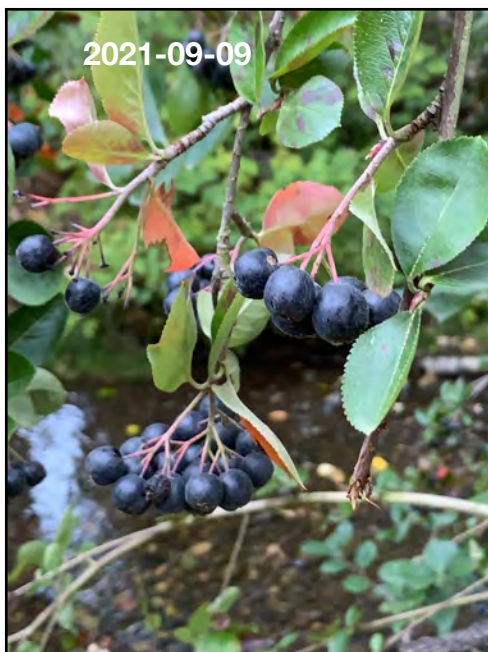




**Stoney Creek Trail Report  
No. 30 - September 2021**

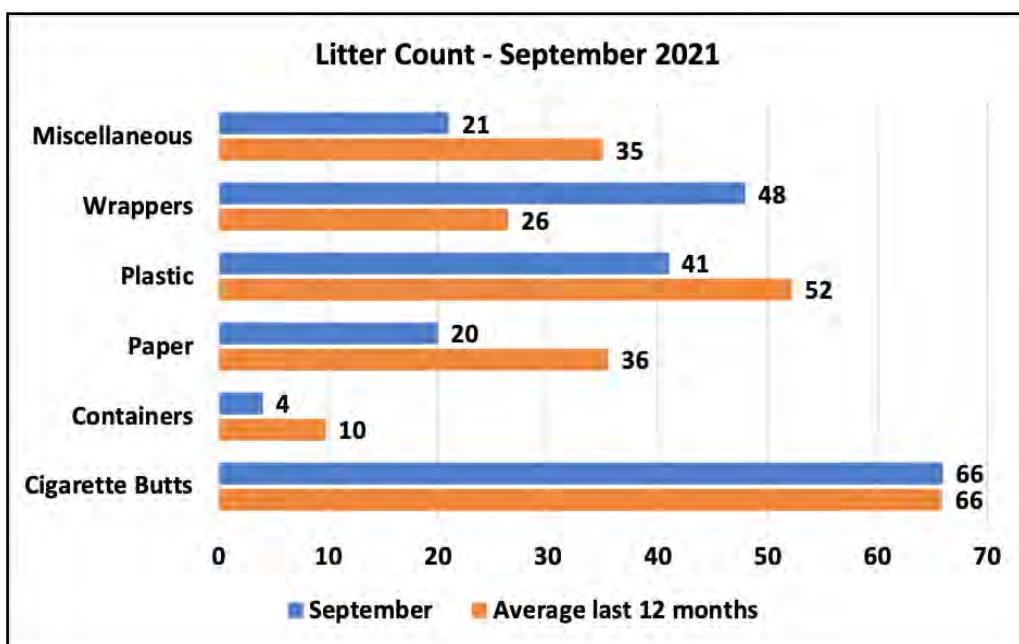
The **Front Page photo** shows a red alder snag standing between Bridge 4 and the Forks. Those holes drilled by woodpeckers looking for insects could serve a purpose by becoming homes for smaller nesting birds. When you pass by, look for a Pileated or perhaps a smaller Downy woodpecker (both have patches of red on their heads).

**The Pandemic lockdown has taught us** the value of Stoney Creek Trail. Walking the Trail gets your heart rate up and stress level down. You might reduce your chances of a stroke or even lose weight! Or you can choose to simply sit on a bench — it's great just being there, somewhere green. Some people walk (or run) with friends, others with head-phones. However, there is evidence that those who pay more attention to their surroundings get more benefit from their walks. It's called "forest bathing," the act of spending time among trees, staying calm and still, observing the sights and sounds of nature.



On the Straightaway, a **Black chokeberry**, a member of the Rose family, and one of the most colourful shrubs on the Trail in autumn. While its berries ripen to a luscious dark blue, the leaves a scarlet red.

Because it is native to eastern North America, I was fortunate to have a dedicated Trail walker identify it for me. The berries are too astringent to eat alone, but they can be used to make jelly, juice, syrup, etc.



*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

*Note: I've given names to many places along the Trail so I can refer to specific locations. See Page 11.*

## Early Signs of Autumn:



**Top:** the **Indian plum**, one of the first shrubs to bloom in the spring, is also one of the first to take on fall colour. The **Bigleaf maple** leaves are turning gold and their winged seeds are ready to fly.



**Middle:** the bright red berries of the **Mountain ash** are strictly for the birds! Up on Hemlock Hill, **Red alder** leaves fall early and carpet the Trail. Many are still green due to nitrogen-containing chlorophyll. They will return the nitrogen to the soil, making good mulch for other growing things.

**Bottom:** the **Vine maple** displays much more colour than the Bigleaf maple. The inner foliage of this **Western redcedar** (BC's official tree) is turning brown, a natural process this time of year.

## The Paper Birch Tree:



The Paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*) is also called White birch or Canoe birch. The name 'birch' is derived from the word 'bark.' *Betula* means 'pitch' (as in glue); *papyrifera* means 'paper-bearing.' It is in the family that includes alders and hazelnuts.

The Paper birch is a small to medium-sized tree, rarely growing more than 30 metres tall. The bark is marked with horizontal lines. On young trees it is dark reddish-brown, while on mature trees it is creamy white, has a chalky feeling, and peels in papery strips.

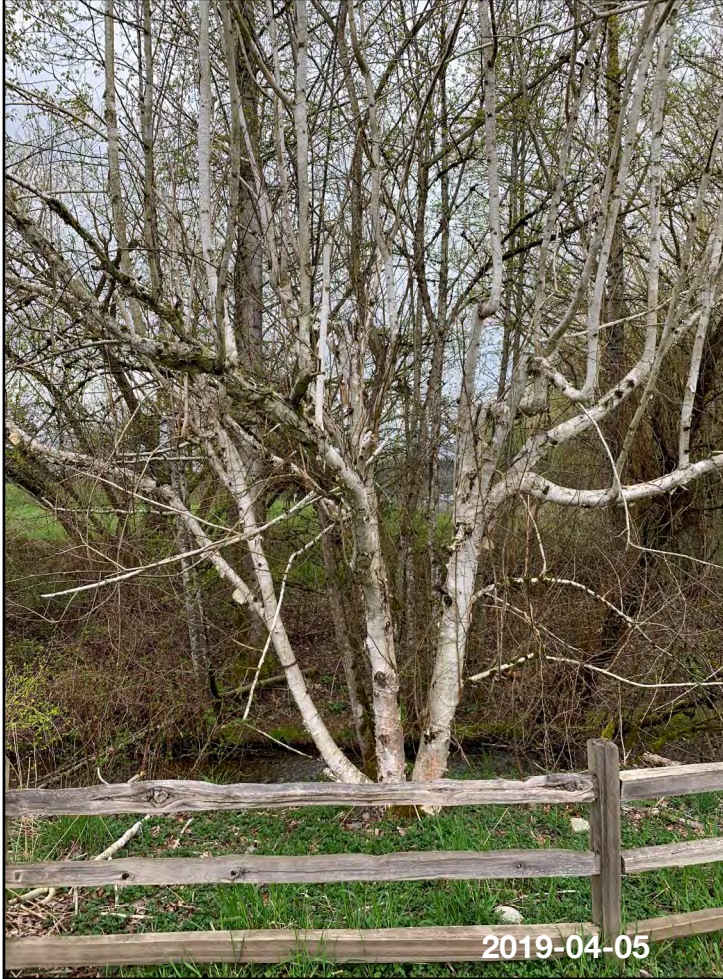
The leaves are oval and sharp-pointed, dull green above, paler and hairy below. The margins are double-toothed.

The wood is pale and fine-grained and has no odour. As firewood it burns well, without crackling.

The Paper birch produces both male (pollen) catkins and long female (seed) catkins which hang in pairs. They flower at the same time or before leaves emerge. The catkins break up at maturity. The fruits are tiny nuts with wings broader than the body.



Birches do not like shade. They will grow where there is moisture on a wide variety of soils and elevations in both pure and mixed stands. The Paper birch is a pioneer species, often one of the first trees to reforest areas that have been burned or cut. It readily sprouts from stumps.



In BC there are many species of birch which often hybridize. They occur throughout the mainland of British Columbia, but rarely on coastal islands or Vancouver Island.

**Left:** The Paper birch is short-lived tree. For several years, this one near the Bowl has been slowly falling apart.

**Below:** left, a Paper birch at The Forks. The brown bark indicates it is a young tree. It's easy to confuse a Paper birch with the Bitter cherry (on the right). However, the leaves of the Bitter cherry are less pointy-tipped, and of course they produce blossoms in the spring.

Birch bark, which can be peeled off the tree in large, flexible, waterproof sheets was as important to the inland first

nations peoples as the bark of the Western redcedar was to the coastal peoples. Baskets and canoes were the most common items constructed from birch bark. The wood was also used as fuel, and the sap and inner bark as emergency food.



## Dogs on the Trail:



“**Oreo** is a 10-month-old rescue from a reserve up in Hinton. His mother is a border collie x lab and his father is a mystery... we think pointer as Oreo is lean and can run for days! He loves to fetch and is obsessed with his ball, he'll even steal other balls, get both in his mouth and prance around trying to make other dogs chase him! He loves morning cuddles and swimming as well!”

“**Kali** is about three years old and we got her when she was a puppy from Heart and Soul dog and cat rescue society. She loves chasing birds, squirrels and cats. She also likes laying by a HOT fire or directly in the sun. She thinks she is the boss and protector of the family and will often get defensive when she thinks our kids (who she is extremely patient with) are in danger. She does love running and wrestling with other dogs and will never turn down food or attention.”



## Dogs on the Trail (continued):

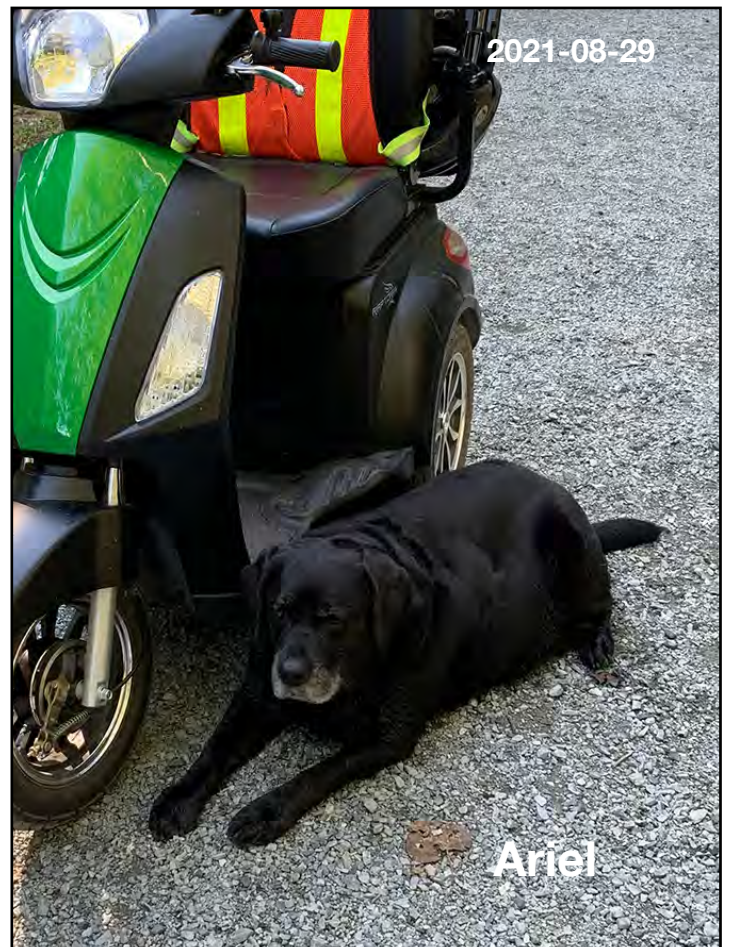


**Sparky** is a rescue dog. “Our vet thinks she is a terrier pug cross. She is about eight or nine years old. She got her name because the day I got her she chewed my bedroom lamp cord and got quite a shock!

“She has a mind of her own and thinks I am her slave. She is probably right! She loves to swim even in the Fraser River and Rolley Lake. She is a happy dog and good company.”

**Ariel** is a nine-year-old English Lab. “Her registered name is ‘Ch. Makaila Dancing w the Starcast.’ In 2013, Ariel won Best in Breed in Merritt and moved up to Group Judging. In 2016, in Kelowna and Merritt she won Best in Breed in Labrador Specialties, eventually achieving Grand Champion (Ch.).

“Ariel is different from most Labs, very stubborn and single minded, believing she is the only dog around. She is the best with kids, dogs and people in the park; at home she is constantly looking for attention and follows me everywhere. Sometimes I think that it could be insecurity. She hates to share me even with my daughter, a cat, a telephone etc. She is demanding but good company, especially since my husband died last year.”



## Miscellaneous Items:



**Top:** The **seed pods** on this Himalayan Balsam are almost ripe and ready to explode. The **Creek** turned coffee-colour after the heavy rain on the 17th, but it was clear again in two days. Runners from **Abby Christian school** are back at it again, getting in shape for the new school year.

**Middle:** Lost items: a **child's hoodie** and an unusual and probably expensive **COVID mask**.



**Bottom:** Good maintenance: a Parks crew removed the **wooden bench** structure near Bateman Road due to decayed posts. And thanks to Parks for rebuilding this **gravel ramp** at Bridge 2.



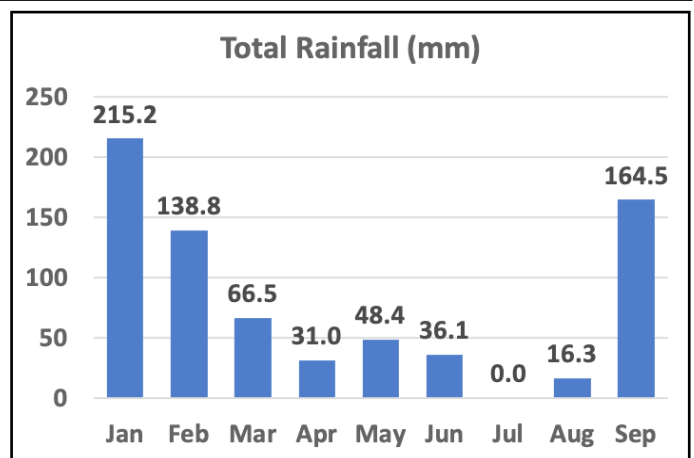
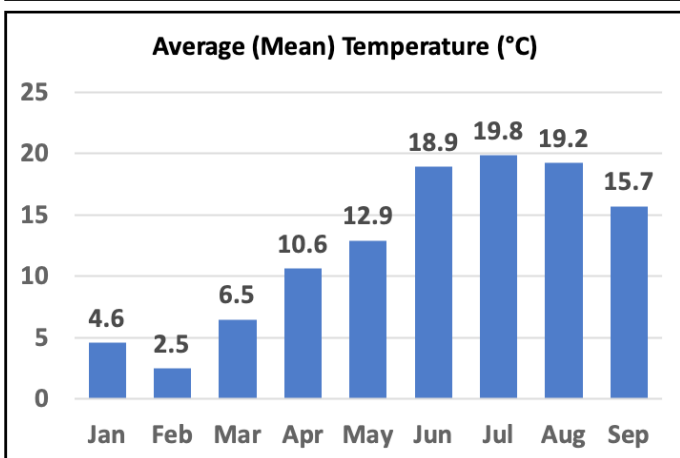
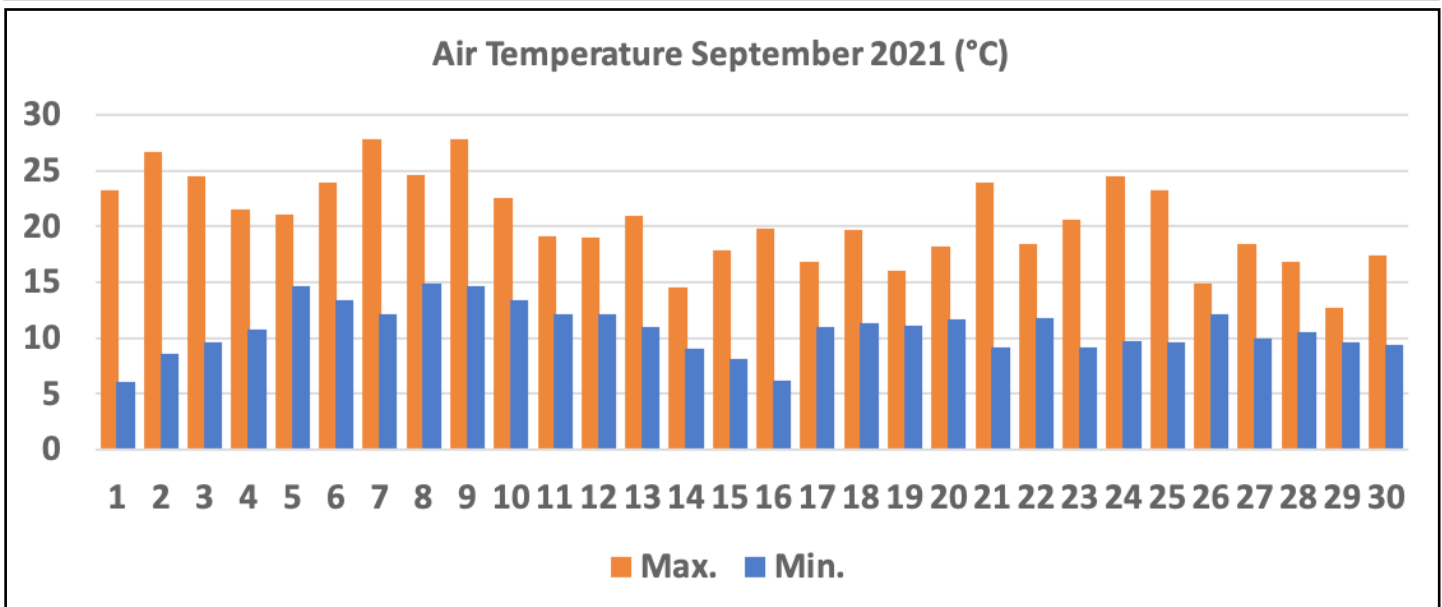
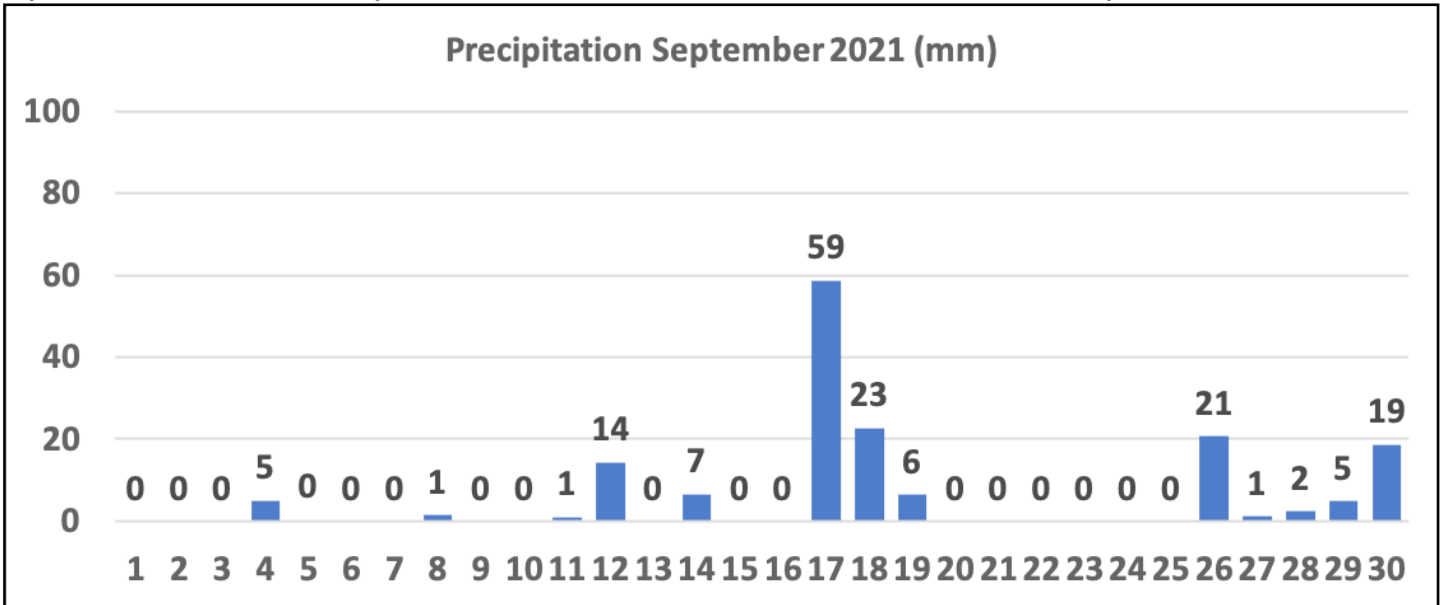
## Pond Dredging Operation:



**Above:** technicians from **AquaTerra Environmental** swept the Pond with a large net. The captured fish went into an aerated tub and were transported to a point upstream. Happily, a day after the digger did its job, a Great Blue heron was back trying its luck.



**Weather comments** (data from YXX). Remember summer? On June 30th, all open fires were prohibited throughout BC. On September 16th, all campfire and open fires bans were lifted. Then, on the following day came a deluge — 59 mm of rain. This was 8 mm more than our previous record for that date set in 1997. Records were also set at 29 other stations in southern BC. — only eight had more rain than Abbotsford. In September we ended up with more rainfall than the total of the five previous months.



For convenience, I use these custom place-names:

