



**Stoney Creek Trail Report  
No. 60 - March 2024**

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The photo on the Front Page is of a colourful fungus called **Chicken of the Woods** (*Laetiporus sulphureus*), introducing this month's feature, **polypores**. These are a group of fungi that produce shelf-like growths known as conks. This one was on a branch of a dying Hazelnut tree on the Straightaway beside the Glade.

Do you remember the large old cottonwood stump that used to stand near Bridge 6? In this photo, you can see it was host to several conks, those odd hoof-shaped things. They are a sign that the stump was being digested by a polypore fungus.



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If you enjoy taking nature photos along the Trail, maybe this is for you.... On the last weekend of April, you are invited to take part in the **City Nature Challenge**. It will involve taking photos of wild species in and around Abbotsford, helping to track local biodiversity.

Volunteers will need to download and learn how to use the app, **iNaturalist**, for which there will be a training session on Stoney Creek Trail on April 6th. The event will actually take place on the weekend of April 27/28. [See Pages 13/14.](#)

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**Oops!** You may recall that in last month's feature on mosses I said that they were very difficult to identify? Since then, experts at **iNaturalist** have advised me that I had wrongly named several of the ones in that Report. Rather than publish the corrections here, I have made the necessary name changes on [my website](#).

## Polypore Fungi (1/3)



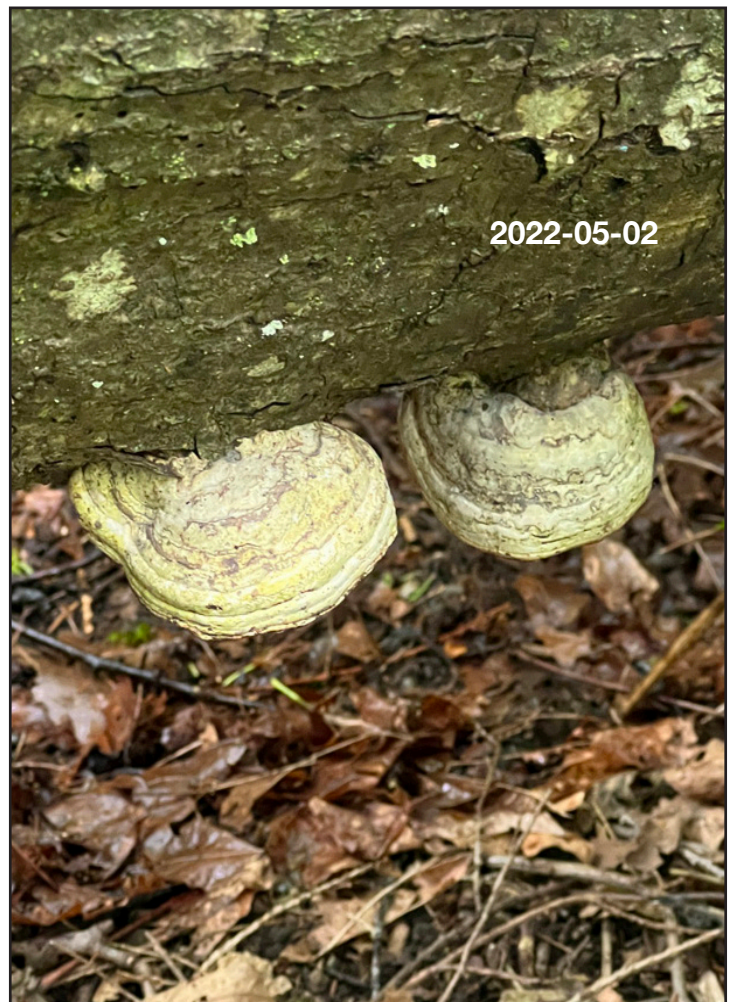
**Ochre-banded conk (*Fomitopsis ochracea*)**

Like other fungi, Polypores consist of a hidden network of hairlike mycelia spreading throughout host trees, both living and dead. They are very efficient in decomposing lignin and cellulose, the main components of wood. They are *parasitic* rather than *symbiotic*, as they do not exchange nutrients for carbohydrates with the host in a mutually beneficial way.

