

BMN TRIP REPORT

Bert Flinn Park and Port Moody's North Shore (Saturday, February 28, 2015)

by Mark Johnston

A nice thing about living in the Tri-City area is that one doesn't really have to leave town to enjoy a walk in the forest or a saunter along a waterway. For our first hike of the year, we stayed home and did both: ascending through the thick second growth of Port Moody's north shore escarpment to our high point in Bert Flinn Park, and then descending along the high banks of West Noons and Noons creeks to the head of the inlet. We had superb weather and a large turnout of 22 hikers!

In bright sunshine, we gathered in front of Old Orchard Hall. After the usual round of introductions, we began our climb up the escarpment. We started up steeply-graded Jacobs Road and, when the asphalt ran out, continued upward on a wide equally-steep track into the forest. We noted a few large Douglas-firs among many of lesser size, and a survey of the lush understory yielded salal, sword fern, and salmonberry—the latter still in its winter bareness. In time, we came to the Twin Creeks subdivision. Here we were happy to stop for a breather while the last of our party finished the climb. We were between the two creeks, Wilkes and Hett. We didn't see Wilkes Creek, which was east of us, but travelling northwest along the edge of the subdivision, we soon came to Hett Creek and crossed it on a long high bridge. On the far side of Hett Creek, we continued through fine second growth, with an understory that includes salal and huckleberry. Looking to our left through relatively open forest, we could glimpse the waters of Moody Inlet below.

Leaving the Hett Creek drainage and approaching the more substantial Mossom Creek, we left the forest for a brief spell at tiny Flavelle Park. Among the park's amenities is a fine wooden viewing platform built around a large Douglas-fir. Standing on the platform, we could look south across the inlet toward Reed Point Marina and Burnaby Mountain. After a sufficient break, we walked along Flavelle Drive to its end and re-entered the forest. We crossed a tributary of Mossom Creek, which was dry, and then walked through an open area thick with salmonberry before coming to the edge of the main creek's deep ravine. Changing direction, we headed northeast along the edge of the ravine until we reached the gas pipeline right-of-way.

Hikers approaching the gas pipeline right-of-way near the wetland area in Bert Flinn Park.
Chloe Tu photo.

Then, turning southeast along the right-of-way, we came within sight of the first of Bert Flinn Park's two small wetlands. This wetland drains in two directions: to the north, into a channel where it runs west to Mossom Creek, and to the south, into Hett Creek. We did not proceed directly toward the wetland, but circled around it through the forest on its south side, and approached it from the east. We walked single file so as not to disturb the fragile vegetation, comprised of such plants as Labrador tea, sundew, gentian, and sphagnum moss.





On the trail, passing through the wetland area in Bert Flinn Park.
Chloe Tu photo.

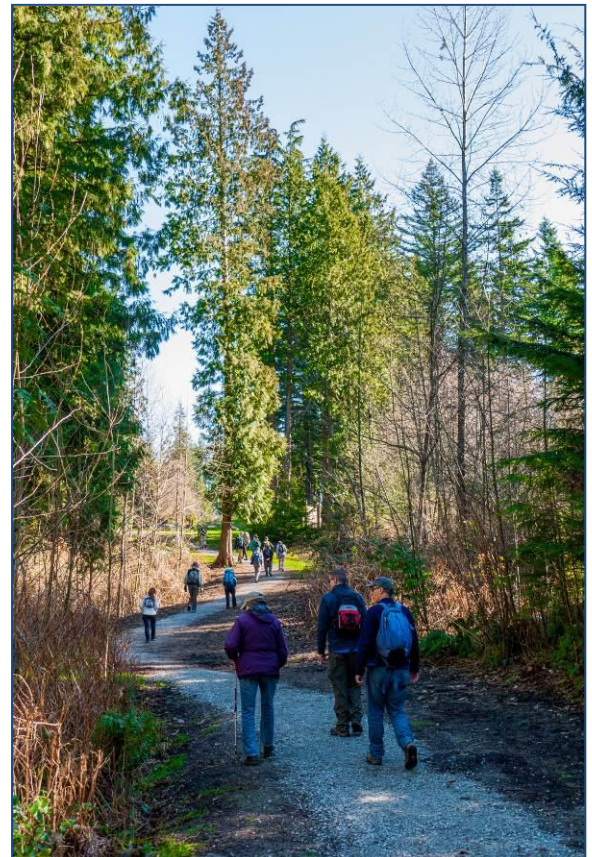
To access the wetland we walked past a moss- and fern-covered glacial erratic, all but hidden beneath overhanging cedar branches. After we had a close-up view of the first wetland, we skirted the second wetland, again keeping to the trees, but this time on the north side. A short while later we came upon a small pond in the newly christened Michael Rosen Park and in a few more steps, spilled out onto Hummingbird Drive near the entrance to Eagle Mountain Middle School. Once again we were obliged to walk surface streets, but only for a short distance, after which we followed a multi-use path to Aspenwood Elementary School and the adjacent community centre where there were washrooms available.

We decided to make Aspenwood our lunch stop. We sat along the bench-like border of the playground, where we could enjoy the full strength of the sun. There had been a lingering chill in the forest and it felt good to be out in the sun, even if we still required a couple of layers of clothing to feel completely comfortable. While we ate, we noticed a glaucous-winged gull flying down low and three bald eagles soaring high above.

Gravel path in Michael Rosen Park, just across the border in Anmore.
Chloe Tu photo.

After lunch we continued east to West Noons Creek and paused on the footbridge just below the Panorama Drive auto bridge. This is tailed frog habitat. Tailed frogs require a flowing stream as well as plentiful boulders on which to attach their eggs. At first, the automobile crossing had depended on a culvert which had been elevated, disturbing the creek's flow. Now the crossing has a proper bridge, and the frog habitat is safeguarded. Although we didn't see any frogs, we did spy a Douglas squirrel perched on a log above the stream. We also took note of a few salmonberry blossoms, a harbinger of spring!

Following our study of the tailed frog habitat, we began our long descent to the inlet. We walked first along West Noons Creek and then, after its confluence with Noons Creek, along the main creek as far as Heritage Mountain Boulevard. As we descended, we walked on the beaten path between the top of the bank on one side and homeowners' backyards on the other. We came across a number of sizeable trees, some of the firs as much as a metre in diameter.





At the foot of Heritage Mountain, we passed through Pioneer Memorial Park. Then, we made our way back to Noons Creek and walked through the hatchery area to the Shoreline Trail. As we came within sight of the inlet, we breathed in the strong scent of salt air. After the long stretch of forest, it was a remarkable change.

**The final leg: along the Shoreline Trail
back to where the hike began at Old Orchard Hall.
*Chloe Tu photo.***

It remained for us to walk the Shoreline Trail back to our beginning point at Old Orchard Hall. Now we mingled with walkers, joggers and not a few dogs as we negotiated our way along this popular path. We got back a bit later than our stated goal, but no one seemed greatly concerned. It had been a lovely day spent in the company of good people. Who could ask for anything more?