

BMN HIKE REPORT

Burke Summit

August 4, 2012

by Mark Johnston

After a year's hiatus from visiting Burke's heights, we were anxious to return. So, on Saturday of the August long weekend, ten of us set out for Burke Summit.

It was a clear, sunny day, and very hot. In the valley temperatures would reach the low 30s, and we didn't find it much cooler up on the mountain. Thankfully, we did enjoy breezes from time to time.

**Reflections in Ted Kay
Lake on Burke Ridge.
*Ian McArthur photo.***

On the way up we passed by the usual milestones. First, the power line. Next, just beyond the Coquitlam Lake View/South Slope junction, the trailside sawdust pile, which is all that remains of an old mill operation. Finally, after a steep rise, the abandoned track-loader, which seems to settle a little deeper into the forest floor with each passing year.

Continuing along Pritchett Creek gorge, we were happy to find the trail clearer than it's been for years. One of our party, Ian, had recently cut out a long-obstructing mess of deadfall. Meanwhile, the plantation to the left



of the gorge keeps growing apace. As the trees grow taller, former views back toward the lowlands are being lost. But it's nice to see the forest recovering.

Beyond Coho Creek we entered the old-growth forest, and soon thereafter, the lake district, where we spent time admiring each body of water in turn: Lily Pad, Hourglass, Ted Kay. Mosquitoes and especially flies abounded. As we climbed through the forest toward the last of these lakes, we moved through myriads of flies, their wings glinting in the sun. They seemed to be dancing in a kind of Brownian motion.

Just before we reached Ted Kay Lake, we turned aside to a bare rock bluff looking toward Coquitlam Mountain. We weren't intending to stop for long, but as a slight breeze seemed to be keeping the bugs at bay, we decided to stay and have lunch.

After refuelling we carried on to Ted Kay Lake and then to Burke Summit. The trail between the lake and the summit is becoming a bit overgrown, but is still very followable. From the summit area we enjoyed good views toward the Fannin and Britannia ranges, as well as of Coquitlam Mountain and Widgeon Peak. By walking around a bit, we were also able to obtain tree-framed views of the Golden Ears group.

We hadn't noticed much wildlife all day. Maybe it was too hot. But on the way down, we had an encounter we will long remember. Halfway down or so, we crossed Coho Creek and were walking the level stretch toward Pritchett Creek. On this stretch the trail follows an old logging road now being colonized by alder. As we progressed, we flushed a nighthawk, which flew away, low-to-the-ground, and landed on the trail a few metres ahead. It blended in with its surroundings, and those at the back of the group stared for some time before they were able to see it. After everyone had had a good look, we tried to pass by without disturbing it, but as we approached, it flew off again, this time heading upward and veering off into the trees. It was all very exciting! Although I have seen nighthawks in flight many times, only once before have I seen one on the ground. On that occasion three of us had hiked to the top of Mt. Artaban on Gambier Island. I was exploring what seemed to be a continuation of the trail toward the mountain's "backside," when I came across a nighthawk nesting on the ground. I summoned my companions to come have a look, but, interestingly, on that hike also, they took a considerable time before they were able to locate the well-camouflaged bird.

As the day was hastening on, when we came down from the track-loader, we decided to turn left for the main road, rather than right to return the way we had come up. Although a less interesting route, the road is easier underfoot, and after nearly ten hours on the trail, we were happy for any advantage!

For a number in our group, it was their first trip up Burke and a real eye-opener. While mobs flock to the Grouse Grind, Mt. Seymour, and Buntzen Lake, those hiking on Burke find something increasingly precious: solitude. Amazingly, we had covered 20 km of trails and not seen another party all day!