

COQUITLAM RiverWatch

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NEWSLETTER

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR *from Murray*

I'm constantly reminded, especially on a morning like March 25, how lucky we are to have a beautiful watershed so close to where we live. It's unfortunate that the politicians and the bureaucrats fail to protect areas such as this from industry and further development. As long as these people continue to address the increasing operating costs, namely public sector wages and benefits, through short-term measures such as development fees, we can expect to see continuing encroachment on pristine areas like Burke Mountain, Colony Farm Park, DeBoville Slough and the Coquitlam River Watershed. One of these days, there will be nothing left to develop nor will we have adequately protected these wonderful areas that will in the meantime continue to attract more and more residents as a result of their inability to afford other recreational endeavours. However, this will not be a concern of the current group of politicians or bureaucrats who will continue to address short term issues in order to stay re-elected or employed with gold-plated benefits. To hell with the future generation or the wildlife.

FINGERLING FESTIVAL

On Saturday, May 5 from 11am – 3 pm: The Port Moody Ecological Society will host its 21st annual Fingerling Festival at their Noons Creek Hatchery and the Port Moody Skating Arena. Coquitlam RiverWatch will attend with our display. Children's singers, Bobs and Lolo, will be back by popular demand. Families will have an opportunity to release young chum salmon into Noons Creek.

BC'S MOST ENDANGERED RIVERS FOR 2012!

Edited from the Outdoor Recreation Council's Press Release
This year marks the 20th annual "most endangered rivers" release from the Outdoor Recreation Council (ORC).

The Coquitlam River is on the list coming in at number nine. The Coquitlam has unfortunately appeared on this list many times - and once again, the major issue continues to revolve around excessive sedimentation, urbanization, but some progress is evident.

The complete list includes: 1. (tied) Sacred Headwaters of Skeena, Nass and Stikine 1. Kokish River; 2. Kitimat; 3. Peace River; 4. Kettle River; 5. Fraser River; 6. Taku River; 7. Elk River; 8. Big Silver Creek; 9. Coquitlam River For details see the ORC's website www.orcbc.ca



Beaver chewed tree in W-4 by Jeff

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Skunk cabbage in
Reach E-8 by Mallee



Bleeding heart and false Lily of the
Valley in Reach E-7 by Ian

MARCH RiverWatcher's REPORTS

Ian (W-1) Mar. 29

I saw one person fishing, but I was unable to get their attention to see if they had caught or seen any fish. The River was clear and a little higher than normal. Slade Creek was clear and flowing well. Birds included Varied Thrushes, robins, and a Steller's Jay.

Ian (W-2) Mar. 29

It was a quiet day at Upper Coquitlam River Park with just one car and one person. The River was clear above the gravel operations and almost clear below. It was a little higher than normal. The water level at the Galette gauge was .750 metres. Falacea (Fulawka) Creek (#4) was clear & flowing. Mantle Creek (#6) was silty and flowing. Partridge Creek was silty and flowing. The source of the silty water was from the culvert. Marquart Creek was cloudy and flowing. A small watercourse near the mouth of Marquart Creek has had a lot of sand come in it. Goodyear Creek (#11) was silty and flowing. Birds included Raven, Varied Thrushes, American Dippers, robins, Northern Flickers, and a Spotted Towhee. The dippers and Varied Thrushes were very vocal. Indian plum was flowering. Some of the salmonberries were also flowering even though their leaves were barely starting to appear.

Jeff (W-4) Mar. 17

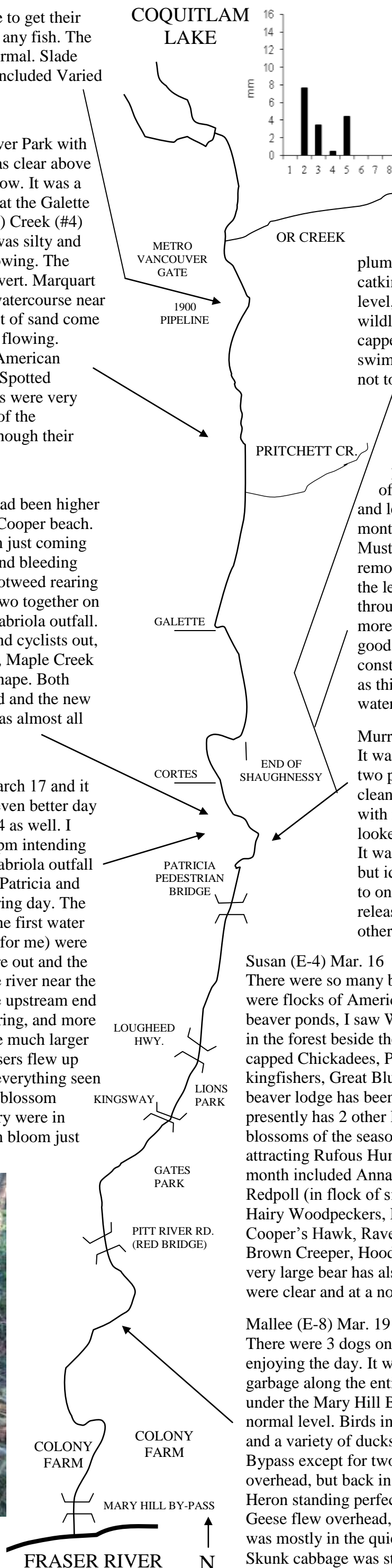
The river was low and clear, although it had been higher recently judging from a line of debris on Cooper beach. Spring was approaching with Indian Plum just coming into blossom, skunk cabbage, horsetails and bleeding hearts poking up, and a few sprouts of knotweed rearing their ugly heads. I spotted three dippers, two together on a rock in the river and one alone by the Gabriola outfall. One fisherman, lots of walkers, joggers and cyclists out, including a group of 13 walkers! Outfalls, Maple Creek well and the Grist pipe were all in good shape. Both bridges on Grist Creek have been replaced and the new fence is coming along. It was a great day as almost all days on the river are.

