

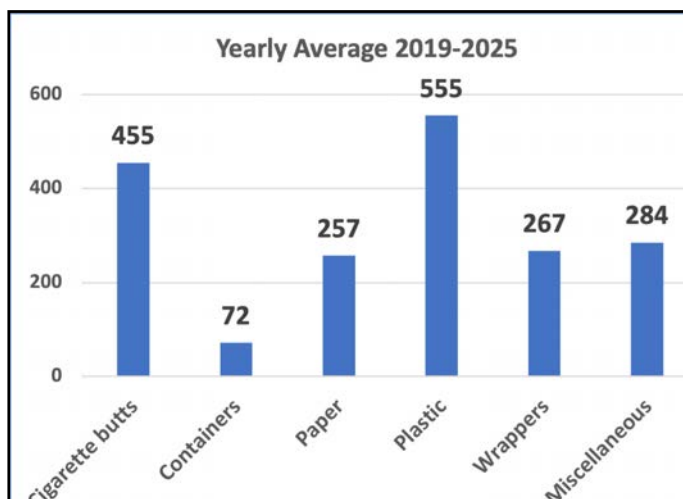


**Stoney Creek Trail Report
No. 86 - May 2026**

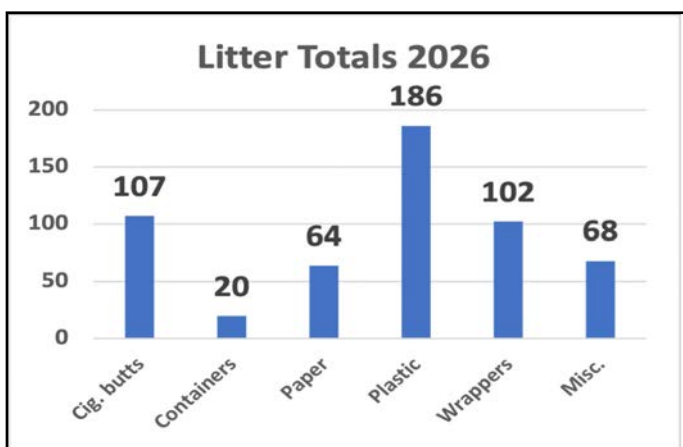
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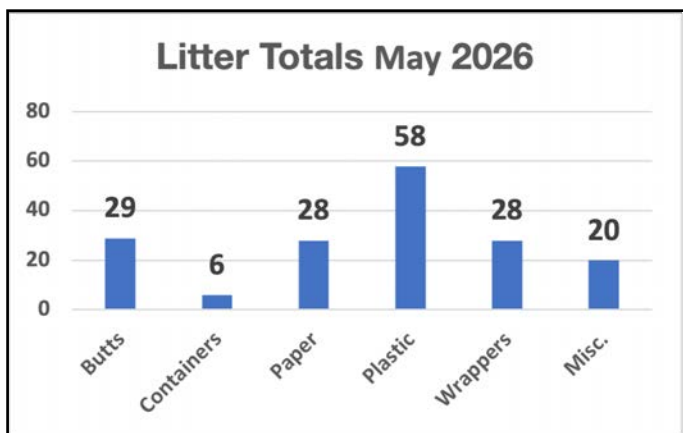
The front photo is a clue to the main feature in this issue of the trail report: **the cigarette-butt problem**. Looking at the statistical charts from Stoney Creek Trail below, you can see that butts have been the second most common type of litter on the trail over the past six years, second only to the bits of plastic bags left scattered on the ground by dog owners—and that's saying something!



Litter: Cigarette butts are the most common litter item globally: [4.5 trillion are discarded](#) each year by [1.2 billion users](#). Environmental science research (butt collection) in Canada has confirmed that they are the most common litter item in our country as well. In 2025 alone, environmental monitoring volunteers collected almost [130 thousand cigarette butts](#) in North America—just on shorelines! In some urban areas in BC, cigarette butts made up nearly 50% of litter. They are a major economic burden—often costing municipalities millions of dollars in cleanup costs.



