

## BMN HIKE REPORT

### Cypress Lake (June 24, 2017)

by Mark Johnston



A view of Cypress Lake. *Chris Wright photo.*

On a fine midsummer morning seven of us met at Old Orchard Hall in Port Moody. Our plan was to walk Noons Creek from tidewater to its headwaters on the “Cypress Lake Plateau.” Typically for our hikes, we end up waiting for a latecomer or two, but today everybody was on time. With the forecast calling for 30-degree temperatures, I imagine we all had the same thought: Let’s get started before the sun gets too high.

In starting out, we did some bird-watching at Moody Inlet. As we walked along the asphalt bike path to get to Noons Creek, we stopped to look at the burgeoning heron rookery that is developing in the mature cottonwoods near a small pond. Then, when we reached the creek’s estuary, we looked out at the flowing tide and were thrilled to see two bald eagles, one perched on woody debris and the other flying low over the water.

**Boardwalk near the mouth of Noons Creek  
at the end of Moody Inlet.  
*Chris Wright photo.***

After leaving the inlet, we visited the nearby Noons Creek Hatchery where the eighth member of our party had arranged to meet us. We found her conversing with hatchery manager Dave Bennie, who wondered why we were starting at sea level when we could have driven up to a much higher elevation. We explained that we were intending to walk as much of the creek as possible, hence our start at sea level. He nodded his understanding, but may have doubted the sanity of our endeavour!

Once we departed the hatchery area, we also said goodbye to the creek for a spell. We walked along Ioco Road for a ways. Then we doubled back on Heritage Mountain Boulevard. One hundred metres or so past where the creek flows underneath the roadway, we reached our next access point and turned north, now paralleling the creek on its west side. Along this stretch the creek flows in a deep, well-treed ravine, and the trail occupies the space between homeowners' backyards and the top edge of the slope. When we weren't distracted by the houses and landscaping, we had down-slope views of the rushing and pooling water. We also passed by a number of large old- or older-growth fir and cedar trees, which no doubt help to stabilize the steep bank.

Eventually we veered away from the main creek and found ourselves following the west branch. Above Deerwood Place, which provides entry to a small subdivision, we crossed over West Noons Creek and resumed our northerly direction up the tributary's east side. If we had wanted to be strict about staying with the main creek, we probably should have taken the path on the opposite side of Deerwood. But should we have taken that path, we would have had to continue by walking up Forest Park Way, the gas pipeline right-of-way, etc, much of the route in direct sunlight. So we opted to follow the west tributary, which would allow us to remain under tree cover most of the way.





Maybe two-thirds of the way to David Avenue we crossed back over to the west side of the tributary. Then north of Panorama Drive we stayed very close to the creek, and in time crossed over yet again to the east side. Once more, we had a decision to make: continue on West Noons Creek for a while longer, perhaps traversing to Noons Creek via Dentist mountain bike trail, or begin the traverse now via Blue Line and Hammer Time bike trails. After discussing the pros and cons of each route, we chose the latter as having a slightly more favourable grade.

**On Blue Line mountain bike trail at or near crossing of West Noons Creek.**

*Chris Wright photo.*

As we started up Hammer Time and then continued via Dentist, we found ourselves on steeper slopes. While this made for more challenging walking, it is along this stretch that Noons Creek is of greatest interest, plunging over a cliff and tumbling in a series of cascades over broken rock. On Hammer Time we were within earshot of the creek; shortly after turning onto Dentist, we crossed

it; and as we continued upward we had a couple of nice views of it. First, just north of the crossing, we had a trailside view of a fine, braided cascade; and then, a little farther up the slope, we took a lateral path to a somewhat constrained view of “Noons Creek Falls.”

When we reached the top of Dentist, we intersected the main logging road that provides access to the upper reaches of Cypress Lake Plateau. Here we encountered a man who had stopped his four-wheel drive vehicle in the middle of the road. After an exchange of greetings, our conversation turned to the Forest Service’s plans to close and deactivate the road. He was unaware of the ministry’s plans and very sad to learn that the road might close. He said he had been coming up here since the 1970s, and that spending time in these woods was a form of “therapy.” If the plans were to go ahead, he went on, he was “really gonna miss this place.” He seemed to be a very responsible backcountry user and even a steward of the area. He mentioned cleaning up other people’s trash and giving rides to hikers who miscalculated available daylight.

After taking our leave, we continued upward by means of Four Lost Souls. Along Dentist and now Four Lost Souls, we noticed that the Forest Service has been implementing other changes. It has removed all of the mountain bikers’ ramps, jumps, and banks, and generally returned the trails to the way they were in the mid-1990s.

At the top of Four Lost Souls, we re-crossed Noons Creek to the west side and came out on the main logging road again. We would follow this road and, where it divides, East Main the rest of the way. We headed away from the creek until we reached the crossroads, and then, on East Main, slowly approached the creek once again. Much of the roadway was in sun, but some sections had welcome shade. While on the roadway, we ran into BMN member Ian McArthur, who was leading a hike for the City of Coquitlam. He and his party were now on their way back from Cypress Lake. They had started at the same time we had, but from a location higher up, and so did not have as far to go to reach the lake. We compared notes and then went our separate ways.

We reached Cypress Lake, the largest of the plateau's many lakes and ponds, at noon. We crossed the spillway and found a place near the lakeshore where we could eat lunch. We sat in the shade of hemlocks—a couple of us with feet dipped in the cool water—and looked out over the lake, its mostly still surface reflecting the forested ridges that surround it. One of the ridges wore a crown of half a dozen or more old-growth trees. We heard the beautiful flutelike song of the hermit thrush from across the lake. We saw three swifts (Vaux's?), exhibiting their rapid, “twinkling” flight, as they streamed in and out of view; there also seemed to be a swallow or two (maybe tree or violet-green?) gliding and dipping over the water. A Steller's jay flew to a perch at the east end of the lake. Some of us would have been happy to while away an hour or two here, but as we had come a farther distance than anticipated, we knew we had better not linger too long.

Reluctantly leaving the lake, we faced a further decision: Do we hike back along the road or vary our route, even though it might add a kilometre or two of distance to what was becoming a very long day? Given the strength of the sun, we decided to forego the road, seek the shade of the forest, and descend via Mossom Creek.

But before beginning our descent, we took a side road to the top of Massage Therapy mountain bike trail. Here there is a fine viewpoint overlooking the Fraser Valley. When we have visited this viewpoint previously, we have had cloud or haze to contend with. But today the skies were clear and the visibility excellent. We could see all the way to the Cascade Range and its string of prominent peaks, including Slesse, the Border Peaks, Larabee, Tomihoy, Shuksan, Baker, and Twin Sisters.

**View from the top of Massage Therapy mountain bike trail, looking toward Mts. Shuksan and Baker, and Twin Sisters.**  
*Terry Puls photo.*

But we were equally captivated by a red-breasted sapsucker which flew among three or four perches at or near the viewpoint. One perch was on the top of a snag, which due to the drop-off was roughly at our eyelevel. Whenever the bird landed there, we had a particularly good view of it. In the brilliant sun we could see



its colouration to good effect, not only the red head and breast, but the way the red fades into yellow toward the belly. Again, it would have been easy to stay and watch for a while, but with miles to go, we pressed onward.

We could have continued down Massage Therapy, but as its first section is quite steep, we decided instead to backtrack to the main road and take an easier line to down-slope trails. At first we followed a tributary of Mossom Creek. Then we continued down the main creek. Finally we came out on the power line road just south of the culvert. In this section of forest we took note of two remarkable trees. The first was a very large old-growth western hemlock, its trunk the better part of a metre thick; and the second a massive western redcedar, now dead, but indicative of what the original forest must have been like.

Along the power line we enjoyed views looking west toward Vancouver, south toward Coquitlam Town Centre, and southeast toward the Fraser Valley. When we'd had our fill of views, we utilized one or two more mountain bike trails to return to our outbound route. Our total distance proved to be quite a bit longer than advertised, and one of our members began to feel pain in her knees, but I think all of us would agree that our attempt to trace Noons Creek in its entirety had been a worthwhile pursuit. One wishes that planners had had the foresight to leave a wider riparian corridor, but it is good to know that there is as much green space as there is.