

BMN Hike Report

Zoa Peak (Saturday, July 27, 2013)

By Mark Johnston



View to the northwest from Zoa, looking toward Alpaca, Vicuna, Guanaco peaks.
Terry Puls photo.

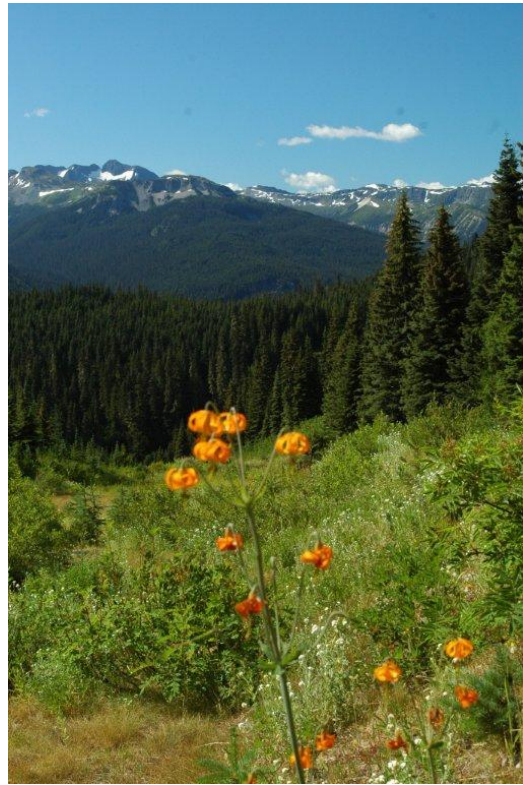
After a five year absence, we finally returned to the Coquihalla area. Previously we had climbed Needle and Yak peaks; this time we settled on the easier Zoa Peak. Our objective was to see subalpine wildflowers in their midsummer bloom. As it turned out, due to the hot, dry summer, many flowers were past their peak and were already drying out. Nevertheless, as we ascended higher up the mountain, we found some flowers looking fresh and unsullied, notably the heathers, both pink and white.

We had fine weather: sunny, scattered clouds, a comfortable temperature; and a good turnout: 16, including a couple of school-aged girls and Terry and Raluca's young son Alexander. Leaving the parking area, we eschewed walking on the graded, but badly eroded 4WD road and instead headed steeply up the pipeline right-of-way to gain the start of the trail. While not particularly aesthetic, our approach afforded us the opportunity to identify the various flowers colonizing the right-of-way, and, if we could

remember to look over our shoulder, magnificent views of Coquihalla Mountain and other more distant peaks.

We wondered whether we would have any trouble finding the start of the trail, but needn't have worried as we came upon a prominent cairn. Turning sharply left, we scrambled up the cutbank and entered the trees. We found ourselves on a well-worn path which we followed through open forest and across small clearings, noting as we walked, many varieties of flowers.

Tiger lily in bloom with Coquihalla Mountain in the background. Terry Puls photo.



There were the tall, large-leaved plants such as cow parsnip and false hellebore with their clusters of small flowers, and other flora of variable height and foliage exhibiting all the colours of the rainbow, including red columbine, tiger lily (orange), arrow-leaved groundsel (yellow), lupine (blue), and bracted lousewort (or wood betony, purple). Some flowers, such as spreading phlox, formed flat mats.



Red paintbrush.
Ian McArthur photo.

We skirted the first and lower of Zoa's two summits on its north side and soon reached the col between high points. We decided it was time for lunch and walked south through a gap to open talus where we had a stunning view of Yak Peak

and Zopkios Ridge's sheer north face. We spread out in groups of two, three, and four on the rocky slope and contemplated the inspiring view. A steady breeze kept the relatively few mosquitoes and flies at bay.

Following lunch, the majority of the group set out for the second higher summit, while a few chose to remain at the col. For those of us who carried on, we had to gain another 100 m or so but were rewarded with more expansive views to the north and west. We



had a nice view of the rounded granite summits of Alpaca, Vicuna, and Guanaco, and when we reached the end of the ridge, of many more granite domes and horns beyond. If one didn't know better, you might think you had been transported to California's Sierra Nevada! We also dropped off the ridge crest to the south to where we could overlook Falls Lake, nestled as it is at the bottom of its steep-walled valley.

Our descent of the pipeline right-of-way late in the day.
Terry Puls photo.

After rejoining those at the col, we began the long descent to the parking area. We were in no hurry to leave this pleasant subalpine area and stopped for a couple of lengthy breaks en route. Although we returned to our cars somewhat reluctantly, we could savour a day's worth of memories on the long drive home.