



**Stoney Creek Trail Report  
No. 64 - July 2024**

Thanks to **Nathan Loewen** of Redcedar Environmental for the photo of a dead Cutthroat trout on the front page. This is one of hundreds of aquatic fauna that died in Stoney Creek earlier this month....

Early in the evening of July 3rd, visitors to the Trail began to see masses of a mysterious, detergent-like foam streaming down the Creek. Within hours, hundreds of dead juvenile fish, crayfish and lampreys were to be seen all the way from above Bridge 6 down to the Pond (photo below).



Later, we learned the substance was a fire suppressant foam called PHOS-CHEK 1% that had been spilled at Firehall No. 7 on Old Clayburn Rd. The foam somehow entered a storm drain that emptied into Stoney Creek at Palfy Park off Laburnum Avenue.

Like everyone with an affection for Stoney Creek Park, I was shocked, angered and grieved by the catastrophic effect of the foam on the Creek fauna. On my website, I will be posting [a history of the event](#). It will be based mostly on information from official news releases, as most people connected to the accident, the response, or the mitigation are understandably reluctant to speak to the public. Here are a few of my thoughts...

The City reported that the foam had been “accidentally released from a disconnected



hose.” The manufacturer’s safety data sheet specifies that a spill should be **absorbed** with an inert material such as sand or vermiculite and **not flushed** into a “sewer system.” Far too late, the City brought in vacuum and flush trucks: the foam had already made its way down to the outfall in Palfy Park (photo above).

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Environmental experts became fully involved the following day, so late that they found the chemical was too diluted to be detected. It is ironic for their press release to state the foam has very low toxicity and of “negligible risk to aquatic life” when a survey found it had reduced dissolved oxygen and coated their gills, thereby suffocating almost a thousand fish!! As if to downplay the disaster, the press release also stated the chemicals in the foam do not accumulate in fish tissue, so the surviving fish were safe.

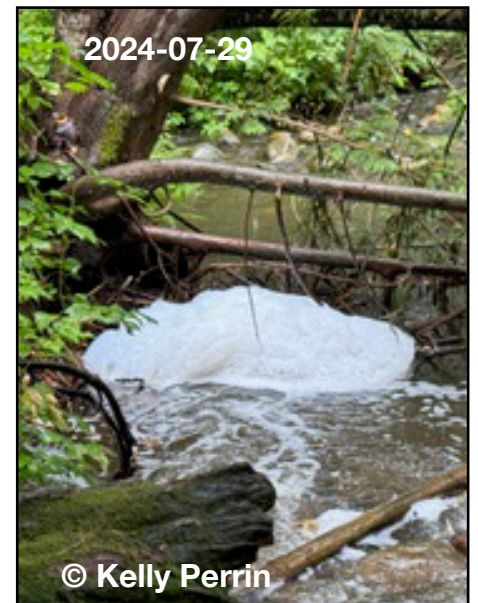
Of course, salmon depend on the existence of other living things in their habitat. In the release, nothing was said about the survival rate of the benthic macroinvertebrates, the small aquatic creatures that are an essential part of the life support system. So far, I have been unable to acquire the results of surveys that were reportedly taken.

Now, weeks after the disaster, at any viewpoint along the Creek, you will see nothing moving except the water.



Juvenile salmon have a hard time surviving under normal circumstances. Let's hope Stoney Creek will have recovered well enough to support the new batch of fry that will result from the upcoming spawning season. The recovery of the salmon population will depend even more on the efforts of ARPSES, our local hatchery.

On the other hand, it was heartening to see a First Nations team (Stó:lō Guardians) working alongside a GHD Environmental crew retrieving surviving fish from the Pond. And, on a quiet Tuesday afternoon (July 16th), I met a family from Surrey picnicking in the Glade. Their boys had found a live crayfish!



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**July 29th: there has been another foam incident!** This time, the foam has come from much farther upstream, near McKee Park. The identity and toxicity of the foam are still being evaluated. It's speculated to be a detergent and the foaming effect is compounded by rain flushing the creekbed after the long dry spell. (Photo taken above Bridge 5).



# Abbotsford Ravine Park Salmon Enhancement Society at work




You recall the fish deaths in the Pond in May? (Seems very minor now). It prompted members of ARPSES, our local salmon hatchery, to update the fish symbols marking the storm drains that empty into the Creek. The purpose of the bright yellow stickers, of course, is to remind people that hazardous chemicals are a danger to natural waterways and must not be allowed to enter the drains. The recent foam concentrate catastrophe certainly underlines this message.