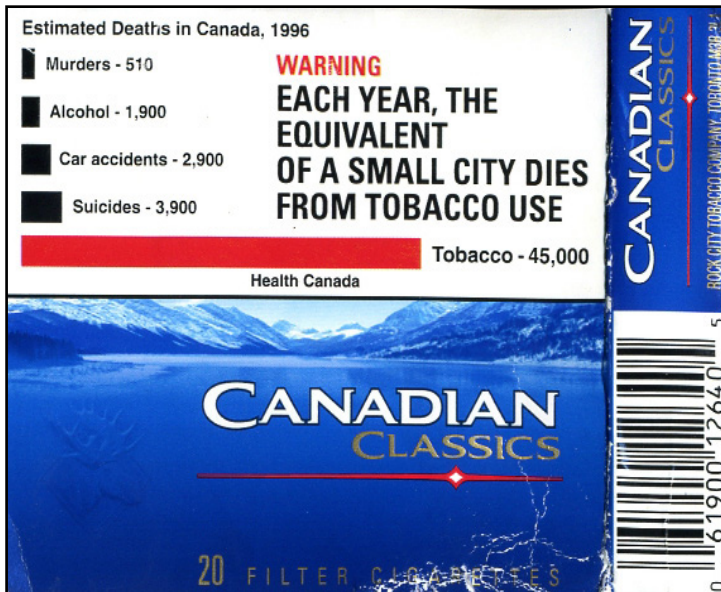
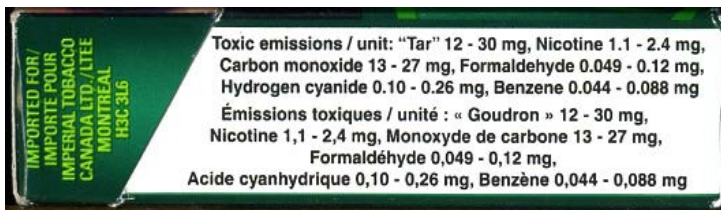
Toxicity: as well as being a planet-wide scourge as litter, butts have an impact far more serious than most people realize. There is strong evidence in Canada that cigarette butts contaminate soil and water and [poison fish](#).



