

**Date and time:** Tuesday November 26 2013 2:00 - 5:25 pm

**Weather:** Pr 11 mm; RH 78%; BP 101.6 kPa; Ovcst; calm; T +1° C

**Activity:** Environmental scan

We call the visit an “environmental scan” when there is no particular project in hand. Typically I walk the 1.5 km circuit of the Thames River Trail just to see what I can see (or hear). I include below the image of a “deer scrape” made by a rutting buck. It helps to harden the antlers and (I suppose) works as an advertisement to local females: “Six-pointer ‘Randy’ 543-2121”



As one can see in the background of this image, there was very little snow on the ground at Newport Forest today. Nor was there much on the ground last Saturday, when heavy snow squalls off Lake Huron blanketed London (to the north) in knee-high snow last Saturday, while missing virtually all the country south of an imaginary boundary we call the “Melbourne Thermocline”.

I walked to the river, noting that it had dropped about a foot, then proceeded up to the River Bluffs, where I flushed several Wild Turkeys from their forage on the weedy slope. Once I arrived at Bluebell Woods just beyond the Bluffs, I heard a Wood Duck giving the “weep-weep-weep” call from deeper within the Riverside Forest. I had been hoping for a better snow cover in order to start the winter tracking program, but was restricted to log-tops where foraging squirrels had left

their calling cards. Here I discovered a nice example of the Tender Nest Polypore, which I took a picture of. (See IMAGES below.)

I had little hope of sneaking up on any animal as I mounted the side of Hogsback; leaves crunching underfoot constantly betrayed my presence. Down into the Blind Creek Forest on the other side, I found the trail blocked by a large deadfall. It reminded me of two other trees, newly broken off high on their trunks and leaving snags that would stand for a long time. One of them is in Bluebell Woods.

Thanks to residual rainfall and recent overnight lows, the vernal ponds (Blind Creek) that run the length of Blind Creek Forest are half-full and frozen over. I look forward to the thousands of Fairy Shrimp (*Branchippus* sp.) that will crowd under the early spring ice next March.

The light was fading, so I had to pick up the pace and get back to the trailer. The sound of a Pileated Woodpecker, hammering away upstairs on the Hogsback, followed me along Edgar's Trail, where I collected the trail cams on my way out, to take home for servicing.

Looking to the southeast as I left the property, I could see the leading edge of a massive storm system that was due to blanket the northeastern US with snow and freezing rain. Why should we be the only ones to enjoy winter!

**Birds:** (11)

American Crow (UM); Black-capped Chickadee (LM); Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose (TR); Dark-eyed Junco (LM); Northern Cardinal (Tr); Pileated Woodpecker (HB); Tufted Titmouse (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (LM); Wild Turkey (RB); Wood Duck (RSF)

**Phenology:** ice on vernal ponds

**New Species:**

'Late Orange Waxy'      *Cuphophyllus pratensis*      LM/Tr pdGT Nv16/13  
(Formerly *Hygrophorus pratensis*)

**Note:** this is the attractive orange mushroom that Pat found during our last visit. Mycologist Greg Thorn remarks that it's a late-blooming mushroom, usually fruiting in September through October.

**IMAGES:**



Right front paw of Eastern Gray Squirrel registers nicely on this thin strip of snow on top of a log. I had hoped for more snow, a few inches would do nicely, followed by a mild spell. Such conditions make ideal tracking, with prints being clearly defined and easy to identify (usually). As soon as you know what animal you have, you can begin the more interesting part, seeing -- and interpreting -- what the animal was up to by fore-tracking or backtracking, often both.



Little Nest Polypore or *Trametes conchifer* had several caps distributed along this hardwood branch, Earlier in its season (June to December) it tends to have dark gray or black rings or zones, here somewhat faded. About as common at Newport Forest as its larger, flashier cousin, the Turkeytail Polypore (*Trametes versicolor*) the Little Nest Polypore is also known as *Poronidulus conchifer*. It begins as a small cup that expands into a cap.