

BMN HIKE REPORT

Woodland Walk (June 9, 2018)

By Mark Johnston

For many years now, we have celebrated the anniversary of Pinecone Burke Provincial Park by leading a public hike on one of the park's easier trails, the Woodland Walk. This year was no exception.

Although in the past we have had as many as seventy participants, this time we had just sixteen, most of them being club members. Perhaps a lack of advertising, and uncertainty about the weather, accounts for the lower than usual turnout.

As is our custom on these walks, we split into faster- and slower-paced groups. On this occasion the faster-paced group was comprised entirely of members, both "old timers" and some who are fairly new to the club. The slower-paced group was a mixture of members and non-members. This report reflects the experience of the latter group.

Under cloudy skies we started up the mountain bike trail variously known as Garbage or Lower Elevator. Our plan was to take this trail to the beginning of the Woodland Walk proper, but we



Saw Blade Falls. *Ian McArthur photo.*

accidentally got onto a new trail known as Recycled. That wouldn't have been a problem, since Recycled also leads to the Woodland Walk, except that our leader, who had sent the rest of us ahead with the assurance that he would "catch up," wasn't aware of our diversion. As it turned out, he overtook the faster-paced group before he figured out that somehow he must have gotten ahead of us! Meanwhile the rest of us enjoyed the gentler grade of our chosen trail as well as its lush understory. The shooting at Port Coquitlam & District Hunting & Fishing Club had not yet begun, so we were able to enjoy the birdsong as well, especially the beautiful flutelike trill of Swainson's thrush.

Just before we emerged onto the power line right-of-way, we felt a few raindrops, and then a few more. While most of us were wearing rain jackets already, when it began to rain more steadily, we supplemented our jackets by opening an umbrella, donning ponchos, or putting on rain pants. By the time we came out into the open, we found ourselves in the middle of a cloudburst! Fortunately, it was short-lived, and though rain continued to fall for a while, it was much lighter. We crossed Pritchett Creek and noted its cascades were fairly full, a signal that we would find Coho Creek's falls and cascades to be fuller as well. Then, just before re-entering the forest on the Woodland Walk's Upper Loop—and reconnecting with our backtracking leader!—we had a wonderful sighting of a western tanager in plain view, its many colours—red, yellow, black, white—clearly visible. It flew to a neighbouring tree, where there was a second tanager, although, now facing into the light, we couldn't see the birds' colouring to the same advantage.

As a reunited group we proceeded along the Upper Loop and made brief stops at all the usual places. At the junction of the new and old Upper Loop trails, we observed the cedar stump that has an interesting whorl. Farther along we came to the place where a number of rusting artifacts give testimony to a former shake cutter's camp. We paused as well by the interesting stump that has been adorned with rocks and branches to create a ghostly visage.

When we came to what is the strongest flow of water between Pritchett and Coho creeks, we crossed over the watercourse on the relatively new bridge put in place by BC Parks and Pinecone Burke Stewards. The bridge is well built and should last a long time. Then, reaching the high point of this part of the trail, we continued through what is perhaps the most beautiful section of the lower forest. As we did, the sun began to shine, even as drops were falling from the sodden tree branches above. The forest here is a bit more open, and greenery covers the forest floor. We heard the Pacific wren's bubbling trill and, later, the Pacific-slope flycatcher's distinctive whistle.

We arrived at the junction with the Lower Loop, and then walked the extension to Woodland Walk Falls. En route we stopped at the enormous cedar stump and took the requisite group photos that aid in perspective. When we arrived at the falls, we stayed a while. We found that there was lots of water coming down and took the time to study its form. We also marvelled at the old-growth Douglas-fir that stabilizes the streamside bank.

Following our time at Woodland Walk Falls, we climbed the steep, creekside path to the rock bluff lookout that provides a peekaboo view of Coquitlam Lake. We could see a ring of bare ground around the lake, an indication that the reservoir is currently at less than capacity. We took a longer rest here and ate a light lunch.

Our next stop was Saw Blade Falls. There was more water than we could have hoped for tumbling over and down the rocky precipice. Some of our party descended to the waterfall's base, while others opted to stay on the main trail and take in a tree-filtered view of the falls. Those that descended were bathed in spray and shouted out as children do when they run through sprinklers.

After leaving the falls, we made our way down to the Upper Loop, and then retraced our steps back to the Lower Loop, which would be our return route. Now for the most part we were back on old road. The walking was easy, though we still had a few stream crossings to negotiate. After the last of these, we came to a decrepit mountain bike jump. Here we heard a Wilson's warbler singing and looked up to see the little yellow bird near the top of an alder. From this point until we reached the power line right-of-way, we were again walking in a particularly verdant area. We identified five kinds of ferns: bracken, lady, spiny wood, deer, and sword. We found foamflower and bunchberry in bloom, observed differences between fringe-cup and piggy-back plant, and noted salmonberry in fruit and thimbleberry about to produce it.

Our afternoon walk along the power line was considerably drier. We saw a couple of birds fly into the forest up slope from us, but we weren't able to identify them. But a few moments later we had a particularly good look at a cedar waxwing and then noticed that it was part of a small flock passing through.

We continued along our outbound route, but instead of using either Recycled or Garbage trails, we walked Coquitlam Lake View Trail to Harper Road. A light rain began to fall. This time we didn't bother with extra clothing. With just a few hundred metres to go, we didn't need to be concerned.

Although we were a little bit disappointed not to have attracted more of the public, those of us in attendance felt we'd had a most inspiring day. It had been especially nice to have taken our time and been rewarded with so many fine sightings.