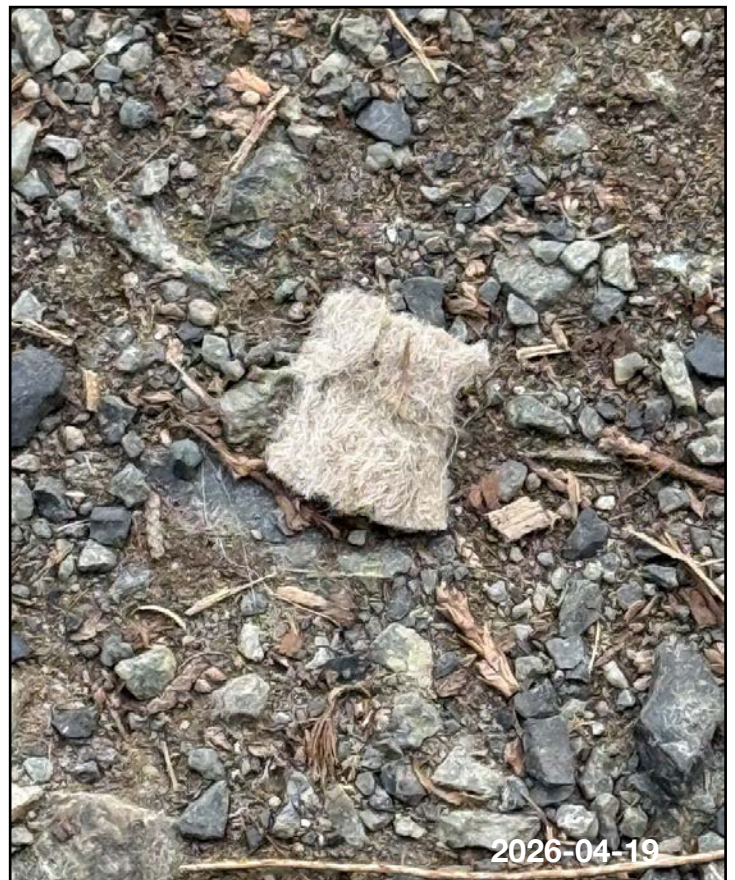
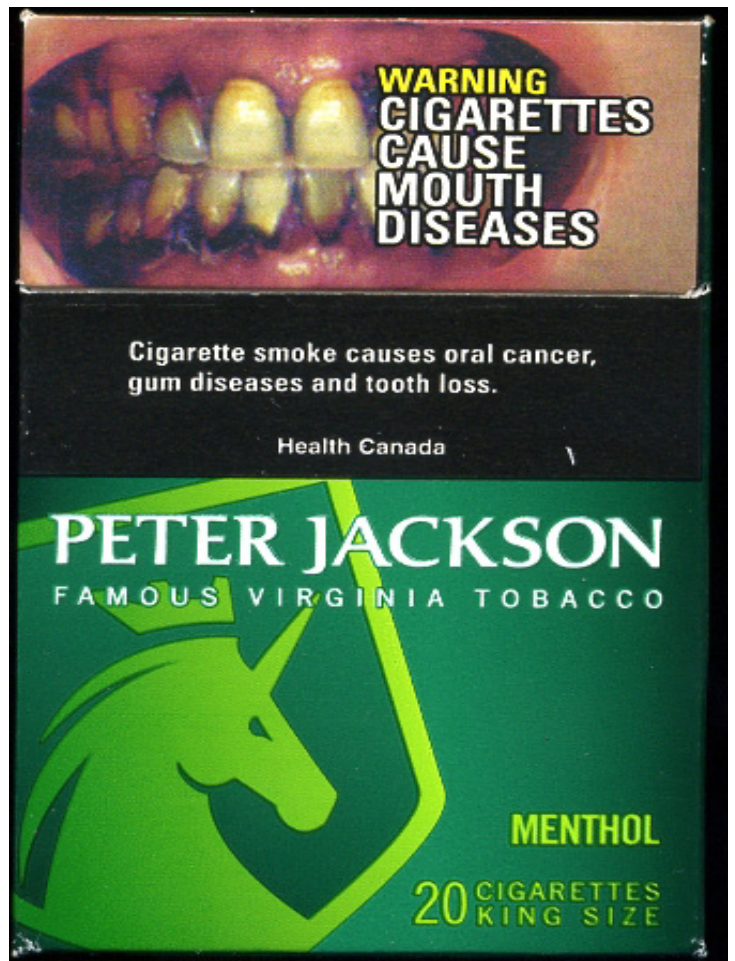
Once discarded, cigarette butts break down extremely slowly, releasing a mix of toxic chemicals—including nicotine and the heavy metals lead, cadmium, and arsenic. These pollutants leach into soil and waterways, where they pose a danger to wildlife of all kinds, from insects to fish, through both chemical exposure and ingestion.

The Hazards of Cigarette Butts 1/2

Public health: cigarettes are one of the world's most significant challenges to public health. Studies have found that smoking-related diseases account for about [5.7% of total global health expenditure](#) and cause [seven million deaths](#) every year. About 80% of tobacco users live in low- and middle-income countries. The majority are men, about one in five worldwide. As you can see, there are plenty of dire warnings about the danger of smoking. Nevertheless, tobacco eventually kills up to half of its users who choose not to quit.



Cigarette filters consist primarily of cellulose acetate, a form of plastic that breaks down very slowly—taking years to decades, depending on conditions. As they degrade, they fragment into microplastic fibers, adding to global plastic pollution.