Last month, this small crew of ARPSES volunteers applied new stickers at locations along Coachstone Way, Hearthstone Court and Latimer Street.



 Fisheries and Oceans Canada  Pêches et Océans Canada 



## This is a storm drain.

-  Storm drains collect rainwater that runs off roads, parking lots and driveways.
-  Storm drains empty into streams. The rainwater collects litter, oil, gas, fertilizer, pesticides and anything else that will float or dissolve. Sometimes people mistakenly dump paint, antifreeze and other harmful chemicals directly into storm drains. All these untreated pollutants flow through the storm drains and into streams.
-  Pollution is a constant danger to streams. If everyone lets just a little fertilizer, a little carwash detergent, or a little motor oil run into a storm drain, it all adds up to toxic levels. Plants and small insects die. Salmon and trout either move out, or they die too. Soon the stream will support little, if any, life.



### Storm Drain Marking Program

You can help.

If your drain has not yet been marked, join with neighbours to paint this well-known symbol on your streets. For further information contact a Community Advisor at your local Fisheries and Oceans Canada office, in the telephone blue pages.

## Trail Dogs 1/2



“**Timber** is a four-year-old Multigenerational Australian Labradoodle. We got him from a breeder in Grand Forks. It was Covid time and it was hard to find a puppy of this breed. Our friends who live in the Kootenays got a pup from this breeder and recommended us to them. We met the breeder in Osoyoos to pick him up. It was a very happy day! Aside from walks and chasing a ball, Timber loves to hang out with his people. He is a snuggler! He howls at sirens and he loves to walk at Stoney Creek!”



“**Toby** is a Pomeranian x Mini Pin (maybe with some Akita genes from his mom). He was an April Fools’ puppy, born two years and three months ago. When he was eleven weeks old, he went to a three-year-old boy, only to find out the boy was highly allergic. So he had to be removed from the home quickly. In stepped their friends, my son and daughter in law, to take the puppy till they could find a new home. They had three cats and two dogs already. So my son called the mom and said he would help. Once Toby came through the door, he wasn’t going to leave—he was home. He loves to socialize with both two- and four-legged creatures, so his favorite thing is to go for walks, especially at Bateman Park, and run and play off leash with his dog friends and meet people. Toby is very protective of his home turf, barking to warn off intruders if they get too close. The neighbors also feel safe knowing he is keeping watch. He is just a very happy dog who lives with two cats (feral rescues), one of which bosses him around.”

## Trail Dogs 2/2

“**Ruby** is a three-year-old Coonhound. We got her from a breeder in Grand Forks, BC. She loves to hunt and chase anything with four legs. She is very vocal and says hello to everyone at the park. Coonhounds require a lot of exercise and entertainment. If they are not kept busy they like to get into trouble.”

“**Muffleupagus (Muffy)** is a very energetic 12½-year-old Miniature Schnauzer. After trying for six months to adopt a dog, I went to Kijiji and found her. I picked her up the next day in North Burnaby! She wasn’t expected to be very healthy or live very long, but this proved to be very incorrect!

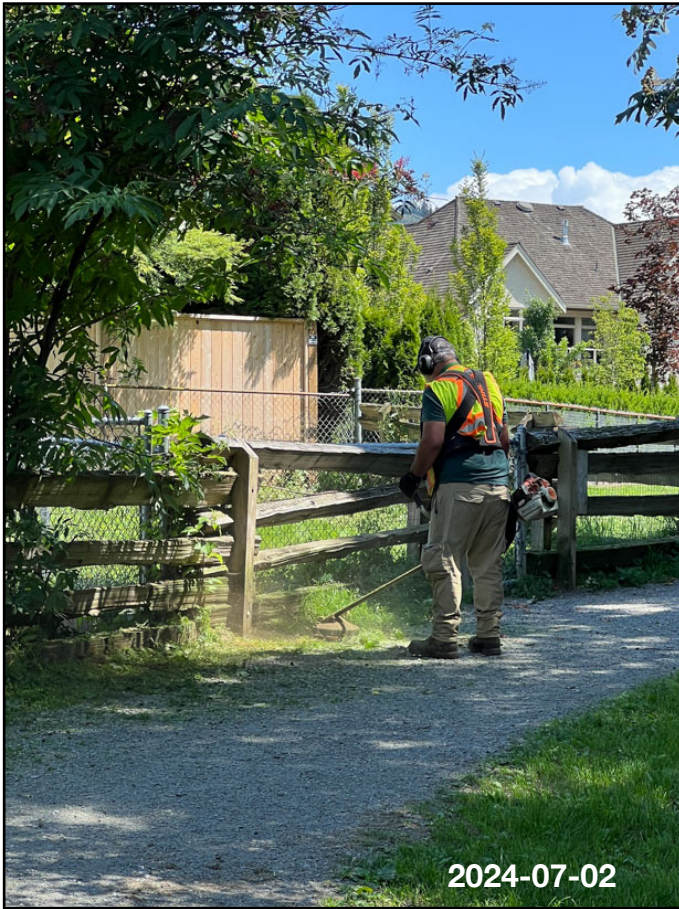
“Muffy used to compete in Agility (favourite obstacles: the Teeter and the A-Frame), but we haven’t done any sports since the Pandemic.



