Seeds in bear scat by Richard Carstensen

In October 1984, I noticed and flagged a fresh bear scat composed mostly of blueberries. Heavy fall rains were dissolving the pulped berries into the moss and litter. By marking the site, I could return at intervals to see what happened there.

By September 1985, the material of the dropping had washed away, but a plate-sized circle of blackened mosses revealed where it had been. As if to remove any doubt, a small fragment of garbage bag remained-the bear had likely been Hefty, a local yearling overly fond of human food. Rimming the circle was a fairy ring of *Cortinarius* mushrooms. But the most exciting discovery was 150 tiny sprouts of blueberry inside the ring! Obviously, they had germinated from the abundant seeds contained in the bear scat.

I revisited the site in October 1987. Nothing showed where the scat had been. Green mosses had moved back into the circle, and the fairy ring was gone. It hadn't been an auspicious site for blueberries, either-thick, interlocking hemlock canopy admitted little light. But five of the original 150 blueberry plants had survived and entered the young seedling stage, still less than an inch tall, with minuscule, toothed, evergreen leaves.

These young leathery-leaved blueberries are tenacious. They may endure for years under poor light conditions, prostrate and inconspicuous, waiting for their luck to change. Maybe a windstorm will someday open a space in the canopy and give the go-ahead to one of Hefty's sprouts. Our forest is a collaboration of animals and fungi and green things, and every square foot has a history as intriguing as the spot I happened to mark.