

COQUITLAM RiverWatch

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NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 189

FISH KILL

Rain fell on the afternoon of Sunday May 18. The water level in the outfall at the north end of Gabriola Drive, which drains much of Westwood Plateau, rose very quickly. Much garbage was brought down and the water quality was toxic. Water from the outfall backed up into the small side channel which connects to the low end of the outfall. I found 35 dead and dying coho fry in the side channel. The event happened very quickly - rain started at approximately 2:30pm, at 3:15 the outfall was roaring and at 5:00pm the level had dropped to what it was before the rain and the fish were dead.



American Dipper nest with at least 4 young by Per



Mother Wood Duck with 4 young in E-4 by Mystery



3 non-native fish (Pumpkinseed fish??) caught in trap in Grist Channel in W-4 by Jeff



Beaver in E-4 by Mystery

Daily Water Quality Checks *by Jeff*

I checked the river every morning this month. The river was high 3 mornings, medium 6 mornings, low 9 mornings and very low 13 mornings. The river was silty on the 4th, 9th and 26th, and cloudy on the 5th and 29th the level being medium or high these mornings, cloudy and low on the 23rd and clear the other mornings.

New support for dyke slippage in W-9 by Charlene



MAY RiverWatchers' REPORTS

Ian (W-1) May 29

The River was clear and at a normal level. Slade Creek was clear and had a normal flow. Birds included Red-breasted Sapsucker, Spotted Sandpiper, Swainson's Thrush, American Dipper, and robins. I saw fry in River. Bird songs filled the forest and sounded very soothing. Plants flowering included goat's beard, false Lily of the Valley, foamflower, bunchberry, large-leaved avens, Herb Roberts, Siberian Miner's lettuce, thimbleberry, and Dame's rocket. Oak ferns were carpeting the forest floor. Someone had spent sometime at the party beach and left the plastic covering of wire they had stripped.

Ian (W-2) May 29

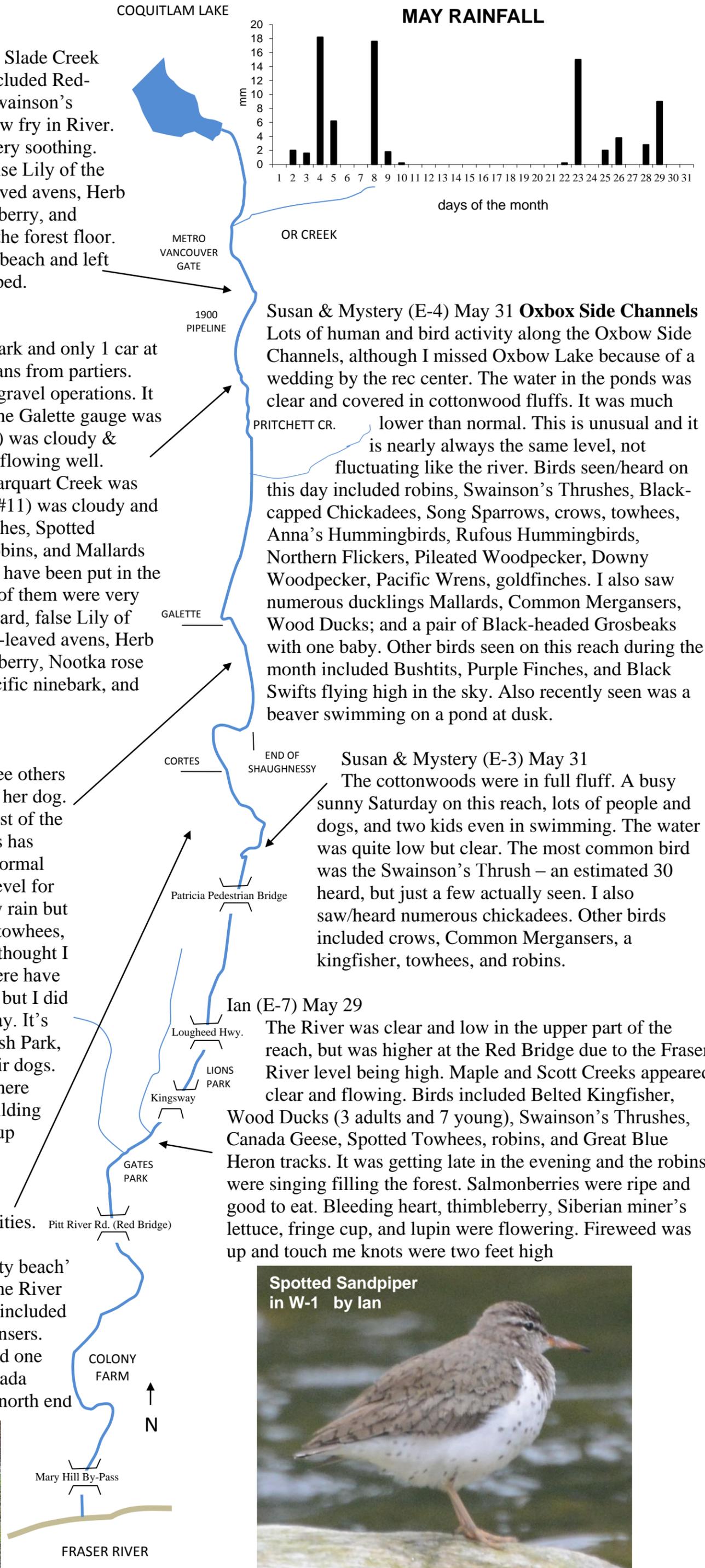
There were 5 cars at the remote airplane park and only 1 car at the remote car park. There were piles of cans from parties. The River was clear above and below the gravel operations. It was at a normal level. The water level at the Galette gauge was .700 metres. Falacea (Fulawka) Creek (#4) was cloudy & flowing. Mantle Creek (#6) was clear and flowing well. Partridge Creek was clear and flowing. Marquart Creek was cloudy & flowing well. Goodyear Creek (#11) was cloudy and flowing. Birds included Swainson's Thrushes, Spotted Towhees, Common Mergansers, crows, robins, and Mallards (3 adults and 2 young). Rotating fish traps have been put in the River. Salmonberries were ripe and some of them were very sweet. Plants flowering included goat's beard, false Lily of the Valley, foamflower, bunchberry, large-leaved avens, Herb Roberts, Siberian Miner's lettuce, thimbleberry, Nootka rose (wonderful smell), trailing blackberry, Pacific ninebark, and Dame's rocket.

