later arri-

ving at River Bluffs] As we stood watching the slow moving Thames, 50+ Canada Geese flew up to break the stillness... . Eventually a lone CG returned feet first plowing into the calm water. After a little while it scrambled up onto the ice surface on the Middlesex side of the river. Another pair of stout birds left from a tree by the river without a sound as we passed by. . . they might have been Mourning Doves but I didn't hear any whirring of the wings as they moved ahead. . . A friendly Downy Woodpecker flitted back and forth between trees . . . As we exited the forest area we heard . . . a Pileated Woodpecker and then the distinctive scream of a Red-tailed Hawk. . . I'm taking this as my Nature School. I know that I will learn much as I continue to make the circuit . . .”

## IMAGES:



I collected a sample of this lichen growing on a tree leaning over the Fleming Creek Bluffs. The blue-green tint caught my attention, raising suspicions of a cyanobacterial (blue-green algal) symbiotic partner. I took a sample on the prospect of “getting lucky” with the ID.



The river is back to normal levels, with some shore ice and an open mid-stream. Piled-up debris from the recent flood indicates the cresting height. (Again with the fog!)