

COQUITLAM RiverWatch

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NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 180

CHANGING WATER LEVEL CAN BE DEADLY FOR FISH by Jeff

There was heavy rain during the night of August 29. Judging by debris the river rose dramatically before subsiding quickly by morning. On the morning of August 30 I found 20 dead fry stranded at several places. The side channel just up river from the outfall at the north end of Gabriola must have filled then dropped, as there were two pools with fry. I airlifted 45 fry out of these pools to the river. Three were approximately 6 cm long, the remainder being 3 to 4.5 cm long.

POOR WATER QUALITY FROM WESTWOOD PLATEAU STORM SEWER by Jeff

Water quality in the outfall at the north end of Gabriola was very poor all month, as usual. The worst was on August 14. At 7:45PM, after rain during the day, the outfall was high and very murky with a layer of soapy foam on top. The murk spread across the river, the river being murky for approximately three-quarters its width by two hundred yards below the outfall.

UPDATE ON THE COOPER PROPERTY by Jeff

Falling of trees on the Cooper property, 1388 Gabriola Drive, just south of David Avenue, began on August 9 and was essentially complete by the end of the month. There were many trees on this portion of the property that will be developed, all cut down. It is a tragedy that a forested area such as this was, in an area with the population density of Town Centre, close to the Coquitlam River, which had escaped development, should be clear cut for the construction of 35 houses. The cut is obvious from the river, the sky being very bright to the west through the strip of trees between the area to be developed and the river. I counted rings on 24 of the larger trees (70cm to 1m diameter waist height). Two trees were approximately 200 years old, 3 were 150-160 years, 7 were 105-115 years, 11 were 88-98 years and 1 was 63 years old.



Trees cut down and branches removed in W-9 by Charlene



Wildlife enhancement area in Upper Coquitlam River Park in W-2 by Ian

Daily Water Quality Checks by Jeff

The river was very low and clear every morning this month except August 28 when the river was very low and a murky brown, August 29 very low and cloudy, and August 30 when the river was low and cloudy.

AUGUST RiverWatchers' REPORTS

Ian (W-1) Aug. 28

Someone has move a lot of rocks to create sandy pools near the party beach. The heavy flows this fall will move the gravel around and fill in the pools. It looks like the Slade Creek culvert that goes under Pipeline Road is going to be replaced. Hopefully this will allow easier fish movement through the culvert. Construction work is in progress at the Al Grist Memorial Hatchery. The hatchery has a blue security fence around part of it. Four large cedar logs were lying on the side of the road near the hatchery. Touch me nots were still flowering. The River was clear and at a low level. Slade Creek was clear and at a low level.

Ian (W-2) Aug. 28

The River was clear above and below the gravel operations. It was at a low level. The water level at the Galette gauge was .560 metres. Falacea (Fulawka) Creek (#4) was clear & a low flow. Mantle Creek (#6) was clear and a low flow. Partridge Creek was clear and a low flow. Marquart Creek was almost clear and flowing well. Goodyear Creek (#11) was cloudy and a low flow. Water from the River was flowing into the recently enhanced area north of the Archery Pond. Water was also flowing out of the Archery Pond. Another bridge was removed in Upper Coquitlam River Park. I don't know why this would have been done and it is certainly going to hurt the number of people visiting the park. Birds included ducks, Pileated Woodpecker, chickadees, and a crow. There were fry in Archery Pond and I heard a frog.

Dave (W-3) Aug. 22

2 people were at Galette Park and 5 at McTavish Park. They were either wading in the river or sitting by the bank. There are rarely any on leash dogs. There were more Douglas squirrels this year and fewer of the Eastern Grey Squirrels. Lots of evidence of bears. They have been seen throughout the area but no one seems all that concerned. McTavish and Galette Parks have been getting a lot of use but have been kept remarkably litter free. It was also good to see the water clear and the levels higher than expected. Some of the vegetation along the McTavish/Galette trail has been damaged, probably by kids. It happens frequently when the trail gets more use.

