

BMN Hike Report

Burke Mountain Traverse (September 25, 2010)

by Mark Johnston



Looking from Munro Lake viewpoint down to the lake and across to Golden Ears.

Photo by Alan van der Woerd

Although the first three weeks of September had been unusually wet, we had for our club hike on the 25th a glorious Indian-summer-like day: morning high cloud finally giving way to brilliant sunshine and early autumn warmth. And whether due to the prospect of a sunny day or the convenience of a hike in our collective “backyard,” we had a wonderful turnout: ten of us gathering at the top of Harper Road. Our plan was to organize a car shuttle and begin the hike on Quarry Road, utilizing the Munro Lake, Dennett Connector and South Slope trails to return to our meeting place. As it turned out, two people decided on a somewhat easier day, choosing to begin at Harper Road and aim for Hourglass or perhaps Ted Kay Lake. The rest of us piled into two vehicles and drove over to Quarry Road.

Reaching the Quarry Road trailhead, we climbed out of the vehicles and readied our packs. There was a coolness in the air and a noticeable absence of bugs. Nonetheless, there must have been insects about. Looking up, we noticed two dozen or more black

swifts twittering overhead and silhouetted against the light-gray sky. Our pace up the Munro Lake Trail was slow and steady. But this made it possible for sharp eyes to pick out a number of small, dark-coloured toads on or at the margins of the path. We had our ears attuned for birdcall but heard only the familiar *chip* of the Pacific wren. When we paused for a moment along the trail, the little bird presented itself for us to see.

We stopped first at a viewpoint that had been opened by a past fire but is now mostly overgrown. Here, Don shared with us his vast knowledge of the mountain. He told us about the historical quarry operation down below and its Munro Lake water supply up above. He also had a story or two about Ted Kay, who kept the lake's dam and adjusted its waters' downstream flow. We stopped, too, at a higher viewpoint, just off the main trail, which overlooks the Minnekhada marshes. But we decided our lunch stop would be the relatively "new" Munro Lake viewpoint - the open rock bluff high above the now shrunken lake's westernmost pond - with its panoramic view of mountains and lowland.

By the time we reached the pond, we were enjoying unfiltered sunshine and this would last the rest of the day. We worked our way around the isolated little body of water and took note of the beginnings of fall colour. The climb up to the Dennett Lake area was moderately challenging due to a couple of tricky creek crossings and the usual boot-swallowing mud underfoot. Upon reaching the viewpoint, any adversity was soon forgotten. We ate our lunch slowly, soaked up the sun's warming rays, and savoured the eye-filling view. We could look down at the various lobes of Munro Lake; across to Golden Ears, Robie Reid, and Judge Howay; and out over much of the Fraser Valley, from the Cascades to the delta.

**The reunited hikers
at Ted Kay Lake.**

Photo by Ian McArthur

Eventually
awaking from our
reverie, we headed
on to Dennett Lake
and further
challenges. The
lake was higher
than I had ever seen
it, making it
difficult to negotiate
its shoreline. What
is usually an easy



stroll along the waterline became a minor bushwhack through the fringe's thick vegetation. Picking our way carefully, we made for the western edge and managed to

find flagging tape marking the Dennett Connector route. Although this steep route hasn't been maintained, once on it we discovered it to be well-flagged and easy to follow.

After one last invigorating climb, we reached the ridge - the high point of our traverse - and made contact with the other party. Then all ten of us enjoyed several minutes' respite at beautiful Ted Kay Lake. Autumn colour here and especially at an adjacent pond was even more intense, the reds in particular contrasting boldly with the hues of water and sky.

Lipstick lichen growing near Lily Pad Lake. Photo by Ian McArthur

On the homeward stretch, we dropped down past Hourglass and Lily Pad Lakes, entranced by the visual and auditory riches of sun-dappled forest and gurgling creek. At Lily Pad Lake we took



note of large patches of lipstick lichen (*Cladonia macilenta*).

For safety's sake, we used the high-water crossing of Coho Creek, but once on the opposite bank took the time to walk down to the lower crossing and look at the falls. Then we followed old logging and skid roads down the mountain. The upper roads - in a 1970s? clearcut - are overgrowing and becoming more trail-like. They are much more enjoyable to walk than in the past.

We got back to our cars at about 5:30 pm, having taken 8½-9 hours for the whole traverse. It had been an enchanting day. As advertised: "stunning views, beautiful forest, . . . gorgeous lakes"; and, as hoped for, all that glorious autumn sunshine!