



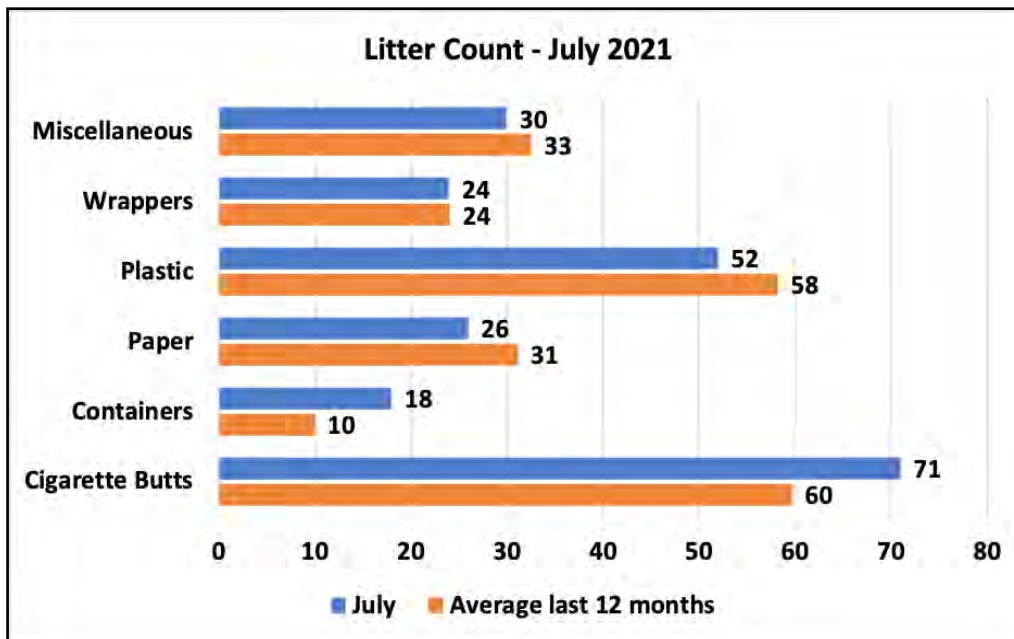
**Stoney Creek Trail Report  
No. 28 - July 2021**

During all of June and the first half of July, **Song Sparrows** could be heard singing loudly every morning at several places along the Trail. The one featured on the **Front Page** is a little fellow who was stationed on an elderberry snag near Bridge 4. Thanks to **Bill Beatty** for the two superb sparrow photos.



Above: at the end of June, someone went to a great deal of trouble to create this large commemorative **pebble display** near Bridge 2. Of course, this kind of thing invites vandalism, so the orange-painted pebbles have been scattered. Hopefully, someone has a plan to gather up and remove them eventually.

*Stoney Creek Trail is just over a kilometre long. Walking the full length, from Bateman*



*Road at the north end to the walkway to Latimer Street at the south end, you would climb about 46 m or 150 ft. (15 storeys). I recommend it!*

*Note: For information about birds and plants, I have borrowed from the **Cornell Lab** and **Wikipedia**.*

*Note: I've given names to many places along the Trail so I can refer to specific locations. For reference, see the illustration on Page 11.*

- 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*

**Song Sparrows** are easy to recognize because of their rich brown back and crown and bold streaks on their white breast. These small birds are widespread and abundant.



The male usually chooses a conspicuous place from which to sing in order to attract females and defend the nesting place. (This one was perched on a dead Hazelnut branch above The Forks). Their songs usually begin with a brief series of crisp, clear notes followed by trills. One bird may have many different songs and variations.

Song Sparrows live for several years and return repeatedly to preferred nesting sites. They usually nest on or near the ground. A pair will rear several clutches in a season. The female incubates the eggs, typically four, for about two weeks. Both parents will feed the nestlings which remain with their parents for another three weeks or so.

The Song Sparrow prefers to eat off the ground, consuming insects when available, but feeding mostly on grass and weed seeds.

The common predators of the Song Sparrow are cats, hawks and owls.

