

COQUITLAM RiverWatch

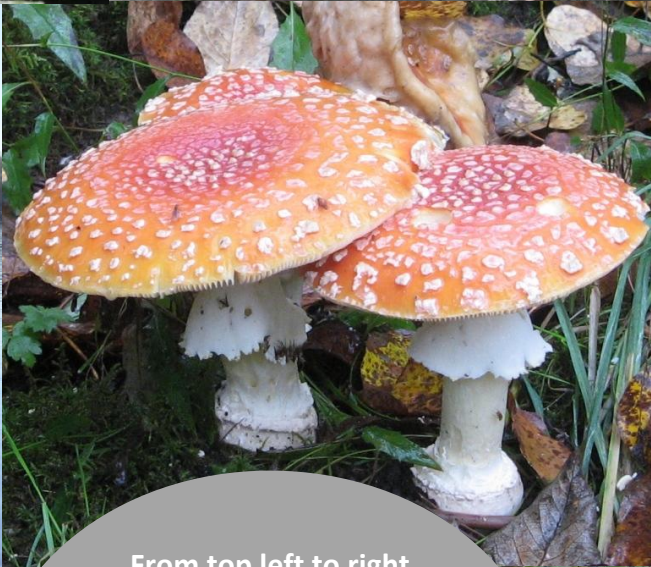
940 Stanton Ave. Coquitlam, B.C., V3J 4V2
imcart@telus.net



NOVEMBER 2012

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 170



From top left to right
Kayakers in W-1 by Ian
River clean up E-7 by Ian
Fisher in W-9 by Mallee
Amanitas in W-4 by Jeff
Beaver tree in W-8 by Charlene
Tires & rims in W-2 by Ian
Trail erosion repair E-5 by David



**HYDE CREEK
SALMON FESTIVAL**
November 18th from 11am to
3pm at the Hyde Creek
Recreation Centre and the Hyde
Creek Education Centre.

OCTOBER RiverWatcher's REPORTS

Ian, Mark, Terry, Roy, Bob, Peter, Anna, & Rachel (W-1) Oct. 20

This was the start of 8 people walking from the Metro Vancouver gate at the north end of Pipeline Road to the confluence of the Coquitlam River and the Fraser River. We saw 4 kayakers going to go from the party beach to the David Pathan Bridge. More garden clippings have been dumped along Pipeline Road. The River was clear and at a high level. Slade Creek was clear and flowing. We saw chickadees and spawning chum salmon.

Ian, & 7 others (W-2) Oct. 20

We saw the returning kayakers in their car so they made it down safely. Someone dumped tires with steel rims along the side of the road. A big dumpster has been placed in Galette Park for no apparent reason. The River was clear and at a high level above the gravel operations and cloudy below. The water level at the Galette gauge was 1.980 metres. There was a lot of wood debris piled up against the Galette gauge rack. It appeared the River was at least 2 feet higher recently. Falacea (Fulawka) Creek (#4) was clear & flowing. Mantle Creek (#6) was cloudy and flowing. Partridge Creek was clear and flowing. Marquart Creek was very silty and flowing well. Goodyear Creek (#11) was silty and flowing. Wildlife we saw included Bald Eagle, raven, gulls, chickadees, and a Douglas squirrel. We also saw hundreds of spawning chum salmon. The side channels in Upper Coquitlam River Park & the Archery Pond were loaded with spawning chum salmon. It was the most I have seen in this area. The main stem of the Coquitlam River also had spawning salmon in it.

