

Date and time: Thursday December 03 2015 1:20 - 4:40 pm.

Weather: Prec. 18 mm; RH 87%; BP 102.2 kPa; cld/sun; NW 10-20 km/h; T 7°C

Activity: Appreciating the site as a whole, thanks to visitors.

When I arrived on site today, I had a few chores before our two expected guests would show up. One chore was to move the Raccoon (that Pat and I brought back to the site on November 21) to a better position behind the trailer and to bring home the cage. The Raccoon, as I expected, was dead. Distemper. Other chores were the usual ones: taking the weather and putting out bird feed. (No customers today!) Then I went down to the creek to visit the rapids. Nearby a lone Black-capped Chickadee hung upside down on a vine, pecking at fruit.

Every time I look at the rapids, I keep thinking how they have changed over recent years. They seem to be shrinking while downstream new rapids are forming. Could the upstream rapids be slowly migrating downstream one rock at a time? The tail end of the old rapids appears in the foreground below.



The sound of a truck coming in brought me back topside to watch Steve Logan and his friend Rick Nameless climb out of a green F150. I hadn't seen Rick since the three of us canoed down the river to Moraviantown a few years ago.

Rick had brought his dog, a white terrier with brown patches that loves to chase squirrels. We don't encourage dogs on the property, but I couldn't very well ask

Rick to lock the dog in his truck. I kept an eye on it as we walked toward the river.

We made a detour to inspect the abandoned channel of Blind Creek. “What do you think, Steve? Was this the previous bed of Fleming Creek or was it a river channel that once flowed on this side of the Hogsback?” Steve replies that it looks more like an old creek bed. Hmmm.

At the Landing Rick pointed across the river “Look! Turkeys displaying!” There were dark shapes over there, but I can’t get a good image in the camera. Suddenly the air over the river was filled with Turkeys. I did my fast flock count and got up to 31. Rick said, “You missed the first five birds!” “Okay, 36 Wild Turkeys.” “A big flock by anyone’s standard,” said Rick. Then Steve drew our attention to a dead Raccoon on the beach, its fur matted, its bones coming apart, its remaining flesh covered with river mud. I wondered out loud if we were looking at another victim of distemper.

“Bald Eagle.” Rick pointed overhead. It wheeled majestically in circles about 200 feet above the river. The beach was half flooded and too slippery to walk so we headed back to camp,

The trailer had warmed up thanks to a single element on the propane stove. We had coffee and listened to Steve’s news from the Rez, including a list of trees that have been dying over the last two decades. (See below.) Rick said he had quit his trucking job as the 401 had become too dangerous and stressful for anyone in his right mind to drive. With his white Terrier on his lap, Rick also described the fur trapping business, including his own part-time operation near Lake St Clair. When he treats and stretches his Muskrat pelts he takes them in to the buyer who examines each pelt with a glance, discarding some as “paper rats” (meaning the skin is too thin) and paying \$10 a pelt for the rest. Raccoon pelts bring no income at all as they are now a glut on the market. Large populations invite distemper outbreaks.

Before the visitors left, we piled all the scrap lumber we had collected last summer into the box of Rick’s truck. These would be used as kindling in Steve’s wood stove. One of the boards hid a huge number of wood ants, *Camponotus* at a guess, and I took several close up images of these. The ATBI project is not quite over yet!

Trees at Moraviantown: The Reserve at Moraviantown is heavily treed and acts as a local species reservoir. Steve mentioned the following trees in dieback.

Elm (*Ulmus* spp.) - half gone; Ash (*Fraxinus* spp.) - few gone; Black Willow -

most gone; Poplars (*Populus* spp.) - heavily holed by Pileated Woodpeckers;
Birches (*Betula* spp.) - most gone.

Phenology: First Snowfall Nv22/15. (gone by Nv 25)

New Species:

New York Carpenter Ant *Camponotus novaeboracensis* Nv03/15

Catching up:

Readers who would like to read any of the past 1011 issues of the *Bulletin* may visit the archive at <<http://www.csd.uwo.ca/~akd/newport-forest/>> and scroll to the bottom.

IMAGES:



Today's visitors Rick Nameless and Steve Logan stand on the bank of the river. Neither Rick nor Steve have computers and Rick requested that we not use his real last name: "I don't trust that internet and I don't want my name floating around out there!" The two drove up from Moraviantown for a visit. Rick is between trucking jobs and Steve picks up work whenever he can. Both are keen wildlife observers and Rick also traps fur additional income.



11-26-2015 13:11:59

The population of the Eastern Gray Squirrel at Newport Forest has consisted entirely of black-phase individuals up until very recently. These days we're seeing more and more grey-phase animals, such as the one caught here on Trail Cam #1 at The Hole.



HDVIEW

11-28-2015



HDVIEW

11-27-2015

Trail Cam #1 also picked up two feral cats visiting the property recently. There's nothing much we can do about these animals, so we accept them as part of the local (rural) ecology.