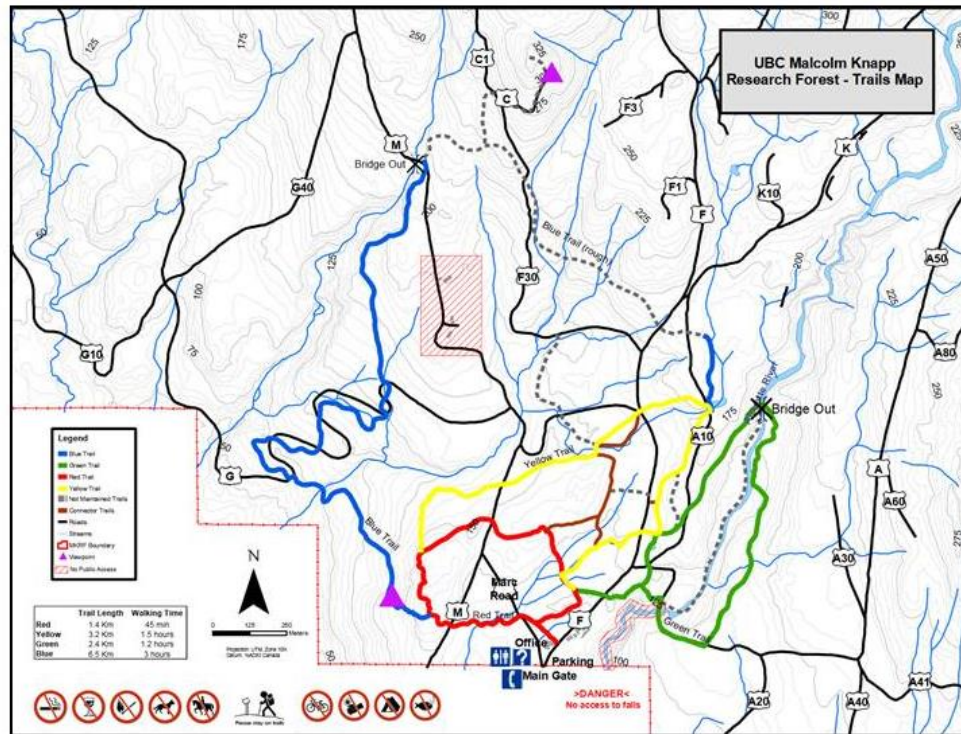


BMN HIKE REPORT

UBC Malcolm Knapp Research Forest (September 9, 2017)

by Mark Johnston



Map available from <http://www.mkrf.forestry.ubc.ca/169-2/>

Our last trip to the UBC Malcolm Knapp Research Forest was in 2008. Overdue for a visit, we included a trip to the forest on this year's list of hikes, hopeful that we might introduce a new group of hikers to the area's many features. Alas, on the day of the hike, the weather was cloudy and rainy, so just five of us took advantage of the opportunity to explore these nearby lands.

Looking for a shorter day, we considered the various colour-coded trails—Red, Yellow, Blue, and Green—in the southern portion of the forest. We studied the routes and stats of each and decided on Blue Trail as providing the right distance and degree of difficulty.

After we had determined our route, we set out across the lawn north of the administration building and entered the trees on the other side. Just inside the trees, we spent several minutes studying a new signboard, which has colour photographs and brief descriptions of the trees and shrubs common to the Research Forest. Over the course of the day, we would see and identify all of these, with the exception of amabilis fir, which is likely found only at the higher elevations of the forest. Once we had finished with the signboard, we descended into and then climbed out of a beautiful ravine. Mature Douglas-fir trees stabilize its banks, and beneath the canopy a variety of shrubs and ferns are thriving.

Our walk through the ravine was in a sense false advertising for what was to come, for we soon found ourselves on a wide roadway leading to the western edge of the forest. Here the map shows a viewpoint, but due to the growth of trees, the prospect over the Pitt River lowlands has become increasingly limited. Not bothering with the “view,” we turned north on an equally wide track, and after crossing Spring Creek, began a long ascent through managed plantations. Although, beginning at the creek, we were back on trail, we made many crossings—seven in all—of a switchbacking road. We found the plantations to be mostly Douglas-fir; one younger plantation is more diverse, having fir, pine, and cedar saplings. At our last crossing of the road, we spent some time at a signboard that categorizes the plantations according to the relative spacing of trees and the density of undergrowth.

Although rain had been light, it now began to fall more steadily. We wound our way up a freshly bark-mulched trail and came out on the north-south M Road near the ford of Blaney Creek. It would have been easy to cross the creek if necessary, but we stayed south of the creek and climbed up a steep roadway to a T-junction. Here, signage directs left to a viewpoint and right to the continuation of Blue Trail. Despite the rain, we decided to head for the viewpoint. I had been to the viewpoint—at the top of Road C30—before, and knew there was a shelter there that would make a perfect spot for lunch. What I didn’t remember was the significant elevation gain! When we got there, our view of the Fraser Valley, as expected, was obscured. But the shelter proved to be a most comfortable place in which to eat our lunch. The log structure has a large opening in front and a floor-length bench along the back wall. Sitting side by side on the bench and facing the opening, we were warm and dry and could keep an eye on the weather outside.

After lunch we returned to Blue Trail. This section is described as “rough,” but is generally easy walking. The trail does go uphill and down and crosses a few creeks, but poses no great difficulty. We approached and crossed a couple of roads and then both before and after crossing a third, found the trail increasingly bushy with encroaching salmonberry and thimbleberry. But, again, we had no great difficulty.

Just beyond a small pond, our trail merged with Yellow Trail. We stayed with Blue/Yellow trails for a while, but finished via Green Trail and F Road. On Green Trail we made a short side trip to the North Alouette River. From the bridge over the river, we could look downstream and see the water pouring over a lip into a rocky gorge below. Apparently the falls area has been the site of many an accident, and barricades and razor wire now bar a close approach.

As we finished our hike, we sighted three black-tailed deer—a buck and two does—all looking very healthy. We watched them for some time as they grazed. It was also nice to see another “beast”—this one mechanical—“looking good.” Used in an earlier time’s logging operations, the steam donkey that sits near the entrance to the Research Forest has been recently refurbished and now sports a generous coat of black paint.

While definitely a walk in the rain, our trip in the Research Forest was still a very enjoyable outing. Of course, the colour-coded trails only scratch the surface of what the forest has to offer. Perhaps next year we will head farther in, to the lake district and beyond.