

# BMN HIKE REPORT

## Cypress Lake and Eagle Ridge Traverse (May 18 2015)

by Mark Johnston



View of Cypress Lake. *Chloe Tu photo.*

Due to its proximity to where most of us live, we end up hiking on Eagle Ridge with some regularity. Still, on this trip, while covering many of the roads and trails we have walked before, we managed to incorporate two or three new trails—in particular, the mountain bike trails Blue Line and Physiotherapy.

We met, as we had for our second trip of the year (Little Horn Mountain), at the Buntzen Lake parking area near the warden's office. The skies were grey, but the forecast called for clearing. Leaving some of our cars at Buntzen, eleven of us piled into three or four vehicles for the short jaunt to Port Moody's Heritage Mountain development and the beginning of our semi-loop hike back to the lake.

We parked our vehicles at the end of Fernway Drive and soon joined the trail that parallels West Noons Creek. Before long, we came to Blue Line, which we walked to the power line service road. Then, after a brief stroll along the road, we set out on Physiotherapy. This is a fine trail, at least in its lower reaches, and while designed for biking, proves equally good for walking. We continued along Physiotherapy, intending to hike it all the way to its upper end, but at a junction midway were presented with the option of connecting



with the Mossom Creek mountain bike trail. By heading for Mossom Creek we would be able to return to the giant, fire-scarred cedar snag that we had first visited in May 2011. Also, by means of this change of route, we would have another opportunity to take in the view at the top of the Massage Therapy mountain bike trail, which on the earlier trip prevailing cloud had partially obscured. So, turning aside from Physiotherapy, we committed to pursuing this new possibility instead.

**Some of the hikers at an early stage of the traverse. *Chloe Tu photo.***



As we walked toward Mossom Creek, we saw a sapsucker high up in a tree. Young second-growth forests



such as the one we were in often seem devoid of birdlife, but woodpeckers comprise one family that seems at home in these desolate woods. After our sighting, we carried on to the creek and began to follow it upstream. Soon, we came to the enormous cedar snag and, as we had before, paused to admire this remnant of the forest now lost and to photograph each other standing at its base.

**Admiring a remnant of the forest now lost. *Chloe Tu photo.***

Then continuing upward by way of Massage Therapy, we arrived at the junction that bears the sign NEED MORE THERAPY?—directing mountain bikers coming downslope onto the lower portion of the trail. At this junction we observed two or three more sapsuckers in the branches above.

After negotiating the steep upper portion of Massage Therapy and pausing near the top to photograph its creative metallic sign (a three-dimensional nuts-and-bolts sculpture depicting a female therapist attending to a male patient who is reclining on a couch or bed),



we came at last to the trail's rock bluff viewpoint. This time we could see everything. The morning cloud had given way to sunshine, and besides being able to view the mountains nearer at hand, including Cypress and Burke, we could look out over the eastern Fraser Valley and identify a number of familiar features.

Our next stretch was along logging roads, first a spur, then the mainline, and finally the latter road's eastern branch. We would follow these roads all the way to Cypress Lake. As we walked along the branch road, we heard the beautiful song of the hermit thrush. We stopped for a few minutes so that everyone could hear the thrush's clear, ethereal, flutelike phrases and learn to identify the bird by its song.

Following a short, rocky climb, we arrived at Cypress Lake. As we approached the dam at the lake's south end, we passed by a patch of dandelions in bloom. While the dandelion is considered a weed species, there was no denying that this "garden" of shiny yellow flowers with their freshly green leaves, set off against the lake's bright blue waters, was a delight to the senses. We stayed at the lake for a while, and although encouraged to wait until the next viewpoint, some of us began to pick at our lunches.

**Hiking through the burn area.**  
*Chloe Tu photo.*

It would have been easy to stay at the lake for a longer time, but as we still had quite a bit of ground to cover, we pressed onward. We walked the eastern branch road to its end and then climbed steeply up into the coniferous forest. We were on rough trail and soon pushed beyond the extent of past logging operations. Although we were now in old growth, as we approached White Rock Lookout we travelled through a small area of fire-killed



trees and lush new growth, the short- and longer-term results of a hard-to-extinguish blaze a few years back. At the outer edge of the burn area, juts the prominent bluff toward which we'd been aiming, and on its relatively spacious, flat granite surface, we each claimed our space and sat down to eat (or finish) our lunch.

**Lunch at White Rock Lookout.**  
*Chloe Tu photo.*

The rock bluff has a commanding view, and although a prevalent haze prevented crystal clarity, we could look out over the

“Cypress Lake Plateau” and see much of Greater Vancouver, from the eastern Fraser Valley to downtown Vancouver. But perhaps most inspiring of all was a sight that unfolded straight over our heads. Two eagles, one a full-grown adult and the other less than full grown, both with talons extended, soared and tilted above us, one bird sometimes touching the other, sometimes not. We watched with awe as the aerial display went on for what seemed like several minutes; finally, the birds flew out of our view.

Undoubtedly, if we had witnessed just this one bit of avian behaviour, we would have been satisfied. But when—after leaving our elevated position and descending via various trails and roads—we reached West View (also known as Vancouver Lookout), we were treated to another interesting, if more commonly observed, display. In this case we watched as a bird flew out from the top of a tree and then circled back to the same or a nearby perch. We couldn’t identify the bird with certainty—our pocket binoculars not having enough power for us to see it clearly—but, given its size and obvious flycatching behaviour, one of our party wondered whether it might be a kingbird.\*



Enjoying the views at West View. *Chloe Tu photo.*

It remained for us to continue our descent via the Full Pull mountain bike trail, and we were happy to be able to do it under more favourable conditions than we’d had on our initial reconnaissance of the path last July. We also stayed with the trail all the way to the power line, not seeking to shorten the route as we had before. The lower reaches of the trail are especially nice, the trees being generously spaced and the forest floor densely vegetated with salal.

After reaching the power line and walking up the short rise to Eagle Bluff, we enjoyed one last distant view, again panoramic in nature, of Metro Vancouver and round to Buntzen Lake and the surrounding mountains. We were running behind “schedule” but no one seemed to mind. After side-hilling over to the Halvor Lunden Trail, we picked our way down one of its steepest sections and then finished on its easier lower switchbacks. It had been a full day, and one with many memorable moments to savour.

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\* According to guidebooks, while kingbirds do frequent wood margins, they are not to be found in the high conifer forest. If we were right about size, our bird may have been an olive-sided flycatcher; if it was smaller than it appeared, it may have been a Pacific-slope flycatcher. The latter bird is very commonly heard, if not seen, in the local forests.