**The Barred Owl**, one of our more common owl species, does not migrate. Found in forested areas year-round, including urban environments, it can be easily identified by its call which sounds like, “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-all?” If you are lucky, a quiet walk through a mature forest during daytime might reveal a roosting Barred Owl. This attractive bird can pass completely unnoticed as it flies silently through the dense



canopy or snoozes on a tree limb. (The one above was perched on a Bigleaf maple on Hemlock Hill). Barred Owls prefer mature forests that have both an abundance of prey and trees with cavities for nesting. They hunt from a perch, scanning and listening for prey, then silently swoop down when they have pinpointed their meal. Barred Owls mostly eat small animals such as rodents, but sometimes they go fishing.

Barred Owls mate for life and can live over 20 years. They usually have a single clutch of two or three white eggs each year. During the incubation period, between 28 and 33 days, the female sits on the eggs while the male hunts for food. After they hatch, Barred Owl chicks hang around the nest for up to six months. During this time, the young owls rarely stray far from each other and are often seen sitting side by side. They climb about their nest tree, using their bill and talons to grab hold while flapping their wings for balance. At 10 to 12 weeks of age, they begin flying.

# The Bigleaf Maple Tree:



In Canada, the Bigleaf maple grows only in the southwest corner of BC, usually on gravelly, moist soils, such as those found near lakes, rivers and streams. It commonly occurs along with red alder, black cottonwood, Douglas-fir, western redcedar, and western hemlock.

The tree trunk is free of branches for half or more of its height. The broad crown is supported by a few large spreading limbs.

Because their bark is rich in calcium and moisture, they are often draped in mosses. The moss layers can get so thick they form a 'soil' into which plants such as ferns sprout and grow.

The Bigleaf maple has five-lobed leaves, 15 to 30 cm across, dark green on top, paler underneath, turning yellow in the autumn. Its flowers are greenish-yellow and hang in clusters from the twigs. The seeds are golden-brown when ripe and V-shaped, 3 to 6 cm long. They will descend like little helicopters, which greatly increases their dispersal.

