

BMN HIKE REPORT

Mt. Fromme

Saturday August 30 2014

by Mark Johnston



Hiking group on south summit. *Chloe Tu photo.*

Although this year has been especially dry, the majority of our hikes in the spring and early summer months fell on days when there was significant precipitation. When it came time for our hike up Mt. Fromme, it appeared we'd be facing more of the same. But as it turned out, despite abundant cloud, we had only two or three brief showers and actually enjoyed a fair bit of sunshine.

While the forecast called for rain, we awoke to fairly bright skies with lots of blue showing. Ten of us met at Eagle Ridge Field and soon organized our carpool to North Vancouver. There are a couple of ways to begin a climb of Mt. Fromme: one can use St. George's Trail or, alternatively, Pipeline Trail (alongside the conduit that once carried water from Kennedy Lake to North Vancouver). Intending to use the latter, we rendezvoused at the top of Prospect Drive. Once on the trail we climbed steeply for a while, then more moderately. Finally we turned away from the pipeline altogether and headed straight up the fall line. We climbed slowly, taking time to admire the many sizeable old-growth firs and observe a small flock of juncos moving low-to-the-ground.

When we reached the old Grouse Mountain Highway, we decided to split into two groups. One group would continue on to the summit; the other group would have a shorter day, circling back via St. George's and Baden-Powell trails.

There were seven of us keen to carry on to the summit. Where the highway turns back on itself, we left its gravel bed and used Halvor Lunden's "Pyr Gynt Trail" to cut between switchbacks. Then, coming out on



the highway again, we crossed the road and picked up a “newer” trail, “Bill’s Trail.” Apparently one of Lunden’s friends is responsible for this trail. Although I hadn’t walked it before, I had on a previous excursion to Fromme noted its start and finish and was fairly confident we’d be able to stay on course.

**Hiking on Bill's Trail through old growth.
*Chloe Tu photo.***

For the most part this proved correct, the only uncertainty coming at the beginning, where there is a parallel trail on the left. But we soon discovered that the trails join together and were further reassured by more signage indicating “Bill’s Trail” and “Mt. Fromme via Bill’s Trail.”

At first we walked through sterile second-growth forest but soon our well-graded trail ushered us into beautiful old growth. We admired the trees, the understory, and kept alert for the sight or sound of birds. Intent on experiencing the forest, we failed to notice the darkening sky. Then, as we

began to approach the summit and started to climb more steeply, we felt a raindrop, and another, followed by one or two more. We met three mountain bikers who were riding downhill. While not particularly excited to see bikers using a trail built for hiking, one had to admire their grit and determination in packing their bikes up such steep terrain. Farther along, we flushed a bird and then two more. Judging by a fleeting glimpse of one bird’s tail band and the general noisiness of their departure, they seemed to be blue grouse.

By the time we arrived on the south summit, a light rain was falling. Cloud had filled the valleys and there were no appreciable views. We had hoped to have lunch on the summit but, given the rain, decided to seek out a more sheltered place below. Staying on top only long enough to take a couple of photos, we dropped down to the saddle between summits, found a bit of dry ground beneath several large mountain hemlocks, and dug into our somewhat delayed meal. Then as we ate, the sky began to brighten again and we were encouraged that we might yet have a view. So after eating, we scrambled up to the north summit but once again could see only cloud. Annoyingly, we could hear a disembodied voice over a Grouse Mountain loudspeaker, which no amount of cloud was going to muffle.