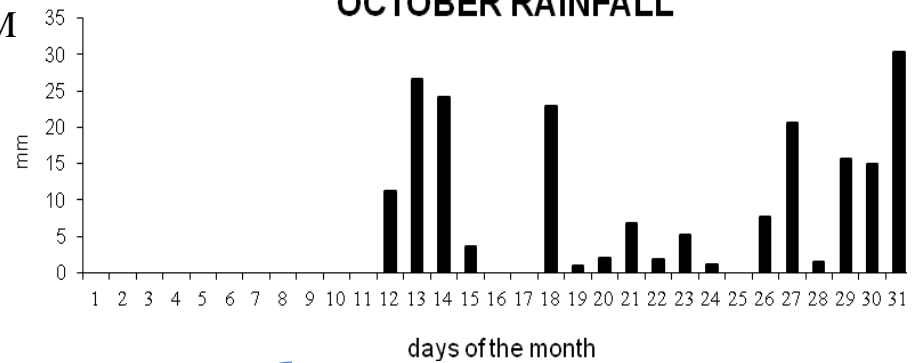
Gord (W-2) Oct. 27

I was assessing redd stranding risk as salmon are forced to utilize marginal spawning habitat by sustained high flows. I estimate that about 50 chum redds are at high risk for de-watering once the flows return to a normal flow. I saw an aggressive female coho, chasing chum and chinook off her redd. The Big Flow Event has resorted and leveled the cobble/gravel substrate of the Upper Coquitlam River Park area, which consists of 2 islands and 3 channels during normal flows. The west channel feeds the Archery Pond enhancement (UCRP). Large woody debris have been added to the log jam at the top of the main island, and a new log jam has appeared where the main island is severed in two by a currently fast flowing channel, containing approximately half of the high risk redds. Tethered logs arranged to deflect flows into the west channel during low flows have been washed into the channel (we will reset them when the flows subside) and are presently harbouring the only coho I identified at this site. About 30% of the redds were only identifiable by the observation of salmon pairs actively spawning due to substrate particle size (primarily cobble). I saw a total of over 200 chum, 5 chinook, and a coho. There was a cockpit of model plane in the bush and an inflatable raft entwined in a new log jam. The River was high and slightly cloudy.

Jeff (W-4) Oct. 15

Following very heavy rain on the 13th and 14th the river rose from very low to extremely high. At midday October 14 there was an almost continuous stream of logs and debris being carried downstream. Trails beside the river were completely submerged and side channels that are only rarely filled were roaring. The Harwood storm sewer outfall which drains a small part of New Horizons had flooded a large area of forest inland from the main trail. On October 15 the weather was cloudy with occasional bright spots so I put on my gumboots and made my way down river. The river had dropped to a medium level, water quality being between murky and cloudy. The extremely high water had made many changes. Cooper Beach which once had a gentle slope now appears to have a sharp drop-off. The side channel just south of the beach was almost completely cleared of the large amount of debris that was in it and the debris dam at its lower end was gone. Salmon can now make their way up this side channel. Beach areas downstream had been scoured and new channels dug. I counted more than 100 salmon, approximately 69 chum carcasses and 2 spring carcasses - beautiful fish. The chum seemed large to me. Some carcasses were in now dry side channels a long ways from the river. The uppermost Large Woody Debris structure down river from Saltspring appeared damaged. A large log, approximately 25 feet long, had been left balanced atop the very large rock by the east bank. Grist Creek was teeming with salmon - I counted 53 in the creek and 9 in the river trying to get up a nasty step into the creek overflow. In general news, Coquitlam has installed 3 interpretive signs on the fence beside Grist Creek. It has been a great month for amanitas. Large specimens of these mushrooms are everywhere along the reach.

OCTOBER RAINFALL



COQUITLAM LAKE



METRO VANCOUVER GATE
1900 PIPELINE

OR CREEK

PRITCHETT CR.

GALETTE

CORTES

PATRICIA PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

LOUGHEED HWY.
KINGSWAY
LIONS PARK

GATES PARK
PITT RIVER RD. (RED BRIDGE)

COLONY FARM

MARY HILL BY-PASS

FRASER RIVER



Gord (E-0) Oct. 17

This was a trip into the restricted area above the hatchery and along Or Creek. I opened the channel at the Upper Pond overflow channel to allow salmon access, investigated the new diversion to supply water to the hatchery back-up water supply (noted that the machine access to the river bank is not secure and is likely to release mud into the intake/river), and hiked up Or Creek to the slide area (about 1 km from the confluence). The creek was dug up this summer to replace the Ponds' inflow pipe, and the area looked secure, despite the high flow (180 cms) on Oct 16. This storm delivered tons and tons of gorgeous spawning gravel material to the river from the steeper creek. There were actually chum spawning here and they were as far as the slide, where I turned around. The slide is secure (now hidden behind alder saplings), and the creek channel is more defined with much less large woody debris than pre-2007. Or Creek was clear and the River above Range Bridge was slightly turbid-no explanation. I saw a total of over 200 chum. Hundreds of chum were observed attempting to swim up the Or Ponds Enhancement inflow pipe.