The **Artist's Bracket** is a large, rounded conk that will grow for many years, up to 30 cm or more in diameter and several kg in weight. Their age can be determined by counting the rings on the upper surface. Their underside can be scratched with a sharp instrument leaving a sketch that turns brown after a while, hence their name.

Polypores are known as bracket or shelf fungi because they produce shelf-like fruiting bodies. Their underside consists of small vertical tubes where billions of spores are produced and released. (Spores are small, single-celled structures that are capable of developing into new individuals). Conks are often semi-circular in shape and tough, so some can last for years.

The hoof-shaped **Ochre-banded conk** is found on both hardwood and conifer trees. This one was on a cottonwood log lying near Bridge 6. It is woody in texture and its underside is creamy white.



**Artist's Bracket (*Ganoderma applanatum*)**

## Polypore Fungi (2/3)

Polypores are the first link in food chains that feed on decomposed plant material. Many insects, mites and other invertebrates feed on polypore mycelia and fruiting bodies. They, in turn, become food for birds and other larger animals. Woodpeckers and other hole-nesting birds typically carve their nests in softer wood decomposed by polypores.

Polypore fungi have been used for various purposes for centuries. For example, cork for insulation, paper for writing, and dye for coloring. They are also valued for their medicinal properties, as they contain various bioactive compounds that have anti-inflammatory, anti-tumor, anti-viral and anti-bacterial effects.

### Turkey-Tail (*Trametes versicolor*)



### Turkey-Tail (*Trametes versicolor*)

**The Turkey-Tail** is one of the most well-known medicinal polypores.

Above, a large number of them have sprouted on a dying Hazelnut on Hemlock Hill just above the Forks. The one on the left was growing on a limb that had broken off the Corkscrew willow on the Hill.

Polypores are indicators of environmental health as they are sensitive to changes in air quality, moisture and temperature. They are much more diverse in old growth (natural) forests where dead wood is more abundant than in managed forests or plantations. Many are under threat of extinction due to logging and deforestation.

## Polypore Fungi (3/3)

The **Hoof conk** is also called the Tinder conk because since ancient times it has been a source of punk for starting fires. Pieces of this fungus were amongst the possessions of the 5,000-year-old Ötzi the Iceman found 33 years ago in the Italian Alps. This one is growing on the trunk of an elderly birch tree west of the Trail on Hemlock Hill. It will be there for you to find.

This **Black-footed** polypore was one of many clustered along a buried log, probably an alder, just south of Bridge 5. This polypore tends to grow upright rather than in the form of a conk. It is the cause of “white rot” in both conifer and hardwood trees.

**Black-foot polypore (*Picipes badius*)**



**Hoof conk (*Fomes fomentarius*)**



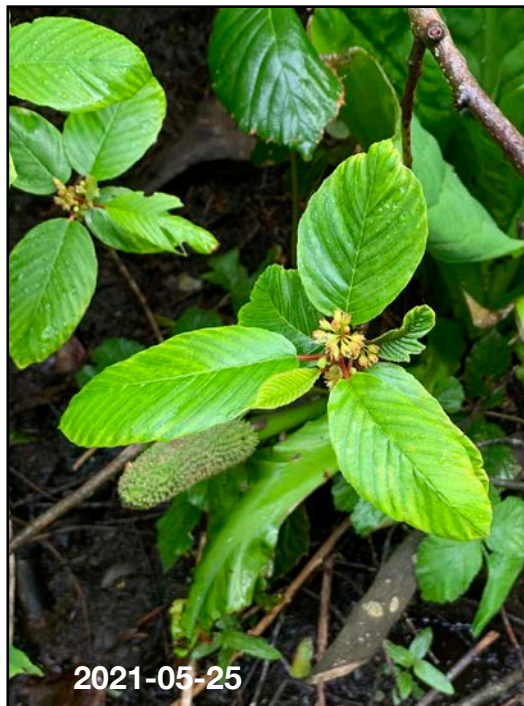
## The Cascara Tree



The Cascara (*Frangula purshiana*) is a small native tree common in southern BC. It doesn't mind growing in the shade of cedars and maples, or in wet areas near a creek. In the wild, Cascaras create brushy stands which provide protective cover for wildlife. They do not adapt well to urban settings, which probably explains why I've found only three in the Park. One is behind the fence opposite Joplin's bench and another that has toppled near the south end of the Straightaway. There was a third one in the marsh near the south end of Bridge 5. Maybe it's still there.

