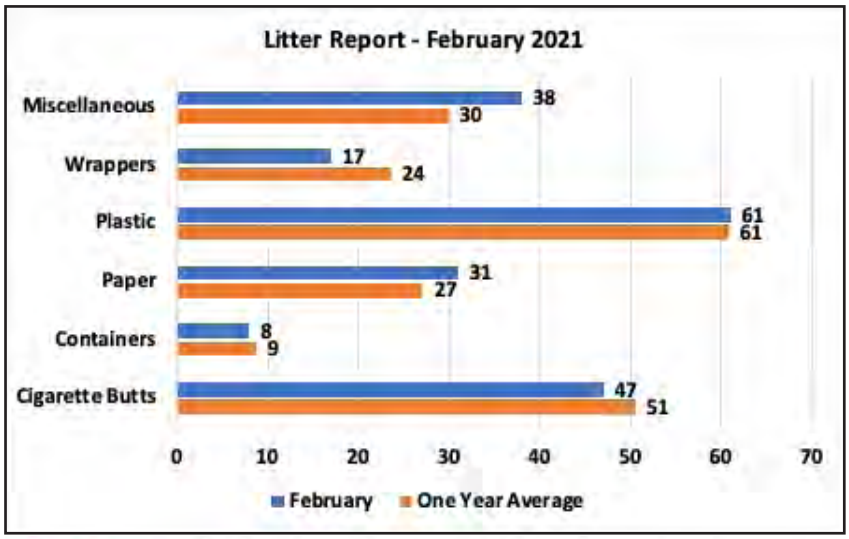
Stoney Creek Trail Report
February 2021

There's nothing of note to report in the litter department. As the bar graph shows, most litter types were close to the average over the past 12 months.



Miscellaneous: clothing, glass, chewing gum, balls & fragments, etc.
Wrappers: candy wrappers, foil, cellophane
Plastic: doggy poo bags & scraps, plastic bags
Paper: tissues, napkins, receipts, newspaper, cardboard, etc.
Containers: bottles, coffee cups, cans, juice boxes, bottle tops

Is spring late this year? Last year's oak leaves are still hanging around, and the blackberries are looking very bedraggled. Even skunk cabbage shoots, which normally appear in the middle of February, are hard to find. And look at the icicles the mid-month cold snap created at Stoney Falls.

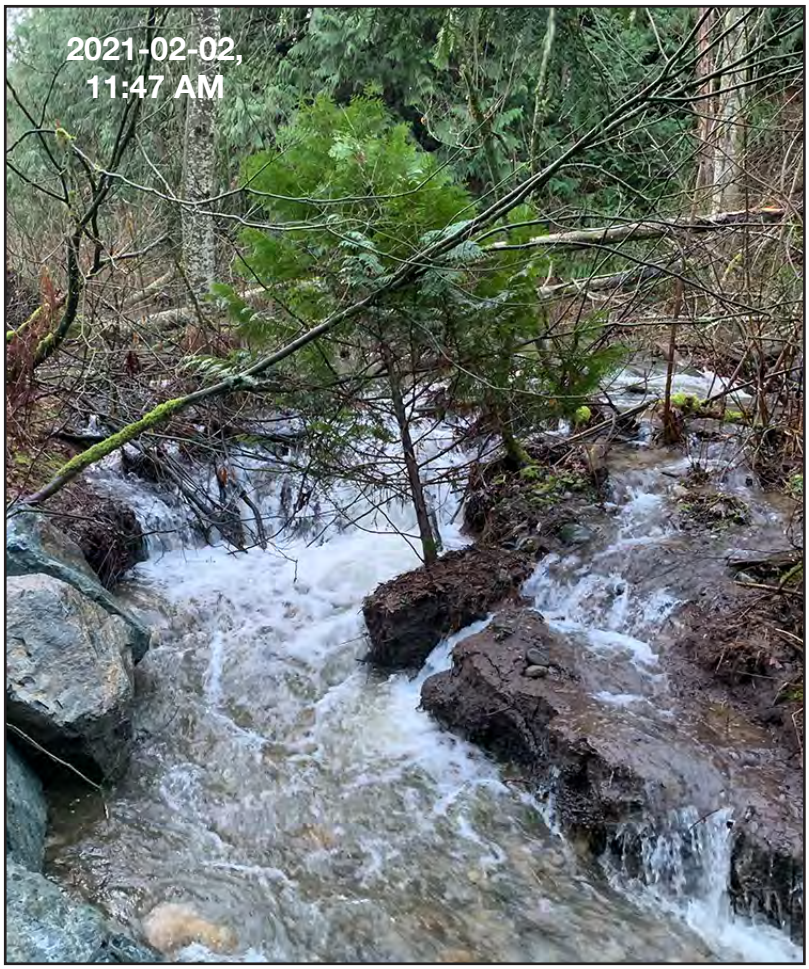
Stoney Creek is constantly changing course...

