

COQUITLAM RiverWatch

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OCTOBER 2013

NEWSLETTER

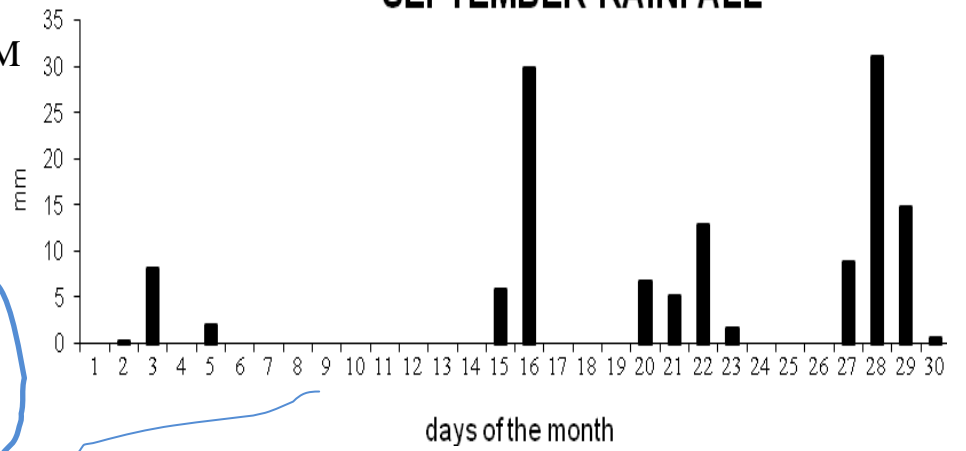
NUMBER 181



Photos clockwise from top left.
Road put in to remove homeless camps in E-7
Beaver dam with beaver box in E-4
Sculpin was stranded and then rescued in W-4
Wasp nest (not active) in E-5

SEPTEMBER RiverWatchers' REPORTS

SEPTEMBER RAINFALL



Ian (W-1) Sept. 30

The River was clear and at a normal to high level. Slade Creek was clear and flowing well. There were lots of salmon and half eaten carcasses. I think the spawning salmon in the River were probably pinks. A new culvert for Slade Creek was installed and some work was done on the downstream side of the culvert. Logs were put in and notches were cut out to allow fish to get from the River up to the culvert and then through the culvert to rearing habitat and a spawning area. Adult salmon have made it up to and through the culvert in the past, but only when the River has been extremely high. I hope this work will be successful.

Gord (W-2) Sept 26

The River was clear and at a normal level. There are 7 plots of streamside Japanese knotweed between Partridge and Pritchett creeks. Although all seven plots were treated multiple times this year, there were still 500 new stems to be pulled. The river looked gorgeous, with about 200 Pinks in this stretch, a single Bald Eagle overhead, a kingfisher, and a couple dippers chasing each other. No Policeman's Helmet was observed at the Lower Overland Pond. Above Partridge Creek is the park, home of the Archery Pond enhancement, now expanded with a new pond, intake and connecting channel. There were 6 Pinks actively spawning in each of the two ponds, and a filming crew mucking about. Invasives are prevalent in the park and the disturbed soil around the new pond has flowering Policeman's Helmet all along the western edge. The City of Coquitlam is sending in a crew to plant native species so a culling of the bordering invasives is in order. Hopefully the Youth Sector of the Watershed Roundtable will act in concert with the city crew. I have waders available for any interested in getting 'in there'. Along the east bank of the river, across from the park, I treated 4 small patches of knotweed, which likely originated from cuttings from an upstream source. In the river, I counted another 800 or so Pinks, about 90 with bright orange disc tags. A few were spawning. I saw 3 Chinook and 1 Coho as well. Finally, on the way home, I opened up the channel that runs parallel to the mainstream by removing the woody debris that had been caught between the large entrance boulders. There are a couple party sites, with plastics etc, in among the braids. After the adult salmon have spawned they are known as kelts and I saw 4 of them. The females have laid all their eggs and appear particularly thin. The male fish are tired out from fighting with other males to make sure they spawn with the best females. Some kelts are able to make it back out to sea, where they will begin to feed and grow strong again. If they are very lucky they may be able to survive long enough to make it back to their river again to spawn. Scientists estimate that only around 5% of kelts that make it back to sea, and survive, are able to make it back to spawn in our rivers!

Charlene & Roger (W-8 & W-9) Sept. 29

The community gardens were quiet. There were no parked cars in the parking lot when we arrived and three upon our departure. A gravel walkway has been created through the grass field on the south side of the gardens and some infrastructure is being built on the southwest corner for real washrooms. Yay!! The River was choppy and flowing very quickly. Lots of debris, including big logs, were washed up on the foreshore. The beach at the mouth of the Coquitlam River had lots of washed up wood, cans, and plastic bottles. A large amount of "scum" was moving down the river and collecting to the beach at the mouth. Upstream, at the Millennium Bridge, the scum was more diffuse. From the bridge, we could see that the water was opaque and full of tumbling debris both big and small. Bird activity included a Cooper's Hawk, many chickadees near Mundy Creek, towhee, and loads of gulls. Unlike on this same date last year when I saw multiple salmon, we didn't see any today. Maybe they couldn't be detected due to the stormy waters? We didn't "see" any activity in the habitat restoration area between the Sheep Paddock Trail and the Lougheed Highway, which was unusual.

COQUITLAM LAKE

METRO VANCOUVER GATE

1900 PIPELINE

OR CREEK

PRITCHETT CR.

GALETTE

CORTES

END OF SHAUGHNESSY

PATRICIA PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

LOUGHEED HWY.

KINGSWAY

LIONS PARK

GATES PARK

PITT RIVER RD. (RED BRIDGE)

COLONY FARM

MARY HILL BY-PASS

FRASER RIVER



Susan (E-4) Sept. 30 **Oxbow Side Channels**

The side channels were clear and at a normal level. Birds included chickadees, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Mallards, kingfisher, crows, Glaucous winged Gull, and robins. I also saw a yearling bear and a bobcat. The bobcat was standing right on the path for a few moments, and then ambled into the forest. Lots of Mallards and a gull were on the big pond today in River Springs, pecking at two big orange chunks floating in the water. These turned out to be half a loaf of French bread and half a baguette. I get angry when people feed birds inappropriate foods like that! The beaver lodge had a big hole in it today, well above water level. I wonder if a large predator broke in. The beavers have also started building a new dam on the pond just south of the main beaver pond. It is in a very curious spot, about 30 feet south of the path dividing the ponds, so it is only making a very small area of water a little bit deeper, not feasible for building a lodge. It is also just a few feet above a beaver box. Beavers seldom build dams in these side channels now since the beaver boxes make the water deep enough. I wonder if the adults were simply teaching the young beavers how to build a dam. Birds also seen this month along this reach included Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Song Sparrows, towhees, goldfinches, Anna's Hummingbirds, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpeckers, Bushtits, flicker, Steller's Jays.

Brandon (E-3) Sept. 21

The water level was low to normal, fast moving, and very clear. I saw 2 birds, but I could not identify them. No salmon in this reach yet. I saw 11 dogs off leash and only 2 dogs on leash. When I asked if they knew their dogs were supposed to be leashed, responded that they did know and just didn't care. One even threw a cigarette butt in the river. All vegetation seems green and healthy. The trail itself is clean and free of garbage.

Susan (E-3) Sept. 30

It was raining, so it was very quiet people-wise. The River was clear, at a high level, and was roaring white. Birds included Black-capped Chickadees, Golden crowned Kinglets, kingfishers, and a flicker. A few days ago I saw 5 salmon swimming back and forth under the Patricia Bridge. I assume they were pinks since no chum are yet in the spawning channels.

Jeff (W-4) Sept. 21

The river was very low and clear. The side channel between Dunkirk and Saltspring held water but there was no surface flow in at the top end, all inflow being beneath the boulders. There was much iron leachate along the river's edge. I had seen my first salmon carcass this season on Sept. 15. Today five salmon carcasses were seen, all pinks. Two dippers bobbed and foraged together on the rocky island above Saltspring before flying upstream together. A kingfisher chattered its way upriver. Mushrooms were really starting to appear. Water striders were still present. I saw no salmon from the Patricia Bridge. In the 30 minutes of fading light that it took to return up the Trans Canada Trail, I saw 6 walkers, 4 cyclists, 2 dogs off leash and 1 dog on leash. This struck me as a lot of trail users for the time of day and is evidence of the generally heavy recreational use this stretch of the river receives. Other happenings of the month included seeing two large black bears by the river just below Dunkirk on the morning of September 8. On September 5, the river rose and fell very quickly during the day. In the evening, I found 6 dead coho fry stranded in a stretch of 200 yards of river. A sculpin was also stranded. I don't know how long it had been out of water but it was still breathing and swam quickly away when I put it back in the river. Rain on Sept. 15 caused the outfall at the north end of Gabriola to rise rapidly and the water quality to worsen from its usual poor to horrible. 200 yards downriver from the outfall, the river was stained completely murky for two-thirds its width.

SEPTEMBER RiverWatches' REPORTS

Ian (W-2) Sept. 30

The River was clear above and almost clear below the gravel operations. It was at a normal to high level. The water level at the Galette gauge was 1.05 metres. It was great to see the River flowing so fast and relatively clear. Falacea (Fulawka) Creek (#4) was silty & flowing well. Mantle Creek (#6) was cloudy and flowing well. Partridge Creek was cloudy and flowing well. Marquart Creek was cloudy and flowing well. Goodyear Creek (#11) was very silty and flowing well. There were lots of salmon and half eaten carcasses. I saw spawning salmon in the Archery Pond and the side channels. Due to being out late in the day and the roar of the River, I did not hear or see any wildlife other than the salmon. A film crew had taken over Upper Coquitlam River Park and was shutting down as it was getting dark. A sign showed this was a Stage 43 production called Circus.

Dave (W-3) Sept. 25

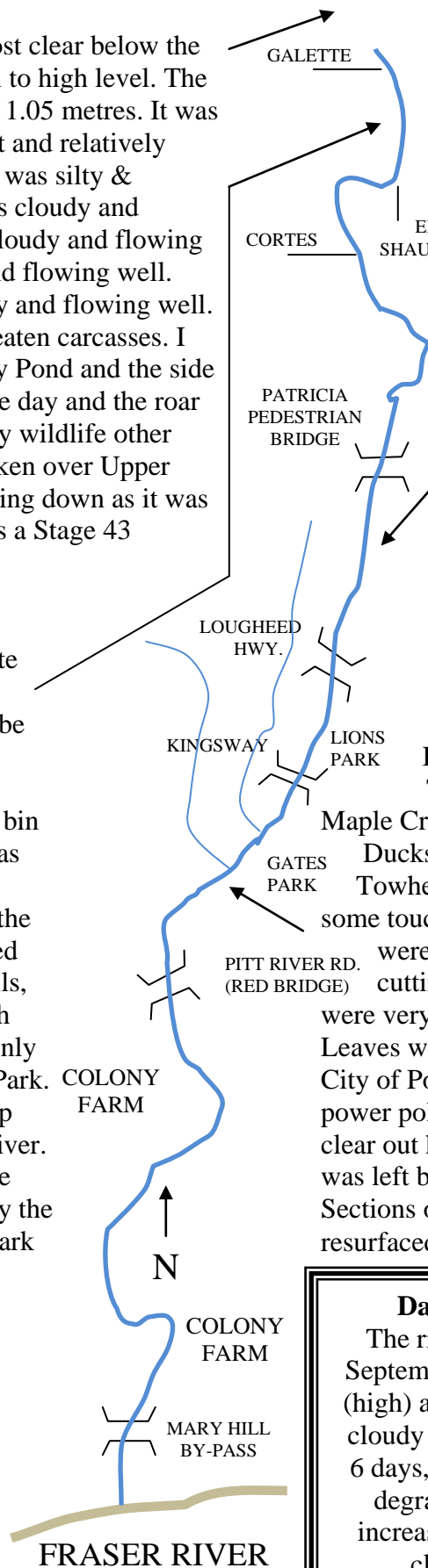
There were three fishermen at Galette Park and two people walking at McTavish Park. Fishermen seem to be the messiest as they discard the packaging from fishing accessories along the riverbank. There is a litter bin within 20 feet of them. The water was running high and clear. It was very picturesque with the white water of the rapids showing nicely. Birds included chickadees, juncos and the usual gulls, robins and crows. There were no fish visible at Galette Park and we saw only one close to the shore at McTavish Park. It was a beautiful day, clear and crisp with a slight breeze coming up the river. The trees were starting to show some colour and it is quiet enough to enjoy the scenery. The vegetation at Galette Park is filling in nicely. The only real disappointment was the fishing packaging litter at Galette Park.

David & Myrna (E-5) Sept 26

The trail was fairly busy for a weekday. There was a homeless camp in the bush between the trail and the Catholic Church. The dog off Leash Park was very quiet, 2 cars in the parking lot. The trail was quite clean. The River was clear and at a low level. The low water level is a concern as salmon were trying to make their way upstream. Hopefully the rain we are expecting arrives. Birds included Northwestern crow, Northern flickers, and American robins. It was great to see the salmon returning and they were most likely pinks. They were only getting as far as Lougheed Hwy. We also saw a wasp nest, but it didn't appear to be active. There were lots of cottonwood leaves on the ground. There was a nice stand of Japanese Knotweed in flower along the Patricia Walking Bridge path.

Ian (E-7) Sept. 26

The River was low and clear. Scott and Maple Creeks appeared clear. Birds included Wood Ducks, Red-winged Blackbirds, Spotted Towhees, robins, and chickadees. There was still some touch me nots flowering. White snowberries were out. English ivy that was dead from cutting the vines near the base of the trees were very visible on the large cottonwood trees. Leaves were carpeting the trail. I assume it was the City of PoCo who cleared a road near the large power pole towers. This would have been done to clear out homeless camps. A little bit of the garbage was left behind, but most of it was taken away. Sections of the paved PoCo Trail have been resurfaced.



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Daily Water Quality Checks by Jeff
 The river was very low all month except for September 5 (medium), 16-17 (medium), 22-24 (high) and 29-30 (very high). Water quality was cloudy on 8 days, silty on 2 days and murky on 6 days, the river being clear the other days. All degraded water quality occurred following increases in river level except for two days of cloudiness on September 10 and 11.