The Cascara's leaves cluster near the end of the twigs. They are simple (having no lobes), with fine-toothed edges and prominent veins. It is the only deciduous tree in the province whose buds are not covered by scales in the winter. The tiny greenish-yellow flowers have five petals in the shape of

a cup. The deep purple berries are eaten by both birds and small mammals, which helpfully distribute the undigestible seeds afterwards. The bark is a dark gray-brown, smooth when young, becoming scaly with age. It peels easily from the tree.



The Cascara has had both cultural and medicinal uses. The Nuu-chah-nulth people used the wood to make chisel handles, and the Skagit people produced a green dye from the bark. When consumed, both the bark and berries are strong laxatives.

The tree's name must not be confused with the other cascara, the husk of the coffee bean, which is used as a flavouring agent in foods and drinks.

## The Vine Maple Tree

The Vine maple (*Acer circinatum*) is a native tree common in forests and woodlands in southwest British Columbia. It is small and multi-stemmed, typically growing up to seven meters in height, with a lifespan of 80 to 90 years. It is so named because of its sprawling branches that will climb into other trees for support. Its branches will sometimes take root to produce new trees. It can thrive in a variety of light conditions, but does best in an understory, forming thickets under taller conifers. It is tolerant of a wide range of soil conditions, from sand to clay, and is relatively drought-resistant.

The leaves are symmetric with seven to nine regularly spaced palmate lobes (spreading like fingers on a hand), all nearly the same length. The young stems are pale green. In spring, from April to June, it produces white flowers with wine-coloured sepals, which are later replaced by widely spreading samaras (paired, winged seeds).



The Vine maple's leaves undergo remarkable colour changes. They emerge a beautiful lime green in the spring, maturing to a dark forest green. In the fall, they transform into vibrant oranges and reds. This is why Vine maples are popular in landscaping.



Vine maple wood is fine-grained, tough and resilient. First nations people have used it to fashion utensils, bows and arrows. In modern times, it has been used for crafting tool handles and carving decorative items.

Vine maples provide valuable food and habitat for many creatures. In spring, the flowers attract bees and other pollinators, while later in the season the seeds are a treat for birds such as woodpeckers and finches. Deer will browse on the foliage.

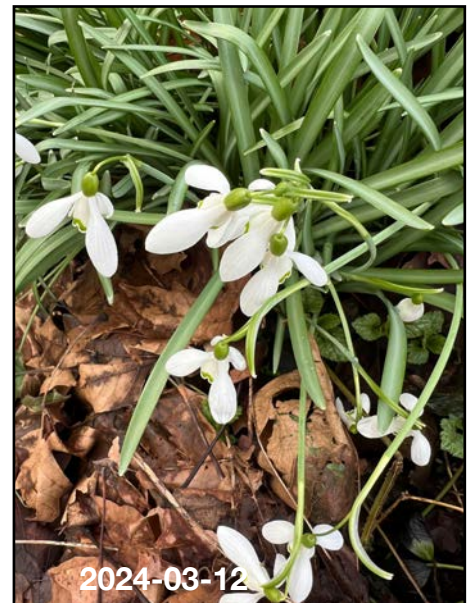
## Odds and Ends



**Top:** a child's ornament and frost on a fence rail. The four Sequoia seedlings that I said had died are actually Larches, which are deciduous conifers.

**Middle:** kudos to **Devon Wade** from Parks for unplugging this walkway drain and removing graffiti from this bench.

**Bottom:** Licorice ferns on a maple below Bridge 5, and a Red currant bush and Snowdrops on the Hill.





## More Odds and Ends



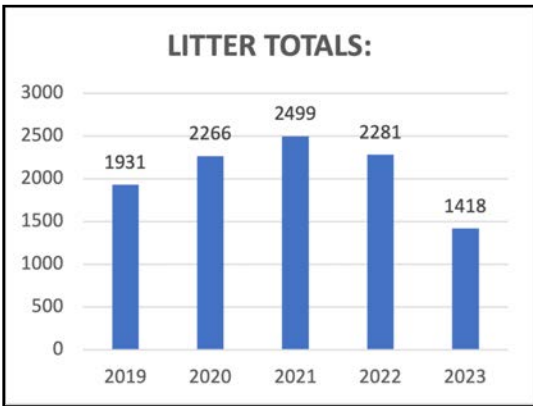
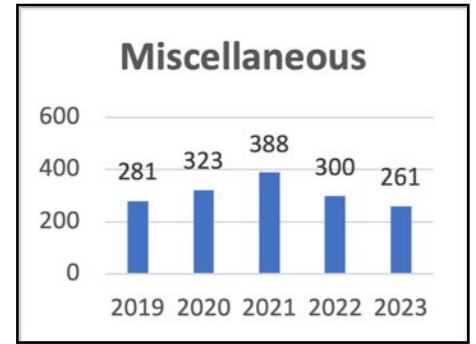
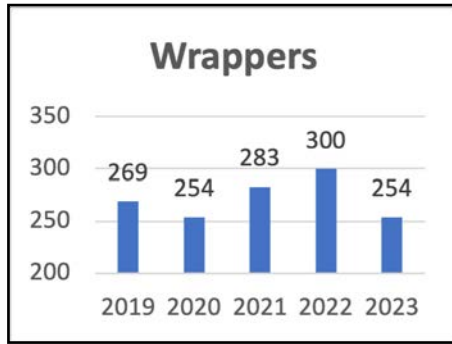
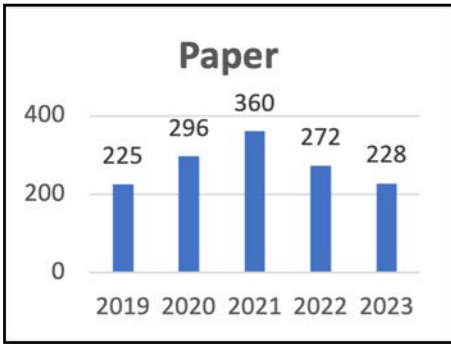
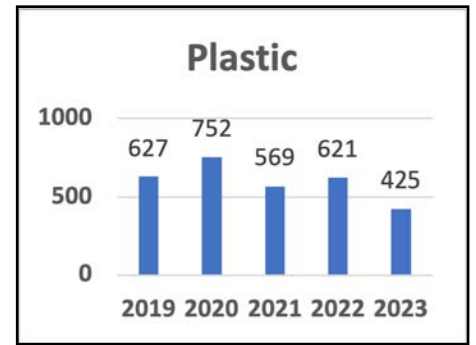
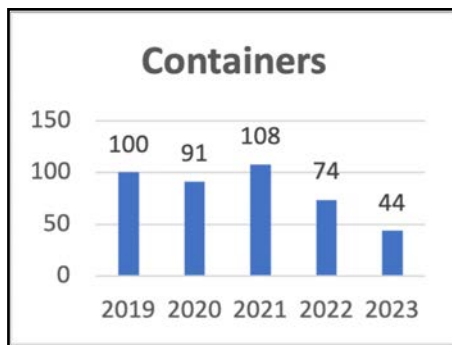
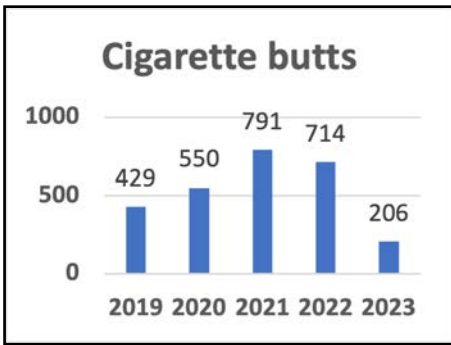
**Top:** new buds on a Cascara, Vine maple and Bigleaf maple tree.

**Middle:** on a visit to the ARPSES hatchery, I learned that this year's batch of coho fry were at the end of the alevin stage, ready to be moved from the incubator trays to the Cap troughs.

**Bottom:** new leaves on the Red elderberry, Salmonberry and Pacific ninebark.



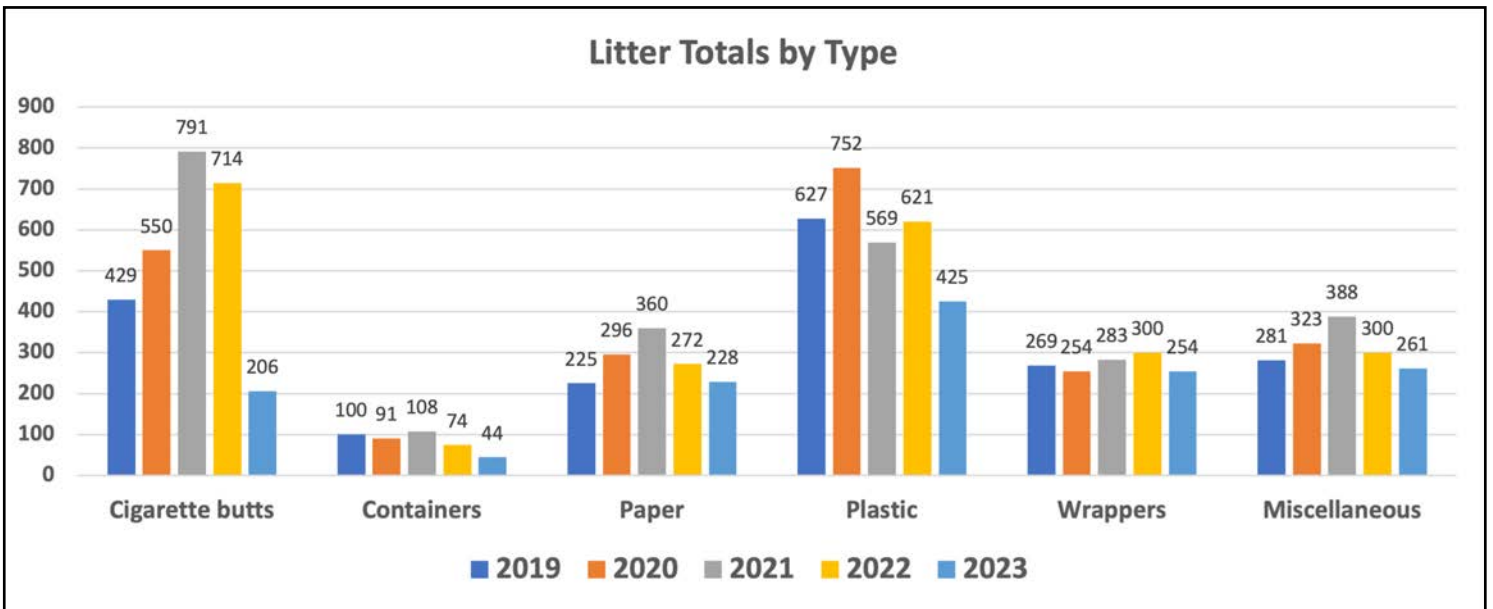
# A Five Year Litter Analysis\*



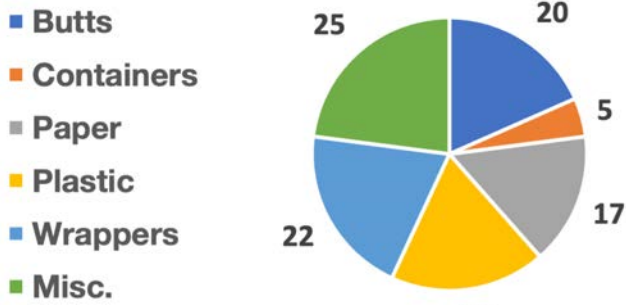
## Some notable litter items picked up in 2023:

assorted pieces of fabric, a bag of wheel nuts, a bicycle, a Blistex applicator, a glass candle holder, colouring felts, a fish net, gloves, a trowel, a hat, a leash, a metal water bottle, a pendant, a plastic colander, two pairs of sunglasses, two toques and socks, a toy shovel, and a USB cable.

\* Only the last nine months of 2019 are included.  
Total litter items over five years = ten thousand plus.



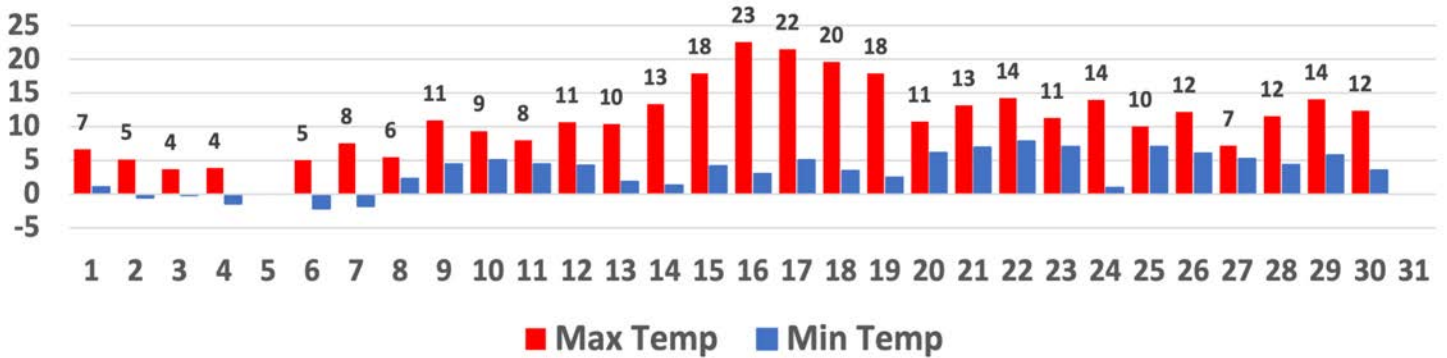
### Litter Tally March 2024



Total litter items = 109

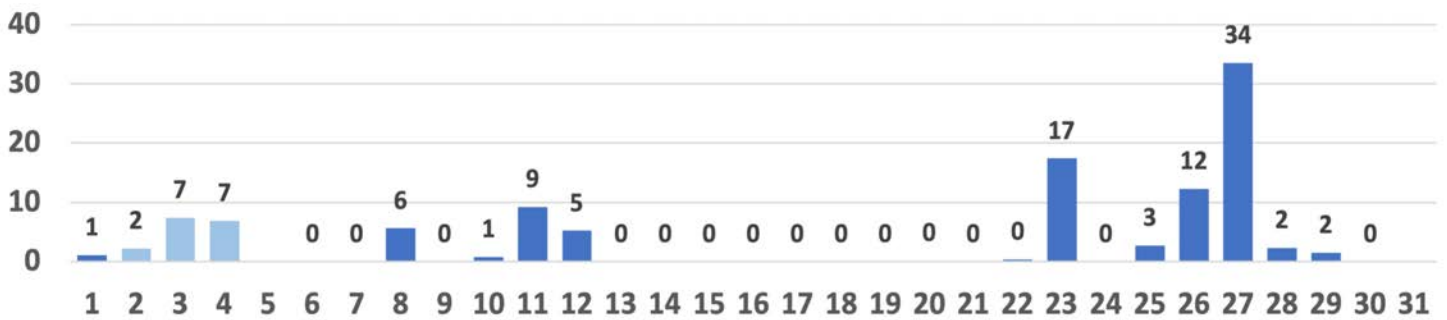
**Containers:** bottles, bottle tops, cans, coffee cups, lids, juice boxes.  
**Paper:** tissues, napkins, posters, newspaper, receipts, cardboard, etc.  
**Plastic:** dog waste bags & shreds, other items made of plastic.  
**Wrappers:** candy wrappers, foil, cellophane.  
**Miscellaneous:** clothing, glass, chewing gum, dog balls & fragments, etc.

### Air temperature YXX March 2024 (°C)

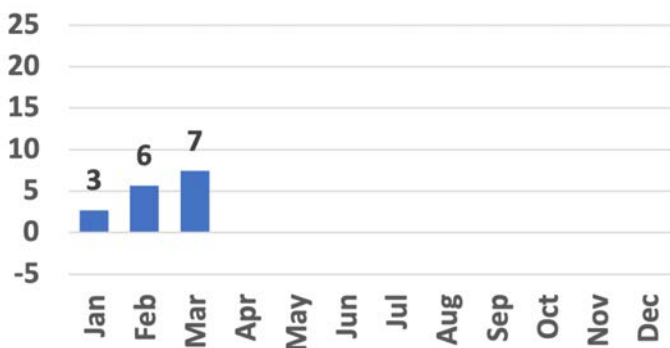


### Precipitation YXX March 2024 (mm)

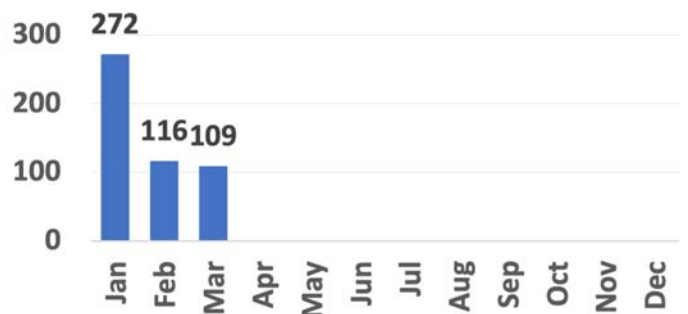
Rain vs. Mixed Rain/Snow



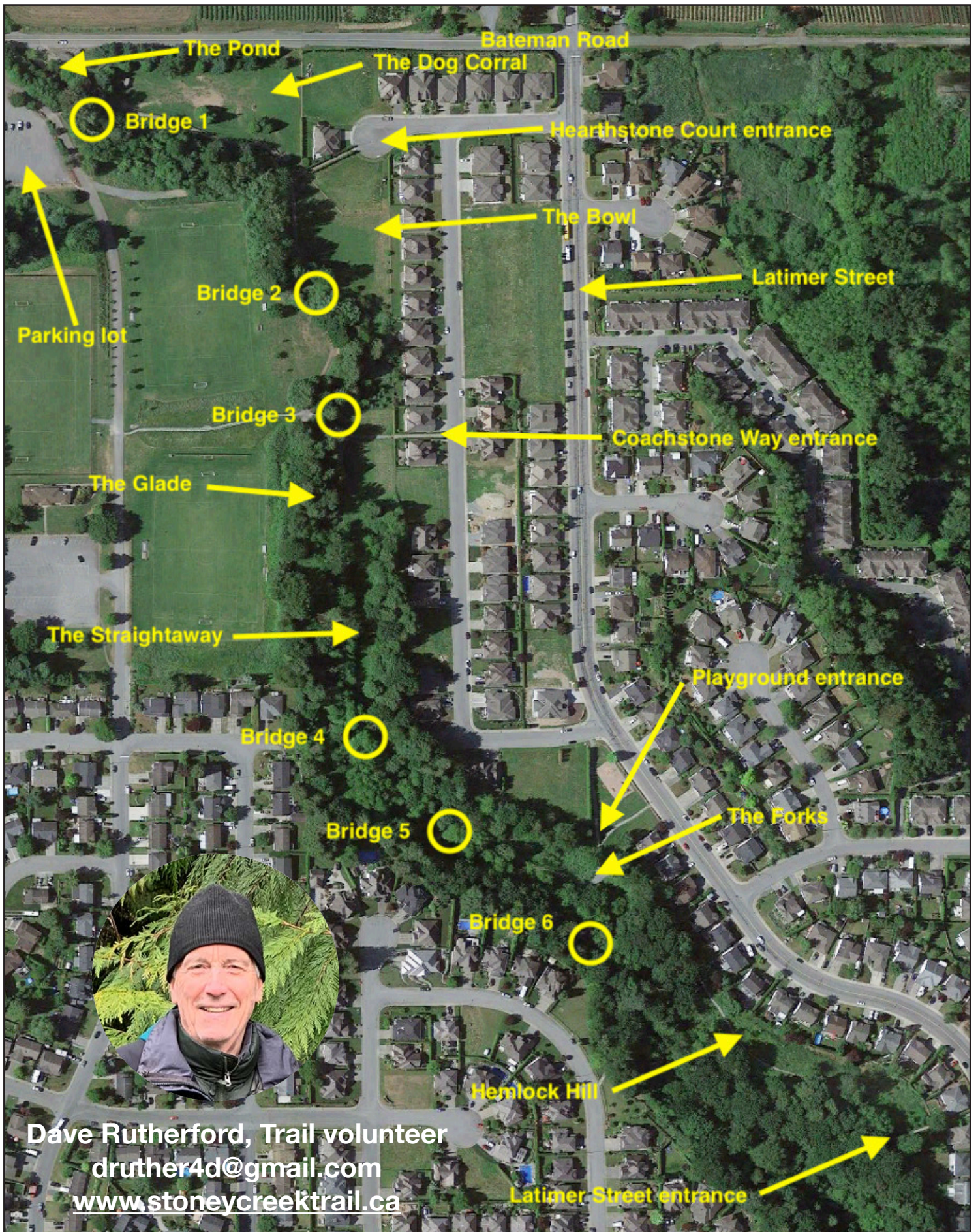
### 2024 Mean Temperatures (°C)



### 2024 Total Monthly Precipitation (mm)



For convenience, I use these custom place-names





– CELEBRATE OUR LOCAL NATURE –

# Join in the City Nature Challenge!

## APRIL 26 - 29

**500+ CITIES AROUND THE WORLD ARE JOINING TOGETHER TO DOCUMENT NATURE!**

Find and photograph **wild** plants and animals in your backyard, in parks, along city streets, in school yards - anywhere you find nature in and around our area.

### Participating is easy!

1. Download the iNaturalist app & make an account.
2. Take photos of **WILD** plants & animals.
3. Upload your observations to share with the iNaturalist community.
4. Learn more as your finds get identified!

### Events in Abbotsford:

**April 6: iNaturalist training walk @ Stoney Creek Trail. Meet @ 11 am at the main parking lot for Bateman Park off Bateman Road.**

**April 27: Bioblitz of city parks with small groups. Meet in front of the Reach Gallery Museum @ 8:30 am**

**April 28: Willband Creek Park Event: the Abbotsford Mission Nature Club will have a nature display at the kiosk next to the viewing platform from 11 am to 3 pm. Club members will be available to share projects and species at the park. They will also lead 30 minute walks starting at 11 am, 12 pm, 1 pm, and 2 pm. Meet at the main parking lot off Bateman Road.**

**\*For all events, please have the iNaturalist app downloaded on your phone. For more info, go to our website:**

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2024-abbotsford>

Click “read more” on the website to find video links and information on how to use iNaturalist



CITY NATURE CHALLENGE IS ORGANIZED BY



CALIFORNIA  
ACADEMY OF  
SCIENCES



NATURAL  
HISTORY  
MUSEUM  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

***From an e-mail I received on Saturday, March 9:***

Hi City Nature Challenge volunteers,

We have finalized dates and times for our City Nature Challenge events. You can find the flyer [on the previous page].... If you have a color printer, you are welcome to print it and put it up where it is allowed. Or share on social media. I have color copies if you need any.

The first event will be an instructional walk with Julia Carr on April 6 at 11 am, Stoney Creek trail. You can park at the parking lot off Bateman Road. Julia was the program manager for the BC Parks Biodiversity Program for several years and has lots of experience with iNaturalist.

You are all invited to help on Saturday morning, April 27, to take observations in local parks. We will meet at the Reach Gallery Museum at 8:30 am and get organized into small groups, then head out to the parks. I would ask that you let me know if you would like to join so that I can have enough teams prepared. I've heard from about half of you so far.

The Abbotsford Mission Nature Club will host four walks at Willband Creek Park on Sunday, April 28, as well as have a booth near the kiosk at the viewing platform. For all the details, please see the flyer or check out the journal post [on our project website](#).

I hope you will have fun learning to use iNaturalist and that you will enjoy helping with for the City Nature Challenge! I took a look at the spreadsheet for the CNC organizers, and it looks as if there are now over 600 cities participating worldwide!

If you haven't already done so, I'd appreciate a response regarding your plans for Saturday morning, April 27 (small group or individual). Feel free to invite your friends to help, people at work, etc.!

Take care,

Joan Septembre

[joan.septembre@gmail.com](mailto:joan.septembre@gmail.com)