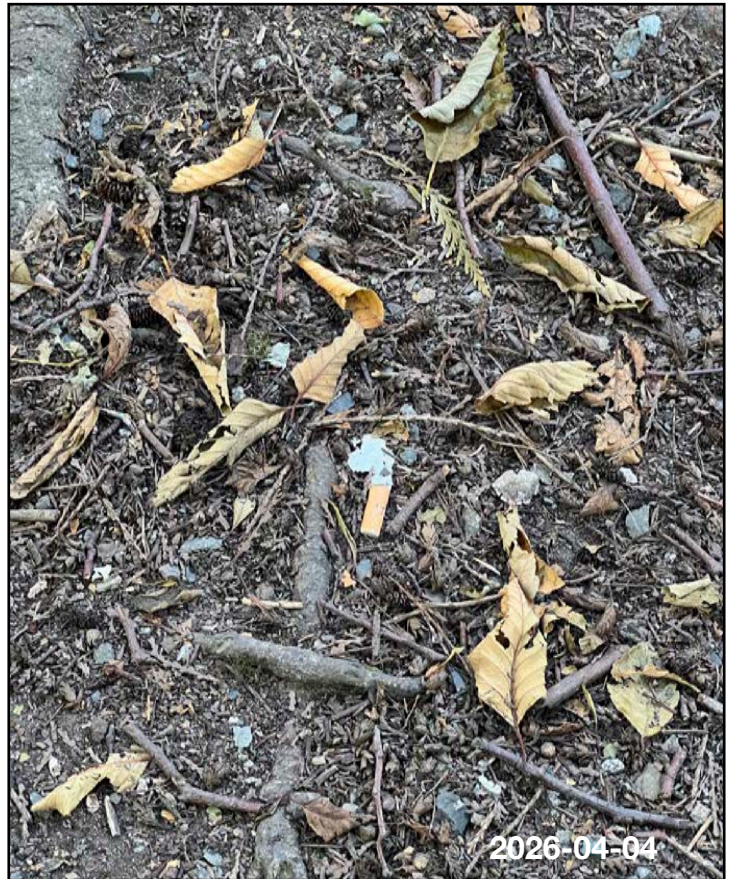


The Hazards of Cigarette Butts 2/2

Fire risk: everyone should know by now that carelessly discarded cigarette butts are a major part of [human-caused wildfires](#). Even a “dead” cigarette can remain hot enough to ignite dry material.

The photo on the right shows a cigarette butt that a careless smoker extinguished in the tinder-dry leaf litter behind Sadie's Bench. It could easily have started a fire that would have swept up into the back yards of the properties along Dunsmuir Way.

The photos below were taken during the extremely dry [summer of 2021](#) in the vicinity of the north entrance to the Dog Corral. It's a common location for smokers to discard butts before entering the Corral. Beside it, a butt left in the playground.



The Annual Smolt Transfer



On May 12th, the annual [ARPSSES smolt transfer](#) took place. Twelve thousand 17-month-old coho were netted in the hatchery's pond in Ravine Park. Seven thousand were piped from tanks on the DFO truck down into Stoney Creek using that large blue hose. The remaining fish went into Clayburn Creek on a second trip.





The stamens of a Pacific waterleaf flower reach out, hoping to touch passing pollinators.

