

## A Cold Night in the Woods

Newport Forest Sunday/Mon. October 31/Nov. 1 2010 2:40/2:10 pm

weather: prec. 7 mm; RH 49%; BP 101.9; ovcast; NW 0-10 kmh; T 7° C  
purpose: two-day stay  
participants: Pat. Kee

Having little interest in ghoulish affairs, Pat and I followed our usual practice of spending Hallowe'en in the trailer at Newport Forest. Raccoons may come trick or treating, but we usually know who's behind the masks! Setting up camp, we noticed crows flocking here and there on the property. While she set up the trailer, Pat was startled by a White-footed Mouse (at a guess), but kept her composure, treating it as a trick in advance of the treat. Meanwhile, I planted two 3' Red Maples in Bed C of Blind Creek, then strolled up to the Copse where I spotted a new-looking lichen growing amid the extensive moss banks there. Intermittent light rain fell during this period.

You never know if it's going to be a good birding day or not. Given the recent scarcity of birds, I was pessimistic. Under lighter skies, we walked to the river, noting a Red-bellied Woodpecker, Gold-crested Kinglet and a Wild Turkey hen along the way. Out on the bank, we started a Wood Duck that field to the opposite shore: "Weep-weep-weep." Pat thought she saw a Killdeer on the shore as we came in, but couldn't be sure.

Just before sunset, we went up to the gate, where I planted another Sugar Maple (3') before continuing on to visit Nina and Edgar Hurdle. We traded gossip with them over the blare of the Ice-skating championships on TV.

After supper the night darkened rapidly. Checking the Hickory tray feeder, I was delighted to see a Southern Flying Squirrel on the tray. Later a bold young raccoon raided the same tray. It must have been one of Wanda's kits and a grandchild of Two-stripe. Later still a second raccoon showed up, both raccoons now eating kibble from the road, but well-separated. The visitor whom we'll call ShyGuy has been showing up at baited watches for more than a month now, seemingly to the exclusion of members of the Two-stripe clan. This was our first sighting of a member since ShyGuy took over. (Beatrix Potter School of Ecology)

The overcast slowly dissipated, even as the temperature plunged from +2° C down to 0° C. By midnight the air temperature had reached -5° C. Looking up at the night sky, I saw the Summer Triangle on its way to oblivion in the west, even as Orion, the Winter Hunter stood astride the Eastern sky. It was cold in the trailer, so we kept both stove burners going all night. While reading in the breakfast nook, I delighted in the distant call of a Great Horned Owl. A peculiar quality in the tone of the "Hoo" makes it sound like it's booming through the wood. Other night sounds were absent perhaps because larger animals were sequestered from the cold.

Shortly after sunrise we looked out the trailer windows to witness an all-white meadow. Hoar frost coated everything, including the trailer deck. After a quick breakfast, Pat went out to check for birds in The Hole, returning with reports of a Carolina Wren and a Pileated Woodpecker. She also spent a good hour putting bud protectors on planted trees, both in the woods and out in the Regen Zone. These are short pieces of soda straw or neoprene tubing (depending on bud diameter) that, when snugged over a bud, protect it from deer nips. They work.

By midmorning we noticed that the stove burners had gone out. We had used up the entire tank of propane just to stay warm! The air temperature, barely above zero, would mean an increasingly chilly trailer as the day wore on. By noon the air temperature had risen to +10° C under sunny skies. We went down to the creek to get another sample from the Lower Rapids and then explored downstream in our rubber boots until we came to the next riffle and a large bank of sorted sand littered with pea clams and snail shells. Beyond that was a grassy sward. (Pat suggested calling it the Sward of Damocles.) After searching for new plants, Pat worked her way upslope toward the trailer, while I went back by the way we came. Pat emerged from the bluffs with a new mushroom and a growth (?) on a log that we couldn't even place to kingdom! Chipmunks and Eastern Gray Squirrels (two in black phase) visited the feeders.

As we cleaned the trailer and loaded the van, several large flocks of crows kept up a constant cawing over in Eva's Woods. It was not clear what excited them, because several areas seemed to draw their attention at once. A large sub-flock would suddenly rise and fly randomly west to the recently harvested fields, even as another flock flew in. One could estimate up to 500 birds in total.

We left the trailer mice to huddle in the insulation behind the walls.

Birds: (22)

American Crow (GF); American Goldfinch (LM); American Robin (GF); Blue Jay (Tr); Black-capped Chickadee (GF); Carolina Wren (BCF); Common Flicker (BCF/E); Common Grackle (LM/BCF); Dark-eyed Junco (GF); Downy Woodpecker (Tr); Gold-crowned Kinglet (BCF); Great Horned Owl (FCF/E); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (RB); Pileated Woodpecker (LM); Red-bellied Woodpecker (BCF); Red-tailed Hawk (FCF); Tufted Titmouse (Tr); White-breasted Nuthatch (GF); White-throated Sparrow (Nk); Wild Turkey (BCF); Wood Duck (TR);

Best birds: Carolina Wren and Gold-crowned Kinglet

New species:

'Spatulate Diatoma' *Diatoma elongatum* FC/LR KD Oc24/10

'Indian Necklace' *Fragillaria [capucina]* FC/LR KD Oc24/10

'Narrow Spirogyra' *Spirogyra Gravilleana* FC/LR KD Oc24/10

'Wide-banded Spirogyra' *Spirogyra [tenuissima]* FC/LR KD Oc24/10

Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus* BCF PD Nv01/10

Malodorous Lepiota *Lepiota cristata* GF/E pd/KD Nv01/10

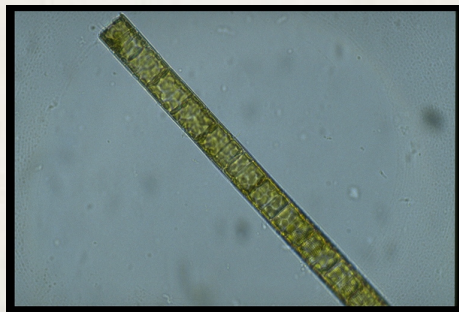
Notes. 1. The sample at the Lower Rapids taken during the last visit proved so rich that I took another, larger sample from the same area this visit. There are some unusual ciliates there. 2. Although we frequently see and hear the Carolina Wren at home, this was the first time in 11 years that we saw it at Newport Forest.

Phenology: first ground frost, no Turkey Vultures

## IMAGES:



Hoar frosts the spent flower heads of goldenrod.early monday. morning *Melosira granulata* is a common filamentous diatom in at the Lower Rapids, mingling with *Cladophora* within the "rock hair."



The filament is composed of unicells with the same basic structure as a gel-cap. With fingers tiny enough, you could slide the larger half off the smaller one. (image courtesy of the Protist Server)



Stealth Cam 10/24/2010 17:47:28 ● 39F  
Note that time function on cam still hasn't been fixed. Actual time of shot was 10/31/2010 10:20:28 -- this very morning. Buck is facing in direction of trailer.