

COQUITLAM RiverWatch

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NEWSLETTER

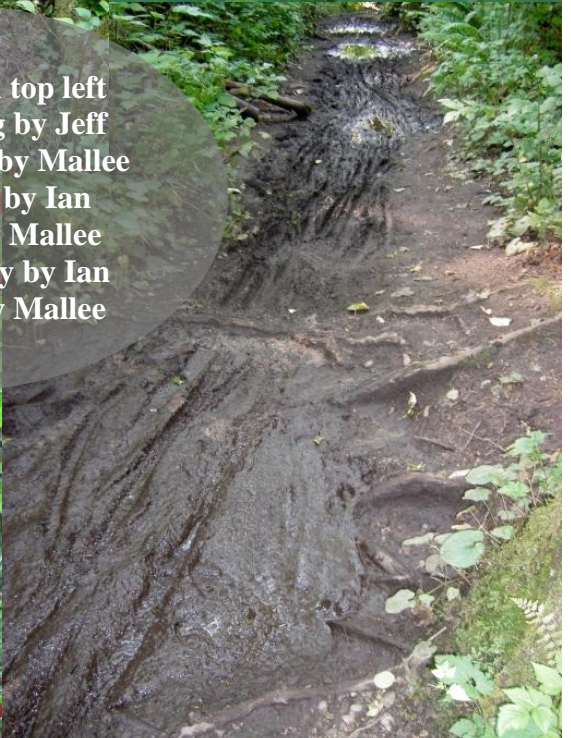
NUMBER 167

JULY HIGHLIGHTS FROM REACH W-4

It has been a remarkable month on Reach W-4. Indian Pipe has been very abundant. The first one was seen on June 24 and I kept finding new clumps along much of the reach, from the Cooper property at the north end south to Grist Creek. The area near Savary is almost carpeted with it. A Great Blue Heron was fishing at the Gabriola outfall on two mornings. We have had four frog sightings, in the drying side channel just north of the Gabriola outfall. These have been identified as Red-legged frogs, based on some not very good photographs. Red-legged frogs are a blue-listed species meaning that they are of special concern and at risk. A small salamander hatchling was seen several times in the same area. With the river so low the pools in this side channel drain quickly and in spite of efforts to keep some water in them they dried up. An immature Cooper's Hawk was spotted on July 18 and I have seen it almost every day since. Jay Brogan, a grad student at SFU who is studying Cooper's Hawks, came out to find the nest. We were unsuccessful but Jay is sure that the nest is located within a 50 metre radius of the north end of Gabriola, and is confident that we will find it.



Clockwise from top left
Red-legged frog by Jeff
Overgrown trail by Mallee
Thimbleberry by Ian
Muddy trail by Mallee
Red huckleberry by Ian
Large stump by Mallee



JULY RiverWatcher's REPORTS

Ian (W-1) July 31

5 cars were parked along the road and people were enjoying the cool river on a very warm day. The River was clear and the level was low, which is normal for this time of year. Slate Creek was clear and flowing. The only birds I saw were 2 American Dippers. The Al Grist Memorial Hatchery has a new structure over the tank area. It looks very sturdy. Huckleberries were ripe and good to eat. Some of the berries were the largest I have ever seen, but did not have as much flavour as the smaller ones. Thimbleberries were also ripe and good eating. Himalayan blackberry and touch-me-not were flowering.

Ian (W-2) July 31

2 people were enjoying paddling in the river. The travel trailer I saw last month has been removed and the area has been cleaned up. The River was clear and at a low level above and below the gravel operations. The water level at the Galette gauge was .540 metres. Falacea (Fulawka) Creek (#4) was clear and at a low flow. Mantle Creek (#6) was clear and at a low flow. Partridge Creek was clear and flowing low. Marquart Creek was almost clear and flowing well. Goodyear Creek (#11) was clear and flowing low. The Upper Coquitlam River Park Pond was extremely low. No water was flowing out on the surface. The outlet stream was dry. Birds included female Mallard with 3 young, chickadees, and a robin. Some of the gravel piled up at the Upper Coquitlam River Park has been removed.