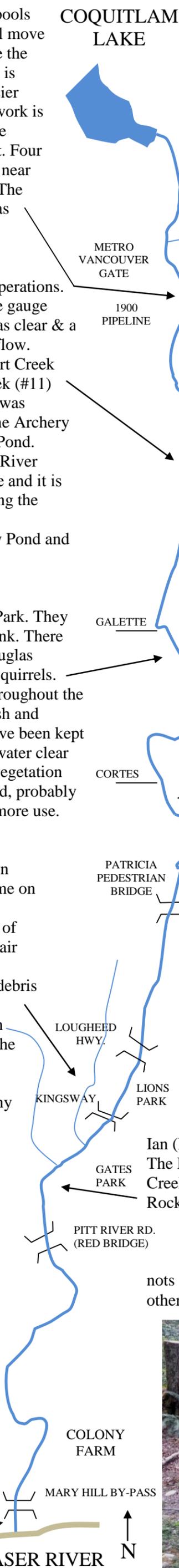
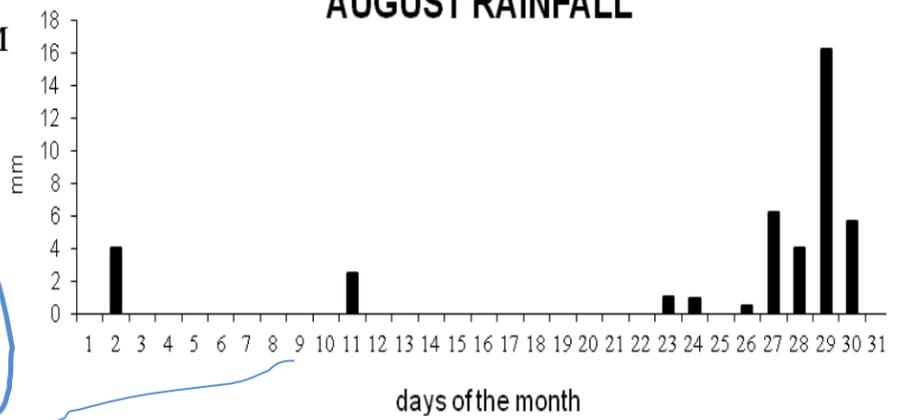
Brandon (W-6) Aug. 9

Lots of people were on the east bank sitting in lawn chairs. One group had some Tiki torch type of flame on the rocky beach, but it didn't create much of a fire hazard. Lots of dog scat. Surprisingly low amount of empty beer cans or other waste left by the lawn chair river enjoyers, they must be cleaning up after themselves, or someone is anyway. Large woody debris piles are still intact. All leafy bushes and trees are wilting. The River was pretty clear and low, which is typical of this season. I saw about 50 crows on the island just downstream of Kingsway Bridge. The fishermen I saw said they caught and released two small rainbow trout. I also saw a garter snake, many water striders and a few mosquitoes.

Charlene (W-9) Aug. 31

Two people were fishing at the mouth. First time at this location for them and although they hadn't caught anything yet, they were very excited to be there. The River was low to medium level. The Fraser River was low enough to enabled me to see more of the remains of the trees' branches that had been illegally cut at the mouth, were removed. Bird activity included 3 hawks, lots of Mallards, kingfisher, loads of swallows, Pileated Woodpecker, Anna's Hummingbird, gulls and Northern Flicker. I also saw loads of big dragonflies, two snakes and many squirrels. Much of the riparian area vegetation, along the slough areas, had been removed and the slough itself had been dredged, which really opened the area up. Although Metro Vancouver has stated that they undergo this process every year, the Kwikwetlem First Nations spoke out against it in the local paper.

AUGUST RAINFALL



Susan (E-4) Aug. 26 **Oxbow Side Channels**

What a dry summer! The blackberries are small and shriveled, and even the fatter ones aren't very sweet. The pond levels were much lower than usual, exposing many more beaver-felled logs. With the forest being so dry, I thought about how important beavers are to dam up ponds and give adequate water for plants around their edges. My sight of the day on this reach was two young Belted Kingfishers chasing each other, swooping and rattling around the dead trees in the pond. I was lucky to not encounter a bear today on my walk, but we have seen numerous bears on this reach in the past month. The side channels were clear and at a low level. Birds included Black-capped Chickadees, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Mallards, towhees, kingfishers, Bushtits, and a Downy Woodpecker. There were lots of salmon fry in the ponds.