“She’s a regular at both Clearbrook and Bateman parks. Muffy loves making new friends, greeting everyone by barking. She was trained to speak a few simple English phrases and regularly says, “I LOVE YOU!” to other dogs and people (except now it just sounds like barking, as we haven’t practiced her speech in many years). She also says goodbye with a single bark afterwards. It’s been said many times that she would be a wonderful Walmart Greeter.

“She loves to play with sticks and ropes. With the right person or dog, she will wrestle. Her favourite game at home is Hide and Seek with treats hidden around the house. She is extremely friendly but cautious around small children because of some past bad experiences. She is a big fan of large fluffy male dogs and can be seen flirting with them from time to time.”

## Park Maintenance 1/2



Maintenance work, such as mowing the large areas of grass in the Bowl and along the Straightaway, is done regularly. The trail margins beside the Dog Corral and up on Hemlock Hill were well trimmed this month.

The crew that trimmed along the fence line across from the Dog Corral was a little too enthusiastic, however. Do you remember the special attention I gave last month



to a shrub I thought might be a **European elderberry**? I believe it was the only one of its kind on the Trail and I was waiting to see the colour of its berries for confirmation. It had disappeared— trimmed out of existence!! 😞

## Park Maintenance 2/2

In preparation for the annual Pond dredging operation next month, some hazardous dead alders on the margin of the Pond were removed.

The trees were difficult to get at because they were so close to the water. Before felling them, the workers had to tie ropes around them so they could be pulled to shore.

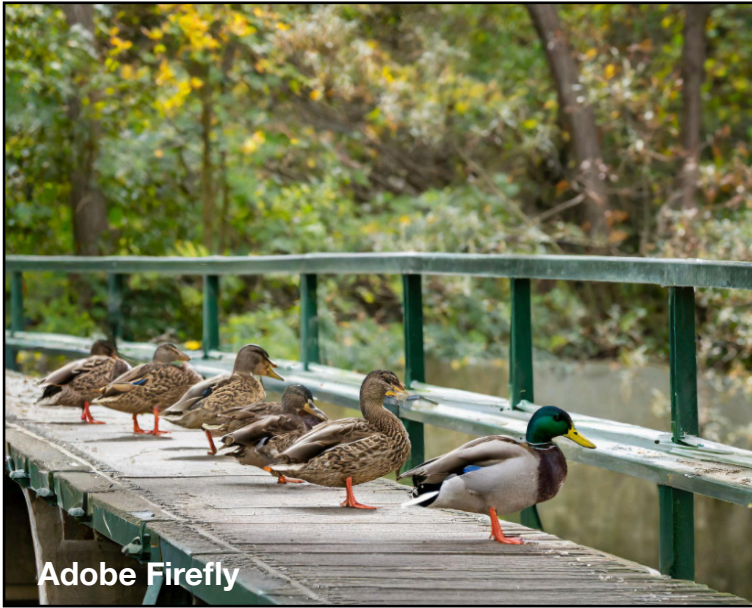
The amazingly powerful grinder on the truck chewed the 15 cm-thick tree trunks into chips in seconds.





## The Bridge 5 project: 1/2

After an excruciating delay of 32 months for the Bridge to be replaced, can the work begin?



