

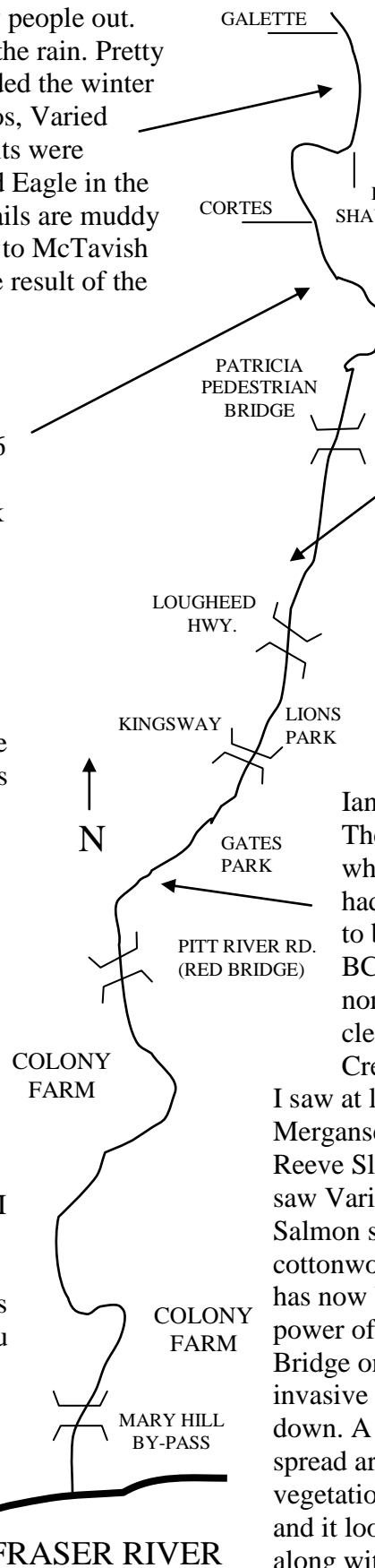
DECEMBER RiverWatcher's REPORTS

Dave (W-3) Dec. 31

It was very wet and muddy and very few people out. The River was high and cloudy after all the rain. Pretty normal for this time of year. Birds included the winter residents like towhees, chickadees, juncos, Varied Thrushes, and crows. Flickers and bushtits were around as well. There has been one Bald Eagle in the area for approximately 2 months. The trails are muddy and wet. The riverside trail from Galette to McTavish has puddles and lots of new sand. All the result of the rain and high water.

Jeff (W-4) Dec. 4

The river had been very high and muddy for roughly the week of November 21-26 and then dropped to a low level between November 27 and 29. This month's walk was on a clear crisp cold early winter morning. The river was low and clear. The beach on the Cooper property and the area immediately south of the Gabriola outfall had been scoured by the high water. Where last month I had counted 167 salmon carcasses on half the reach, today there were only 24 carcasses and 14 skeletons on the entire reach. Grist Creek had many small fish which I assumed were fry but they didn't seem big enough for this stage of their development. The trees were almost all bare allowing good views of the river from the trail. A dipper was flying from rock to rock in the river singing between hops. A merganser flew upstream as I approached and there were 3 gulls and several crows. Sandy areas along the river were covered with animal tracks. I noticed many areas of iron leachate that I couldn't recall seeing before. Litter pickup was on December 9, collecting garbage around the Gabriola outfall. This outfall drains much of Westwood Plateau and brings a lot of garbage to the River. A plastic cooler had washed up during the high water which I filled to approximately 80% with plastic bags, plastic strapping, beer cans, candy wrappers and miscellaneous items.



Jeff (W-5) Dec. 4

After walking Reach W-4 to the Patricia footbridge I continued south to the Lougheed Bridge. This reach sees much less traffic than W-4, only 5 walkers and 3 dogs this day. 3 of the walkers were gathering branches for Christmas decorations. The River was clear and at a low level. The gauge north of Kingsway read 0.15. With the river so low I made my way downstream along the edge much of the way, returning along the trail. Garbage spotted included a metal bed spring and a large tarp in the river, a concentration of junk beside the river closer to Lougheed that had been there a long time and may have been a camp at one time, and lots of stuff under the Lougheed Bridge, including a bicycle, that was almost definitely a camp. The trail was reasonable clear of small litter. I counted 22 salmon carcasses and 5 skeletons.

Ian (E-7) Dec. 30

The weather started to shower & get windy while I was out. I talked to 3 fishermen that had not caught or seen any fish. There appears to be an active homeless camp near the large BC Hydro towers. There was another one just north of the sandy beach area. The River was clear and at a normal level. Maple and Scott Creeks appeared clear and flowing.

I saw at least 40 Wood Ducks, 4 Hooded Mergansers, 27 Mallards, and 2 Buffleheads in Reeve Slough. Throughout the rest of the reach I saw Varied Thrush, chickadees, gull, and a crow. Salmon skeletons were in a few areas. The cottonwood tree that fell across the River last year has now been pushed partly downstream by the power of the winter flows. An area near the Red Bridge on the paved PoCo Trail has been cleared of invasive vegetation and some alders have been cut down. A thick layer of wood chips have been spread around on the ground to prevent the vegetation from coming back. Plant pots were left and it looks like conifers are going to be planted along with some other native species.

COQUITLAM RiverWatch

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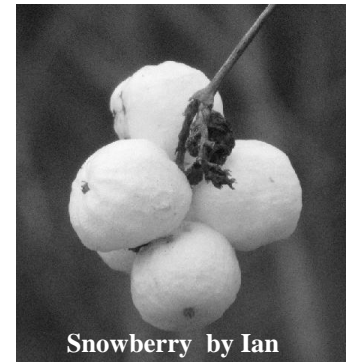
JANUARY 2012

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 160

MYSTERY BERRIES By Terry Taylor (edited from BC Nature article)

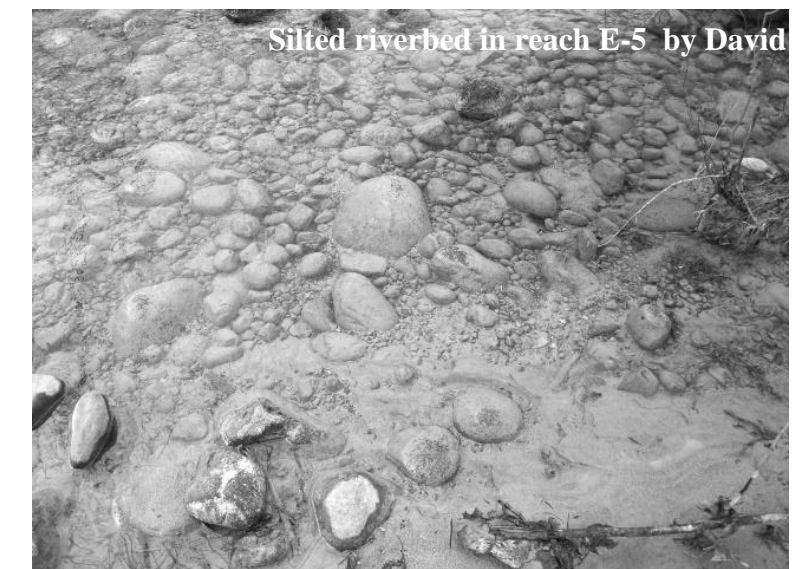
Berries are one of the mechanisms used by plants to disseminate their seeds. They usually use birds as their principal disseminators, and are, therefore, colorful, sweet, and juicy. One of our berries, however, violates all three of these generalizations. This is the snowberry. Its berries are so different from those of our other native shrubs. Snowberries are white, tasteless and dry. Since they are slightly poisonous it is not advisable to use the taste test. These berries are produced in dense little clusters, and cling to the leafless branches right through the winter. They can be spotted easily against the dark forest background. One reason they do not readily decay is due to the lack of sugars. Snowberries do not appear to be very nutritious. Berries that are not eaten by autumn are often mouldy, and I do not recall seeing moldy snowberries. This berry is so anomalous it must be doing something different from other berries. It must also be doing something right, because snowberry bushes are certainly not rare. So what is it doing? There lies the mystery. It appears to be adapted to a wintertime regime, and it has been suggested that snowberries take advantage of the time of year when food resources are sparse. If these berries are indeed used as emergency food during the winter, then they should be greedily gobbled up before spring arrives. There are some reported observations of birds eating snowberries during the winter, but birds do not seem to relish them. This shrub possibly produces this type of fruit to take advantage of an opportunity not available to other berry producing species. The bright white colour of snowberries, and the fact that they grow in densely-packed clusters may also give a clue to what strategies are involved. Just the right appearance to stand out on a dark dreary day, a moonlit night. They also are more readily seen at night when small rodents are active. Have white berries evolved to be seen and eaten at night? Not only are the berry clusters easily seen under low light conditions, but fallen white berries are more easily seen on the dark forest floor. Not only do birds have a rough time during winter, but mice do as well. We see the forest birds, because birds are active during the day. Mice are active at night; we are very unaware of how many of them there are, and what they are doing. Are snowberries mainly rodent berries, not bird berries?



Snowberry by Ian



Cleared area near Red Bridge in reach E-7 by Ian



Silted riverbed in reach E-5 by David

DECEMBER RiverWatcher's REPORTS

Ian (W-1) Dec. 31

I saw a fisherman that was very excited about catching & releasing his first steelhead after many trips to the River. He showed me a photo and it looked to be about 24 inches long. The River was clear and at a normal level. Slade Creek was clear and flowing. Birds included Bald Eagles (2 mature and 1 immature), 2 American Dippers, and a flock of about 30 Bushtits darting around. The Bald Eagles were beautiful to see perched high in a tree and flying along the River. The dippers were spotted with one of them singing its heart out. I saw 5 spawning salmon (probably coho) in Slade Creek with one having red colouring on its side. The salmon in Slade Creek have to go through a culvert under Pipeline Road, so they are real fighters. I also saw one in the Coquitlam River. I did not expect to see any spawning salmon, but this must be the last of this year's run.

Ian (W-2) Dec. 31

The River was clear above and below the gravel operations. It was a normal level for this time of year at both. The water level at the Gallette gauge was .765 metres. Falacea (Fulawka) Creek (#4) was clear & flowing. Mantle Creek (#6) was clear and flowing. Partridge Creek was clear and flowing. Marquart Creek was cloudy and flowing very well. Goodyear Creek (#11) was clear and flowing. Wildlife included 3 Bald Eagles, gull, 5 Golden-crowned Kinglets, Spotted Towhee, 10 chickadees, and an Eastern grey squirrel. There was a strong smell of rotting fish in Upper Coquitlam River Park. There were many salmon carcasses around the UCRP Pond. Most of the flesh was gone and some had only the skeleton left. 3 people on motorbikes and 1 on an ATV were riding around on the paved northern part of UCRP. The people in the house beside Bedrock Granite were having a large fire in their backyard.

Mallee (W-5) Dec. 3

Someone had left a tied up plastic bag full of garbage. I also saw an electronic device that someone had pulled apart and dumped the metal pieces and wiring in the middle of the path near Lougheed Highway. The river was clear and at a normal level. It was moving swiftly even after several days without rain. Birds included chickadees, crows, gulls, and an immature Bald Eagle. It looked like motor bikers were riding the trail as there were lots of tire tracks

