

Date and Time: Tuesday November 3 2013 1:45 - 5:55 pm

Weather: Pr 42 mm; RH 60 %; BP 103.1 kPa; ovcst; calm; T 14° C

Activity: Exploring Blind Creek and the Riverside Forest

Before setting out for today's expedition, I lowered a minnow trap into Fleming Creek, wondering what fish might come to it during the current episode of minor flooding. The river was up a good metre, the creek half a meter. I furnished the trap with the choicest of bait: a mixture of small chunks of bread and wiener.



Late autumn, when the veg has died back and landforms are easier to see, is the best time to map local geography. Shown here, for example is the current view of the “bed” of Blind Creek looking “upstream” toward the mouth of Fleming Creek, about 120 m away where the line of Eva’s Woods can be seen in the distance. At one time (we hypothesize) Fleming Creek used to flow along this channel before the river, cutting bank to the south, intercepted the creek and gave it a new outlet, cutting off the old channel. Judging from the condition of relict pools (now vernal

ponds every spring) and riffles, the cutoff appears to have happened relatively recently, say a few hundred years ago. But judging from the difference in height between the two stream beds at the cutoff point, the event happened much earlier than that. The river, according to Steward Donald Craig, has been steadily lowering over the centuries, as it scoured away the heavy clay layer left by the most recent glaciation. At the time of the first French explorers in the area, it was already called “La Tranche”.

However, first we have to establish that it was, at one time, an earlier continuation of Fleming Creek. For such an analysis, we will need a stream hydrologist to consult. Then, if that is confirmed, we will try to date the event, at least to within 100 years. The first step in this project, however, is to map the ancient bed. Erin Carroll has agreed to join me in The Great Blind Creek Mapping Expedition, a gps-walk from the mouth of Fleming Creek to the mouth of Blind Creek, a distance of roughly 800 metres. Coming soon to this Bulletin!

Turning such thoughts over in my mind, I became oblivious to my surroundings and, just as I came to the river landing, flushed a Ruffed Grouse from my very feet! This is our first sighting of this bird since 2006 when we had three flushes, that being a more or less typical number up to that year. Meanwhile, throughout the Blind Creek Forest birds had been calling all afternoon as the warm-season residents prepared for the fall migration south. Presumably they are doing their best to fatten up. However, I was not specifically birding thus afternoon. (I am not particularly good at it in any case.)

On the bluffs trail, I noted that the now-bare trees close to the trail exposed some trees further upslope that still had most of their leaves. A number of smaller trees with bright red leaves still on them caught my eye. I had simply not noticed them in previous autumns. What could they be? I clambered up for a look and received a surprise. The bluffs had an extensive patch of Eastern Flowering Dogwoods, not just one or two, as we had thought, but many. (See IMAGES below.) I descended the bluffs in time to see a Great Blue Heron take off from the shore below.

First the Ruffed Grouse and now the Dogwoods. What surprise would the Riverside Forest (now coming up) reveal? The forest cloaks a massive point bar that deflects the river north a few hundred metres. The inner forest could be basically classified as Beech-maple (Braun system) and, although there were lots of maples there (Sugar and Black), there was only one smallish stand of beeches, possibly clonal, that we were aware of. Today, with the nearby vegetation less distracting, I had a clear view into the north end of the forest, where a large stand of yellow-

leaved trees caught my eye. I ventured into this rarely-visited area to discover that they were all Black Maples. Closer to the Hogsback, another equally extensive stand of trees with copper/yellow leaves caught my eye. American Beech. About a dozen of them! I inspected leaves to make sure. Surely three surprises was enough for one day. (See IMAGES below.)

The overcast was thickening, it was growing late in the day, with only an hour to sunset, and I was getting worn out from my off-trail excursions. (Every year an evil genie stretches the main trail by another 100 metres or so.) I double-timed back to camp just in time to change the sd cards on the trail cams and to retrieve the minnow trap from the creek before sunset. Nada. What should I expect during a flood? Apparently little or nothing.

Birds: (11)

American Crow (BCF); Black-capped Chickadee (GF/E); Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose (LM); Common Flicker (BCF); Common Grackle (BCF); Great Blue Heron (MB); Red-bellied Woodpecker (GF); Ruffed Grouse (RL); White-breasted Nuthatch (BCF); Wild Turkey* (ET) * fresh scat on Edgar's Trail

Phenology: American Robins still on site; trees 95% bare

New Species: (two or three yet to be processed)

Bulbous Honey Fungus	<i>Armillaria gallica</i>	Loc
'Jelly Caps'	<i>Ditiola radicata</i>	Loc
'Small Yellow Slime'	<i>Hemitrichia sp.</i>	Loc
Bear's Head Tooth	<i>Hericium americanum</i>	Loc

Notes: Locations (Loc) not yet available. The Fungus Bioblitz yielded some 70 species, about a dozen of them new to the list.

Readers Write:

Daniel Botkin, a well-known biologist and popular author at the University of Miami (Biology), sends us word about his latest book: "Perhaps the people on your email list would like to view the video that explains the origin of the title of my new book, *The Moon in the Nautilus Shell*. It is an amazing natural history story. It can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyPKoJY23xU> "

IMAGES:



More understorey Eastern Flowering Dogwoods on River Bluffs than we thought were there are revealed in this image.



Black Maples complement a previously unsuspected stand of American Beech trees behind them. The colours may appear similar.



WILDVIEW

10-24-2013 10:59:35



Some three days before the Fungus workshop two Sundays ago, this six-point buck showed up for a morning photo session at The Elbow. The deer hunting season will run from November 18 to November 24 this year.