

# BMN HIKE REPORT

## Pinnacle Creek Ravine (September 13, 2022)

By Mark Johnston



**Pinnacle Creek firs. Ian McArthur photo.**

This fall, although we are still holding our club meetings via Zoom, we have nonetheless scheduled a full slate of in-person hikes and walks. The first of these was an evening hike in Pinnacle Creek Ravine. Ian led the members-only hike and was accompanied by five others, one of whom joined the walk part way through.

Pinnacle Creek Ravine, part of Coquitlam's Harbour Chines area, lies south of Dewdney Trunk Road, north of Como Lake Avenue, west of Mariner Way, and east of Baker and Oneida drives. It is well watered by the many-branched Pinnacle Creek, and its ridges support some of the largest Douglas-firs within the city boundaries.

After allowing ample time for our group to gather, we set out from the uphill side of Baker Drive Elementary School. The sun was low in the western sky, and the air temperature beginning to feel a bit cool. We walked past an outdoor education area, its log benches arranged in a semicircle beneath sheltering firs, and descended a steep, narrow trail into the depths of the ravine. As we dropped down the slope, we noticed a few large Douglas-fir trees. Then, after reaching a

low point and starting a gentle ascent up an intermediate ridge, we encountered many more. These trees, growing along the ridgetop between the initial depression and the main stem of Pinnacle Creek, have trunks that are mostly more than a metre thick. As we admired the trees, we delighted to see a Douglas squirrel in the branches of one. Among the firs are western hemlocks and western redcedars. Noting that some people may have trouble distinguishing between young firs and hemlocks, Ian pointed out that the trunks of firs seem to lack the fluting or buttressing that characterizes those of hemlocks. Cedars, too, exhibit fluting.

We worked our way down the ridge to what would be our lowest point and shortly after met up with our latecomer. Reversing direction we began to climb again, sidehilling above the main stem of Pinnacle Creek, which, though we could not see, we could hear. Part way up we came upon the largest firs yet, the biggest of the trees having a trunk close to two metres thick. One of our members had once counted the rings of



**Pinnacle Creek giant. Ian McArthur photo.**

slightly brushy trail up to the power line, where we might have a distant view. We crossed a branch of the creek on a log and worked our way up a steep slope to emerge on the right-of-way. We followed the power line north over a slight rise and finally achieved the looked-for view toward Eagle Ridge, with the Coquitlam Crunch trail beneath the power line opposite being particularly prominent.

As the light in the forest began to fade, we made our way back down into the ravine, crossing a number of tributaries of Pinnacle Creek. Back at the main stem we came across a “new” tree—a Sitka spruce. In the falling dark some weren’t sure that we were looking at a spruce, but finding its papery-scaled cones on the ground confirmed our initial identification.

It was growing quite dark as we regained the elevation to the rim of the ravine. Our side trip to the power line right-of-way had added distance and time to the hike, so we got back about half-an-hour later than advertised, but no one seemed to mind. We had had an illuminating introduction to a backyard “wilderness” that few of us frequent but should really know more about.

a fir half as thick as the tree before us and by this method found the fir to have lived for two hundred years, so it was suggested that the Pinnacle Creek fir must be at least four hundred years old.

Not all of our attention was on Douglas-firs. We found a very large specimen of western hemlock, took note both of bigleaf and vine maple (examining the latter’s multiple-lobed leaves), and distinguished the usual variety of ferns, including sword, deer, lady, and spiny wood. Well into the hike we came across stink currant (*Ribes bracteosum*) and were instructed to crush one of its leaves in our hand and notice the resulting “skunky” smell. Stink currant produces blue-black berries, somewhat bland to the taste, but valued and widely used by northwest coast peoples.

From time to time we heard the Pacific wren’s two-syllabled call note. We also heard chickadees chattering. Once or twice we heard the Douglas squirrel’s lengthy trill.

Eventually we crossed the main stem of Pinnacle Creek. The creek was flowing nicely, but crossing it posed no difficulty. Although not part of the original plan, we decided we had time enough to follow a