On the left: due to heavy rains and a blockage of debris, this new channel appeared last winter just above Bridge 4. It stayed pretty well empty until the rainy season returned last October.

During the very heavy rains this season, especially at the first of this month, the new channel opened permanently, creating “Stoney Falls” and a small island. The new channel diverts about 1/3 of the water flow.

Erosion of the little island continues: those small cedar trees are in trouble. However, as I pointed out in a previous report, the man-made wall of boulders has prevented further erosion on the Trail side.

By the way, notice how the water has cleared up overnight. This is normal for Stoney Creek.



To spawn in Stoney Creek, Coho salmon must swim 10 km from the Fraser River to reach the pond at Bridge 0. From there to Bridge 5 is a climb of 20 m over a distance of 750 m. Coho juveniles make good use of “off-channel” habitats and will gather where adult fish cannot access. With this in mind, **Dale Taylor** and I met with **Tyler Thibault** of the DFO to look for possible locations for a man-made spawning/rearing channel.

Dale and Tyler

There are two kinds of off-channel habitats: (a) a backwater or groundwater channel, and (b) a surface-fed (flow through) channel.

The photo on the right, taken at the Forks, shows the remains of an “oxbow,” which is a **backwater channel** that has become separated from the main stream. It is not connected to the main stream but remains filled with water from under ground. The existence of the oxbow shows that the Creek has changed course in the past and will continue to do so.

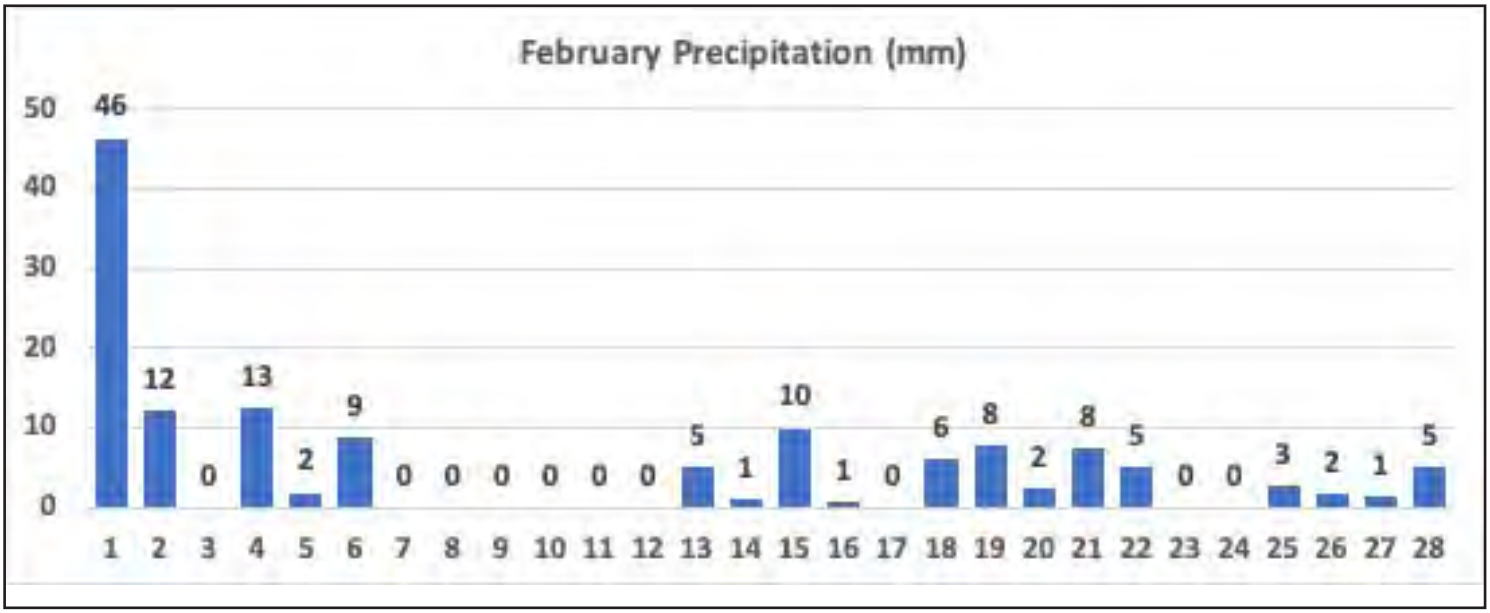
Below: beside the Straightaway is a possible location for a **flow through channel.** To divert water from the stream but prevent the main flow from forcefully widening and flushing out a spawning channel, boulders and logs would be used to create a “valve” at the intake. Further down the channel, similar material would be used to slow the water flow. Fortunately, Stoney Creek is well supplied with the natural materials required.