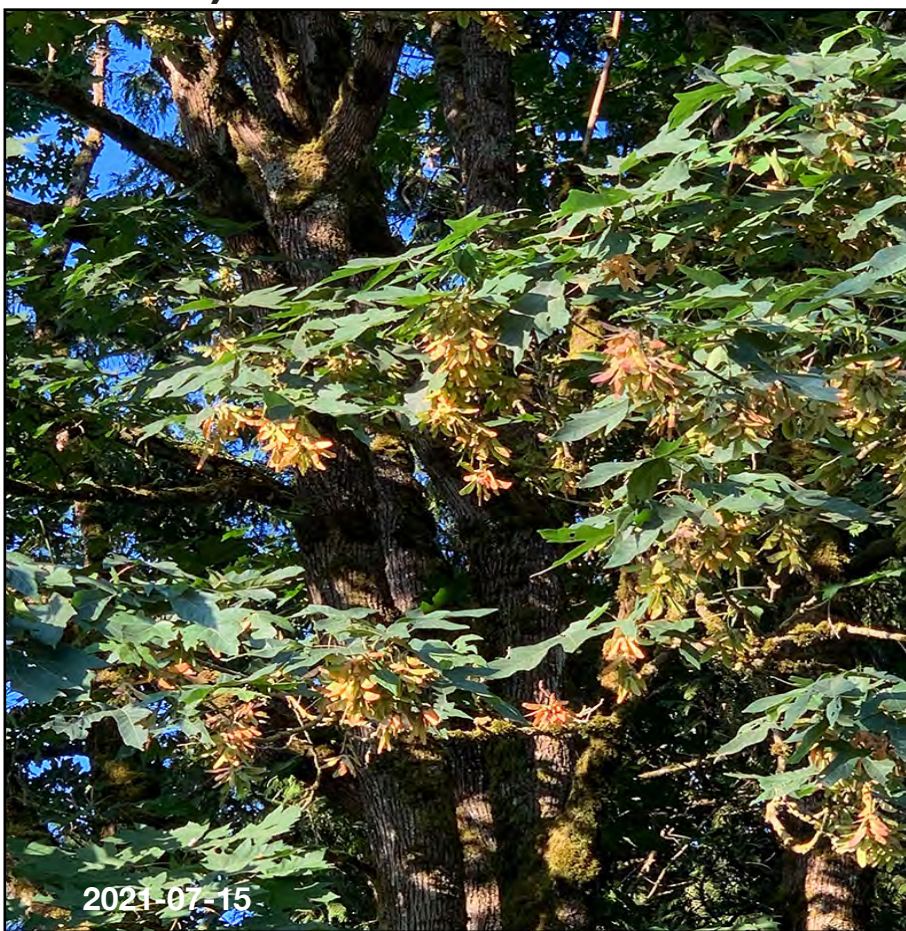


## The Bigleaf Maple Tree (continued):

The Bigleaf maple is a culturally significant tree. Traditionally, all parts were used by Coastal people for medicinal, edible, spiritual, and practical purposes.

The bark was made into tea to treat tuberculosis, and the sap to treat sore throats. Maple flowers are quite sweet and edible. The sap has a low sugar content, so it takes a large quantity to make a small amount of syrup.

The Stó:lō (Stah-lo) people used the inner bark to make baskets, rope and whisks for whipping soopolallie berries. The leaves were used as containers, and also for covering dishes and adding



flavour when cooking. The hard wood, as well as being carved to make dishes, pipes and other implements, was made into canoe paddles, hence the name “Paddle Tree.”

Nowadays, because of its close grain and moderate hardness, Bigleaf maple wood is used commercially for furniture, flooring, interior panelling, and musical instruments.

*Note: much of my information about native trees comes from the excellent reference book, “**Plants of Coastal British Columbia....**” by Pojar and Mackinnon (Lone Pine Publishing).*

## The War of the Ants:



**Pavement ants** are dark brown, very small (2.5 to 4 mm long) and essentially harmless to humans. They are well adapted to urban living, preferring to nest under sidewalks, pavement, and other areas with little vegetation. They will forage for almost anything, including other insects.

Pavement ant colonies may have 3,000 to over 10,000 workers, usually with one queen, but sometimes two or more. The nests can occupy an area of from 1 to 5 square metres and be 45 to 90 cm deep. They may claim a territory ten times that large.

During the late spring and early summer, colonies attempt to expand their territory by invading nearby enemy colonies. This can result in huge battles, sometimes leaving thousands of ants dead.

On two occasions, swarms of Pavement ants were observed on the gravel path up Hemlock Hill. The initial encounter between forces took place on June 23rd, with a repeat engagement on the 29th. Surprisingly, the swarms appeared and disappeared in less than a day, leaving no trace. (The knife is 6 cm long).

## Dogs on the Trail:



**TJ** is a two-year-old Labernese. He weighs approximately 45 kg (100 lbs). “He loves to walk on the Trail and explore everything around him. His favourite game is hide and seek. He has a bouncing walk, a very happy dog. If he sees something special about a person, he’ll stop and won’t continue until he gets their attention and leans his whole body on them.

“There is a bench that has been added on the trail recently (Sadie’s bench). When he gets tired, he’ll jump up onto the bench, lie down and put his head on the arm rest.”

**Shadow** is a 14-year-old Spaniel. “He was adopted along with his brother Charlie as a one-year-old from the SPCA. They weren’t to be separated! So we gladly adopted both of them!

“Fetch was his favourite game until Charlie died last year. Now he refuses to even touch a ball. He loves his ‘sniffs and strolls’ through the Trail. This old guy has the most handsome white eyelashes!”





## Interesting Sights:



Above: **Variations on a Theme.** There's nothing unusual about finding items like these. Ho-hum.

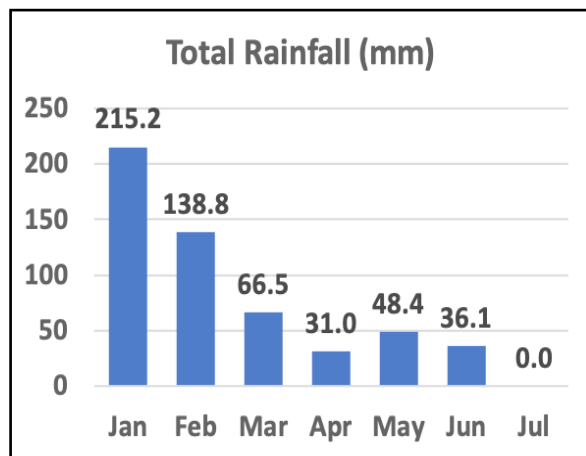
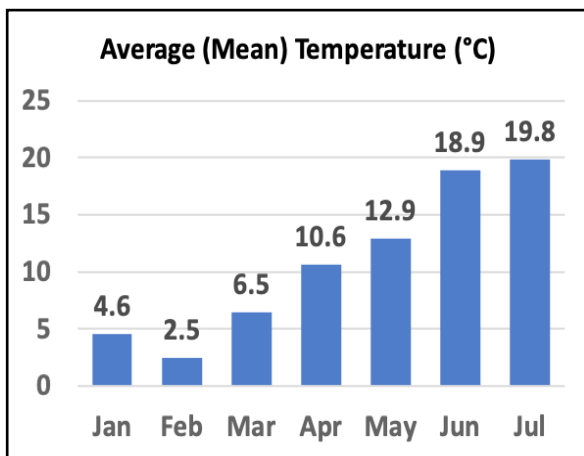
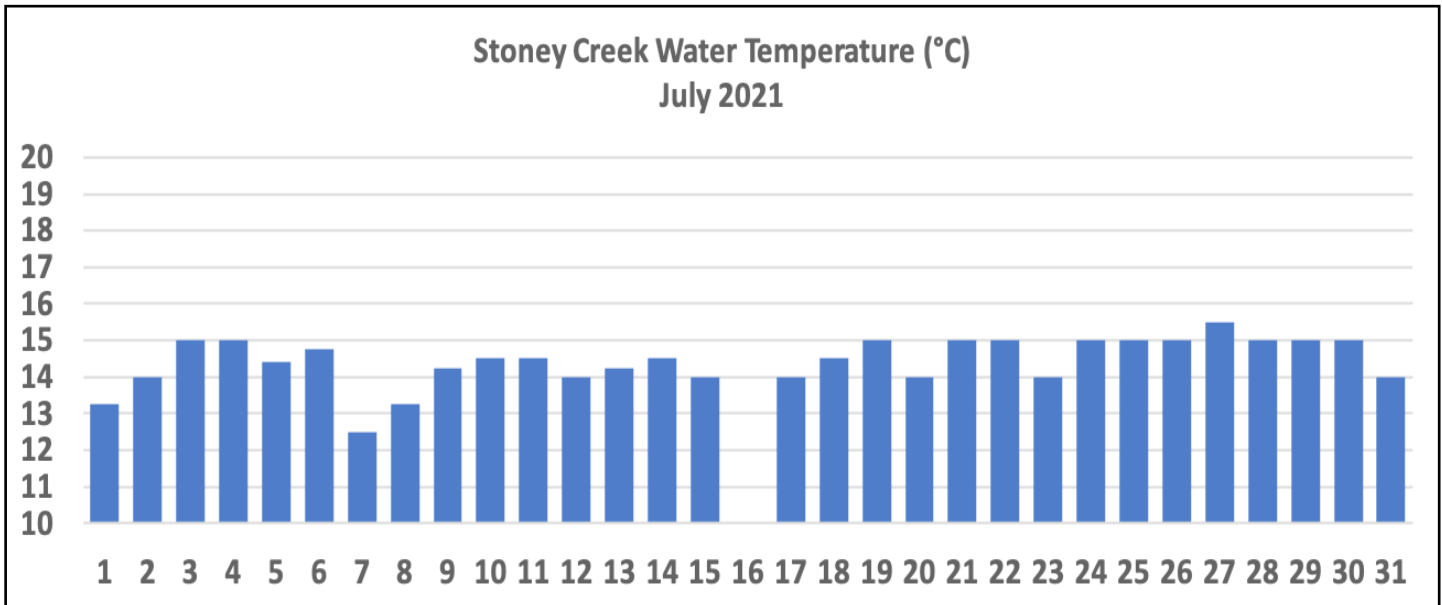
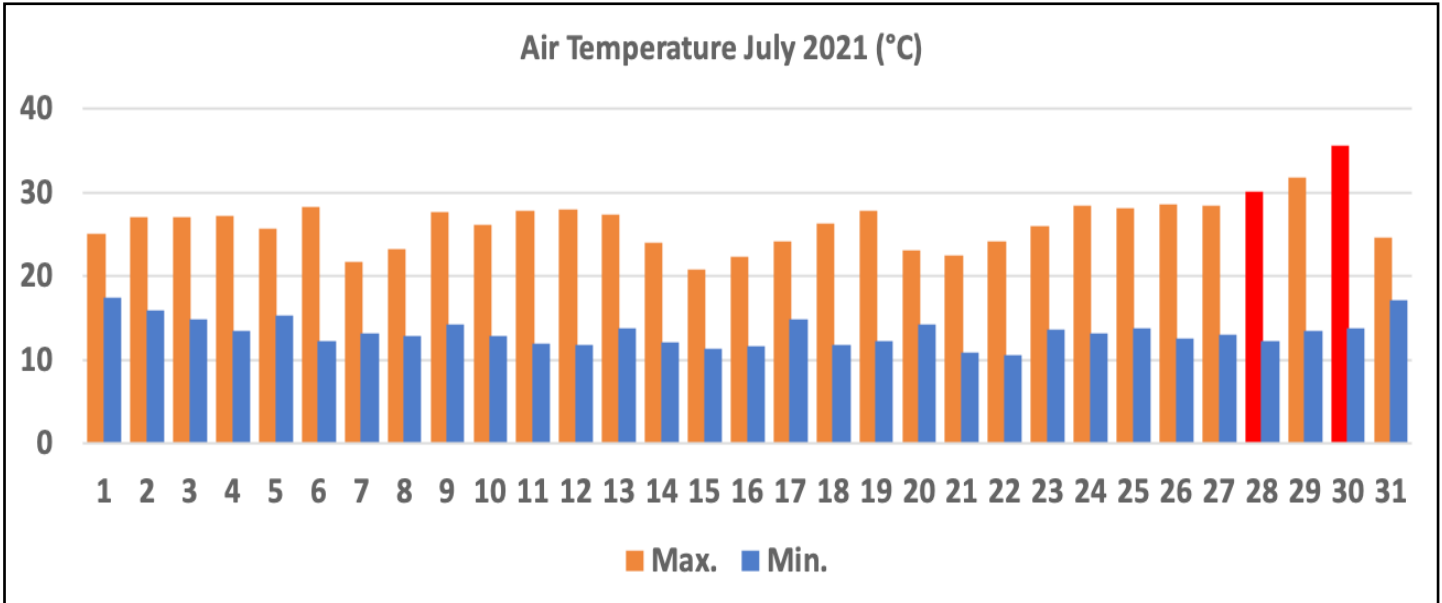


Left: the invasive **Curled Dock** has flowered and the distinctive blood red leaves have appeared. Near the Latimer Street entrance, this thicket of the native shrub **Spirea** (hard hack) produces spectacular, deep pink flowers — a favourite of bees.



The invasive **Himalayan blackberry** has become well established on the West Coast. Here, we see that the City parks mowing crew did a very thorough job on the encroaching vines on Hemlock Hill. Blackberry thickets, on the other hand, provide shelter for birds and small mammals, and plump, sweet berries.

**Weather comments** (data from YXX): The precipitation graph has been omitted because there is nothing to show — it has not rained on the Trail since June 14th. The average temperature was a little higher, but we did not have the extremes of the last few days of June. The Creek water temperature stayed below 16°, so the salmon fry that escaped capture by children had a good month.



For convenience, I use these custom place-names:

