

Date & Time: Monday February 25 2013

Weather: Pr 22 mm; RH 72%; BP 102.5 kPa; overcast/sun; calm; T + 5° C

Activity: maintenance and weasel scat

When I arrived at Newport Forest, Steve Logan was already down at the trailer working on the gnawed-through propane hose. As before, the ground was hard, with little snow, and I drove down, finding that Steve had replaced the double-hose arrangement with a single hose. The redundant hose now had to be closed off. Looking for a 1/4" bolt in the trailer bedroom, I surprised a weasel that had been sitting on the (stripped) bed. It had turned the bed into a scat station, as be-



low. The weasel made a mad dash for the corner and dived behind the mattress. It was definitely a weasel and definitely not white! Did it go into summer pelage early? The question remains whether it was a Long-tailed or Short-tailed Weasel. I tend to be a bit slow when it comes to rapid deployment of wits, with few enough remaining: "Duh!" I spent the rest of the time pounding my head against

the wall: “Why-can’t-you-be-more-observant?” Judging from the size of the animal and my impression of the tail length, I would have to guess a Long-tailed Weasel. Last summer I spotted what I thought was a Short-tailed weasel. Dave Martin questioned whether it might actually have been a Long-tailed Weasel at the time. The evidence, as such, seemed to favour the Short-tail, including the size -- about half the length of today’s animal. As a result of today’s sighting, however, we will put both species into suspension in the ATBI records until we get a photo or a good observing opportunity. (Either way, it was *not* a Least Weasel.)

Steve and I had a coffee in the increasingly warm trailer as the new propane line kicked in. We discussed the coming economic collapse, then the drug problem, both on the Rez and in cities. At one point I went back into the bedroom to fetch something and there was the weasel again! Another “Duh” as it dove under the mattress. (Later at home, Pat suggested that one reason it may have stayed around is that it’s a mother weasel staying near its young. But they’re not usually born before April.) In any case, nights in the trailer may never be the same! I certainly prefer mice scampering over my chest to weasels prowling under the bedclothes!

After Steve’s departure I walked to the river and then into the Blind Creek Forest to check on the water supply for the vernal pond season. (See IMAGES below.) I inadvertently sampled the depth directly, finding a foot of water in a pool I happened to be crossing. Back in camp I installed a crude guard of hardware cloth around the newly installed hose. Fool me twice, shame on me. Then off into a newly minted late afternoon sun.

Tracks: (6)

Coyote (BCT); Eastern Cottontail (ET); Eastern Gray Squirrel (BCF); Virginia Deer (LM); Virginia Possum (BCF); Wild Turkey (BCT)

Birds: (8)

American Crow (BCF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Canada Goose (TR); Common Flicker (FCF); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (BCF)

Phenology: snow cover reduced to 80%, soon to be back at 100%; no Raccoons!

IMAGES: (featuring the vernal ponds)



Tracking myself: You can see the tracks of a foolish person walking across the ice on Blind Creek, only to plunge into ankle-deep water. One could wish for a greater depth when Blind Creek turns once more into a chain of vernal ponds. The next image shows the appearance of the ponds when fully charged, an increasingly unusual event. You can also hear the Western Chorus Frogs calling!



http://www.amphibiaweb.org/sounds/Pseudacris_triseriata.wav

Chorus Frogs in the Blind Creek Forest: the movie!

If you click on the url under the image, a frog chorus will start, even as the Quicktime logo covers the image. Click on its edge to bring it back. There you are, standing at the edge of the vernal ponds in the Blind Creek forest, immersed in the *essence* of early spring!

The light green algal mats are *Mougoetia* a common filamentous form.