

BMN HIKE REPORT

Burke South Summit (September 24, 2016)

by Mark Johnston



View near Burke South Summit: "Clouds prevented any distant views." *Ian McArthur photo.*

We had hoped to visit Pika Peak last year, but the day of the attempt was cloudy and there were a few showers. So the group settled for Burke South Summit. Not inclined to give up, we thought we would try again this year. Once again, we had a cloudy day, but according to the forecast, there would be no rain.

Ten of us met at the top of Harper Road at 8:00 am. As we waited for our group to organize, we noticed that there was unusual amount traffic on the road, apparently much of it bound for the BC Seniors Games archery competition at the Port Coquitlam and District Hunting and Fishing Club. But once we were underway, we had the mountain pretty much to ourselves, for we ran into only two other parties: a man walking his dog and a Meetup group of seven.

It had rained quite a bit the day before, so the creeks were running high. We had to use considerable caution in crossing Pritchett Creek and later, Coho Creek. When fording Coho, we used the high water crossing, and even then not everyone succeeded in getting across without soaking a boot.

At the abandoned track-loader, we decided to split into two groups. A group of four would move faster and hopefully make it to Pika Peak. The other group would travel at a more measured pace and content itself with attaining the ridge top or perhaps Burke's south summit.

Veering away from Pritchett Creek canyon, we started along the old logging road toward Coho Creek. At this point, the first group began to pull away, and those of us in the second group lagged behind. The clouds were low, but as we peered ahead, we could still see the height of land, and were hopeful that we might yet obtain some views.

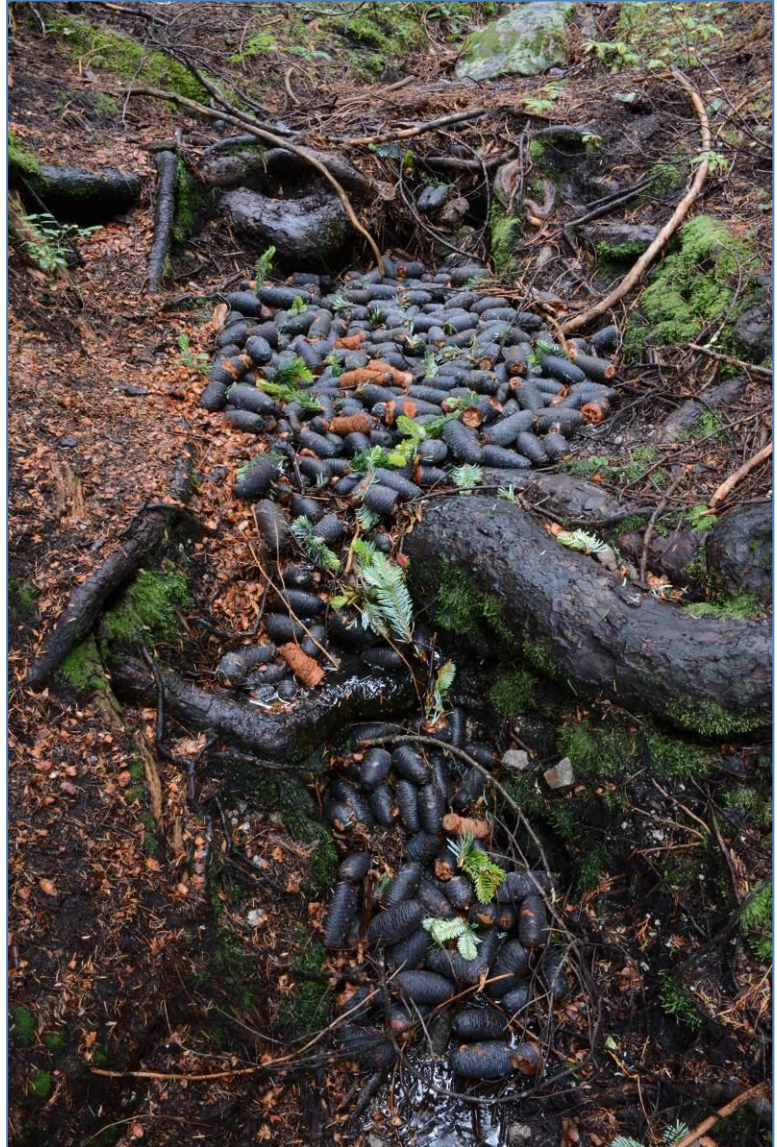
We crossed Coho Creek and entered the old growth. A few of our party were interested to see cones that had been cut down or fallen to the ground. We noticed little piles of amabilis fir cones, some of which were still attached to a bit of branch.

Some of the amabilis fir cones along the trail.
Ian McArthur photo.

These beautiful, deep purple, barrel-shaped cones disintegrate on the tree, unless they have been cut down, as these were. Then, on the far side of Lily Pad Lake, we came across a few western white pinecones. We first spotted the slightly curved, reddish-brown cones on the ground, and then looked up to find the trees. We located two trees, one of which, however, has now died.

When we reached Hourglass Lake, we took a short break. It was near lunchtime, but group consensus was to push a little farther up the mountain to Ted Kay Lake before stopping to eat. We found the next section of trail particularly picturesque. The berry bushes were showing some fall colour, and the half dozen or so little ponds reflected shoreline trees in their calm, still waters.

With only a few more steps until the ridge top, we stepped aside from the trail to claim a rocky pavement overlooking Ted Kay Lake as our picnic site. Our hopes notwithstanding, it was not at all certain that the clouds would lift, so lunching at the lake seemed like the best idea. That way, we weren't sitting at a high point in a bubble of grey, but could look across an expanse of water and so have a sense of depth. Our choice of lunch spot proved fortuitous in another way, too, as we didn't have to contend with bugs, which, we would find, were more plentiful higher up.





One of the many small ponds reflecting shoreline trees in the vicinity of Ted Kay Lake.
Michelle Vanchu-Orosco photo.

After lunch we quickly gained the ridge top and began to make our way along the crest. While the walking was relatively easy, we discovered that, at many points, water had pooled on the trail and we had to step off the path to find drier ground. This sometimes necessitated pushing through scrub trees as well.

Just before arriving at Coquitlam Mountain Overlook (no view today!), we ran into our faster group. The members of this group had reached Burke Summit and decided that it would be pointless to continue to Pika Peak. So they'd had their lunch and were now on their way back, except that they were planning to make a side trip down to Dennett Lake. They suggested that we in the slower group should consider the nearby overlook as our turnaround point. We took their suggestion under advisement, but when we reached the viewpoint, we agreed to continue on for another fifteen minutes before turning back. While clouds prevented any distant views, the ridge top was quite beautiful in its autumn dress. We passed "Infinity Pond" and "Skinny Dip Lake." As we approached a boulder-strewn pond, I recognized that we were only a stone's throw from the summit. So, although we were at the end of our fifteen minutes, I encouraged us to go five minutes' farther. In some ways there was not much point: there were no views. But in other ways it was nice to reach an advertised goal.

Our two groups met up again at Ted Kay Lake, but we didn't stick together. The faster group, which had been waiting at the lake, went ahead, and the slower group, newly arrived at the lake, took a little bit more time. At first we retraced our outward bound route, but when we came to the Coquitlam Lake View Trail – Harper Connector, we chose to hike out to Harper Road and finish by walking the roadway. I don't know that we saved any time by going this way, but, by not having to worry about our footing, we could walk in a more carefree manner. We got back to our cars at about 6:00 pm.

For all concerned, it had been a long, but good day. Someday soon the secret of Burke's many splendours will be out, but for now one may still find solitude among its stately old-growth trees and many placid ponds.