### Does the City have all its ducks in a row?

Here's why it has taken so long. Acquiring the necessary permits for installation of a new bridge is complex. An application has to be filed for an Approval by the **BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS)**. As well, a Permit from **Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)** is required. The wording in the applications has to be specific and detailed and all permissions have to be received before work can begin.

The principal law regulating streams, aquifers and associated water resources in B.C. is the **Water Sustainability Act (WSA)**. Its purpose is to ensure protection of all natural watercourses. Any activity that is likely to affect the nature of the stream: the stream bed, the stream bank and the adjacent environment (riparian area) is termed "**Changes In and About a Stream**" (**CIAS**) and must be properly authorized under the WSA. To give you an idea of how complicated this is, the online Guide for Applications under the WSA is 41 pages long, and for the CIAS, 34 pages!

Another provincial regulation to be followed is the **Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR)**. It requires that an assessment report be submitted by a Qualified Environmental Professional.

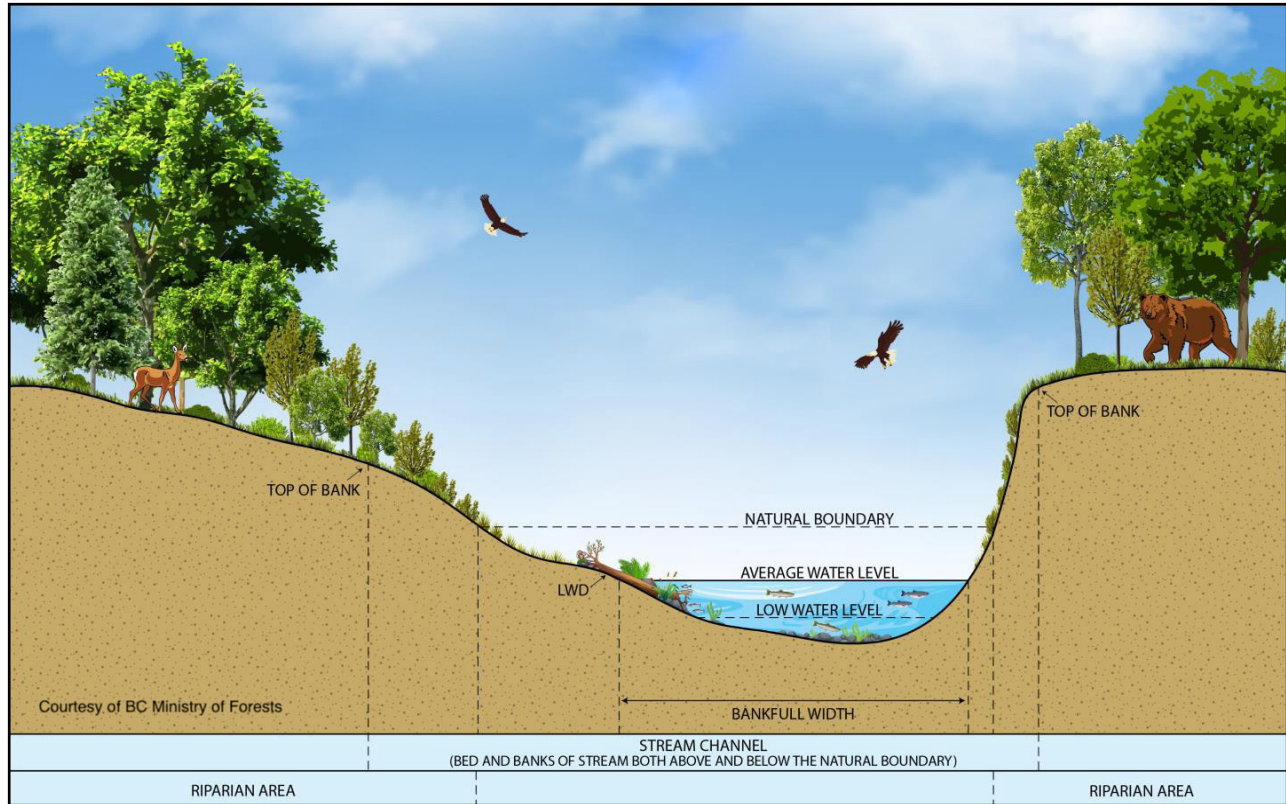
For any construction work near a stream, such as a clear span bridge and erosion protection, a **Notification of Authorized Change** must be issued. In the Bridge 5 case, the new bridge does not meet the full definition of clear span, so a WSA Approval was needed, as well as a Notification. The work must be monitored by a qualified professional engineer to determine appropriate protections, with potential involvement from specialists in other disciplines (biologists, hydrologists, archaeologists, etc.).

**Good news!** All the required permits have been acquired, fabrication of the steel Bridge is underway, and the tender for the contract will soon be issued.

Thanks to **Aletta Vanderheyden** at the City of Abbotsford for her help in the preparation of this information.

## The Bridge 5 project: 2/2

Because Stoney Creek is **fish habitat**, the federal government agency, DFO, must be involved. The definition of fish habitat includes watercourses, streams, ditches, ponds and wetlands that provide water, food, or nutrients into a fish-bearing stream even if they do not contain fish or have only temporary or seasonal flows. Fish habitat also includes streamside vegetation (riparian) areas.



**One of the many hazards** stream work creates for fish and other aquatic life is the introduction of fine sediments. They can cause: (a) loss of spaces between spawning gravels used to shelter eggs, alevin, and juvenile fish; (b) clogging of gills and smothering of eggs and juveniles; and (c) elimination of critical food items such as insects and other aquatic invertebrates.

**Riparian areas** play critical roles in (a) providing woody debris that contributes to channel complexity and maintains microclimate conditions; (b) buffering the effects of changes in water flow; (c) buffering streams from sedimentation and pollution due to surface runoff; (d) contributing food and nutrients in the form of insects and organic litter; (e) stabilizing soils through root matrices; and (f) providing shade and cover to control temperature and manage predation.

**Instream work windows** specify the optimal times of the year for stream work to minimize impacts on species and habitats, as determined by habitat officers. The “Fish Window” for the Bridge 5 project will likely be from the middle of August to the middle of September.

## Odds and Ends 1/2



**Above:** a hornet chewing wood from a fence rail to make paper for its nest, a religious medallion and, sadly, a dying bat.

**Right:** This month's newly identified flora: Common knotweed and Perennial ryegrass.

**Bottom:** insects; Flower beetles on a China rose and buttercup, and a Lady beetle that had found something of interest on a head of grass. (Do you see the rose aphid?)



## Odds and Ends 2/2



### It's Berry Season:

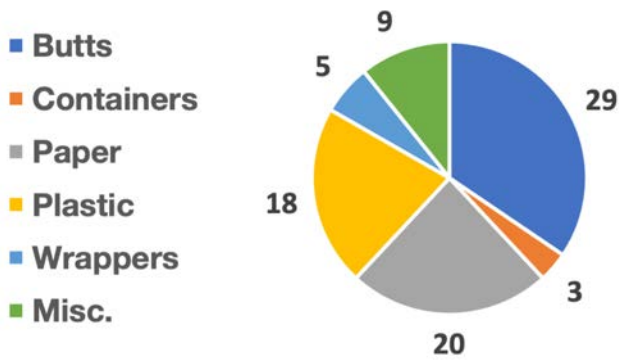
**Above:** Red elderberries, Cherry plums, and Saskatoon berries.

**Right:** Hedge nettle and Canada thistle.

**Bottom:** Himalayan blackberries, Mountain ash berries, and High-bush cranberries.



### Litter Tally July 2024



Total litter items = 84

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

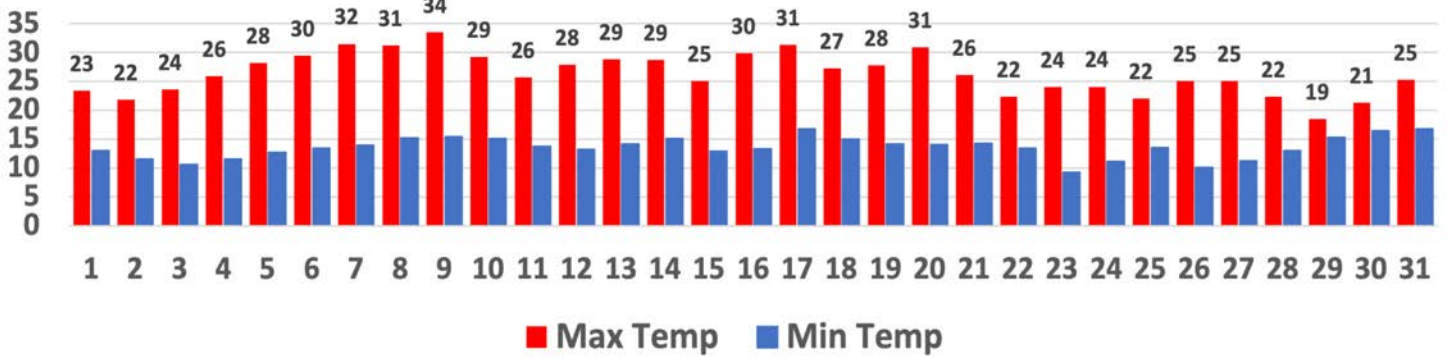
**Paper:** tissues, napkins, posters, newspaper, receipts, cardboard, etc.

