

BMN HIKE REPORT

Burke Ridge Five Lakes Loop (Saturday, October 18, 2014)

by Mark Johnston



View from the upper Line Trail, looking out over the Pitt River lowlands. *Ian McArthur photo.*

After a week of rain and with possibly more on the way, we weren't sure whether we should keep to our advertised destination, Burke Summit. But in the end, we decided to strike out for the ridgetop anyway. There were seven of us plus Andrea's dog Jezebel.

We set out along our standard route to the ridgeline: Lower Elevator mountain bike trail, Coquitlam Lake View Trail, Harper-CLVT Connector, South Slope Trail. Our only variation would be using Bean mountain bike trail to cut the corner of the Lake View/Harper Connector junction. An initial concern was the feasibility of crossing Pritchett Creek, which, after all the rain we'd had, would certainly be running high. Whether we continued our upward climb or settled for a different route altogether would depend on the difficulty of the crossing. After twenty minutes on the trail, we came upon the creek. It was tumbling down its bouldery bed and pouring across the trail, but by using utmost care and sometimes with the aid of a helping hand, all of us were able to step from rock to rock and make it safely across. Soon after, we turned onto Bean mountain bike trail. Besides shortening our distance, the use of this trail had a few other advantages. Rather than having to walk along a cobbled logging road, we had a relatively soft footbed. Another bonus was being able to see one of Burke's largest old-growth cedar stumps and imagine the forest as it once was. And then there were the plentiful mushrooms, especially angel's wings and *russula*.

Reaching the Harper-CLVT Connector, we were thankful for a short stretch of level trail. But no sooner had we caught our breath, than we had to steel ourselves to ascend the South Slope Trail. Like the Coquitlam Lake View Trail, this trail also begins as a steep, rocky logging road. But the payoff is access to a beautiful path alongside Pritchett Creek Canyon. Here the creek spills over a number of rock ledges in a series of picturesque cascades. As we hiked along the top of the canyon wall, we paused often to enjoy the rushing water and mark its every drop and eddy.

Our next excitement was crossing Coho Creek. We didn't bother with the summer crossing below Sweat Team Falls but turned aside at the "high-water crossing" a short distance above. At this crossing there are two large rocks—one more or less flat-topped, the other having a bit of a knife-edge—which allow for a dry-foot crossing. Although the distance between rocks is not great, it is perhaps a little further than one would like. Complicating matters on this grey day, the rocks were wet. Even if one were to successfully negotiate the jump, there was the very real possibility of losing purchase and sliding off into the water. Mitigating the danger was the availability of an overhanging branch. By holding onto the branch, one could move from rock to rock with an extra point of support. Once again, everyone made it across without incident. Now we were entirely in old-growth forest and beginning to enter cloud. We came to Lily Pad Lake, its surface dark in colour, with mist caressing the trees around it. The lake is named for the lily pads that usually cover its surface, but on this occasion there were none. We did notice, however, the patch of lipstick lichen growing near the lake that we had seen previously. As we approached the lake, some of us saw a lone varied thrush which was standing in brownish yellow grass near the shore. Although aware of us, it made no effort to fly. As we watched, it hopped along the ground a metre or two and stopped, and then repeated this movement. Its hopping seemed a bit uncoordinated, and we wondered whether it might have suffered injury.

The BMN hikers after pausing for lunch beneath sheltering trees.
Ian McArthur photo.

We were thinking we would take a break at Hourglass Lake, but just before we reached the lake, it began to rain. By the time we had gotten around to the rocks on the eastern side, the rain was sweeping across the water in billowing curtains. We hurried on past the lake—but not so fast as to miss taking stock of a small flock of chickadees—and climbed halfway up to Ted Kay Lake before finding



suitable forest cover for a sheltered lunch. Settled beneath the protecting branches of mountain hemlock and amabilis fir, we ate our food and talked about whether or not we should quit our quest for the summit.

As it didn't appear that we would be having views anytime soon, we decided to continue on to Ted Kay Lake and then loop back via the Burke Ridge Trail. Somewhere not far away, a Steller's jay squawked, whether in approval or disapproval it was hard to say.

On our way to Ted Kay Lake, we turned aside to a rock bluff from which one has a view of Coquitlam Mountain. There was no view today, but we did find another patch of lipstick lichen, which seems to be fairly common along this section of trail. A few minutes later we left the trail on the opposite side to access a rocky shelf above the lake, ordinarily a nice spot from which to view and maybe photograph it. But, again, not today. In fact, we could barely see the lake, cloud obscuring all but the portion of its surface near the shore.

We circled round the lake and soon gained the Burke Ridge Trail. This trail proved to be exceedingly wet and in places was a virtual stream. We had to exercise special care on the steep stony parts, and even then one or two of us slipped and fell. We passed between Twin Lakes, neither lake being very visible in the rain and mist. But as we approached Burke Village, the rain began to let up and when we reached the site of the old ski lodge, it had stopped. Over the course of a lengthy nutrition break, there was sufficient clearing such that we were able to see a number of lowland features.

View from the site of the old ski lodge, looking toward Eagle Ridge.
Ian McArthur photo.

Our further descent was via Harper Road, Triple Crown mountain bike trail, and Line Trail, although again we used other bike trails to cut the corner where the Line Trail makes its final bend. On the upper part of the Line Trail, which is beneath the power lines, we had good views to the east and south, the sun slanting down and illuminating various landmarks such as little Mt. Burke and the Minnekhada Regional Park area.



As we drove back home, I wondered whether we might have given up on the summit too soon. But looking back at Burke Ridge from the vantage point of the Loughheed Highway, we could see that the clouds still hung on the ridgetop; we had been right in assessing that we wouldn't have had any views. But views or not, we'd had an enjoyable walk through magnificent old growth, past mist-shrouded lakes, and with the sounds of water everywhere—rain falling on leaves, streams wending their way through every conceivable depression, falls tumbling and reverberating between canyon walls.