

**Date and time:** Saturday November 18 2023 2:55 - 4:25 pm

**Weather:** RH 54%; BP 101.4 kPa; T 7°C; clear; winds SW 5-10 km/h; Pr 33 mm.

**Contents:** A short visit to retrieve sd cards, adding an “environmental scan.”



A Coyote glares suspiciously at the trail camera taking its picture.

Accompanied by our best field assistant, Sharon Campbell, I arrived late on the property, a delay to be cancelled by our early departure, in any case. The weather, although cold, brought a magnificent flood of sunlight that elevated our spirits,

We parked in the space left by the removal of our little house trailer last year. We hastened to the Nook to examine Trail Cams #2 positioned to “capture” any rodent coming to nibble at the deer antlers resting on the old Black Maple log. We promptly exchanged the sd cards while I anticipated a visual harvest of mice and voles when we got home that evening. The antlers were greatly reduced, speaking to plentiful images in store.

Turning our attention to the Blind Creek Forest, we set out for the River Landing. After I succeeded in extracting the sd card from Trail Cam #1, Sharon pointed out that an old trail-liner log sported two quite different species of mosses, one a short moss with a velvety texture, the other composed of of densely packed thin

micro-leaves a good centimetre in length. As we walked, sunlight shot beams across the forest floor, giving a warm colouring to offset the seven-degree temperature. Along the way, Sharon came upon a narrow branch sporting a number of leafy whitish brackets which we decided to send along to our consulting mycologist, Prof. Greg Thorn.

Continuing on, we marched to the River Landing (RL), coming upon a gigantic dead Elm which we at first thought had been growing on the property. But there was no deep pit where the roots should have been growing if it had grown locally. Moreover the length of the tree was perched upon the top of the first river terrace and lay parallel to the shore. Using what was left of my brains, I wondered if the tree had been brought in by a flood..

We took numerous shots of the river. Then, on the way back, Sharon spotted two fascinating white fungi growing out from the underside of a log by the trail. (See IMAGES below). I had never seen such a white pore surface on a bracket fungus before. Greg Thorn, our consulting mycologist, would have to see this one. I took several photographs of this beauty. As we passed the Bend on the way back to camp, Sharon pointed out an unusual sight for November: fresh green leaves. These all turned out to belong to a recumbent, partly rotted Cow Parsnip, a very tall plant growing at the Bend. Why were the leaves still green?

It was about 4:20 pm when we got back to the Nook. It had been a short visit but a productive one, especially after reviewing our imagery; not just a temporary snowfall, but the two dogs and the alarmed Coyote.

**Phenology:** Trees all bare; first snowfall (<Nv1823)

### **Readers Write**

Rebecca Smythe, a local naturalist, writes these (embarrassing) words:

“I so enjoy your giggle-inducing sense of humour and singular witticisms dotting your observations, discoveries, informed current and historical assessments of the rhythms, biology (especially insects), weather events, changing topography, and wildlife passage along the banks of the life giving Deshkaan Ziibii/Thames. I deeply respect and cherish the inestimable gift you and wife have given to such a large community of readers through your ‘real-time’ meticulous enrichment of important regional knowledge you have collected over decades. I understand the love/care of a stretch of rich river flanked by a land teeming with life and the desire to restore it to full health in perpetuity. Not many will ever achieve it. It is an aspirational template of a protected area free of the carpets of invasive plants. It is window to what was and a doorway to what could be.”



### **Image Gallery**

**This** Artist's Conk (*Ganoderma applanatum*) gets its name from being a virtual drawing board. If you take a twig in hand, you can use it as a pen and write on this pristine white surface to make a drawing. The lines are fine and readily visible. With thanks to Greg Thorn for the ID.



Assistant Sharon points to trail cam strapped to a post. In front of her are the remains of the buck's head plus antlers. We got a big surprise when we examined the images the cam had taken in the intervening 39 days. Instead of mice and voles, we found only an Eastern Grey Squirrel (black coat phase) that returned to the antlers repeatedly throughout that period, It alternated between chewing at a walnut and nibbling on the antlers. An Eastern Striped Chipmunk appeared once. (Like mice and voles, squirrels and Chipmunks, also rodents, enjoy antler salt.) Visitors: black phase squirrel; grey phase squirrel (twice only), Chipmunk. The rest of the visitors were birds that used the upright post as a perch, apparently having little interest in salt, even as our aggressive squirrel enjoyed its salted walnuts. The birds: Northern Flicker; American Robin; Blue Jay.



Two domestic dogs pause at Trail Cam #1. Both appear to be Collie crosses, possibly belonging to a local farmers — at a guess. Were they out hunting or merely on a reconnaissance mission? They visited (or stayed) more than one day. In another image they appeared together .



Looking across the river . . .

This image is one of many shots of bare trees that I took to illustrate the current leafless condition of Newport Forest. It combines not only the condition of the trees, but the advice I was once given if I ever wanted to be a good nature photographer; when photographing a more or less distant object, be sure to add some foreground material, like a screen or framing.

