



Saturday, January 4, 2020 by Chuck Miller

Searching for Kinglets - Searchmont South Forest Conservation Reserve Snowshoe



This was a 3-4 km (1.8-2.4 mi) off trail snowshoe through steep terrain. We explored the slope and the coniferous lowland forest stands of spruce, balsam fir and alder associated with alluvial deposits along Dam Creek.

We were looking for winter birds including Golden-Crowned Kinglets in the forests along the north facing slope. This protected area is located approximately 40 km northwest of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario along KM-3 of the Ranger Lake Road.

The snow was slightly “crunchy” and “sugary” with a solid base which made snowshoeing easy. The temperature was just below freezing and the sky was overcast. It was an excellent day to look for Kinglets and 18 Sault Naturalists joined the search – alas none were discovered.

This is an area where Golden-Crowned Kinglets were seen in November – and it is still partly a mystery how they survive winter. Kinglets are very small weighing about the same as 2 pennies, their



feathers are mostly for insulation and not for flying long distances, they face incredible challenges to stay alive in winter and are subject to high mortality rates. They are constantly on the move searching for food. (photo and more info at <https://courses.hamilton.edu/winter-species/golden-crowned-kinglet>)

Other winter birds included Common Ravens, Goldfinches, Blue Jay, Grouse (sp) and a (very cooperative to photographers) Black-Backed Woodpecker. There were two woodpeckers, but one flew off before it could be identified. The woodpecker was feeding on a recently dead spruce tree.



Other wildlife observations included a site where a fox had caught a mouse and some likely Bobcat tracks in the snow.



The Searchmont South Forest Conservation Reserve is a beautiful area with open hardwood and coniferous forests – north of the Ranger Lake Road. The slope leads to Dam Creek in the bottom of the valley behind Searchmont Ski Resort to the north.





Walking downslope to Dam Creek was relatively easy – “what goes down must come up again” and the climb back to the Ranger Lake Road was a little more challenging – with plenty of rest stops to listen for birds.



We stopped for coffee at Scott's Coffee on the return trip.

For more images see: [Renee's Photos](#) [Val's Photos](#)