Dave (W-3) May 9

Two people were on the river trail and three others at McTavish Park and one lady exercising her dog. Parks and trail have been litter free for most of the spring. The south end of Hockaday always has some litter. The River was clear and at a normal level. The water has been at a consistent level for several months. Always rises after a heavy rain but returns to normal quickly. Birds included towhees, juncos, hummingbirds, gulls and crows. I thought I heard a kingfisher but couldn't spot it. There have been a lot less squirrels than in past years, but I did see one on this day. It was a fairly quiet day. It's usual now that there are people at McTavish Park, either sitting by the river or exercising their dogs. Park usage at McTavish has been good. There was some construction debris from the building site at McTavish. It should all be cleaned up once the job is done.

Lyn & Carole (W-4) May 22

We saw 14 people doing a variety of activities. There was one plastic grocery bag full of garbage that was mostly found on the 'party beach' just north of Patricia Pedestrian Bridge. The River was clear and the level was normal. Birds included one pair of Mallards plus 2 pairs of mergansers. They were all on the river. We only walked one way, a quarter of which was on Trans Canada Trail. Wild honeysuckle was in bloom on north end of the reach.



Susan & Mystery (E-4) May 31 **Oxbox Side Channels**

Lots of human and bird activity along the Oxbox Side Channels, although I missed Oxbox Lake because of a wedding by the rec center. The water in the ponds was clear and covered in cottonwood fluffs. It was much lower than normal. This is unusual and it is nearly always the same level, not fluctuating like the river. Birds seen/heard on this day included robins, Swainson's Thrushes, Black-capped Chickadees, Song Sparrows, crows, towhees, Anna's Hummingbirds, Rufous Hummingbirds, Northern Flickers, Pileated Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Pacific Wrens, goldfinches. I also saw numerous ducklings Mallards, Common Mergansers, Wood Ducks; and a pair of Black-headed Grosbeaks with one baby. Other birds seen on this reach during the month included Bushtits, Purple Finches, and Black Swifts flying high in the sky. Also recently seen was a beaver swimming on a pond at dusk.

Susan & Mystery (E-3) May 31

The cottonwoods were in full fluff. A busy sunny Saturday on this reach, lots of people and dogs, and two kids even in swimming. The water was quite low but clear. The most common bird was the Swainson's Thrush – an estimated 30 heard, but just a few actually seen. I also saw/heard numerous chickadees. Other birds included crows, Common Mergansers, a kingfisher, towhees, and robins.

Ian (E-7) May 29

The River was clear and low in the upper part of the reach, but was higher at the Red Bridge due to the Fraser River level being high. Maple and Scott Creeks appeared clear and flowing. Birds included Belted Kingfisher, Wood Ducks (3 adults and 7 young), Swainson's Thrushes, Canada Geese, Spotted Towhees, robins, and Great Blue Heron tracks. It was getting late in the evening and the robins were singing filling the forest. Salmonberries were ripe and good to eat. Bleeding heart, thimbleberry, Siberian miner's lettuce, fringe cup, and lupin were flowering. Fireweed was up and touch me knots were two feet high



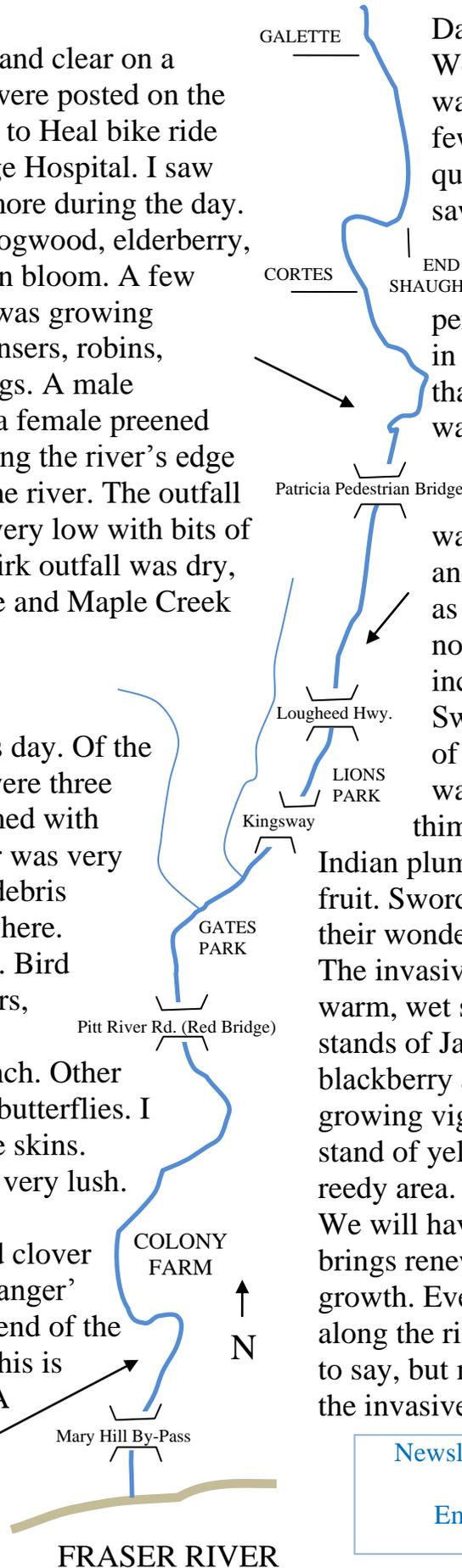
MAY RiverWatches' REPORTS

Jeff (W-4) May 3

The River was at a medium level and clear on a cloudy Saturday morning. Signs were posted on the Trans Canada Trail for the Wheel to Heal bike ride which raises funds for Eagle Ridge Hospital. I saw 21 cyclists but there were many more during the day. Bleeding heart, yellow lamium, dogwood, elderberry, fairybells and salmonberry were in bloom. A few mushrooms were out. Knotweed was growing vigorously. Birds included mergansers, robins, towhee, crows, and many birdsongs. A male merganser was in the river while a female preened herself on a rock. Fry were all along the river's edge and in small pools connected to the river. The outfall at the north end of Gabriola was very low with bits of foam among the pipes. The Dunkirk outfall was dry, Saltspring was flowing, Grist pipe and Maple Creek well were running.

Charlene (W-8 & 9) May 31

The reach was quite active on this day. Of the many people out walking, there were three small groups of bird watchers armed with binoculars and cameras. The river was very high and murky - lots of organic debris floating, especially cotton everywhere. Current was moving quite swiftly. Bird activity included hawk, mergansers, towhee, junco, loads of swallows, chickadees, hummingbird, and finch. Other activity included dragonflies and butterflies. I also saw two intact moulted snake skins. Vegetation was in full bloom and very lush. Lupines, wild roses, buttercup, Dame's rocket, salmonberries and clover blanketed the reaches' edge. A 'danger' sign has been posted at the south end of the Sheep Paddock trail. I think that this is relatively new, but I'm not sure. A lengthy retaining wall has been erected, just southwest of the Kwikwetlem Land, due to dyke slippage.



David & Myrna (E-5) May 25

We managed to get out for a walk between bouts of rain. A few other walkers but pretty quiet. Two of the ten people we saw appeared to be homeless. Dog off leash park was extremely quiet, one person with one dog and no cars in the parking lot. The one dog that was on the trail off leash was very well behaved. Came up to Myrna, sat down and waited for a pat. The trail was clean. The water was clear and very low. We were surprised as we had rain most of the day, not heavy though. Birds included American robin, Swainson's thrush & a number of small birds (probably warblers). Pacific ninebark and thimbleberries were in flower.

Indian plum and salmonberry were in fruit. Swords ferns were noticeable due to their wonderful new, bright green, fronds. The invasive plants also are enjoying the warm, wet spring conditions with healthy stands of Japanese knotweed, Himalayan blackberry and policeman's helmet growing vigorously. Also found a small stand of yellow flag iris growing in a reedy area. Yellow flag can be invasive. We will have to keep an eye on it. Spring brings renewal and astounding, fast growth. Every year the riparian area along the river looks more mature. Sorry to say, but more could be done to control the invasives along the river corridor.

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