Mallee (E-3) Aug. 23

There were a number of children (and a dog) wading in the River with nets, or lifting rocks to construct dams near the Patricia Pedestrian Bridge. Few people were about until I was near the bridge. Considering the little amount of rain over the past month, the River was still flowing steadily and crystal clear. I didn't see one bird during my walk although I could hear a few. Some of the undergrowth looked tired probably from lack of rain and there's definitely signs of fall on the way with lots of maple and alder leaves along the path. Disturbingly, several large trees had been chopped down along the path even though they appeared to look healthy.

Susan (E-3) Aug. 26

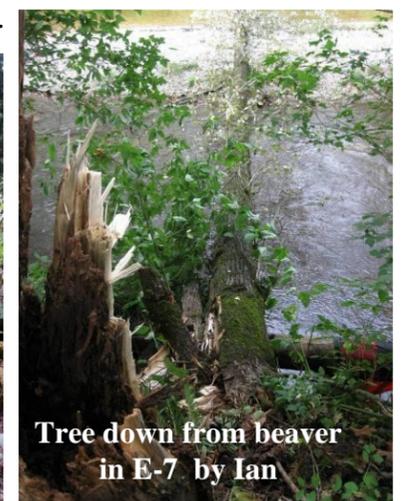
The River was clear and the level was very low. The forest was very dry and dusty, even crispy. Many leaves have fallen already, especially big leaf maple. Lots of young trees and shrubs have died, and many ferns and false lily-of-the-valley are limp. The highlight today was a little field mouse scampering back and forth across the path. It allowed me to get within about a meter before scurrying off into the ferns. Otherwise, it was a very quiet day along this reach. Birds included Black-capped Chickadees, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and a crow.

Murray (E-3 south) Aug. 30

I picked up a kitchen-sized bag of garbage – mostly beer cans and bottles (last of the summer partying) and some poop bags. The Reach otherwise was fairly clean considering it's been over a month since I was last down. The River continues to look good.

Ian (E-7) Aug. 30

The River was clear and a little higher than normal. Maple and Scott Creeks appeared clear. Birds included Wood Ducks, Belted Kingfisher, Rock Pigeons, Spotted Towhees, chickadees, and robins. Another tree has come down and is across the River. It had been chewed by a beaver, but was also very rotten. There were quite a few branches on the trail due to the strong winds overnight. Fireweed and touch me nots were flowering. Some of the Himalayan blackberries were ripe while others were moldy. Snowberries were out.



AUGUST RiverWatches' REPORTS

Jeff (W-4) Aug. 5

August being the month when fish are least bothered by people in the river I repeated last August's river wade. The weather was sunny, clear and a pleasant temperature. The river was very low and clear. I made an early start entering the water at Patricia at 7:30AM and wading upstream. The water felt cold initially but soon became pleasant. Depth was typically mid-calf and seldom much over the knee. A kingfisher flew upriver by me soon after I started. I also saw crows, Copper's Hawk, and heard a flicker. A brown scunge on the bottom was common. A weedy plant with pink stems was common in faster water. Many fry were along the river's edge, among boulders and by the Large Woody Debris structures. Some looked particularly large and healthy. They didn't seem perturbed by me, swimming happily a foot or so away as I stood still to watch them. Water striders were common; one spotted being more than 12 feet from the bank. Several boulder pools had been made in the river by beachgoers. The most elaborate was at Dunkirk where a weir had been built extending from both sides of the river leaving a gap of maybe 10 feet in the middle, with a pool as part of the weir on the west side. With the early start, I managed to avoid seeing many people. One fellow reported seeing a bear 5 minutes before. A young fellow at Dunkirk kindly swam out to recover some cans left on rocks in the middle of the river. A 2-seater raft zipped by me. I collected what garbage I could carry and tossed the rest onto the bank to be picked up later. Cans were the most common item with 37 actually in the river. 11 cans were in one spot, a hole among boulders roughly 3 feet deep. Plastic bags (16) and flip-flops (9, all singles) were next. Some other items found were a car muffler, sofa cushion, balls, and a raft paddle. The Large Woody Debris structures are good at catching garbage.