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

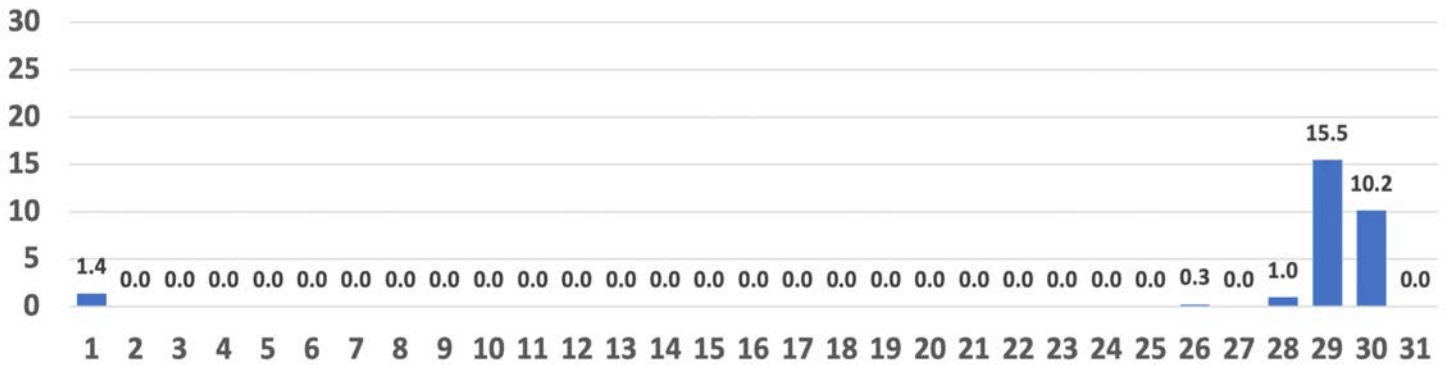
**Wrappers:** candy wrappers, foil, cellophane.

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

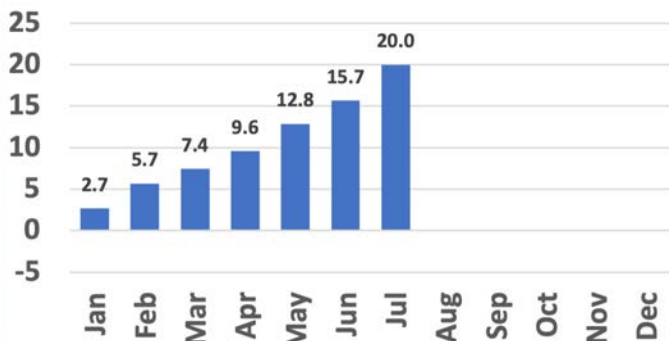
### Air temperature at YXX July 2024 (°C)



### Local Precipitation July 2024 (mm)

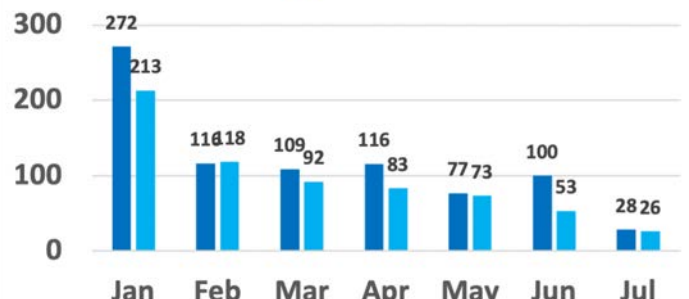


### 2024 Mean Temperatures (°C)



### Precipitation in 2024 (mm)

Average: 2019-2023



For convenience, I use these custom place-names

