

Newport Forest Sunday February 11 2007

2:10 - 4:20 pm

**weather:** prec. 2mm; RH n/a; ovcast/sn; WSW 0-25kmh; LM - 6C; GF - 5C

**purpose:** trail maintenance

**participants:** Kee & Brian

We filled three feeders (2 trays & the meadow feeder), set up the propane heater, had a quick coffee, then headed to the BCF to continue the trail work. I noted tracks as we went, but they were hard to read because the cold temperatures had kept the snow in powder form and the wind had blown it all over the place, partially infilling most of the prints.

Coming in to the BCF through The Hole, Brian spotted some large tracks, over 4" wide, with a four-foot stride length (twice the distance between consecutive tracks). they came from the meadow onto ET, then crossed Blind Creek. Was it a cougar or collapsed deer tracks?

I lined with Brian for a while and was about to set out when he called me over to a place just off the trail where tufts of fur lay on the ground, with blood splatters all over the snow. I checked the fur - Eastern Cottontail. Brian said "Don't leave me here with that cougar." I said to call me on the WT if he saw anything, then I set out to walk the TRT. There were lots of tracks almost everywhere along the trail, but most of them were too old to read. I discovered that squirrel tracks can look like a much bigger animal under these conditions because the hopping-points can collapse into a single large hollow that looks like a human with triangular feet.

I found a second kill near the top of the HB, this one a black-phase Eastern Grey Squirrel. Same MO. Here and there throughout my walk, the large tracks would come and go across the trail. Who knows?

I left DBs on the HB, at the RSF bench, at the Jumble, and at the RL skunk release site. Most of the skunk tracks were more recent. I found them in many places, so I suspect our little friends are doing quite well for themselves. As for Raccoons, I saw no tracks that clearly belonged to them.

The river is now mostly iced over, with the few remaining leads slowly closing over -- less swimming space for ducks and other waterfowl. The creek is entirely frozen over. Average snow depth in the BCF was about 8 cm, not a lot.

Brian lined about 60 metres of trail in the BCF by the time we decided to quit.

We saw several new spots where the Pileated Woodpeckers had dug out large holes from Bitternut stumps, leaving large piles of chips.

**birds:** (9) Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Blue Jay (GF); Dark-eyed Junco (GF); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Northern Cardinal (RSF); Pileated Woodpecker (RSF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (Tr); Wild Turkey (HB)

**mammals:** (5) Coyote (RL); Eastern Cottontail (ET); Striped Skunk (BCF); Virginia Deer (BCF); White-footed Mouse (BCF)

**new species:**

Spiders:

Small Grass Spider	<i>Trachelas tranquillus</i>	RL nz/KD Au21/05
Tiny Clubionid	<i>Trachelas [deceptus]</i>	RL nz/KD Au21/05
Long-jawed Orb Weaver	<i>Tetragnatha versicolor</i>	RL nz/KD Au11/05
Yellow Linyphiid	<i>Microneta</i> sp.	RL nz/KD Au11/05

Plecoptera

Green-winged Stone Fly	<i>Isoperla</i> sp.	RL nz/KD Au11/05
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Psocoptera

Corrupt Bark Louse	<i>Polypsocus corruptus</i>	RL nz/KD J131/05
‘Spear-winged Psocid’	fam. Lepidopsocidae	RL nz/KD J131/05

Hemiptera

Gnat Bug*	<i>Systemloderes</i> sp.	RL nz/KD J131/05
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\*also called “Unique-headed Bugs,” these insects are quite rare, mostly tropical, and very “primitive,” with a five-segmented head, four-segmented thorax, and nine-segmented abdomen.

**phenology:** river and creek now frozen over, average snowpack 7 cm