

Date and time: Saturday December 28 1:50 - 4:10 pm

Weather: Pr 65; RH 76%; BP 102.0 kPa; calm; clear; T 7° C* (snow ≈ 3 cm)

Activity: Kee and Erin begin gps map of Blind Creek

Who can blame us for thinking that a creek once flowed between these banks?
This was the scene as we began the mapping process. We had arrived earlier under



clear, sunny skies, but decided to park in the Upper Meadow, as the ground had already begun to thaw and traction was not good, even with my “all terrain” tires.

Going the rest of the way on foot, we flushed two yearling Virginia Deer out of the Gallery Forest in the Lower Meadow. Moments later, three adults broke cover from the same wood, bounding across the meadow into the Blind Creek Forest. Erin was the complete naturalist today, spotting a Winter Stonefly on the snow beside the trailer, hearing and seeing a Tufted Titmouse across the Lower Meadow

and spotting a Northern Cardinal in the Gallery Forest. Soon she asked humourously “Well, what bird would you like next?” I replied, “We’ve seen very few Red-bellied Woodpeckers recently.” Within a few minutes: “Isn’t that one up in that walnut tree?” It was. On our way to Blind Creek, we encountered tracks of an Eastern Cottontail and numerous tracks of Virginia Deer and Eastern Gray Squirrels. Throughout our trek, however, we saw no tracks of Coyotes or Raccoons, a somewhat unusual circumstance.

Starting at the Elbow, we plotted gps points at irregular intervals of between five and ten metres. When we arrived at (present day) Fleming Creek, where the putative cutoff occurred some time in the past, there were two surprises in store for us. First, Erin spotted a tree with an unusual bend in it, looking rather like a trail-marker used by First Nations people to indicate an important trail. The other surprise occurred overhead. A rustling sound jerked our heads up to the astonishing sight of a Bald Eagle leaving a tree no more than 10 metres above us. It had been watching us quietly since our arrival some ten minutes earlier. It power-stroked out to the river, where it wheeled upstream, flashing its pure white tail in the brilliant sun. Having finished the last gps point for that section of the map, Erin turned her binoculars on the river, catching a female Common Merganser upstream. It flew downstream toward us and past.

We then repaired to the Elbow to begin the other, much longer section of relict creek bed in the “downstream” direction. What appeared to be ice-covered ponds turned out to have virtually no water in them but mostly air or mud, instead. We completed about half a kilometer of this section before encountering a pond with enough water to give Erin a soaker when the ice broke beneath her. That meant quitting time. Up to that point we had mapped about half of the total length of Blind Creek. A splay of deadfall marked the beginning of the next gps session.

We walked to the Upper meadow, where I could begin the iffy task of turning the van around on ground that had become soft and slippery in the meantime. In such situations I generally use a form of jet propulsion to get up to the gate. Once I get rolling, I simply gun the engine. This sends a high-speed spray of mud out behind me to overcome the drag of soft ground. Once again it worked.

Birds: (10)

American Crow (BCF/W); Bald Eagle (BC/FC); Blue Jay (BCF); Canada Goose (TR); Common Merganser (TR); Downy Woodpecker (Nk); Northern Cardinal (GF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Ho/HBF); Tufted Titmouse (BCF); White-

breasted Nuthatch (Tr)

New Species:

‘Basketmouth Ciliate’	<i>Climacostomum virens</i>	LR KD Dc12/13
‘Rose-winged Damsel’	<i>Nabis roseipennis</i>	LM KD date TK

Notes: the genus *Climacostomum* has two described species, *C. virens* (Ehrenberg, 1833) and *C. gigas*, (Meunier 1907), the latter marine. The Damsel is a bug that I forgot to record early last fall.

Report on Fleming Creek Sample taken on December 12

The purpose of this sample was to find out what ciliates (protozoa that move by cilia) might emerge from the biofilm on rocks (Lower Rapids) in the cold months. We set up simple cultures for two such rocks to tease out the following genera, along with one new one: *Chilodonella*, *Colpidium*, *Glaucoma*, *Litonotus*, *Paramecium*, *Prorodon*, and *Tetrahymena* spp. (plus smaller unidentified Ciliates) The new genus was *Climacostomum*, as specified above. I also encountered a very large species of *Litonotus* (not *Dileptus* or *Lacrymaria*) that I am still working on. One strange thing about the sample was the absence of hypotrichs, always plentiful in warm weather samples. Where did they go?

Preliminary year-end statistics:

Over 2013 we made some 56 site visits, two of them overnight stays. Total precipitation over the year was 862 mm -- with perhaps a few more mm by New Years Eve. This compares with the long-term regional average of 973 mm. The total ATBI count now stands at 1929 species. The figure might have been much closer to 2000 if we hadn't gone through the data, eliminating duplicates and removing doubtful or incorrect entries.

Readers Write:

Marg Hulls, a Newport Steward, wrote to “share ... how much we six persons enjoyed a beautiful winter walk at Newport Forest. I had said we'd probably have to walk along the road due to the heavy snowfall on the weekend. The others had all decided that they wanted to go on to the property and it was wonderful - a bright clear day, sun shining and the snow was light and not overly deep.”

IMAGES:



Erin points upriver in the direction of a female Common Merganser that was swimming alone by the shore. Presently it took wing down toward us, remarking as it passed, “Wasn’t that some Eagle!”



Let it be admitted that I usually take terrible photomicrographs, especially when I work with live (and moving) organisms. Our subject had run out of gas however, owing to oxygen depletion under the cover slip. The result was a better-than-average image of this *Chilodonella*. The round structures are mostly food vacuoles, so many little stomachs. The mouth (or stomum) of this predator/scavenger is located in the rounded bump on the right. The species is possibly *C. cucullus* and this individual was 150-160 microns long.