

**Stoney Creek Trail Report
No. 56 - November 2023**

The Front Photo shows what you see when entering the Trail via the Latimer Street walkway. I don't know about you, but I get a rush every time I arrive there, at the top end of Hemlock Hill. The sensation is not a trivial one (see the feature on Forest Bathing).

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“Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole” (Roger Caras). **Sorry, no dogs this issue.** I'm still waiting for responses from several owners.

Weather facts: In the first week of November we had more rain (103 mm) than in all of October (95 mm). In October, we had more rain (55 mm) than in *all three months of summer.*

On the weekend of November 19th, I received several reports that a **primitive encampment** had appeared in the Glade. I was told that a stranger with a dog was also seen in the vicinity. This resulted in a discussion of the problem of homeless people and the potential risks associated with them. Based on this information, I (and apparently other concerned people) reported this to the City. The camp was gone by late Monday morning.



On the next page is a feature about the **Aerial yellow jacket**, our common wasp. I've never had the opportunity to photograph them on our Trail, so **on the left** is close-up of a large wasp nest that I found near Merritt, BC. It was about the size of a basketball.

If you have been reading back issues of these [Trail Reports](#), you may have noticed that the bridges were **numbered incorrectly** prior to the January, 2023 issue. Here is the reason: Bridge 1 (the one closest to the parking lot) was actually the last bridge built. Years ago, what is now Bridge 2 was the first bridge you would come to when walking the Trail, so I called it Bridge 1 in my earlier Reports. When the newest bridge was built not long ago, I started calling it Bridge 0 and continued to do so until the City put numeric labels (1 to 6) on the bridges last January.

Wasps

This abandoned wasp nest, found by **Jean Lewis** (Roxie), has prompted me to prepare this feature on the **Aerial yellow jacket** (*Dolichovespula arenaria*). These insects live throughout North America; in British Columbia they are active from April to October.



This nest, once enclosed in a paper shell, may have come from the cedar hedge beside the Hearthstone walkway. On the right, a mass of wasp paper.

Wasp nests are made of layers of chewed up wood mixed with saliva and organized into layers called “honeycombs.” The space between them acts as a corridor. Each cell in a honeycomb has a hexagonal shape—the most efficient use of space. The nests, which usually hang from tree branches, shrubs or under eaves, are used for only one season.



Yellow jackets’ food consists mainly of other insects, but they are opportunists and will forage for decaying fruit and discarded food as well, which often brings them into contact with people. Nevertheless, they perform a vital role as pest controllers, taking large numbers of flies, bugs, aphids, and caterpillars from crops and gardens.

Yellow jackets are an example of *aposematic colouration*: their bright yellow colour is a warning sign—don’t mess with me!! Keep in mind that they only sting defensively, so in their vicinity do not wave your arms about, just move calmly away.

I've enjoyed telling Trail visitors about the **Coho fry in Stoney Creek**. Spawning season has begun and the first ARPSES salmon survey was taken on the 12th. With a little help from ChatGPT, here is a summary of the Coho life cycle:

Spawning: Our Coho salmon start their life cycle by returning from the Pacific Ocean via the Salish Sea to their natal stream, Stoney Creek, to spawn during the fall. Spawning typically occurs between October and January.

Pre-Spawning Phase: Before spawning, Coho salmon undergo physical changes, with the males developing a hooked jaw (kype) and the females developing eggs.

Spawning Site Selection: Coho salmon are known for their remarkable ability to navigate back to the exact streams where they were born. Our Coho will have found their way up the Fraser River, through Matsqui Slough, and past the mouths of Clayburn Creek, Willband Creek and Nichols Brook to get to Stoney Creek. They will choose clean, well oxygenated gravel beds for spawning.



Nesting: The female Coho salmon uses her tail to create a depression in the gravel called a redd. She deposits her eggs into the redd while a male fertilizes them with his milt.

Egg Incubation: The eggs remain in the gravel through the winter months, protected from predators and harsh weather conditions. The incubation period lasts from a few weeks to several months, depending on water temperature. It is **very important to keep children and dogs** out of the Creek during this time: from October to April.



Alevin Stage: Once the eggs hatch, alevin emerge. These tiny fish remain in the gravel, relying on their yolk sacs for nourishment. During this stage, they're highly vulnerable.

Fry Stage: As the alevin absorb their yolk sacs and grow larger, they become fry. At this point, they start to venture out of the gravel and feed on small aquatic organisms.



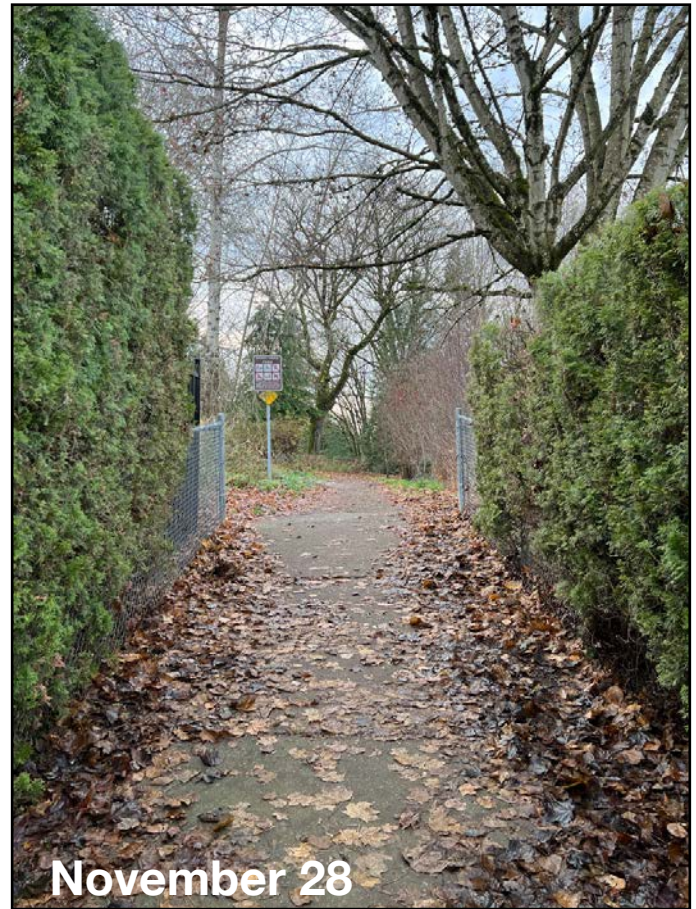
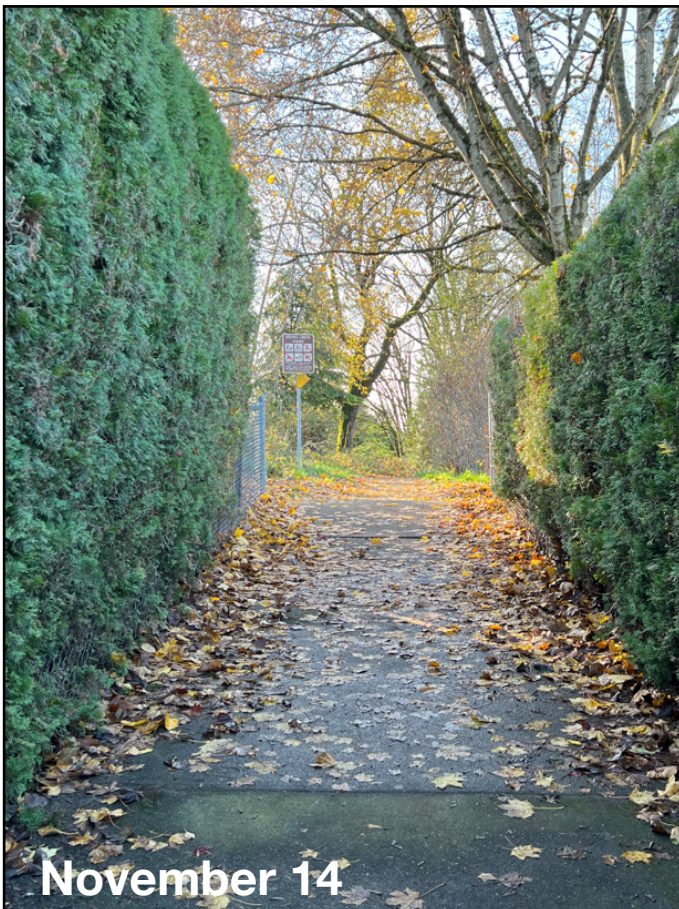
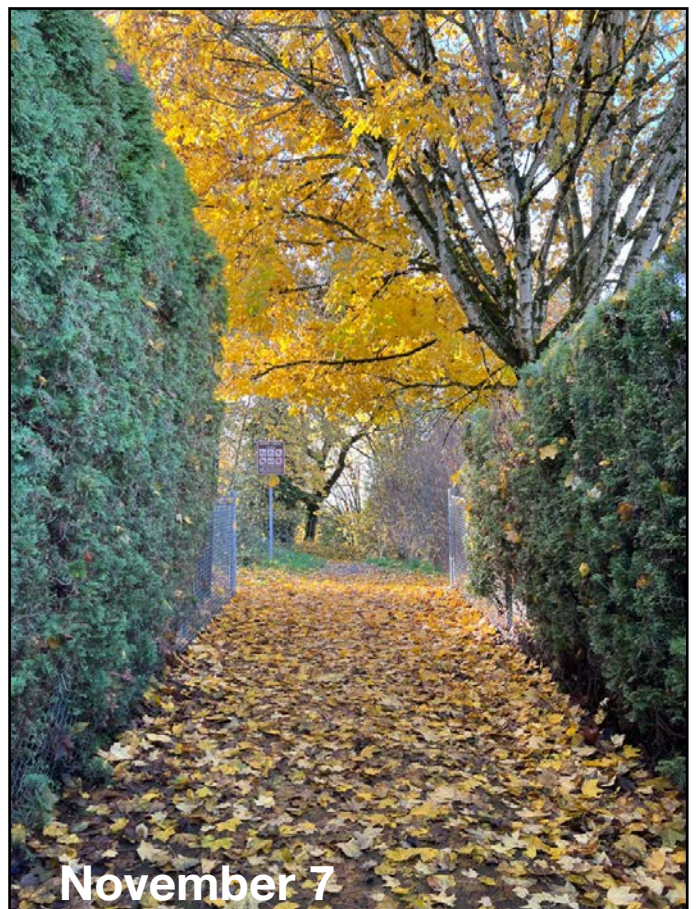
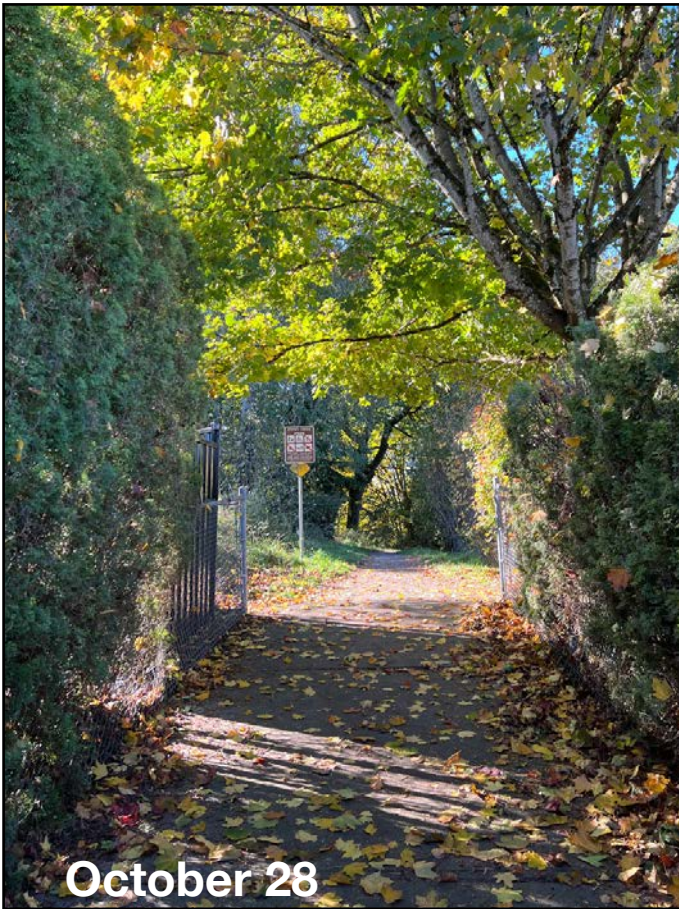
Parr Stage: As they continue to grow, Coho salmon develop vertical bars on their sides, called parr marks. This camouflage helps them blend into their surroundings in the freshwater environment.

Smoltification: Eventually, Coho salmon undergo parr-smolt transformation, a physiological process that prepares them for the transition from freshwater to saltwater. Their bodies adapt to tolerate the change in salinity.

Ocean Migration: Once smoltification is complete, the juvenile Coho salmon migrate downstream to the ocean. They spend a couple of years feeding and growing in the rich marine environment of the Pacific Ocean. Depending on environmental factors and fishing pressures, only 1% to 5% of our Coho will survive to return and spawn.



Autumn transition:



The Value of “Forest Bathing” (1/2)

It’s been a couple of years since I mentioned the health benefits of walking on Stoney Creek Trail. We are blessed to have small wooded areas within our city. Here’s why you should take advantage of this and spend time on our Trail...



It is best if you walk alone (or with your dog!)—no chatting with friends to distract you, no using your cell phone (except for taking photos). I can attest that photography is a great way focus your attention on your surroundings).



The value of forest bathing lies in its affect on your overall well-being. Paying attention to the scent of the cedars, the gurgling of the Creek, the texture of tree bark, etc. while walking along the Trail is called mindfulness. It brings you into the present moment, fosters relaxation, reduces stress and promotes mental clarity.

There are physiological benefits as well. Forest air is rich in volatile organic compounds emitted by trees and inhaled as you walk. Scientific studies have linked them to improved bodily immunity to infections and diseases. Of course, the physical activity is good for cardiovascular health and fitness.

Forest Bathing (2/2)

Through forest bathing you can achieve emotional well-being. Just sit a while on one of the park benches and slowly look around you. The serenity of a forest often leads to reduced anxiety and perhaps even a sense of awe.



Lastly, forest bathing can help you to develop a vital connection to nature. This can foster a deeper understanding of our interdependence with nature and instill a sense of stewardship of the environment. Hopefully, it will lead to greater environmental awareness and possibly inspire you to support conservation efforts.

There are many values in forest bathing; it sharpens the mind, strengthens the body and enhances overall well-being. Good reasons to visit the Trail regularly!

Odds and Ends:

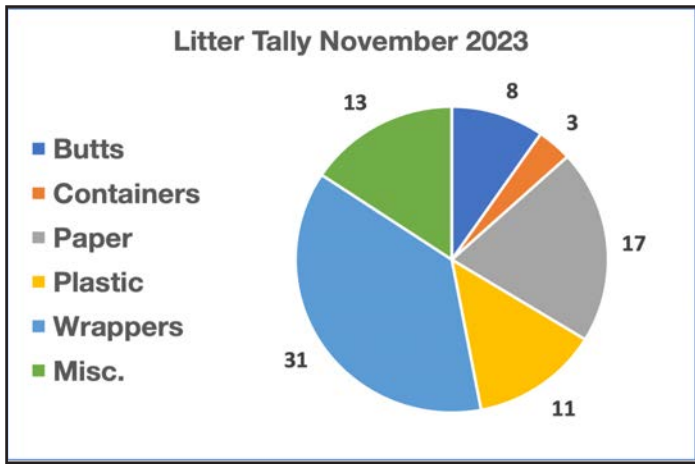


Top: Very low water entering the Pond; then a couple of days heavy rain (witness erosion on Hemlock Hill).

Middle: The effect of the herbicide Roundup on the Japanese knotweed outbreak near the Dog Corral.

Bottom: that heavy rain had another result: a brief Chum salmon run; a suspicious fish net found at the Pond; and finally a touch of frost at month's end.





Total litter items = 83 (last month = 95)

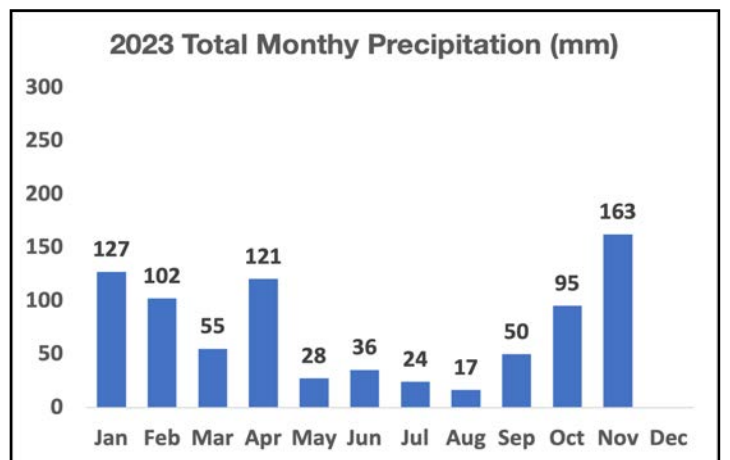
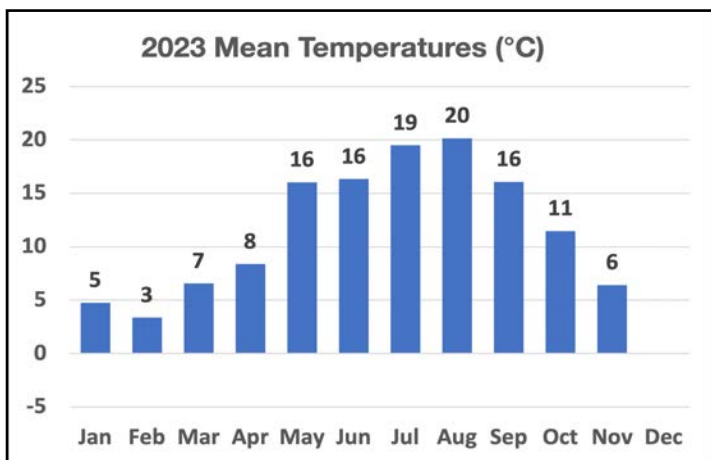
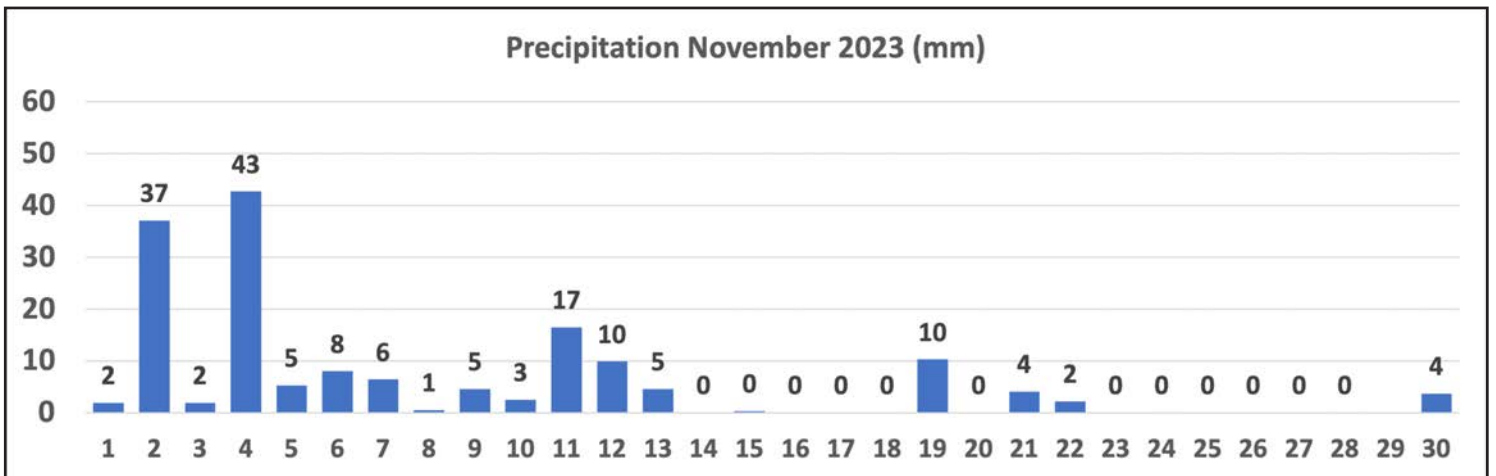
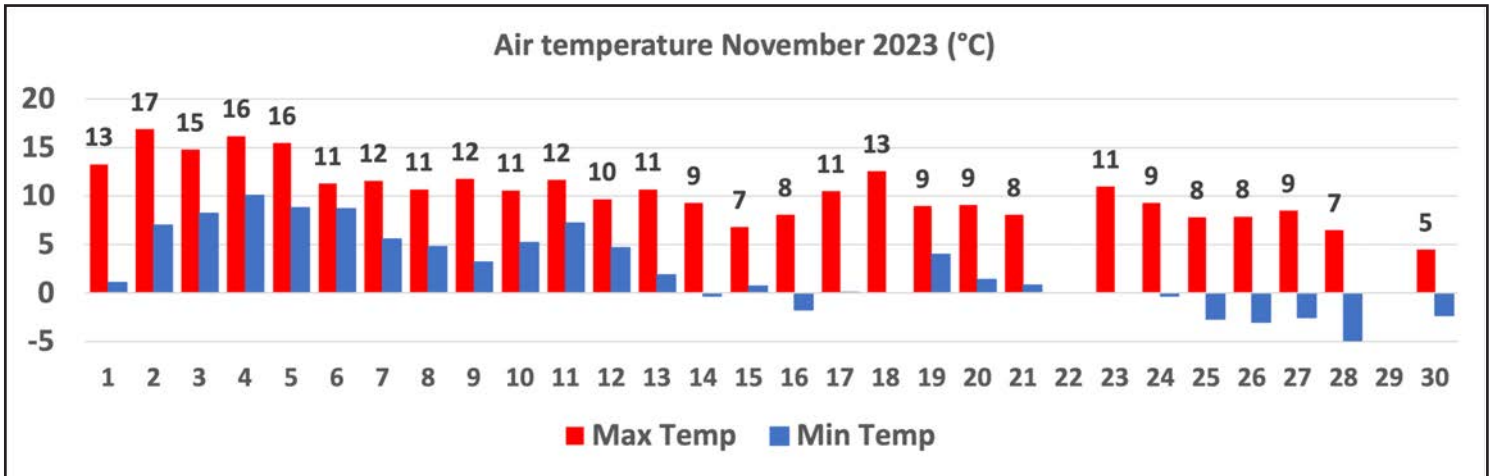
Containers: bottles, bottle tops, cans, coffee cups, lids, juice boxes.

Paper: tissues, napkins, posters, newspaper, receipts, cardboard, etc.

Plastic: dog waste bags & shreds, other items made of plastic.

Wrappers: candy wrappers, foil, cellophane.

Miscellaneous: clothing, glass, chewing gum, dog balls & fragments, etc.



For convenience, I use these custom place-names