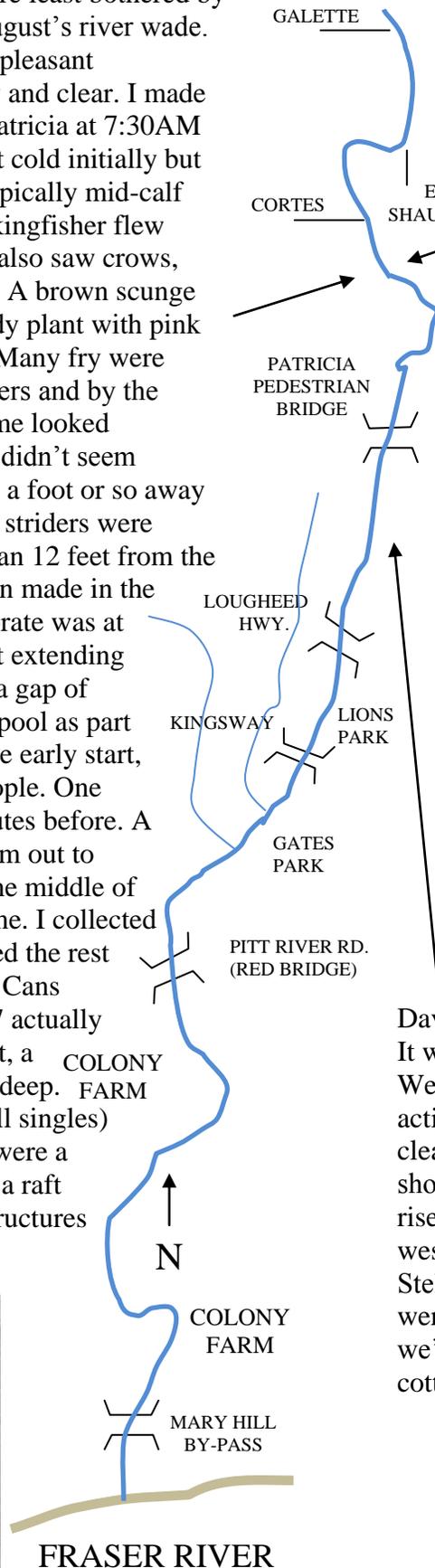
Some of the culverts to be used for Slade Creek in W-1 by Ian

Murray (E-3 north) Aug. 26

I ran into 6-8 people mostly walking their dogs –equal number on and off leashes. I picked up a full kitchen size garbage bag which mostly came from one area near the Oxbow Siphon Pond. Likely the last of the Friday night beer and bonfires for the year. It was mostly beer cans, McDonalds' and Starbuck's cups – what else is new!! Otherwise, the trail was surprisingly clean considering it's likely been a month and a half since I was last along this trail. I didn't get as much done as usual as I was multi-tasking – trying to walk the dog while at the same time picking up garbage. There was a good flow of water from the River into the Oxbow Siphon Pond, but most of it being diverted back out to the River rather than into Oxbow Lake and the side channels. I'm guessing that the strainer in the siphon pond is majorly plugged although there has to be somewhat still running into the lake. The River looked really good – no doubt thanks to Hydro keeping the flow up. Water was nice and clear and I'm looking forward to the start of the fishing season around the end of September/early October.

David & Myrna (E-5) Aug. 25

It was very busy on a nice Sunday afternoon. We saw 60 people doing a variety of activities. The trail was clean. The River was clear and still very low. Even with the rain showers we've had, the river level hasn't risen significantly. Birds included North-western Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Steller's Jay, and Northern Flicker. The trees were looking a little better with the moisture we've had throughout August although many cottonwood leaves were coming down.



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