Dave (W-3) Oct. 15

Two groups of fishermen (7 in total) were at Galette Park and two people at McTavish Park. Two Family groups with chairs and food were at both parks. One of the family groups at Galette had a crayfish that one of the kids had caught. First I have ever seen from this river. At McTavish, a father was teaching his 8 year old son to cast. Quite a performance. The south end of Hockaday is still a mess with the old Spragg fence and litter on the short trail leading to the river. Really too bad. The River was running fast and clear. The walk was before the rain started and changed the river. Wildlife included towhees, juncos, and salmon. The salmon are returning and to my mind they are earlier this year than in the past few years. There are more than in 2011.

David & Myrna (E-5) Oct. 17

A City of Port Coquitlam worker was repairing the trail where it looks like there had been a wash out (adjacent to the works yard). While it was great to see a city worker fixing the trail so quickly after a washout one can only wonder what possible contaminants might have been carried into the river from the works yard. The River was silty and at a high level. It was running very fast. A side channel near the Dog Off Leash Park was quite eroded and may become a full fledged arm of the river. Interesting to see the power of the River and the creation of a new channel. We saw chum salmon.

David & Myrna (E-5) Oct. 27

The River was high, fast & murky. It was moving so swiftly it was impossible to see any fish. 5 Common Mergansers were riding the waves at the beach near the Patricia Pedestrian Bridge. The velocity of the water and the rapids created by submerged rocks didn't faze them at all. We also saw dead chum salmon and an Eastern Grey Squirrel.

Charlene & Roger (W-8) Oct. 22

The River was huge and carried lots of organic debris. There were multiple logs and branches clinging to the riverbanks. Bird activity included hawk, heron, and Hooded Mergansers. We also saw two snakes and multiple salmon - swimming in the river adjacent to Mundy Creek and jumping near the Millennium Bridge. We also saw evidence of beaver activity, multiple trees gnawed down. Lots of people were buying fireworks in anticipation of Halloween. I hope they will be used in accordance with the law. The local mountains had just received a dusting of snow and the autumn leaves were gloriously red, yellow and orange. Workers were building up the trail (with gravel) that runs parallel to Colony Farm Road, as it was flooding.

Mallee (W-9) Oct. 7

A brilliant day brought out many people (87). There were seven fishers at the junction with the Fraser, a couple in a boat, some on shore, and others wading waist deep but none had caught any fish. The trail was clean except for bear poop and the usual area under the bridge and the mouth of the Coquitlam River. I found ashes from a fire that had no stones around it. After the one day of rain a week back, there appeared to be a little more water in the side channels, except the one closest to Mary Hill Bypass. The river was higher than my last visit but that could be because of the in-coming tide. It was a little murky and not very deep peering down from the Millennium Bridge. Birds included Wood Ducks, sparrows, chickadees, and crows. The odd flower was still blooming and I noticed a number of bees hovering over the remaining dandelion. The most amazing sight were wild rose bushes laden down with rosehips. I noticed the beaver has now completely gnawed down the tree I passed in March when I took a photo of it still standing.

OCTOBER RiverWatcher's REPORTS

Carole & Lyn (W-4) Oct 23

The trail was very quiet, with few people out and about. The main sound was that of the water which was flowing strongly. It seemed fairly clear. We could smell the rotting salmon, and saw many, both alive and dead in the Grist Channel, and along the banks of the river. We saw a few birds, Winter Wren, and a couple of eastern squirrels. The trail was very clean, in fact we saw no litter on the trail or river banks, but someone had placed some roofing and building materials next to the garbage receptacle at one of the entrances to the trail near Dunkirk Road. The only other litter we saw was some car tires which were in the bushes near Gabriola Drive in the vicinity of Georgeson and Harwood Avenues.