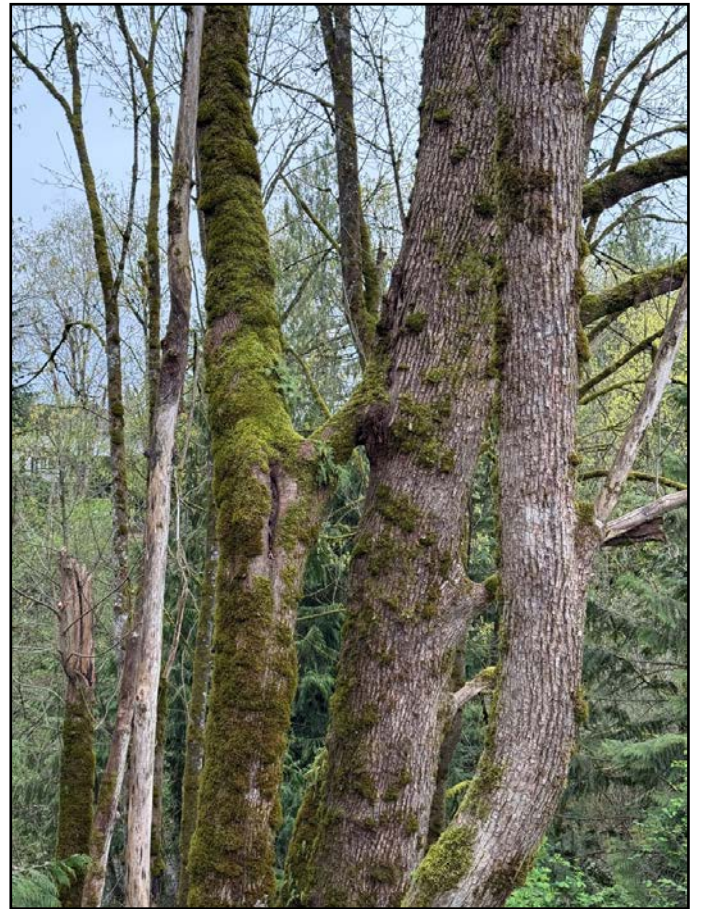
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An Odd Couple

This is an unusual pair of bigleaf maples on Hemlock Hill. You can see they are very attached to each other.

Trees like these are informally called "marriage trees" or "husband and wife trees." They would have started out as two separate saplings that fused together. In forestry, they are said to have undergone a process called **inosculation**, from the Latin *osculum*, meaning "friendly kiss." Having joined together, they are referred to as gemels, from the Latin word *gemelli* which means twins.

Inosculation is a natural process which can happen when two trees grow in close contact. This is especially common in bigleaf



maples because they have rapid, highly adaptive growth patterns and relatively thin bark. The way it happens is as follows....

Wind and growth caused the trunks to rub against each other, wearing away patches of protective outer bark. Thus the cambium (the living inner layer of tissue) became exposed. As the trees produced scar tissue and healed, they fused, performing a natural graft.

Once together, they form one structure, and because their vascular (circulatory) systems have merged, they can share nutrients and water.

Thanks to **Ron Lewis** for bringing them to my attention.

The Pack That Likes to Bark

The pack likes to bark—but we won't talk about that! Let me introduce my family to you.

"Gary is the only male. He is a cool cat who likes to go with the flow, remaining laid-back because he is surrounded by mollies. Despite his male attributes, by no means is he any form of alpha. I hate to say it, but Gary is a big baby—and I mean *baby*.



"Zina is the alpha of the pack. She has a bit of a bullying nature, though Pippy and Emma don't usually tolerate it, and that's when a fight or two starts. You know the term *sibling rivalry*, yes, true to the core. I see the jealousy when it comes to who gets the passenger seat next to me.

"Their favourite thing to do is be with me, go for walks, or some kind of outdoor adventure. And like the loyal companions canines are known to be, they never leave my side more than a foot or two, always stuck to me like glue. They follow me around every chance they get. They all love dog toys and bones. The predator nature in Zina can destroy anything that squeaks in a matter of minutes, leaving behind the scattered remnants of what used to be a perfect toy. I've never minded cleaning up the mess, as I see the beauty of her nature while watching the pleasure she finds in such activity. You know—dogs will be dogs.



"Pippy, on the other hand, is my gremlin child. She likes to take her time eating dog treats just to taunt her siblings, making gremlin sounds during the process. People are always astonished if ever given the opportunity to witness. It truly is a sound that I have never heard before in all the years I have owned pets.

"Emma likes to share her bones with her brother Gary. I'm not sure why, but maybe it's because they live together. Gary and Emma are my mother's dogs and rely on me for getting out of the house.