Jeff (W-4) Mar. 24

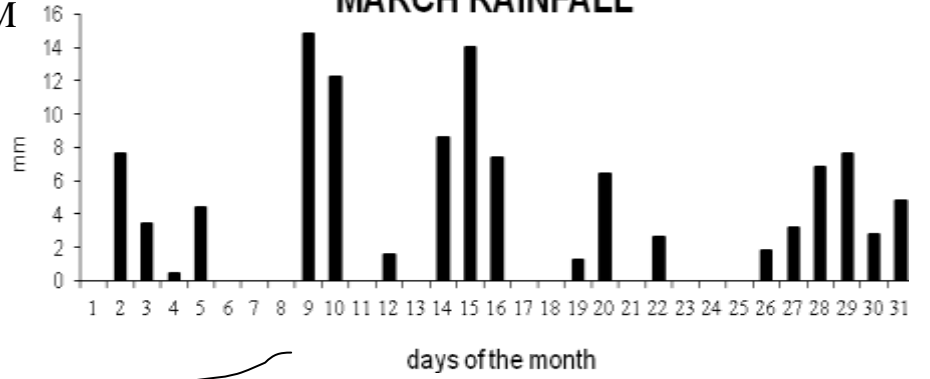
The "official" walk this month was on March 17 and it was a great day, but a week later was an even better day so I thought I would write about March 24 as well. I wandered down to the river at about 3:30pm intending only to check on Cooper beach and the Gabriola outfall and ended up walking the whole reach to Patricia and back. It was a spectacular, warm early spring day. The River had been low and clear all week. The first water striders and whirligig beetles of the year (for me) were zipping around on ponds, mosquitoes were out and the first fry of the year for me – several in the river near the fishing spot south of Dunkirk, more at the upstream end of the island between Dunkirk and Saltspring, and more in Grist Creek. The Grist Creek ones were much larger than those in the river. Two male mergansers flew up river together. Change comes quickly as everything seen last week was well along. Indian Plum in blossom seemed to be everywhere and salmon berry were in bloom. There were even a few crocuses in bloom just downstream of the Gabriola outfall.



Cedar tree with Pileated Woodpecker holes in Reach W-4 by Jeff



MARCH RAINFALL



Susan (E-3) Mar. 16

A beautiful early spring day with the Indian plum leaves and flowers just unfolding, the alder catkins soft and reddish. The river was clear, normal level, and there was virtually no garbage. The only wildlife along this reach was numerous Black-capped Chickadees. Recently I saw a pair of dippers swimming from rock to rock and singing loudly, but not today.

Murray (E-3 north) Mar. 25

Great traffic along this section of the Reach. It was unusually clean even for this part of the Reach not even the normal number of poop bags. The old propane tank I picked up and left by the city's bear-proof garbage container a month ago was still sitting by that same container. Must not be in the City worker's job description to remove it. The River looked great as it was clear and the level was normal. The water being diverted through the Sand Siphon Intake Pond was running more so back into the river although there was still good flow through the Oxbow Channels. I'm constantly reminded, especially on a morning such as this, how lucky we are to have a beautiful watershed so close to where we live.

Murray (E-3 south) Mar. 27

It was generally quite quiet despite a break between two periods of rain. The entire Reach was very clean. I only gathered about an 1/8 bag of garbage with none of the usual poop bags evident. The River looked very good. It was clear and at a normal level. It was slightly higher after the heavy rain yesterday but ideal for fishing. I didn't see any fish but did talk to one young fisherman who had just caught and release a 6 pound steelhead. He was fishing on the other side just south of the mouth of Grist Creek.

