

Newport Forest Friday February 25 2005

2:50 - 5:15 pm

Weather: prec. 43 mm*; light ovcast; calm; LM - 1C; FCF -1C

Purpose: to get measurements, feed birds and check new buds

Participants: Pat, Kee

We stopped at the TS, where I refreshed the paint on the bluff monitoring stakes before continuing down to the trailer. The whole property now has a fairly uniform crust of snow 4-5" deep.

In putting out bird seed, Pat discovered the body of a dead raccoon under the Black Maple tree in the Nook. In fact, the body lay directly under the tree (raccoon) box, with no tracks leading to the body. We concluded that the animal had fallen out of the box - or off it. We both felt guilty, as if we were somehow responsible.

I examined the animal, a first year male weighing ten lbs. It was lean, but still had some of body fat stored in the leg-pit areas. It appeared to be healthy, no holes, a severe abrasion had removed most of the skin on the upper surface of the left rear foot. The animal had evidently been licking the wound, as it was free of scabs and blood, although still raw. Two sets of raccoon tracks led to the tree, one from the creek (up the FCT), the other from the direction of Eva's Woods. I can't be sure that they're not from the same animal, but both end at the tree, with no return. I did not examine the EW tracks, but the FCT tracks were made no earlier than last night. The raccoon had been dead no more than about 12 hours, the limbs being still quite flexible, although the jaws appeared locked together. We have wondered about tetanus, rabies, or another disease.

I checked the bud protectors in both the N and S cores. All appeared to be in place. We are ready for spring!

Birds: American Crow (LM); American Tree Sparrow (ER); Black-capped Chickadee (tr); Canada Goose (TR); Dark-eyed Junco (Tr); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Hairy Woodpecker (Tr); Northern Cardinal (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (tr)

Phenology: Fleming Creek and the Thames River are ice-free.

* water equivalent