

Date and time: Monday December 22 2014 2:20 - 5:20 pm

Weather: Pr 9 mm; RH 74%; BP 102.0 kPa; calm; sun/haze; T 4° C

Activity: Checking the property.

Pat was delighted at the absence of snow, but I was disappointed. I've been waiting to start the winter tracking program. We settled for a walkabout, me off to the river and Blind Creek Forest, Pat down the bluffs to Fleming Creek.



Kee appears on ice-o-vision, the new miracle medium that erases all signs of aging. Cold nights produced this inch-thick slab of ice in a water tub. Clearly not a “selfie”.

Before setting out, I joined Pat in the trailer. She looked grim. “What?” She pointed to a large scat on the table. “Wendy is back. I also heard her scuttling behind the walls.” Wendy is our name for the female Long-tailed Weasel that took up residence in the trailer last winter, bearing a number of young in the early spring. If Wendy turns out to be pregnant again, we’ll know that there’s still a male about.

Setting out for the river, I passed a vine of Virgin’s Bower in winter dress, its white fluffs decorated by dark seeds. Passing through the Hole and on to the Bend, I spotted some fragrant white brackets on a leaning Boxelder. I snapped one off for a

souvenir, inhaling the fragrance of *Daedaleopsis confragosa* as a pick-me-up. Out at the river, I photographed the eroding beach on our side of the river, complemented by the ever-growing sand bar on the opposite shore. Newport Forest is slowly losing land on the upstream side of its massive point bar, even as its own sand bank grows on the downstream side — at the expense of the opposite shore. In this way, the river bend not only enlarges, but ever so slowly migrates downstream! A lone Great Blue Heron flew across the river in the middle distance.

I made my way back to the Blind Creek Trail, following it to the spot where I photographed some mysterious growths on a log. I stopped to collect samples of the hard, woody, copper-coloured buttons. Were they fungi? Greg Thorn would know. Returning to camp, I heard the shrieks of a Pileated Woodpecker, then heard its knocking in the eastern section of the Blind Creek Forest.

Why are we seeing so few birds in recent months? Is it because we haven't been putting up a suet feeder? Besides the Heron and the Woodpecker, we heard only American Crows this afternoon.

Pat had cleaned up the trail down to Fleming Creek when I caught up with her. We found a fine troop of Oyster Mushrooms (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) growing on one of the logs that line the trail. Apparently this mushroom is not only edible but is grown for food in some places.

But the sun was setting. After a quick coffee in the trailer, we maneuvered the van up and out of the slippery lower meadow, along to the farm gate and off into the gathering dusk of the Longwoods Road to home.

New Species:

'Gilled Minicap'	<i>Resupinus striatulus</i>	BCF/BCT GT Dc 10/14
'Pinkpatch Fungus'	<i>Corticium cf. roseum</i>	BCF/BCT GT Dc10/14

Both species were found by Greg Thorn on the giant downed willow described in the previous issue of The Bulletin. His account of the foray appears below.

Phenology: River and creek continue to run clear at near-normal levels.

Readers Write:

Greenway Pollution Control Centre

Linda McDougall is Board Chair of the Thames Talbot Land Trust: “The Greenway tour is interesting. I did it back in 2008 as part of my orientation training at the City. These links describe what the City does as far as Thames River Water Quality Monitoring Data and actions . . . :

<<http://www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Rivers-Creeks/Pages/Thames-River.aspx>> [and]

<[http://www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Rivers-Creeks/Documents/2013-Thames-River-Water-Quality-AODA .pdf](http://www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Rivers-Creeks/Documents/2013-Thames-River-Water-Quality-AODA.pdf)>

“I sometimes wonder if the Province should have banned cosmetic fertilizers for lawns etc. instead of, or as well as, cosmetic pesticides, to help reduce the nitrogen and phosphorous etc. UTRCA watershed report cards are good and they identify among other things that we need more trees!”

<<http://thamesriver.on.ca/watershed-health/watershed-report-cards/>>

Mysterious bird predation in Blind Creek Forest

Chris Guglielmo is with the Advanced Facility for Avian Research at the UWO Department of Biology: “I’m not a feather expert so it is hard to tell from the pictures. However, Owl primary feathers will have distinct soft fringes on the edges, hawks will be smooth. If the feathers are clearly chewed up and broken it was a mammal. If they are plucked it was another bird. If it is a hawk there is a chance that the predator was a great horned owl. They eat everything including other owls and hawks that they catch during sleep. In fact GH owl predation was a major problem in some areas when peregrine falcons were being reintroduced to the wild.”

Dave Martin is a well-known local bird expert: “I think those are Great Horned Owl body feathers in the photo. There are lots of possible reasons why the carcass could be in the woods. The bird could have been

- 1) shot
- 2) died of an injury [perhaps in that last violent wind storm]
- 3) died of ill-health

- 4) died of old age
- 5) attacked by another owl defending its territory. Great Horned owls are paired up now and defending territories. They will lay their eggs in early Feb
- 6) attacked and killed by a Red-tailed Hawk while on its day roost. Great Horned Owls usurp Red-tailed Hawk [or crow] nests even if occupied. Perhaps a hawk got the upper hand on this one.
- 7) been overcome or injured by whatever it was preying on and/or surprised by a predator while on the ground.”

Searching for lichens

Greg Thorn is a mycologist at the UWO Department of Biology. He recently paid a site visit in the company of grad student Dana Kavanagh: “You may know that Dana is comparing the lichen communities of certain species or species-groups of trees between 4 TTLT properties: ashes (*Fraxinus americana*, *nigra*, *penyslvantica*), elms (*Ulmus americana*, *rubra*), soft maples (*Acer rubrum*, *saccharinum*), hard maples (*Acer sacrarium*, *nigrum*), and aspens (*Populus tremuloides*, *grandidentata*). At Newport Forest, we struck out on soft maples and aspens - none to be found. In place of aspens, I decided to broaden the category to Salicaceae, which allowed sampling of your "crack willows" in the Blind Creek area. I could have broadened our soft maple category to allow *Acer negundo*, but decided against it for now. However, we got a lot of lichen samples on the remaining hosts, including a WINDFALL of recently toppled ashes, elms, willows, and some sugar maples taken out by the others.

My job is to point Dana to the right trees (after I found her sampling a sycamore, not quite sure what kind of maple it was) and then hang about until she finishes that tree and move her on to the next one. In the meantime, I have plenty of time to explore other kinds of fungi, and I got two quite interesting ones on your crack willow in Blind Creek (both quite close to where the trail turns to go over the hogsback, on a willow with wood duck box): *Resupinatus striatulus* and *Corticium* cf. *roseum*.” [gives locations]

IMAGES:



WILDVIEW

12-10-2013 09:34:18



Greg Thorn and grad student Dana Kavanagh are (partially) caught by a trail cam as they pass the trailer on the morning of Dec. 10. The basket carried by Greg is the sample carrier of choice for mycologists. Collected fungi are not subject to any damaging pressure from closer containment.

This particular camera seems to prefer the year 2013 to the present year on its time-stamp; each time I reset the year, it stubbornly reverts to 2013.



The sun sets behind power lines that date back to 1947. They run from the hydroelectric facility at Niagara Falls all the way to Windsor. At one time they must have been the main power source for that city. Now they serve local distribution only, having been replaced by twinned lines that carry much more electricity on a parallel route some 27 km to the north.

We were entertained over the afternoon by jet contrails that blossomed into weird-looking cirrus clouds arranged along straight lines, as above.