Gord (W-5) Oct 27

I was assessing redd stranding risk as salmon are forced to utilize marginal spawning habitat by sustained high flows. The last time we experienced a pro-longed big release of water during peak chum spawning was in 2007. This release was approximately twice the present one and chum had spawned in the (then) wetted channel that cuts east/west across the gravel/cobble bar. On this day this channel was dry and exhibited no evidence of previous fish activity. There is one wetted channel that flows north/south and several redds were evident at the north end. The current river bank (west) consists of a heavily redded platform with both an upstream and downstream tail. I estimated 110 high risk redds are visible here. The River was slightly cloudy and at a high level. I saw over 400 chum. I flipped over some carcasses so the birds could enjoy the other eye.

Gord (W-6) Oct 27

The channel that runs parallel to trail and river is currently being utilized by about 30 chum. The gravel platform that extends into the main channel is very heavily populated with spawning chum, similar to 2007. I counted excavations out to about 50 cm of water depth, and came to about 500 high risk redds. The purpose of this assessment is to document/quantify the potential for detrimental effects of big releases on spawning salmon. After 2007, which resulted in the lowest chum fry production figures on record, we were told that the 'seismic upgrade' of the dam would enable BC Hydro to better manage fall inputs into the reservoir. Apparently, to safeguard our salmon stocks, we need to investigate alternative options, such as pulsing the release over several days to mimic natural event flow patterns, rather than a bureaucratically convenient sustained release.

Murray (W-6) Oct. 28

Normally this time of year there would be several fishermen out, but the River was too high. Very little garbage along the Reach – a couple of reasons for this; likely the cleanup organized by Garry Elgear from Riverside Fly and Tackle last weekend and the removal of homeless camps under the Kingsway Bridge. The River was high but reasonably good shape after the heavy rainfall this past couple of weeks. Maple Creek, at the dike culvert was pretty close to the high water mark with the water fairly clear. It was great to see 3 chum in the backwater just north of the culvert although nothing in the creek south of the culvert. There was one person peering into the creek that runs along Kingsway as if there were more chum further up the creek. The River area smelled of dead chum salmon and you could see them in the River although not easy to spot due to the high and cloudy conditions of the River. While the water conditions would be disappointing to the fishermen, maybe it's just as well as there are too many unsportsmanlike fishermen along the River intent on snagging the chum just for the sport of shaving a bit of a fight. I just saw one homeless camp along the River between Maple Creek and the Wilson power line.

GALETTE

CORTES

END OF SHAUGHNESSY

PATRICIA PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

LOUGHEED HWY.

KINGSWAY

LIONS PARK

GATES PARK

Ian (E-7) Oct. 21

PITT RIVER RD. (RED BRIDGE)

COLONY FARM

COLONY FARM

MARY HILL BY-PASS

FRASER RIVER



People were setting off fireworks. This is not a great time for this as the salmon are returning. The River was cloudy and at a high level. Maple and Scott Creeks appeared clear and flowing. Birds included Belted Kingfisher, Wood Ducks, Mallard, kinglets, chickadees, and gulls. Salmon were splashing around near the mouth of Scott Creek. This is the time of year when the kinglets move from high on the tree tops to foraging for food closer to the ground where we can see them more frequently. It is always disappointing to see summer come to an end, but the fall colours light up the forest.

Charlene & Roger (W-9) Oct. 22

The River was huge and carried lots of organic debris. We couldn't see past the surface of the water. There was no beach exposed at the mouth at all. Lots of garbage, particularly food and drink containers, at the mouth (fishermen??) and under the bypass overpass. We filled up two bags of garbage! There was also a shirt, jacket, and blanket at the mouth. Bird activity included hawk, heron, Bufflehead and a kingfisher.

Newsletter editor
 Ian McArthur
 (604-939-4039)
 Email: imcart@telus.net