

BMN HIKE REPORT

Kanaka Creek (May 13, 2017)

By Mark Johnston

On this delightful outing we continued our early season tour of regional parks. On our first hike of the year, in March, we had walked a portion of the Traboulay PoCo Trail as well as other trails in Colony Farm Regional Park. Then, at the end of April, we had visited Brae Island and Derby Reach regional parks. Now, in May, we were set to explore the Cliff Falls section of Kanaka Creek Regional Park.

Four of us met at the ICBC Driver Licensing Centre in Port Coquitlam. The skies were grey and there was the feeling of rain in the air. We didn't have to wait long to know that our intuition was correct. As we drove toward Maple Ridge, the "feeling" of rain became reality, and, by the time we arrived at the Bell-Irving Kanaka Creek Fish Hatchery parking lot, it was looking as though the rain might be here to stay.

Crossing 256th Street just south of the bridge over Kanaka Creek, we headed west along Canyon Trail. We had barely gotten started when our eyes fixed on an American dipper which was diving beneath the surface of the water as well as walking along the bottom of the creek. We also observed it as it stood on the stream bank, where it displayed its characteristic bobbing motion. Possibly the bird had built a nest under the bridge, although we did not verify that. At one point, when it was in plain view on the bank, a Douglas squirrel passed by it so closely, I was sure the two might make light contact! But the dipper seemed completely unfazed by the squirrel's approach.



BMN hikers along the wide Canyon Trail.
Gay Mitchell photo.

Although at the outset it had seemed we might be in for a rainy day, as we continued along the wide trail, the rain began to ease and then stopped. No longer having to use an umbrella or wear a rain hood, we could more fully appreciate our beautiful surroundings. The largely deciduous forest was particularly verdant, with greens of every imaginable hue. Maples, alders, and cottonwoods were all manifesting new growth, and curving vine maples were both abundant and richly adorned. Salmonberry and elderberry were in bloom, and bleeding heart, Siberian miner's-lettuce, and foamflower added to the floral array.



For much of the initial stretch of trail, we were high above the creek, but halfway along Canyon Trail, we turned north on Pine Ridge Trail and crossed the creek on an arching metal span. After regaining elevation, we turned again to the west and made for Kanaka Creek's North Fork, which we also crossed, this time on a wide driveable bridge. We paused on the bridge deck to look up and down the stream. With all the rain we've had this spring, the creek was deep and wide, sometimes running smooth and clear, and other times fractured and beaten white.

Arching metal span of the pedestrian bridge over Kanaka Creek.
Gay Mitchell photo.

Crossing the North Fork a second time, we came to a small grassy area dotted with picnic tables. Here, the two forks of Kanaka Creek flow together. As this would be our lunch spot, and given that it was still early in the day, we spent quite a bit of time wandering around on both sides of the bridge, seeking out the best vantage points from which to view the North Fork's Cliff Falls and the various cascades and falls on the main creek. We found that we had to re-cross the North Fork and walk a short distance downstream to see Cliff Falls to the best advantage. Staying a safe distance back from the overhanging bank, we watched as the water, without any narrowing, poured over a short vertical drop and rushed down an angled apron before mingling with the main creek. Back on the picnic area side of the bridge, we had good but somewhat circumscribed views of the cascades and falls on the main creek. This portion of the creek lies deep beneath sandstone cliffs and flows over rock face that is dimpled with potholes.

The early spring forest near the North Fork of Kanaka Creek.
Gay Mitchell photo.

For a while now, the clouds had been breaking up, and the sun was shining through. We settled at one of the picnic tables to eat lunch. As we chatted, a bald eagle flew past overhead, a raven following. Although one can imagine this park at times being a busy place, today it was very quiet; in fact, we almost had it to ourselves!

After lunch we returned via Canyon Trail, first crossing the main creek and then continuing toward the Pine Ridge Trail junction and our outward route. Along this part of the trail, we came across a number of large Douglas-fir trees. One tree had fallen across the trail, and the section that had blocked the trail had been cut out. Initially, we estimated that the tree was a hundred years old. But a close examination of the tree rings revealed a pattern of slower than faster growth, so it seems likely that its lifespan was somewhat shorter than that. Also



noteworthy was our further encounter with the same American dipper we had seen earlier. The bird was in the same place, busy with the same activities.

Kanaka Creek Education and Environmental Partnership Society's new Watershed Stewardship Centre.
Gay Mitchell photo.

We got back to the parking lot with time to spare, so we decided to walk to the fish hatchery. While the hatchery was of interest, we were more taken with the Kanaka Creek Education and Environmental Partnership Society's brand new Watershed Stewardship Centre. This is a beautiful facility, carefully set into the land, and should serve the Society well for generations to come.



This was my first visit to Kanaka Creek Regional Park and certainly won't be the last. While spring is a spectacular time to visit, I think I would like to return in the fall. Then, the salmon will be spawning and the vine maples turned to gold.