Dave (W-3) July 26

People were wading and sitting by the river at both Galette and McTavish Parks and 4 youngsters using boogie boards and inflatables to raft down the river. The shallower part at the south end of Hockaday also had 8 to 10 people wading in or sitting by the river. Park users at McTavish clean up after themselves and the Galette users tend to leave more litter behind when they depart. Good weather brings out the recreational users to the river. Galette Park is frequented more by young adults, especially later in the day. McTavish is used more by family groups with children. The River was clear and at a normal level, but coming down as the weather dries out. I saw a small group of chickadees, which was the first in several months. There was also one cute house wren flitting among the rocky riverside and a family of 4 flickers in the brush. A raccoon with a damaged front paw has become a regular. I think it is being fed by the park users or is scavenging the food the users leave.

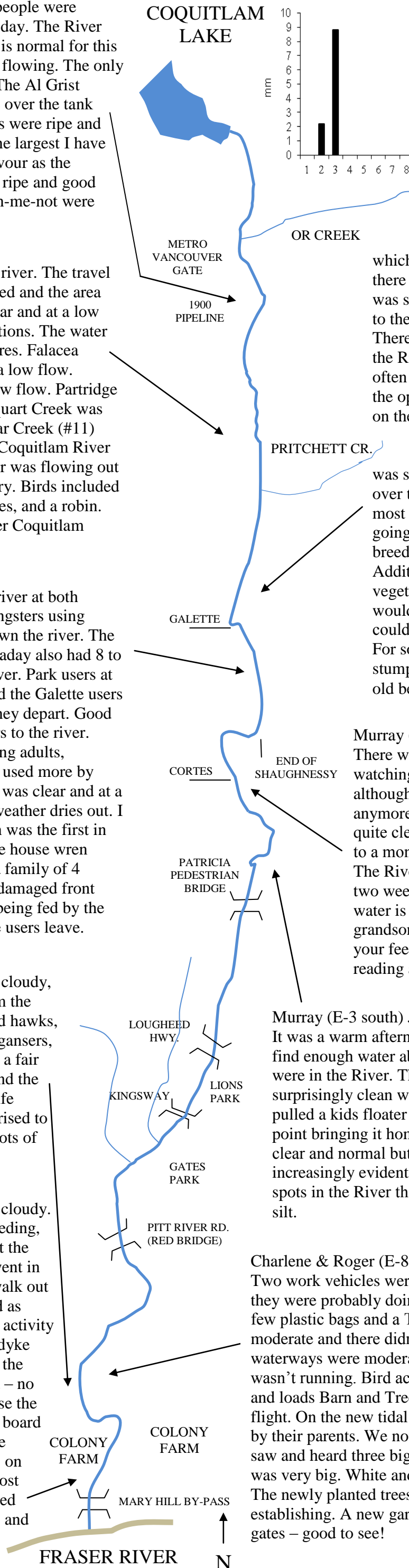
Charlene & Roger (W-8) July 29

The river level was moderate and quite cloudy, although we could see the riverbed from the pedestrian bridge. Bird activity included hawks, sparrow, Barn and Tree Swallows, mergansers, Mallard, and a hummingbird. We spent a fair amount of time around Mundy Creek and the habitat restoration area. The only wildlife visible was one Mallard. We were surprised to see so few birds but hopefully there is lots of wildlife in the area but just out of sight.

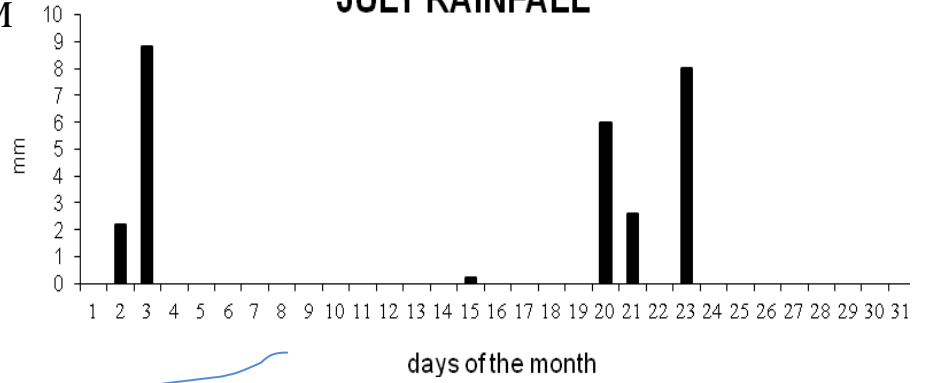
Charlene & Roger (W-9) July 29

The river level was moderate and quite cloudy. Now that the recent high waters are receding, we can see that the slope of the beach at the mouth has decreased. When our dogs went in the river for a drink they were able to walk out quite a ways. All of the logs (often used as benches) have been washed away. Bird activity included hawk, heron and pigeon. The dyke road between the pedestrian bridge and the parking lot has been temporarily closed – no reason given – so park visitors had to use the lower trail. A new dog walker etiquette board and doggy bags have been erected at the head of the lower trail. Park rules (dogs on leash, no fires, no bikes, etc.) signage post also erected. There was also a sign posted at the mouth entrance directing walkers and cyclists to Maquabeak Park.