Susan (E-4) Mar. 16 **Oxbow Side Channels**

There were so many birds along this reach! On Oxbow Lake, there were flocks of American Wigeons and Mallards. On one of the beaver ponds, I saw Wood Ducks, flock of Varied Thrushes were in the forest beside the pond. I also saw/heard numerous Black-capped Chickadees, Pine Siskins, robins, juncos, Pacific Wrens, kingfishers, Great Blue Herons, and a Song Sparrow. A new beaver lodge has been built on the pond below the one which presently has 2 other lodges. I also saw my first salmonberry blossoms of the season, so these magenta gems will soon be attracting Rufous Hummingbirds. Other birds of note I saw this month included Anna's Hummingbirds, Purple Finch, Common Redpoll (in flock of siskins), Steller's Jays, Fox sparrows, flickers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Downy Woodpeckers, Pileated Woodpecker, Cooper's Hawk, Ravens, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, towhees, Brown Creeper, Hooded Merganser, Golden-crowned Kinglets. A very large bear has also recently been seen by the pond. The ponds were clear and at a normal level.

Mallee (E-8) Mar. 19

There were 3 dogs on leash and 7 off leash. I saw 36 people enjoying the day. It was a pleasant surprise that there was no garbage along the entire trail except for one dog poop and some under the Mary Hill Bypass Bridge. The River was clear and at a normal level. Birds included Great Blue Heron, Canada Geese, and a variety of ducks. I didn't see any wildlife near the Mary Hill Bypass except for two robins perhaps due to the noise of the traffic overhead, but back in one of the side canals, I spotted a Great Blue Heron standing perfectly still, waiting for lunch. Three Canada Geese flew overhead, along with two crows and a variety of ducks was mostly in the quieter canals off the Home Farm Dyke trail. Skunk cabbage was starting to sprout close to the riverbank.

MARCH RiverWatcher's REPORTS

Murray (W-6) Mar. 24

It was relatively quiet for a lovely sunny Saturday morning. It was relatively clean for an area that hasn't always been noted for its cleanliness especially around the McAllister Pedestrian Bridge and underneath the Kingsway Bridge. While there remains an active homeless shelter just north of the Maple Creek culvert, everything is clear right now under the bridge. Still seems to be a lot of fallen tree debris on one of the gravel bars just south of the McAllister Pedestrian Bridge. The River was clear and at a normal level. It looked really good and measured about 1.5 meters at the gauge just south of the Lougheed Bridge. Maple Creek at the dike culvert was clear with some minor debris caught at the grate. The Creek measured about 1' below the high water mark. One of the fishermen I saw said a couple of fish had been caught below the bridge earlier that morning but you know how fishermen tend to exaggerate.

Ian (E-7) Mar. 26

The River was almost clear and at a normal level. Maple and Scott Creeks were clear and flowing. Birds included Wood Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Gadwall, Red-winged Blackbirds, Mallards, Song Sparrow, & Varied Thrushes. I was surprised to see an American mink making its way along the steep bank of the River. When it saw me it quickly retreated. Indian plum was flowering. Plants that were just starting to come out include bleeding heart, Lily of the valley, salmonberry, and stinging nettle. There is an active homeless camp by the large power poles that is complete with a canoe. Sword ferns have been planted in the area beside the paved PoCo Trail that has been cleared of invasive plants and covered with wood chips.

Charlene (W-8 & 9) Mar. 31

The River was high and cloudy. Bird activity included chickadee, geese, gulls, Mallards, heron, sparrow, robins and Northern Flicker. There was little human activity along the reach today – must have been the weather. The birds didn't seem to mind – lots of singing could be heard. The reach was looking so green. Buds were forming on the trees. Bleeding heart and blue bells were flowering.

David (E-5) Mar. 31,

It was quiet at Lions Park and the Skate Park. The Dog Off Leash Park was also very quiet (not usually the case). Coincidentally we saw 2 dogs off leash within 100 feet of the Off Leash Park. Although the parks were not busy, I was surprised to see 15 people out in the rain. The River was at its normal level but you could see signs that it had been higher in the last day. The water had started to get cloudy as it started to rain a couple of hours before. Birds included Northwestern Crow, Varied Thrush, Dark-eyed Junco, Glaucous-winged Gull, American Robin, Winter Wren and a pair of Common Mergansers flying, swiftly, upstream. Spring is always a favourite time of the year. It is special to watch nature unfold, something new and bright every day. On this day I saw Indian plum, Skunk cabbage and Bitter cherry in flower.

Mike (E-8) Mar. 25

It was a very busy day with lots of people out enjoying a walk or ride. The Indian-plum and skunk cabbage were blooming nicely. The three cottonwoods that had fallen across the dyke in the Kwikwetlem Colony Farm entrance dyke in the previous month had been cleared. Bird activity is definitely elevating. Some birds we saw included Buffleheads, Wood Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Great Blue Heron, Red-winged Blackbirds, Red-tailed Hawks, Bald Eagles, Ring-necked Pheasant (calls), and Tree Swallows. The reptiles were out with the sun as we saw a rather large Western Garter Snake near the footbridge and possibly a painted turtle basking on a log in the slough adjacent to the Kwikwetlem dyke. It was a very active day as the weather started to improve and we saw 79 people doing a variety of activities. The water in the river was clear and at a normal level. The perimeter channel in the northern Wilson Farm area of Colony Farm was (still) silty due to the recent rehabilitation work in the area (similar to previous month). There were recent signs of moles & beaver.