**Sampling blueberries at Meech Lake.
*Chloe Tu photo.***

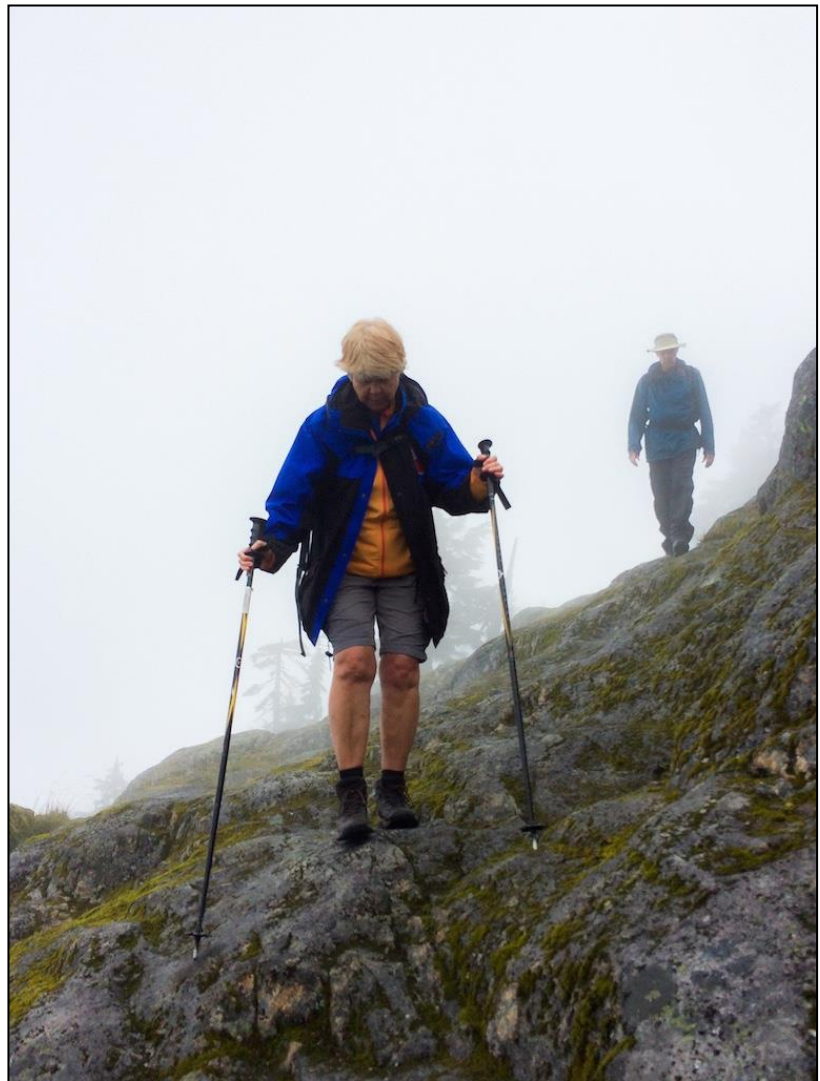
We began our descent, this time using the “Main Trail” down to Pipeline Pass. At a junction we took a short side trip to see “Meech Lake.” This attractive little lake is comprised of two ovate pools joined by a narrow neck of water. We lingered by its shore for a while, especially as the sun seemed to be breaking through. Our further descent was at times very steep. Once again we met bikers, who were in mid-climb with their bikes hoisted above their heads. They weren’t intending to ride down Bill’s Trail, as the previously-met bikers had done, but planned to tackle a more steeply pitched route: the upper section of the Pyr Gynt Trail (which drops down Fromme’s western slope to the Grouse Mountain Highway). As we continued to lose elevation, I spied a Steller’s jay, a bird we had heard from time to time but was now briefly in plain view.

Descending from north summit.
Chloe Tu photo.

At the bottom of our descent, we came again to Pipeline Trail and followed it out to Mountain Highway. From the highway we used a short connecting trail to access a parallel lower road. We found the latter to be in very rough shape. We had to make our way over and around a number of trees that had fallen across the trail and push our way through encroaching salmonberry bushes. We came out on the road just downstream from “Mosquito Creek Falls,” quite glorious in spring flood but now just a narrow strand of water running over the terraced rock. Only two or three of us bothered to make our way on slippery stones to its base; the rest were content to sit on a log and rest.

It began to rain again and we shouldered our packs and started along the old road. We had to dip down into and then climb out of a few deep water bars (there were also a number of shallow ones), but as we progressed the road steadily improved. After twenty minutes or so

we came out to our best view of the day. The sun was breaking through again and we could look down on Burrard Inlet and see Point Grey jutting out into the Strait of Georgia.



When we arrived back at Mountain Highway, at the spot where we had picked up the Pyr Gynt Trail in the morning, we decided to follow our second party’s route and used St. George’s and Baden-Powell trails for a somewhat longer but gentler return. As we walked, we could reflect on what had been a challenging but good day. Working as hard as we’d been, it would have been nice to enjoy summit views; nevertheless, nothing could detract from the sense of accomplishment that comes with reaching one’s goal.