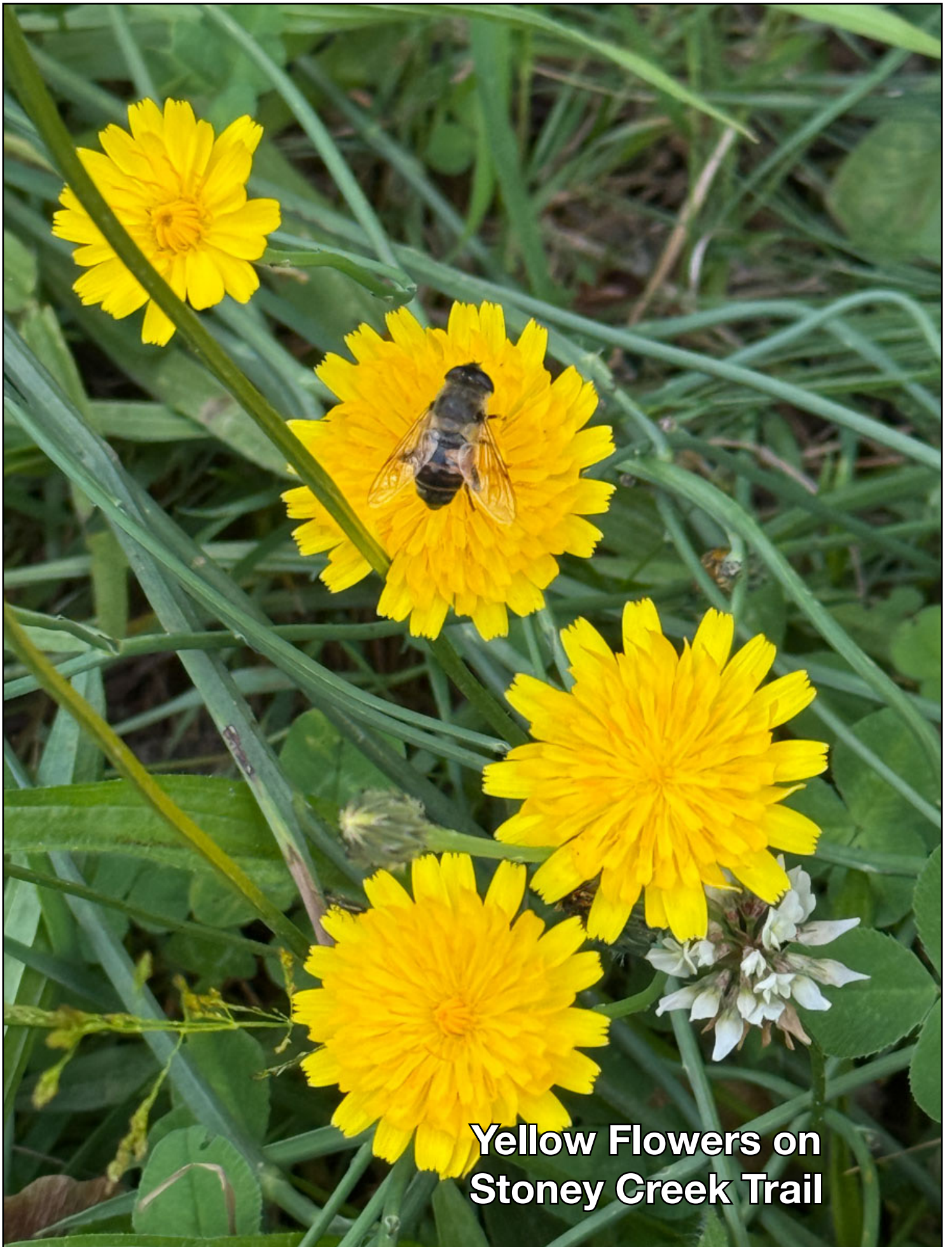




INDEX

Page 3: [Buttercups](#)

Page 4: [Asteraceae](#)

Page 7: [Mustards](#)

Page 8: [Worts and Roses](#)

The flower shown on the previous page is **smooth hawksbeard**, one of several yellow, dandelion-like species found along the Trail. When it comes to the number of different species, the asters are the most diverse group. But if you're counting sheer abundance of yellow flowers, the buttercups easily take first place.

You can see buttercups along the Trail from early May to late July. Their glossy, five-petaled yellow flowers make them easy to distinguish from the members of the Aster family (Asteraceae) all of which look similar to the dandelion.

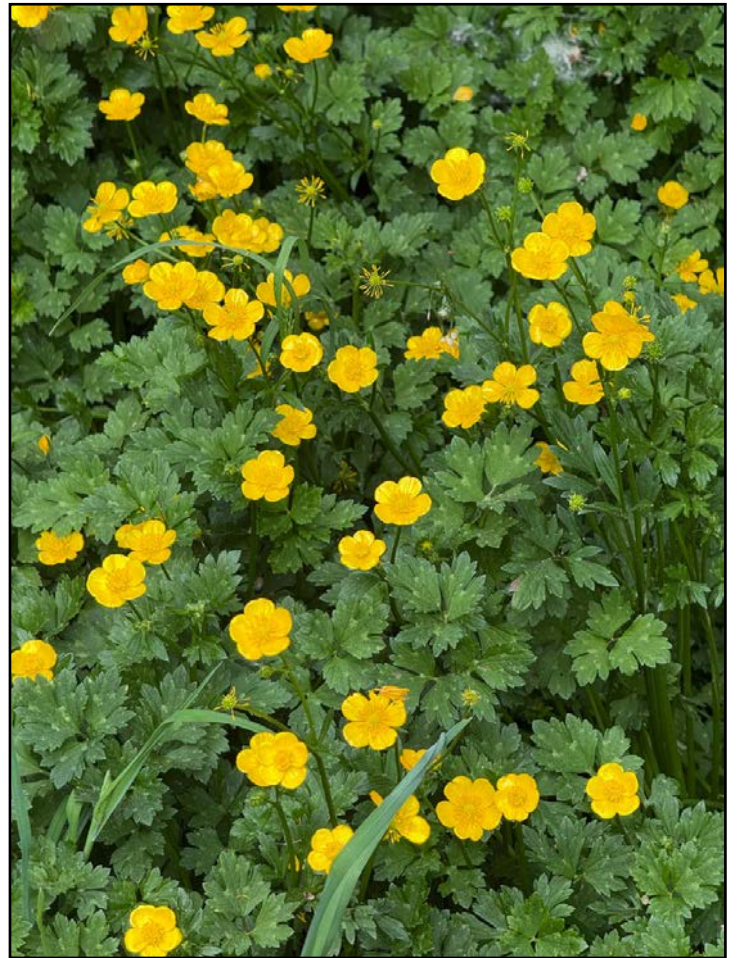
The buttercup flower is single, with five separate petals. A dandelion flower is actually a flower head made of many tiny flowers (florets) each of which resembles a petal. Buttercups belong to the **Ranunculaceae** family, while the dandelion and its look-alikes belong to the **Asteraceae** family.



Incidentally, the insect in the photo is a **drone fly** (*Eristalis tenax*), a species of hoverfly found almost everywhere in British Columbia. Resembling a honeybee, it has one pair of wings, large eyes, and hovering flight.

The Buttercup Family

There are two simple ways to distinguish one species of buttercup from the other. The **creeping buttercup (right)** grows low, spreads via runners and forms mats. Its leaves are divided into three lobes and have pale markings.



The **meadow buttercup (left)** grows tall and upright with slender, broad-reaching stems that wave above the grass. Its leaves are deeply divided into narrow lobes, almost fern-like.



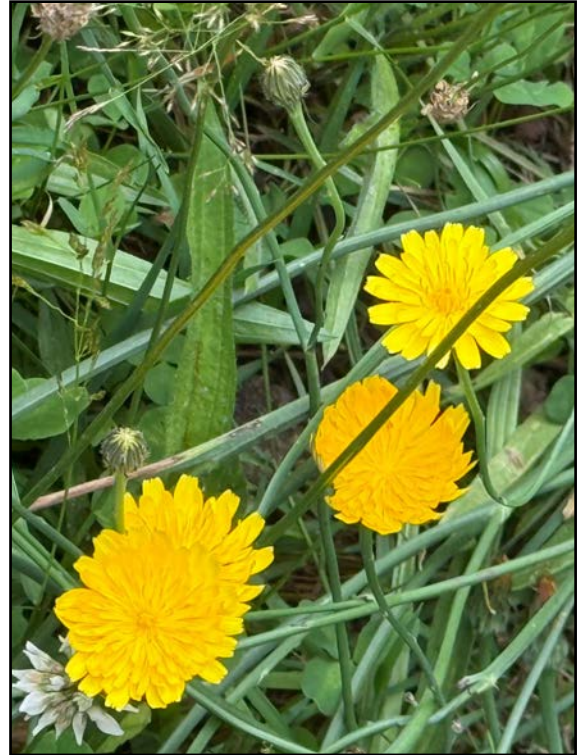
The Aster Family: 1/3



The *Asteraceae* is one of the largest families of flowers. It includes daisies, sunflowers, asters, chrysanthemums, dandelions, lettuce, and many other familiar plants.

The **common dandelion** is the standard that many of the other yellow trail flowers resemble. Compared with sow thistle, nipplewort, cat's-ear, hawksbeard, and hawkbit, it is the easiest to identify because of its single flower head on a hollow, leafless stalk which, when broken, exudes a white sap-like milky latex.

The **Cat's-ear** is low-growing, with large flower heads usually one at the end of each long stalk. The leaves are noticeably hairy. They don't grow on the stem, but rather form a rosette at the base of the plant. The seed head is like the dandelion's, much larger and neater than those of the other yellow flowers. Its name comes from the shape and fuzzy texture of the leaves.



The **autumn hawkbit** has small flowers on thin stems arising from a dense tuft of narrow basal leaves. The leaves are only slightly hairy. It grows in open grassy places and usually looks like a smaller, skinny, more delicate, branched dandelion. Like its name suggests, it blooms in late summer into fall. The word hawkbit dates back to medieval Europe. It was believed that hawks ate these plants to sharpen or improve their eyesight.

The Aster Family: 2/3



Tall branching plants with multiple heads:

Smooth hawksbeard is slender, with many branching stems bearing numerous small to medium-sized yellow flower heads. Long, narrow flower buds are enclosed by hairy green bracts. The flowers look like delicate dandelions. The seed heads are small and fluffy, like a beard. The leaves grow on the stem and are narrow and smooth.



Sow thistle is a fairly tall plant, sometimes waist-high, with medium-size, rather faded yellow flowers. There are many branches on the upper stems. The leaves are soft and have slightly prickly edges and look like pointed ears that wrap around the stem. The ripe seed head is very fluffy like a big dandelion.



The **Tansy ragwort** has a more typical “daisy” flower head with outer yellow ray florets and a central cluster of yellow florets.



Its bright yellow clusters are cheerful, but it is an aggressive, noxious weed that poses a severe threat to local agriculture and livestock.

The Aster Family 3/3

Small, delicate woodland-edge species:

Yellow nipplewort is another plant common in southern BC less closely related to the dandelion. It is an upright, branching plant that can also be waist high, open and wispy. The leaves are broad and soft. It has numerous tiny yellow flower heads, only about 1–1.5 cm across. It prefers to grow in shade or partially shaded areas of the trail. The leaves are thin and soft, and grow larger and triangular in shape near the bottom of the plant.

The name comes from an ancient herbalist philosophy stating that plants were intentionally designed by God to resemble the specific parts of the human body they could heal or benefit.



Wall lettuce is especially distinctive because each little “flower” usually looks like it has five yellow petals, but those are actually five individual ray florets—a clue that it is still an aster, not a mustard or buttercup. It is a slender, shade-loving member of the daisy family found beside the trail. It has soft, lobed leaves that clasp the stem and small pale-yellow flower heads with usually five ray florets. Its delicate branching stems can reach about one metre tall.

The prefix "wall" comes from its ability to grow out of the vertical cracks of old stone walls, brick masonry, and rocky cliffs in Europe. It thrives in shallow, nutrient-poor pockets of soil.

The Mustard Family



Mustards usually have four petals in a cross shape and often long seed pods.



Hedge mustard

(*Sisymbrium officinale*) is a common member of the mustard family (Brassicaceae) found along the trail. Like wall lettuce it often grows in disturbed

ground in BC. It has upright, branching stems with deeply lobed leaves and clusters of tiny pale-yellow, four petalled flowers. Its narrow seed pods are held tightly against the stems.

Introduced from Europe, it is generally considered a common weed rather than a major invasive plant in BC.

American yellowrocket (*Barbarea orthoceras*) is a native member of the mustard family found in moist areas of British Columbia, including stream edges, meadows, and disturbed ground.

It has clusters of small, bright yellow, four-petalled flowers and deeply lobed leaves. It blooms in spring and is popular with bees and flies.

The name "yellowrocket" describes how the plant grows rapidly in early spring:



St John's Wort and the Rose Families



St. John's wort does not have composite "flower heads" like dandelions, ragwort, hawksbeard, etc., so it is not part of the daisy/aster group or mustard group. It usually has five yellow petals, a large number of pollen-holding stamens, and often small translucent dots that look like holes in the leaves.

St. John's wort spreads aggressively by both seed and creeping root systems, easily choking out native flora in meadows and pastures. As well, it is toxic to cattle or horses when they graze on it.

In Old English, the word "wyrte" simply meant "plant." Over the centuries, it became a suffix applied almost exclusively to plants that had known medicinal uses.

Large-leaved avens is actually closer to plants such as wild roses, strawberries, cinquefoils, and blackberries.

A clue is the flower structure: five petals and numerous stamens are common rose-family traits. Its round, bristly seed heads are also very different from the fluffy wind-carried seeds of many yellow asters.