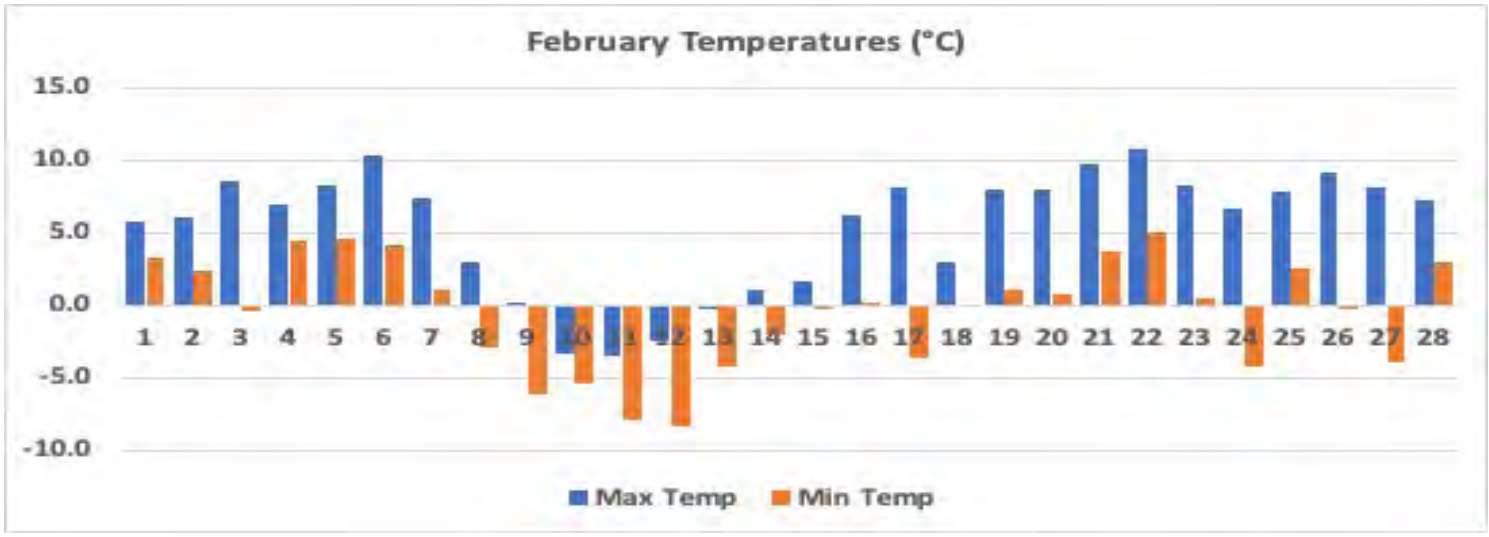
Weather...

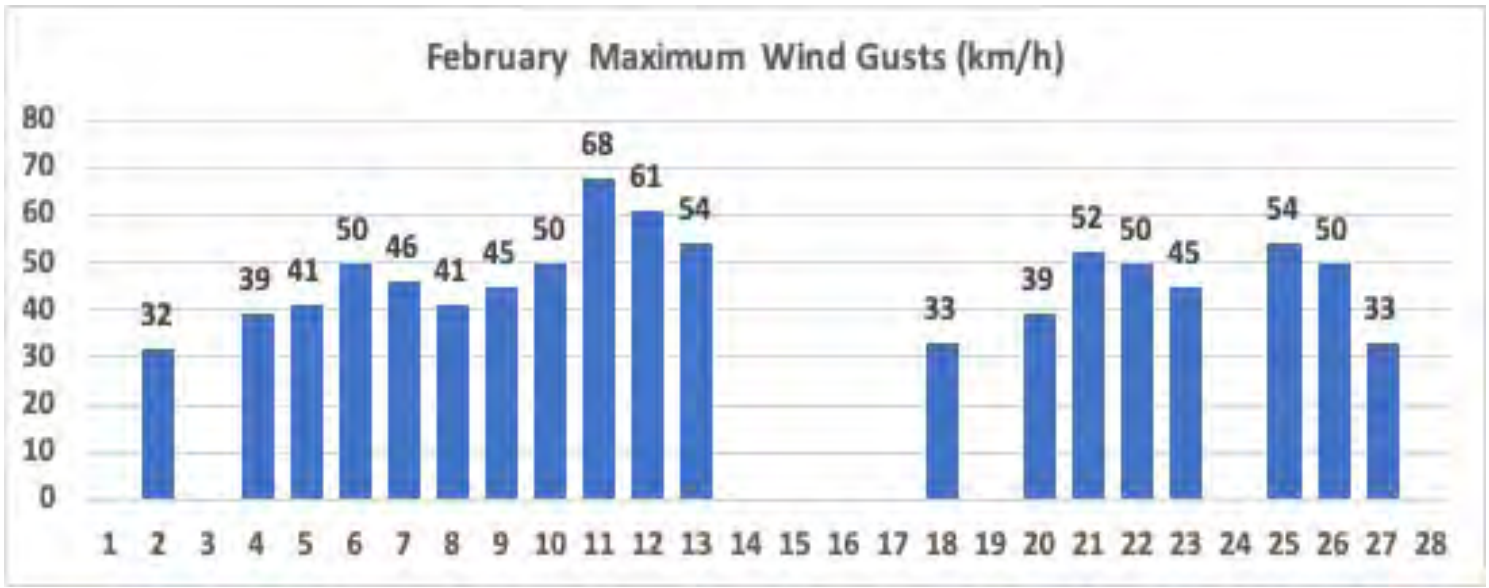
In spite of the record downpour on the 1st, February was much drier than January. The total precipitation was 138.8 mm compared to January's 215.2 mm.

On the other hand, February was by far the coldest month this winter. The average temperature was 2° less than January's. Of course, the cold and the dryness resulted in very little snow.

It was windy though, especially in the first half. As the following graph shows, on 14 days, wind gusts measured over 40 km/h, topping at 68 km/h on the 11th.







Note that the format of this report is optimized for the iPad.

Featured tree this month:

The **Western hemlock** (Ts*uga heterophylla*) gives the name to “Hemlock Hill” (the south end of the Trail). This evergreen is easy to spot because of its flat, glossy leaves and conspicuous drooping tip. Uncommon on Stoney Creek Trail, the hemlock tolerates shade well, as shown by these small trees nestled under alders at the top of the Trail.

The hemlock grows best in moist locations and prefers a high level of organic matter: well-rotted wood from an old log or stump is best. The hemlock is capable of associating with wood-decay and soil fungi. This enables its seedlings to survive on rotting stumps and logs. Look for delicious, edible, chanterelle mushrooms near hemlocks!

Unusual items...

A sunglasses lens, icicles below Bridge 3; a gift package of candy valentines on Bridge 4; big heron tracks, one of the many cloth Valentines tacked to fenceposts along the Straightaway; another carefully painted pebble; raccoon tracks, and a makeshift doggie poo bag dispenser. Needless to say, these items soon disappeared.

My custom placenames: