

**Stoney Creek Trail Report
No. 47 - February 2023**



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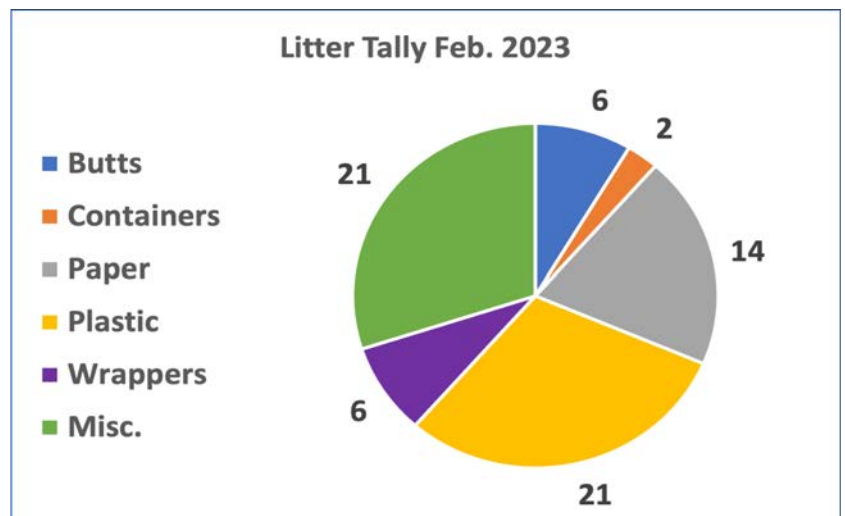
On the front page, the small dirt pile marks the exit of a tunnel built by a mole, an animal adapted to living entirely underground. (The mole is not to be confused with the **shrew** or the **vole**). A male mole is called a boar and the female a sow!

Broken Bridge news: I've been told that Parks & Recreation are "pushing as hard as we can to get them rebuilt." Ottawa has recently announced an additional \$557 million in disaster assistance for BC. Our plight is certainly not as serious as that of displaced people and damaged farms, but perhaps the City's share will be enough to afford a rebuild of our bridges.



The Case of the Disappeared Tree: on the left, this small Douglas fir may remind you of the velvety soft texture of new Douglas fir needles. In 2020, this healthy little fir tree stood beside the big cedars just across from the entrance to the Dog Corral. It's gone! No tree, no stump, no hole in the ground. If I hadn't taken this photo, you wouldn't know that the tree ever existed. Strange. Have a look for yourself next time you go by there.

Thanks to the Trail Walkers who have helped by picking up litter. There have been far fewer bits of plastic dog poo bags scattered near the dispensers in the last few 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



This mole, found dead on the Trail near the Forks, is about 15 cm long.



More than a hundred mole hills have appeared on the well-drained slopes around the Bowl this month.

The Coast mole (*Scapanus orarius*) is found from southwestern British Columbia down to northwestern California. These solitary tunneling animals will construct burrows in a wide variety of habitats—but not where the ground is swampy.

Coast moles are covered in dark velvety fur except on their tail, their forelimbs and their snout. Their inconspicuous eyes and ears and small hind legs are adaptations for living underground. They use their sensitive nose for navigation and their powerful spade-shaped forelimbs for digging and pushing soil behind them as they tunnel. As well, they have “extra-strength” hemoglobin (blood) which allows them to survive in a low-oxygen environment.

Coast moles inhabit a relatively small home area of about 30 by 40 metres in which they construct a network of passages for hunting and nesting. These tunnels vary in depth from surface runs only a few centimetres deep to main runs 30 cm or more underground. In a year a single mole may produce several hundred mole hills.

A mole’s diet consists mainly of earthworms. They will also eat small invertebrates such as millipedes, insect larvae, snails and slugs. They will occasionally hunt aboveground in insect-rich areas around logs.

Though normally solitary, during the breeding season, males will dig long tunnels connecting with those of neighboring females. Mating occurs in late winter and by May the young are born in a grass-lined nesting chamber about 15 cm below the surface. A typical litter consists of three to four pups. The young become independent of their mothers by midsummer. At this time, when juveniles disperse from their mother’s home territory, they can be seen traveling above ground in search of new territories.

Coast moles may play an important role in maintaining soil quality, aerating the soil through their digging activity and aiding in soil drainage. Young Coast moles dispersing over ground are a food source for owls. (Credit: [ADW](#), [Wikipedia](#))

Notable items:



Top: a look back at this winter's snowfalls observed at the Bowl. Just before Christmas we had 25 cm of dry snow at -13° . Later, at the beginning of this month, 5 cm of white stuff at -4° . And at the end of the month, two snowfalls totalling 24 cm of sticky stuff at around $+2^{\circ}$. More to come?



Middle: a look ahead. The Red Flowering Currant on Hemlock Hill seems to have a head start on the Indian Plum near Sadie's Bench. (Both shrubs are native to BC).

Bottom: Parks and Recreation have given the Trail some attention this month. Numeric ID signs have been placed on all the Bridges, and new steel ramp plates have been added to Bridges 3 and 4.

Changes along the Trail in a Decade (Page 1 of 2)



Some trees at Bridge 2 have grown a great deal in 12 years.



Changes along the Trail in a Decade (Page 2 of 2)



This Paper birch beside the Bowl has been slowly falling apart.



Trail Dogs 1:



“**Gwyn** is a Moyen (Medium) Poodle. She’ll be ten in March, and she comes from a breeder who now seems to have stopped breeding, Paris Poodles, outside of Chilliwack. She was flown to us in Regina when she was nine weeks old, and lived her first six years with us in our home there. In 2019, we moved to Abbotsford and she, of course, came with us, ironically returning to the Fraser Valley. As you can see from her photo, what she really likes doing is fetching and carrying sticks. She particularly likes to run after them into the sea at the dog beach near the Vancouver Maritime Museum. She loves swimming in the ocean and going to Bateman and other nearby trails, chasing every squirrel and rabbit available. As soon as we turn around in a walk and start coming home, she looks for a stick or two to carry. She can be quite particular in what sticks she is willing to accept!”

“PADS Summer II (**Summer**) is a Pacific Assistance Dog and works with me, her handler, in her role as an accredited facility dog at Abbotsford Christian Middle School. I have worked with her for three years now and was partnered with her after an application, placement, and training process.

“She is a six year old Labrador retriever who loves going to work each day where she supports middle schoolers and contributes to creating a welcoming and friendly learning environment for all.

“Her passions are kids, and in her spare time, sticks, off leash walks, and food. She loves food!”



Trail Dogs 2:



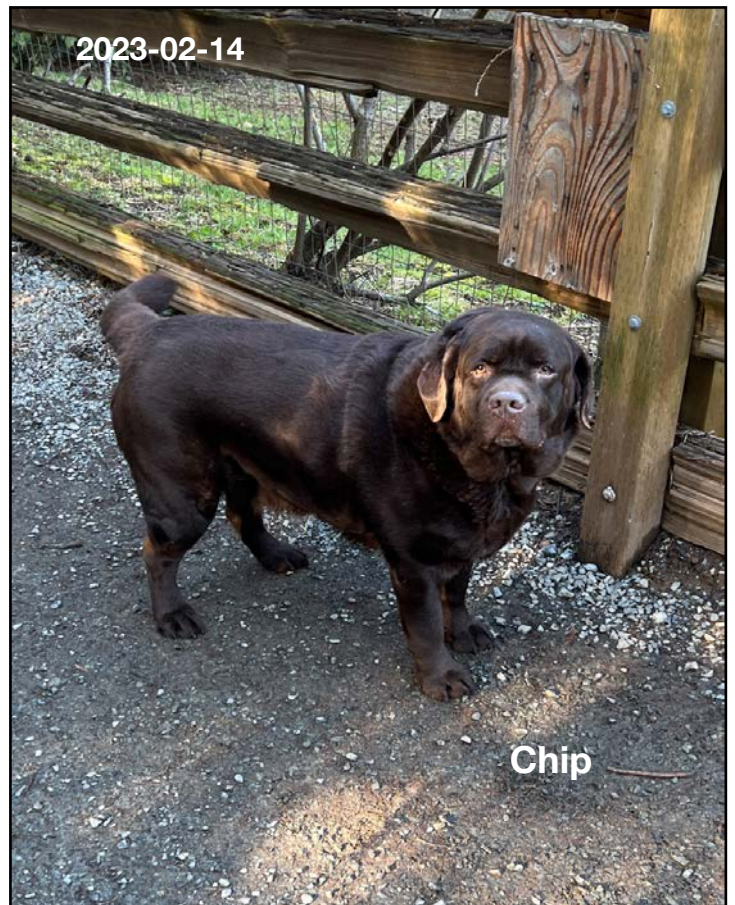
“**Ivy** is a seven-year-old purebred Australian Shepherd. She loves coming to the park and 4-wheeling through the bush and scrub. The messier she gets the happier she is.

“She is a ‘counter surfer’ par excellence. Her motto is: if I can reach it, it is mine. She is a sweet girl!!”

“**Chip** is a six-year-old English Chocolate Lab. He is a big gentle lap dog who is always by our side, unless someone has a treat or a carrot.

“He likes short walks on cool days, otherwise you will find him lying on the A/C vent. Chip loves car rides, wading in the water and rolling in gravel.

“Chip has been the perfect addition to our family.”



Plant Species of Concern in Our Area:

This is the first installment in a series on plants of concern in BC.

The area of Abbotsford that includes Stoney Creek is located in the **CWHxm1** biogeoclimatic subzone, according to the Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification ([BEC](#)) program of the Ministry of Forests. **Translated:** Coastal Western Hemlock; warm, dry summers; moist, mild winters with relatively little snowfall. This series features plants found in the CWHxm1 subzone.

The [BC Conservation Data Centre](#) assigns colour codes to indicate the risk level. **Reds** are at risk of being lost, **Blues** are of special concern. **Yellows** are at least risk.

If you find any of these plants along Stoney Creek Trail, please let me know!

Note that several of these plants grow from **rhizomes** which are underground stems that differ from roots. Rhizomes have nodes that can produce shoots for propagation. Ginger root is a common rhizome. Rhizomes can also spread too easily and become bothersome, like bamboo.

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Dwarf bramble (*Rubus lasiococcus*)

Rubus lasiococcus is a species of wild blackberry known by another common name, **roughfruit berry**. It is native to western North America, from British Columbia to northern California, where it grows in mountain forests.

It is a perennial, with slender trailing stems up to 2 m long spreading along the ground. In some stems there are nodes that will take root

when in contact with moist soil, while other stems, up to 10 cm in length, grow erect and bear flowers.

The deciduous leaves grow alternately along the stem on stalks a few centimetres long. The leaves are compound, having three lobes with saw-toothed edges. The white flowers, which bees love, have five broad petals 5-8 mm long and numerous pollen-producing stamens. The fruits are dense, hairy red drupelets (like raspberries), about 1 cm wide, growing in clusters.

Henderson's checker-mallow (*Sidalcea hendersonii*)

This perennial herb is native to the Pacific Northwest. It requires wet soil, so its range is limited to wet meadows and tidal (salt) marshes that experience inundations.

It grows from a strong taproot and short spreading rhizomes. The stems are sparsely hairy, erect and hollow, typically tinged purple and 50-150 cm tall.

Leaves grow at the base of the plant as well as alternately up the stem. The basal leaves are round or heart-shaped, shallowly lobed, toothed, and long-stalked. The leaves on the stem grow from stalks that are progressively shorter towards the top. They are purple-tinged and have five lobes.

The flowers are profuse, borne on short stalks, and having five deep pink petals. After flowering, seeds develop in capsules having five to ten chambers, each containing one seed.



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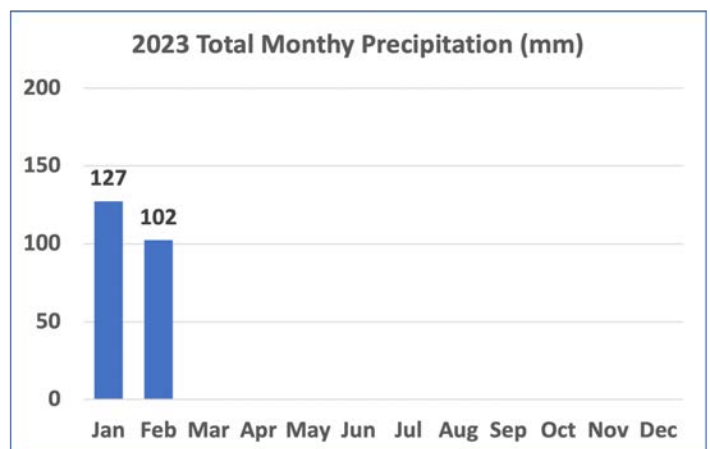
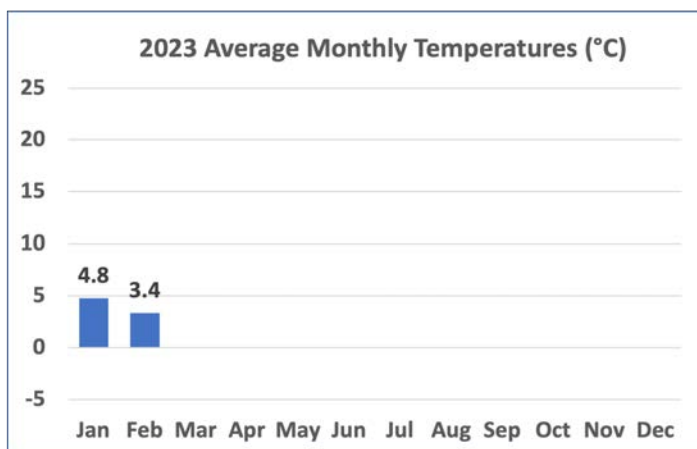
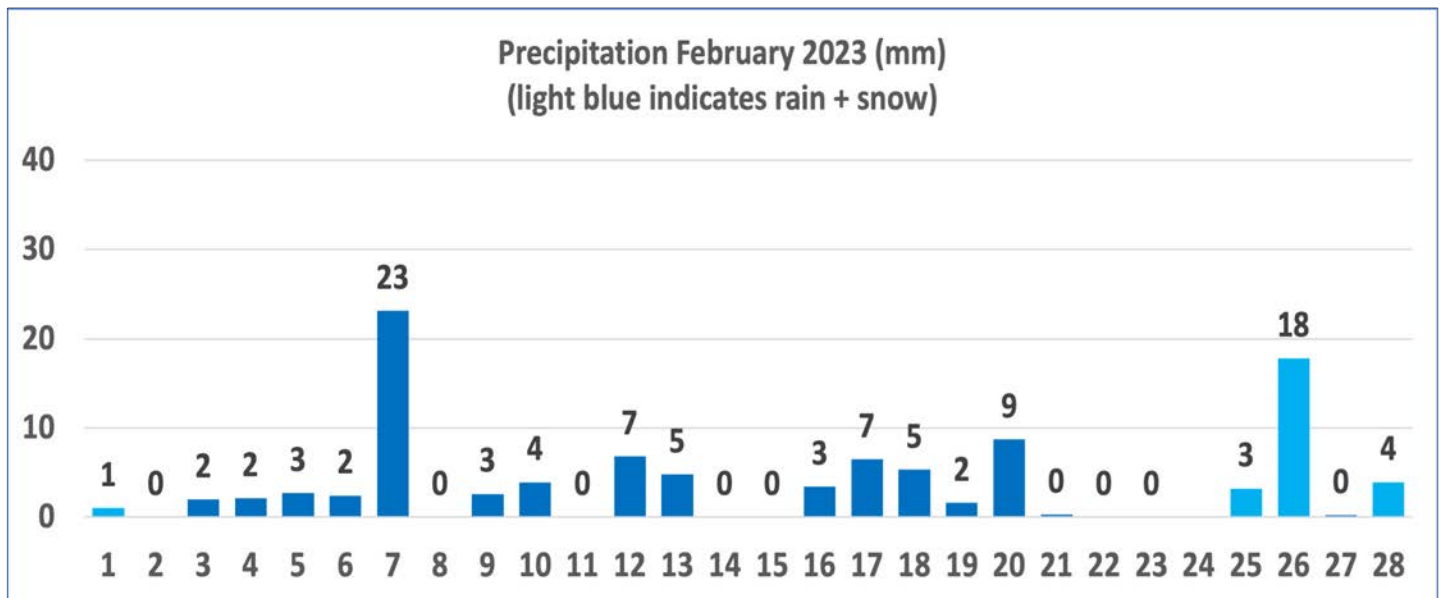
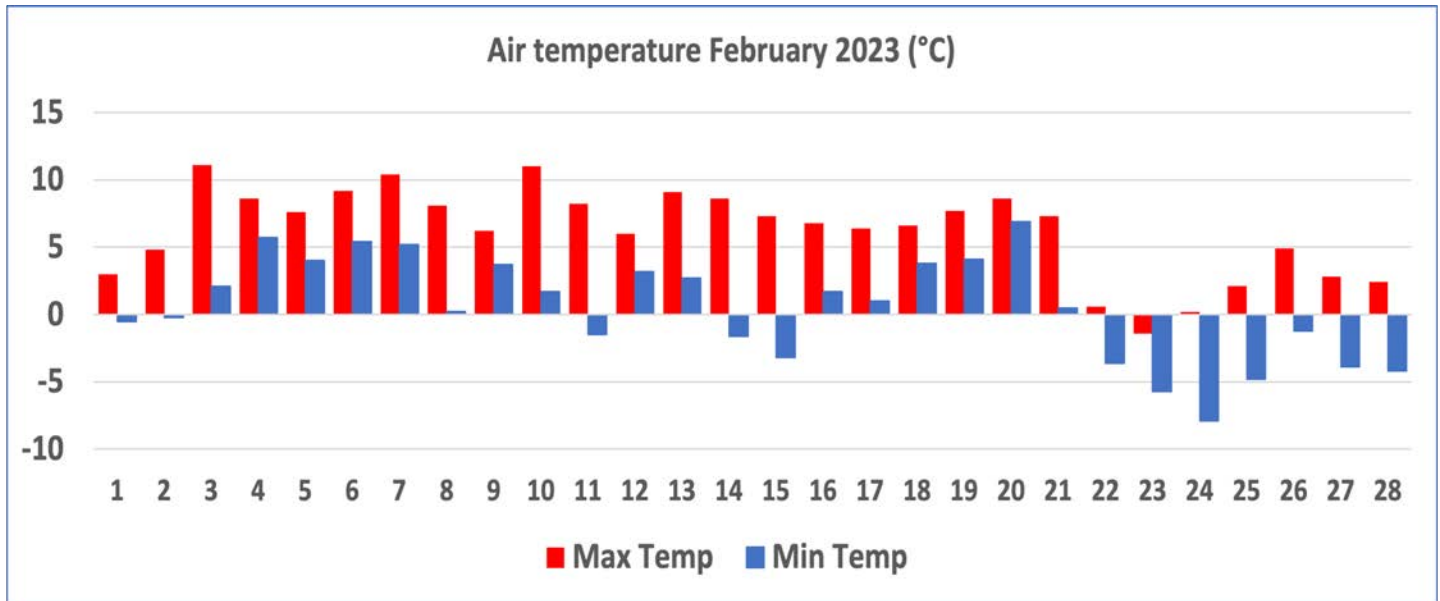
Leafy mitrewort (*Mitellastra caulescens*)

This is a perennial herb in the saxifrage family. It is found in moist, shaded forests, wet meadows, and swamps at low to middle elevations. It has hairy stems 20-40 cm tall growing from slender rhizomes. Most of the leaves are at its base, usually five to seven of them, 5-lobed heart-shaped and 2-7 cm wide.

The tiny flowers, which blossom first at the top, grow on stalks 2-8 mm long. Each is composed of five greenish-white triangular-shaped petals that have 7-9 unusual thread-like appendages branching from them. The seeds are black and grow in capsules.

(Credit: [E-flora BC](#))

On Feb. 1st, The **BC Environment Ministry** reported that the Fraser River basin snowpack was 75% of normal. It had grown to 84% by midmonth, lessening the chance of drought. Usually, we have about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the seasonal snowpack by then. The effect of our snowfall at month's end will appear in their March report. **NOAA**: La Niña is expected to change to ENSO-neutral conditions and persist through to summer. The one-month outlook is for below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation.



For convenience, I use these custom place-names:

