

# BMN HIKE REPORT

## Coquitlam Crunch (Friday, May 20, 2016)

by Mark Johnston



View on the way down the Coquitlam Crunch. Looking southeast across the Fraser River lowlands toward Mt. Baker and the Twin Sisters Range. *Steve Giannopoulos photo.*

Last year, to take advantage of the long days of May/June/July, we offered an evening hike on the lower slopes of Eagle Ridge. The outing was so successful that this year we decided to schedule *two* evening hikes. We held the first of these on Friday of the Victoria Day weekend.

Ten of us met at the Coquitlam Crunch parking lot at 6:00 pm. The sun was shining through a fleet of cumulus clouds. Our plan was to use the Crunch as the backbone of the hike, but to take in a portion of Ridge Park as well.

For the first part of the trek, we headed straight up the Crunch as far as Panorama Drive. For a while we had plenty of company. A couple of years ago, the City of Coquitlam improved the trail by constructing a set of wooden steps where the grade is steepest. Since then, the Crunch has become hugely popular, hence, the crowd. But after we left the steps

behind, the numbers began to thin as well. It seems many users, primarily interested in working out, stick with the steps and never venture any farther up the hill.

When we reached Bramblewood Elementary School, we followed Panorama Drive east to West Hoy Creek. Before we started up the creek, we heard a Swainson's thrush singing. There was no mistaking its beautiful, "breezy, flutelike phrases." At the same time, we could hear, on the other side of the road, a Wilson's warbler vocalizing. The thrush's phrases slid upward, while, in contrast, the warbler's "thin, rapid little chatter" dropped in pitch.

In coming down Panorama we had lost some elevation, but as we hiked up West Hoy Creek, we quickly gained it back. Watching our feet as we walked on uneven ground, we also noticed a fringe of broad-leaved starflower (*Trientalis latifolia*). One of our party commented that starflower seems particularly abundant this year—perhaps due to our sunnier-than-usual spring weather?

We entered Ridge Park and continued to rise, now via a series of long switchbacks. At the western end of each switchback we emerged from the forest onto a power line. The cleared right-of-way afforded us views of the eastern Fraser Valley. Immediately below us was Coquitlam's Town Centre Park; in the middle distance, the Fraser River lowlands; and on the horizon, the Cascade Mountains. Mt. Baker was particularly prominent.

After the last switchback, we crossed West Hoy Creek and came out on Parkway Boulevard. Once again we walked on sidewalks (along Parkway and Salal Crescent) to another section of trail. By means of this trail we crossed Scott Creek and returned to the Crunch. We were now at its highest point.

**White-crowned sparrow.**  
*Steve Giannopoulos photo.*



Our trip down the Crunch was a delight. No longer having to worry about rough ground, with its protruding rocks and roots, we could keep our eyes fixed on the panorama in front of us, which was even more expansive than our views from the switchbacks. We also took the time to identify a number of birds, including northern flicker, song sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, robin, crow, and towhee.

We got back a little later than advertised, but no one seemed to mind. It was such a lovely evening, and some of us lingered a while longer, talking and enjoying the sky's deepening colours.