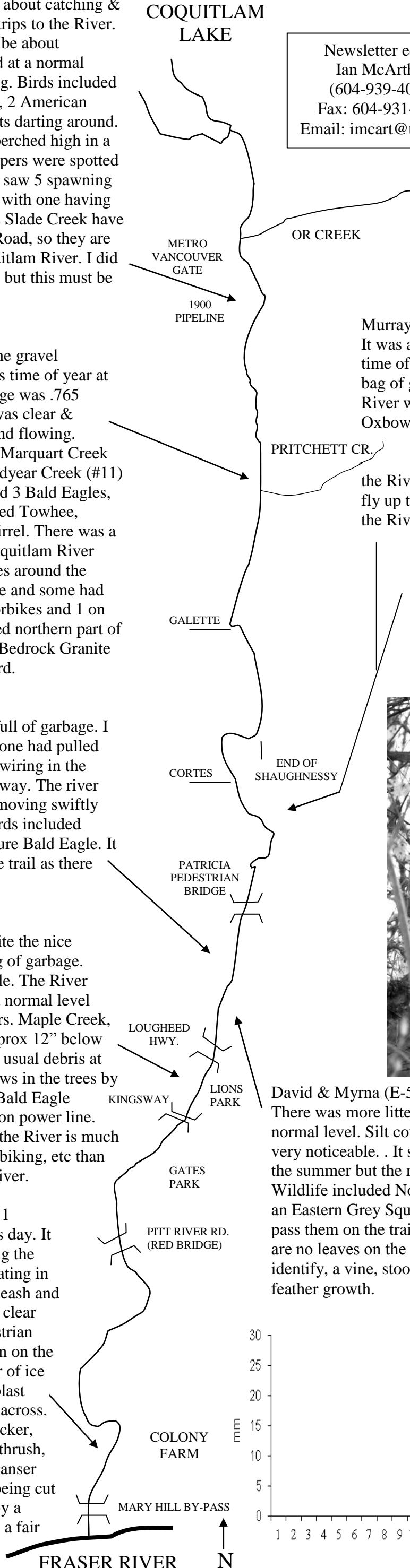
Murray (W-6) Dec. 21

It was quite quiet along the Reach despite the nice weather. I collected about a 1/3 of a bag of garbage. There was other garbage but unreachable. The River looked great. Nice and clear and a good normal level flow. The Lougheed gauge read 2 meters. Maple Creek, at the dike, looked stagnant and was approx 12" below the unofficial high point. There was the usual debris at the culvert. There were hundreds of crows in the trees by the River near Lions Park. A beautiful Bald Eagle was in a tree by the river near the Wilson power line. As I mentioned previously, this side of the River is much less attractive for recreational walking, biking, etc than the PoCo Trail on the east side of the River.

Charlene & Roger (W-8 & W-9) Dec. 11

It was very busy at Colony Farm on this day. It was nice to see people out and enjoying the park. There were about 70 people recreating in the reach on this day. 12 dogs were on leash and 5 were off leash. The river was running clear and at a moderate level. From the pedestrian bridge, we could see lots of dead salmon on the riverbed. Water in the dykes had a layer of ice on top. Some little kids were having a blast throwing rocks on it to watch them roll across. Bird activity included Pileated Woodpecker, Bald Eagle, Black-capped Chickadees, thrush, gulls, Mallard, heron, Bufflehead, merganser and towhee. The grass/vegetation was being cut right down on either side of the dykes by a Metro Vancouver employee. There was a fair amount of litter along W-9.

COQUITLAM LAKE



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Salmon skeleton by Ian

Murray (E-3) north Dec. 17

It was a much nicer walk than walking the malls this time of year. The reach was clean – collected about ¼ bag of garbage – but it should be this time of year. The River was clear and slightly higher than normal. The Oxbow Side Channel was flowing good although I thought there was a little more water escaping from the sediment pond back into the River than what was normal. I saw a Bald Eagle fly up the River and just one small bird on the rocks in the River – don't know what it was.

Murray (E-3) south Dec. 18

I collected about ¼ bag of garbage. The River was crystal clear this morning and about the same normal level as yesterday despite some rain overnight. I didn't see or hear any wildlife.

Unknown vine in reach E-5 by David



David & Myrna (E-5) Dec. 31

There was more litter than usual. The River was clear and at a normal level. Silt covering the rocks on the bottom of the River was very noticeable. It seemed that a lot of the silt had washed away in the summer but the recent rain events have obviously brought more. Wildlife included Northwestern crow, Black-capped Chickadee and an Eastern Grey Squirrel. People always seem cheerful when you pass them on the trail. Snowberry berries noticeable now that there are no leaves on the trees. One plant that I haven't been able to identify, a vine, stood out because its seedpods were surrounded by feather growth.

DECEMBER RAINFALL

