

Date & time: Monday February 18 2013 2:00 - 6:35 pm

Weather: Pr n/a; RH 52%; BP 101.9 kPa; sun/haze; S 20-30 kmh; T +2° C

Activity: maintenance visit and walkabout

The ground was firm and with only about 20% snow cover today, so I drove right down to the Lower Meadow without incident, set up camp, and put out some kibble in the Nook to see who might show up. Passing that way on my first walk, I had the feeling that someone was watching me. Was that a Virginia Possum



peering around the base of the old Black Maple? It amazes me that they walk with so little apparent concern over snow and ice in bare feet! I thought of having little shoes made for them, but there would be some difficulty getting them on.

The wind was a little high for many birds to be out. I changed the sd cards on all three trail cams. Both river and creek were now running freely. The trail down to the creek was free of snow as far as the ice shelves. I ventured no further.

Both in the Lower Meadow and along the river trail there were squirrel tracks everywhere. Blind Creek had a thick layer of ice guarding a foot of water for the vernal ponds that would emerge later. At one point I encountered a game trail that crossed the ice, connecting forest with field and used by squirrels and deer. Here and there Coyote tracks trotted dutifully in search of Eastern Cottontails (tracks of which appeared only near the trailer). Once again, no Raccoons seem to have been out. I also came upon some tracks that had probably been made by a Meadow Vole crossing the ice, its fat little body having ploughed a furrow punctured by tiny footprints. I also spotted the filled-in tracks of some earlier visitors, as below.

The rest of the day was spent disassembling the remaining deck chairs, a tedious business involving the removal of 100 rusty screws. These had been built in his garage in the 1980s by my Uncle Cam in Toronto. By now wood-digesting fungi had done their work, the chairs having entered a state of immanent collapse. Their slats, however, are still sound enough to build a few more treadways for the seeps on the trail to the creek. Treadways make the trail safer and easier to walk in the soggy early spring.

I wanted to warm up the trailer a bit for an onsite dinner, but discovered that somebody had chewed through the propane lines! I used two oil lamps to throw a feeble heat on my sandwich and coffee. No owls were calling, so I left, enjoying the luxury of a carefree drive out.

Site Visit Report: Steward Marg Hulls, in the company of three friends, took a walk in Newport Forest on a beautiful morning last Saturday. They saw Black-capped Chickadees, an Eastern Cottontail, and a large hawk circling the Lower Meadow. They thought it resembled a Broad-winged Hawk. [The remainder of their birds have been added to the bird report below.] The group spotted lots of Wild Turkey Tracks, including places where the turkeys had skidded on the ice! At one point the walkers found a buried walnut that some squirrel had worked hard at removing from its burial site. But the nut was frozen fast to the soil.

Birds: (10, including birds seen by Marg Hulls & Co, denoted by "loc")
American Crow (loc); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (loc); Canada Goose (loc); Dark-eyed Junco (loc); Downy Woodpecker (BCF); Northern Cardinal (loc); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wild Turkey (loc)

Phenology: snow cover reduced to 20-30 %, overall; ground frozen; cover back to 100% on Fb19.

Lichen Report: On January 28 I collected a sample of lichen from a tree on the slope of the Fleming Creek bluffs. I thought it would contain a blue-green alga, since the lichen had that colour. However, I have since learned that nothing can be inferred about the algal partner of a lichen from its colour. The fungal partner has several pigments, none of them photosynthetic. Thus, instead of finding a blue-green alga or cyanophyte inside the lichen, I found a chlorophyte that bears a close resemblance to *Trebouxia*, one of the most common algal photobionts in lichens generally. (See IMAGES below for our alga.) Since I think it likely that this is the actual partner, I am adding it to the species list in square brackets our notation for tentative ID.

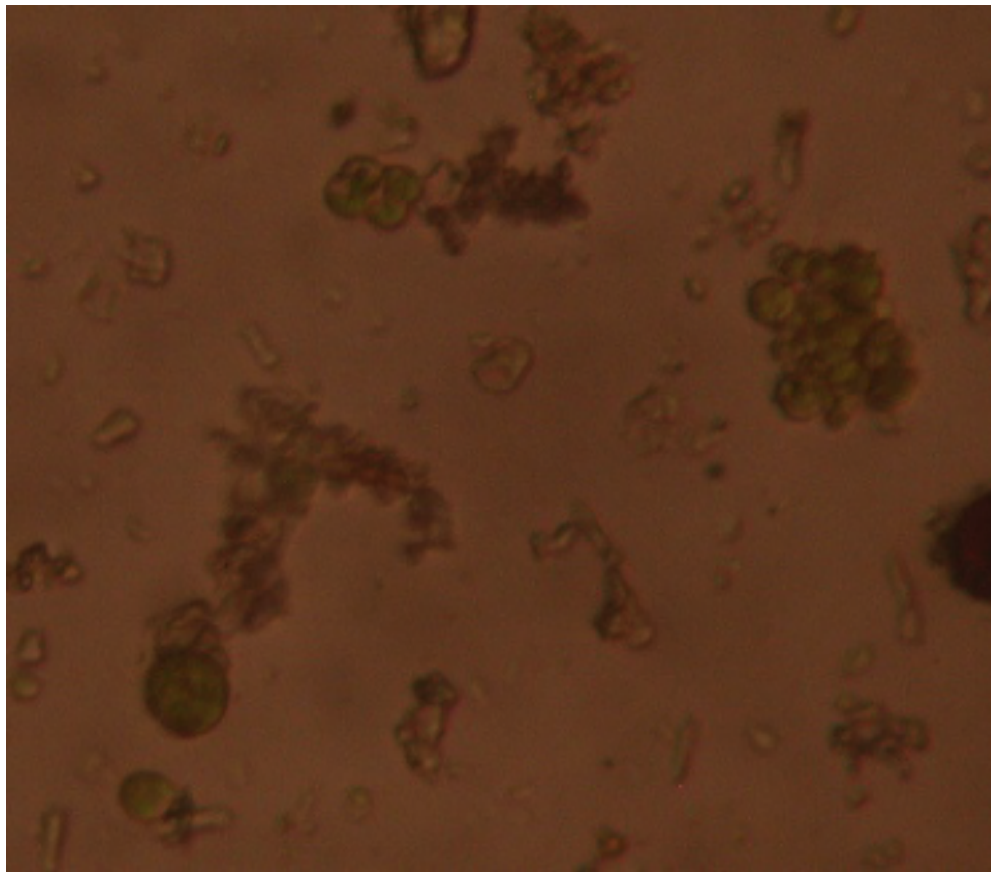
New Species:

Lichen photobiont [*Trebouxia*] sp. GF/FC KD Ja28/13

IMAGES:



Blind Creek has been partially recharged in preparation for the vernal pond season, which starts next month. The slight rise on the left ends at the Lower Meadow.



|____| 20 μm

Algal partner (photobiont) appears to be *Trebouxia* sp., not a blue-green alga at all, but a Chlorophyte -- appearing here in clusters of smaller green cells, as well as solitary larger ones.

To obtain these specimens, a few small thalluses were extracted and macerated, then a “squash” slide was prepared of the resulting debris. These were the only significant algal species to show up on the slide.