

Date and Time: Thursday March 27 2:20 - 4:15 pm

Weather: Pr 14 mm; RH 62%; BP 102.1 kPa; calm; overcast; T +3° C

Activity: Kee and Will start spring phenology records

The visit began before Will and I even arrived, driving down Highway 2 through a snow “streamer” (from Lake Huron) followed by light rain that gave way to calm weather under a heavy overcast. Crossing the Wardsville Bridge, we stopped to take this image of the river, now ice-free.



Abutment of former bridge remains in left foreground. Ahead is one of the few straight stretches in an otherwise meandering Thames. Newport Forest lies just around the far bend.

Once on the south side, we turned onto the Beattie Line, then the Fleming Line where our first bird appeared. A Northern Harrier cruised low over an open field in search of small prey as we arrived at the property. At the gate we were delighted to find the Upper Meadow almost completely bare of snow and frozen right to the surface; we could drive in at last! This was to be the first of many visits where we would intensify the collection of physical and biological data in order to assess the impact of the extended deep cold of the last four months. The list below displays

the results. We would have stayed longer, but I had arranged to visit Steve Logan at Moraviantown later in the day.

Earlier that day Steward Donald Craig had visited the property to search for new tree species. We found his tracks on the trail to the river, following them up to the river bluffs, then gave up at that point. He had wanted to visit the two Flowering Dogwoods higher on the bluffs but apparently missed them. (See below.)

We estimated the percent snow cover and measured snow depth in both the Lower Meadow and Blind Creek Forest, as well as the state of river, creek and ground:

	snow cover	depth	
Lower Meadow	≈5%	25 cm	[≈ means “approximately”]
Blind Creek Forest	≈ 85%	30 cm	
vernal ponds		well-charged & ice-covered	

	ice cover	depth
Fleming Creek	0%	≈ 10 cm
Thames River	0%	≈ 15 cm

	buds	bark
Young trees	few nipped	≈ 66% deer-stripped near base

Tracks and sightings: Virginia Deer; Eastern Cottontail; Raccoon; Donald Craig tracks as well; large pile of black feathers indicated a predated/scavenged Wild Turkey; no Eastern Gray Squirrel tracks owing perhaps to hard snow crust

Birds: (10) American Crow (WM); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Canada Goose (TR); Mallard (TR); Northern Cardinal (Tr); Northern Harrier (Rd); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); Wood Duck (TR)

New Species:

Black Oak	<i>Quercus velutina</i>	Loc DC Mr27/14
Butternut	<i>Juglans cinerea</i>	Loc DC Mr27/14

Note: These trees were identified on the property this morning by Forester Donald Craig, with locations yet to come. The Butternut had already appeared on the list after we planted two saplings in the Regeneration Zone six or seven years ago. Both died, owing perhaps to unsuitable soil there. So this is a (real) “first”.

Readers Write:

The number of messages has made it necessary to summarize.

Jim Alexander (London): Global warming not really 'media driven,' since some networks are critical. Most climate scientists agree despite recent winter.

Dan Bickel (Sydney Australia): Australia had record hot summer, California its warmest winter and Europe mostly mild. One bad winter is not an ice age.

Hugh Casbourne (London): Term "global warming" originated in movie Soylent Green. Watch Chasing Ice, "breath-taking" at <http://www.chasingice.com/>

Chris Dewdney (Toronto): Climate change a "mantra", not subject to criticism. We're still in an interstadial. Check out 1816, the 'year without a summer'.*

Mora Gregg (Winnipeg): ran into ditch to avoid Wild Turkeys on road. The day was sunny with air temperature of - 30° C

Dave Martin (Harrietsville): Enjoys Brian Fagan's books and is fascinated by ice ages. Is not "terribly concerned" by global warming.

Ron Martin (London): Extracting excerpts from the Bulletin that hear on our tracking operations, Ron seeks meanings of acronyms HB, UM, BCF, DB

Charles Spina (London): spotted healthy-looking Coyote by Stoney Creek early in morning of March 6. Coyote stared at him as he passed.

*thought to be volcanic in origin

Note: Our next Climate Change Report will be out in a few days. (Watch for a surprise!) If time permits we hope to include a special report on the science of global warming in from two to three weeks.

Remark: Unless temperatures rebound to their seasonal norms relatively soon, talk of a "late spring" tends to obscure the fact that temperatures are simply remaining low relative to seasonal norms, as they have all along in 2014 so far. Global warming and solar induced cold spells are of course independent phenomena.

IMAGES:



Bud of Shagbark Hickory appears to be undamaged by cold. We found very few buds with any cold damage, including Oak and Maple, but some Bitternut Hickory buds looked withered and darkened.



Nineteenth Century two-floor schoolhouse on side of Black's Road on way to Moraviantown appears to have been converted into a residence.

At the Rez, we met with Steve in his wood-stove heated trailer. He told of a poor Pickerel harvest at the mouth of the Thames owing to a complete blockage by river ice and freezing over. He plans to start tapping the maples in his sugar bush soon.