COQUITLAM LAKE



JULY RAINFALL



Mallee (E-2) July 7

I saw 27 people doing a variety of activities which is quite a few since this is private property and there is a proposed development for this area. This was still far less hikers than last visit, probably due to the time as I wanted to miss the worst of the heat. There was very little garbage. Although the sound of the River moving quite rapidly was refreshing, it was often drowned out by the droning quarry trucks on the opposite side. While all the tiny creeks I crossed on the trail were pristine, the river had an odd tinge to it. I heard lots of birds, but I didn't see any as I was too busy concentrating on where I was stepping. Because of the dry, warm weather over the last couple of days, I expected the trail; the most a-la-natural along the river, to be a little easier going but it still remains a haven for mosquito breeding with puddles and boggy conditions. Additionally, on some parts of the trail, the vegetation closed in on the path where at one point, I would have been mowed down by a biker who couldn't see me, if it hadn't been for my bear bell. For some reason I didn't notice this amazing cedar stump last time. It must have been at least 300 years old before it was chopped down.

Murray (E-3 north) July 17

There were 6 kids in the River and 2 parents watching. It was a great day to be down by the River although no really deep holes for swimming anymore. I picked up a ¼ bag of garbage – really quite clean considering I hadn't been down for close to a month and it's now summertime at the River. The River was clear and quite low but normal after two weeks of little rain. Questionable if enough water is in the River to let me tube down it with the grandson. The River is a great place to go and put your feet in (if you can stand the temperature) while reading a book.

Murray (E-3 south) July 19

It was a warm afternoon along the Reach with a few trying to find enough water above their knees to get cool. Four people were in the River. This end of the Reach was pleasantly surprisingly clean with only a handful of garbage picked up. I pulled a kids floater raft out of the River. It had a hole in it so no point bringing it home for the grandchildren. The River was clear and normal but low. It's this time of year that it becomes increasingly evident that there are fewer and fewer decent deep spots in the River that haven't already filled in with gravel and silt.

Charlene & Roger (E-8) July 29

Two work vehicles were in the Wilson Farm – we were thinking that they were probably doing some fish/wildlife monitoring. There were a few plastic bags and a Tim Horton's coffee cup. The river level was moderate and there didn't seem to be much current. The Wilson Farm waterways were moderate and had lots of lily pads. The pump house wasn't running. Bird activity included Red-tailed Hawk, wren, sparrow and loads Barn and Tree Swallows. The swallows were very active in flight. On the new tidal gates were 4 young Barn Swallows being fed by their parents. We noticed a few piles of bear scat along the dyke. We saw and heard three big frogs just north of the pump house. Vegetation was very big. White and pink sweet pea flowers lined the dyke trail. The newly planted trees and shrubs in the Wilson Farm seem to be establishing. A new garbage can has been erected near the new tidal gates – good to see!

