

**Date and time:** Thursday December 24 2015 1:35 - 4:25 pm.

**Weather:** Pr 14 mm; RH 64%; BP 101.4 kPa; SW 30 kmh; cloud/sun; T 9° C.

**Activity:** A quick site visit and a selection of images from the year now passing.

One of today's goals was to take a benthic rock sample from the recently discovered new rapids in Fleming Creek that lie just downstream of the riffle called the Lower Rapids. We could see dark green in the image, indicating filamentous algae and their accompanying microfauna. But when I strolled into the Nook today, full of anticipation, I found myself staring down the bluffs at a creek in flood. Darn! But disappointment quickly gave way to wonder as I became conscious of clucking sounds from all over the bluffs. Robins! Dozens of American Robins could be seen hopping over the leaf litter, perching in trees or flying across the creek into the Fleming Creek Forest and back.



Just then Darren rolled in with his Jeep. Would he mind helping with a sample? (My hip was acting up again.) The new rapids would not be do-able, but he could get one from the free water column, as they call it. Was the green colour in the creek due to algae? I had always thought so, but Bill Taylor, a protozoologist at the U of Waterloo Biology Dept., explained to me many years ago that the spate colour in our area was usually due to dissolved limestone producing a greenish tinge. In any case I found no algae later in the sample that Darren took.

Before heading out for a brief walk to change the sd cards on the trail cams, we relaxed over coffee in the trailer. As a host, I was embarrassed by evidence of the return of Wendy the Trailer Weasel after an absence of several months; little presents of scat lined the seat backs in the trailer's modest eating area. Over coffee,

Darren mentioned some mistakes in my description of his work at Rondeau Provincial Park down on the shore of Lake Erie. (See **Corrections** below.)

Our gumption now up to operational levels, Darren and I made our way to the Hole (entrance to the Blind Creek Forest) where I changed the sd card on Cam #1. Darren, looking into the woods nearby, exclaimed, “Aren’t those the cover boards we put in several years ago?” (Cover boards entice newts and salamanders beneath them where they can be observed by field workers.) The boards were well-rotted but, when lifted, they revealed a number of interesting invertebrates, as described in **Species Notes** below.

After changing the sd card on Trail Cam #2 (currently behind the trailer), I photographed the dead Raccoon as part of a documentation of how corpses disappear over time. We left in convoy into a brightening late afternoon threatened to the southwest by an advancing shield of cloud.

**Phenology:** Only three (one-day) episodes of snow cover up to this date.

**Species Notes:** From the soil beneath the rotting cover boards, Darren picked up various invertebrates and handed them to me one at a time. Unfortunately, I had forgotten to reload the battery for my regular field camera and was therefore forced to fall back on my spare camera, which is very poor in any kind of close up situation. Consequently all the shots were blurry. But among the collection there was a millipede, two species of slug, a small *Discus* sp snail, a wood louse, and a ground beetle. One of the slugs, having a dark body and a yellowish sole, was probably *Arion distinctus* or *A. hortensis*. The beetle appeared to be *Pterostichus pensylvanicus*. The latter two species named are already on the ATBI list.

**Corrections:** “Rolling the phrag” is the operation described in issue #1013 from the previous visit: 1. The phragmites burns hotter and better when flattened to the ground, and not while still standing. 2. Darren did not invent the technique. It is used by local people to clear weeds away from fishing areas at the river. 3. Rolling is done with a tracked “Argo” swamp vehicle pulling a steel roller through stands.

### **Readers Write:**

Greg Thorn remarks on the images of a tiny fuzzy mushroom that I sent to him recently for comment: “I cannot make any kind of a positive ID. It does look like a *Tubaria* or something close to it. Mushrooms are out late, as befits the year - a

whole flock of *Tricholoma myomyces* just appeared under the pines by the path where I walked the dogs this morning.”

Pete Chapman: “We are doing the count [Christmas Bird Count] in the Skunk's area on Jan 3 this season. I will send you a list of what we see at Newport Forest. I've spent quite a few days there recently either planting nuts and flowers, seeding grasses and flowers or attacking invasives. Good fun, but some days tiring. It reminds me how old I am. I keep seeing a small flock of Bluebirds and lots of Bald Eagles. Yesterday there was a big flock of Blackbirds. I'm hoping all of these are findable on the third.”

**IMAGES:** (Some highlights of 2015



Most cursorial spiders, such as the wolf spiders, tend to run away when cameras loom. But this Brush-legged Spider (*Schizocosa crassipes*) seemed to think it was invisible, holding still for this exceptionally clear image. (June 03 #982)



This Gray Tree Frog (*Hyla versicolor*) resembles one of those cheap cement frogs sold at garden centres. This is the colour scheme it chose while lurking on a trailer shutter. Was it trying to look like a small clump of vegetation to attract insects? (June 17 #984)



A bizarre Monkey Slug caterpillar, equipped with stinging hairs, will metamorphose into a Hag Moth (*Phobetron pithecium*) ( Sp24 #1003)





photo credit: Aisha Amer

A Mound Ant (*Formica exsectoides*, at a guess) trots along with a dead Tree Cricket in its jaws. Will the cricket end up as just another addition to the mound or does it have some other destiny? This image was one of Aisha's first attempts with a macro lens. (August 4 #994)

