

Date and time: Saturday January 20 2018 3:50 - 4:30 pm

Weather: Pr 38 mm; RH 61%; BP 101.3 kPa; sun/haze; winds calm; T 3°C

Contents: Stopping by

As Assistant Yunus Amer and I left London, there were the usual high snowbanks along the road. But by the time we got to Delaware, the snowbanks had vanished and open fields showed a thin cover dotted with small patches of bare soil. Initially we were on our way to Moraviantown to meet up with the Logans for a visit and to complete some office work involving the year's trail maintenance.



Yunus unlocks the farm gate for the van, while my shadow takes his picture.

The weather was bright and sunny and temperatures were almost balmy as we left the Rez to visit Newport Forest on our way home. When we got to the farm gate, we were delighted to see not only a thin covering of snow, but the drift gone from the gate so that it could be opened easily. The ground was firm, still frozen, and we drove on easily. What a joy — compared to our worries about getting in.!

On site, I took the weather stats while Yunus collected the three trail cams for me to take home and refurbish (again); we have been getting no images at all recently from any of them!

We took a few environmental shots, such as the hanging ice from a recent flood and a typical snow cover for the day. Speaking of snow cover, I was startled when I read the rain gauge to discover that some 38 mm worth of precipitation had come down since our last visit.

Most of the animal tracks on site were badly wind-eroded and difficult to read.

The visit was enjoyable, but we had to leave after only 40 minutes on the property if we wanted to get home before sunset.

Involuntary entomology:

Pat caught an absorbing CBC call-in radio program the other day. The topic was “What makes you squirm”. There were several calls about snakes and spiders, of course, but the CBC saved the scariest for the last: an EMS worker described an incident in a Toronto home to attend a lady in distress. The lady was unconscious when the crew arrived. As they worked on her, our caller happened to look up and noticed that the wallpaper seemed to be moving. All of it. That’s when he realized that he was looking at literally hundreds of thousands of bed bugs. Everywhere.

The lady was dead on arrival, but the bugs weren’t. The emergency workers found them all over their clothing, inside their tool box, and crawling up their legs. Showers all round. All clothing simply burned. Tool boxes emptied and sprayed. No quarter given, none asked.

Already understanding how difficult it is to get rid of bed bugs once infested, we propose a new weapon of war, the BBB or bed bug bomb. An incoming ICBM would explode over a city, leaving a cloud of several hundred million bedbugs to rain gently down onto a densely populated area. Counterstrikes launched at the enemy would leave neither side with time for war, given the battles at home.

Life in a hand lens: The *Forest Unseen*, mentioned in the previous issue, was runner-up for a Pulitzer Prize. Written by Biologist David George Haskell, the book portrays the comings and goings of microfungi, insect eggs, air molecules, tree tracheids, and just about every ecological player with small working parts. The writing is richly sprinkled with startling metaphors and lightly salted with Buddhist perspectives. (The foregoing sentence illustrates the style.) All the book’s action hinges on the goings-on within a one-metre circle on a rocky Appalachian hillside. Haskell calls it the “mandala”. The sight of a humble patch of moss triggers the description of a very different physiology from that of the flowering plants; a tick waving its front legs at the tip of a *Viburnum* twig brings forth a detailed description of the tick’s skin-piercing apparatus; a deer hoof print leads eventually to exposure of a mistaken idea about old-growth forests; the humidity-loving Salamanders turn out to be still undergoing adaptive radiation, which is why their taxonomy is such a nightmare. And so on. We read a chapter every night.

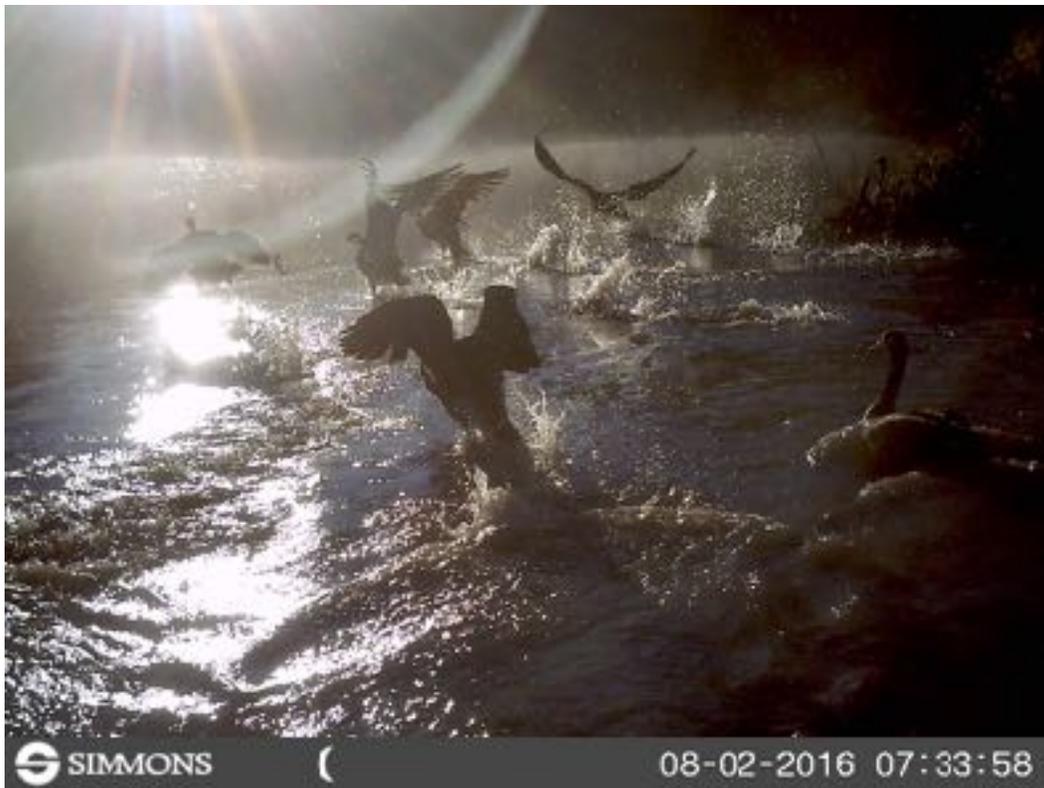
Image Gallery



Hanging ice decorates the shore of Blind Creek after a flood subsides.



Small open patches of dead vegetation harbour microclimates where arthropods might get a foretaste of spring.



The best picture I never took illustrates the mastery of a remote camera that caught this superb scene, even while standing leg-deep on its tripod in flood water on Mussel Beach. Canada Geese take flight on an unknown impulse.

As readers can see, the event occurred in 2016, but we've had it in mind to republish it ever since, waiting for a slow month like January.

