

# BMN HIKE REPORT

False Creek Seawall (May 19, 2018)

By Mark Johnston



Hikers enjoyed a few nature sightings on this urban walk. Here, an adult Canada goose looks after goslings of differently aged broods. *Terry Puls photo.*

On many of our hikes we have incorporated bits and pieces of suburbia, but seldom, if ever, have we kept strictly to civic pathways. So our walk along the False Creek Seawall was unusual in being an entirely urban affair. As fate would have it though, we had a number of nature sightings worthy of a walk in a more remote environment.

We began the day by taking SkyTrain to Vancouver. Seven of us boarded at Lafarge Lake-Douglas Station, with two more joining the group at Lougheed Town Centre. Once we were all together, we took the Expo Line to Science World.

When we reached Science World, we walked to the nearby Olympic Village wharf and scrambled aboard Aquabus for the next leg of the journey. Our intention was to travel via boat on False Creek as far as the foot of Hornby Street. In walking from SkyTrain to Aquabus, we had an opportunity to see a few common urban dwellers: some Canada geese, rock pigeons, and a gull on the wing. But then, as we plied the waters of False Creek, we

were treated to a more thrilling sight. As we approached David Lam Park, a pelagic cormorant with a fish in its beak overtook us, circled our bow, and flew past us again on the other side going the opposite way.

Upon reaching Granville Island we transferred to a second boat for the crossing to Hornby Street. After the relatively short crossing, we walked up to Beach Avenue and turned left to pass beneath the Burrard Street Bridge. As we walked under the bridge, we admired the



guerrilla plantings growing in the shade of the span's underside. Coming to the far side of the bridge, we began our ascent of the stairway to the bridge deck. Here we took note of the colourful oriental poppies flourishing alongside the steps. The flowers were bright red with purple centres.

**Oriental poppies flourishing alongside the stairway to the Burrard Street Bridge deck.** *Gay Mitchell photo.*

From the bridge deck we looked down on the rock jetties that have allowed for an expansion of Sunset Beach, and gazed across the water to the tents of the Vancouver International Children's Festival in Vanier Park. We also had distant views: of Mt. Gardner on Bowen Island and of the lower slopes of Sunshine

Coast and North Shore peaks, which were otherwise shrouded in cloud. As we took in the views, we heard a flicker calling. It was perched atop a hemlock by the Vancouver Aquatic Centre just west of us.

At the far end of the bridge, we headed for the Starbucks at the northeast corner of Cornwall Avenue and Cypress Street. Those of us so inclined imbibed the drink of our choice. Then, when all were satisfied, we resumed our walk. We rounded the corner and set out along Cypress to access the seawall. Just a few paces from Starbucks we had a firsthand look at "Nature, red in tooth and claw." On a strip of lawn between buildings and curb, a crow preyed on a starling. The crow was using its beak to spear the starling through its breast and pick at its flesh. We watched with fascination and a certain horror, though we all know that this is the way things work.



**What to purchase for lunch?**  
*Terry Puls photo.*

By the time we reached the seawall, thoughts of the killing were receding. We were distracted by foot traffic along the walkway and marine traffic on False Creek.

At Granville Island we secured a table on the public market's north-side patio, and everyone went off to purchase something for lunch and then bring it back to eat it communally. Close by our table, a falconer stood with a falcon perched on her left forearm. She was surrounded by people interested to know about the bird. She explained that the falcon was a gyrfalcon/jaeger cross. She had brought the bird to the island not simply for display but to "work." Apparently, the falcon is hired to guard picnickers from potentially bothersome gulls!

After lunch and a look around the island—some of us circled the island, others visited various studios and shops, still others used the time to take photographs—we returned to the seawall and strolled eastward. Almost immediately we came upon several adult Canada geese looking after at least three dozen goslings of differently aged broods.



**A gull devouring a purple sea star.**  
*Gay Mitchell photo.*

Other wildlife sightings included a harbour seal and a gull devouring a purple sea star. The gull was standing on the sloping rock base of the seawall and seemed unperturbed to have an audience. Besides noticing wildlife we enjoyed looking at the many rhododendrons and other cultivated flowers that were growing alongside the walkway.

Back at Science World we reboarded SkyTrain for the return trip. While our outing had been a departure from our usual hikes in wooded terrain, we'd had a number of encounters with wild nature that we won't soon forget.