FRASER RIVER

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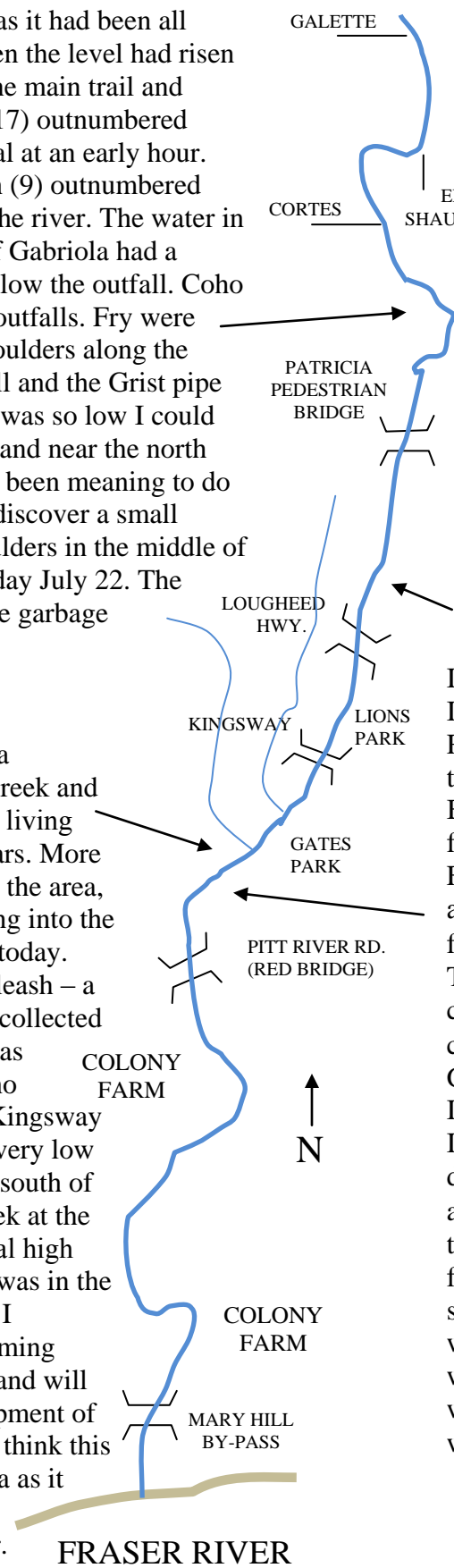
JULY RiverWatcher's REPORTS

Jeff (W-4) July 14

The river was very low and clear, as it had been all month thus far except one day when the level had risen unexpectedly. I walked south on the main trail and returned along the river. Joggers (17) outnumbered walkers (9) and cyclists (4) as usual at an early hour. And, again as usual, dogs off leash (9) outnumbered dogs on leash (2). 3 dogs were in the river. The water in the large outfall at the north end of Gabriola had a soapy cast to it with some foam below the outfall. Coho fry were in the smaller of the two outfalls. Fry were also seen at many places among boulders along the river's edge. The Maple Creek well and the Grist pipe were running well. Since the river was so low I could hop boulders to a small boulder island near the north end of the reach, something I have been meaning to do for a long time. I was horrified to discover a small clump of knotweed among the boulders in the middle of the river. I picked up litter on Sunday July 22. The trail was in good shape, most of the garbage was at the party areas.

Murray (W-6) July 22

The only cyclist was a regular to a homeless camp between Maple Creek and the Wilson power line. He's been living along the river for a couple of years. More activity, which I think is good for the area, as a result of more families moving into the neighbourhood. Lots of dogs out today. Two people had 4 large dogs off leash – a little unnerving to say the least. I collected a ½ bag of garbage. The Reach was quite clean, again mainly due to no homeless camps underneath the Kingsway Bridge. The River was clear and very low measuring .5 metres at the gauge south of the Lougheed Bridge. Maple Creek at the culvert was 1' below the unofficial high water mark. A lot of green slime was in the pond just north of the culvert. As I mentioned above the area is becoming more popular for young families and will continue to grow with the development of Burleigh Walk once completed. I think this will generally be good for the area as it may discourage homeless camps from being set up along the River.



David (E-5) July 31

I saw 39 people along the River and was surprised to see so many people out and about on a Tuesday morning. Lots of people enjoying the coolness of the forest along the river. There was work going on at the Mountain Bike Park near Patricia Ave. The trail was clean and the beach near the Patricia Pedestrian Bridge had a rock fire pit that had been recently used. There was a fair amount of debris around the fire pit. The River was clear and at a low level. People were throwing sticks, for their dog, in the river. It was a quiet day for wildlife with only seeing North-western Crow, American Robin, & Swainson's Thrush. Mountain Ash, False Lily of the Valley and Indian Plum were all in fruit. The forest was still looking green.

Ian (E-7) July 16

I saw 12 in the river & 4 by the river. The River was clear and at a normal level in the upper part of the reach, but at the Red Bridge the River was high and barely flowing. This was due to the freshet in the Fraser River. Maple and Scott Creeks appeared clear, but I couldn't see them flowing. Birds included Swainson's Thrushes, Wood Duck, Great Blue Herons, crows (60 in one flock), Spotted Towhees, chickadees, and robins. I saw an Eastern Grey Squirrel that was in rough shape and I thought it might die right in front of me. It eventually gathered its strength and disappeared into the bushes. I heard frogs and mosquitoes were around. Invasive touch me not and morning glory were flowering. Himalayan blackberry were starting to flower. Hardhack and fireweed were flowering. Some of the salmonberries were still around and the thimbleberries were ripe and delicious. Oregon grapes were out.

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