"There is a mystery around how I acquired four siblings, as I never did get to see their parents. It was kind of like a side-street giveaway. All I was told is that they were a "whoops" and a Chihuahua breed. Yeah, I wanted a small non-shedding dog. I did, though, deduce my own conclusions. They were born sometime between May and June of 2017, making them nine this year. As for their larger size, they are a mix with some breed that sheds. Nonetheless, I love them just the same. They were the cutest pups.

"I originally took Pippy and went to my mom's house pretending that I got *her* a pup. Unbeknownst to me, she wanted my dog. So I was on my way to get another one for her. I wasn't even out the door when she said, "Oh, you better get me two so they have each other to play with." Gary and Emma became my mom's new companions. As for Zina, the last of the litter—no way could I leave her behind.



"They do have another brother, but he was homed prior to me gathering the rest. I often think about him, wondering if he is safe and in a good forever home."



"As for me, I moved here in 2017 to help our mother. Once settled into a place of my own, as timing always dictates, the giant shedding Chihuahua-mix breed crossed my path and, for the love of dogs, something said, '*Just do it!*'"



Creeping buttercup

Did you think there was only one kind of buttercup?

The creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) spreads aggressively by runners (rooting stems) and forms dense patches or mats.

This species far outnumbers the meadow buttercup.



Meadow buttercup

The taller-growing meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) grows in clumps and spreads by seeds. Its leaves are more deeply divided.

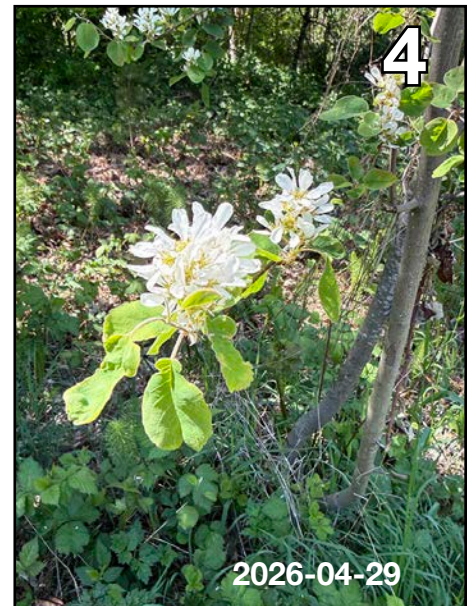
Both species of buttercup are perennials with glossy yellow flowers and are common on roadsides and open grassy areas in the Pacific Northwest.

Odds & Ends (1/2)



May Flowers

1. A developing flower cluster on a **Pacific ninebark**.
2. Blossoms of the **High-bush cranberry** on the Straightaway.
3. Invasive **wavy bittercress** near Bridge 5.
4. The **Saskatoon berry** is native to western Canada.
5. Tiny flowers of non-native **mouse-ear chickweed** are about 8 mm wide.
6. The blossoms of the **Thimbleberry**, native to the Pacific Northwest, are an insect favourite.
7. The **trailing blackberry**, also a Pacific Northwest native.



Odds & Ends (2/2)

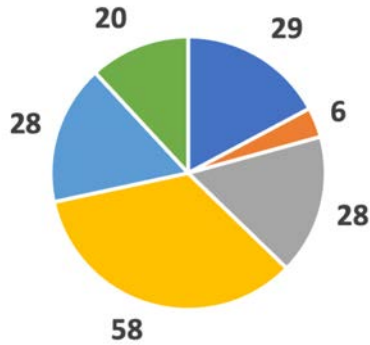


1. Did you stop to enjoy the wonderful aroma of the **Amur maples** along the Bowl path this month?
2. The trail's only **red oak** comes into leaf later than other trees. I challenge you to find it!
3. **Red osier dogwoods** help to stem erosion on the streambank above Bridge 2.
4. An **Indian plum**, also known as the **osoberry**, beside the Bowl path.
- 5, 6. A tendril on a **chocolate vine** reached out but couldn't find purchase, so it doubled back on itself. Its deep purple flowers smell faintly of vanilla.
7. The tiny flowers of the **snowberry** are easy to overlook.



Litter Tally May 2026

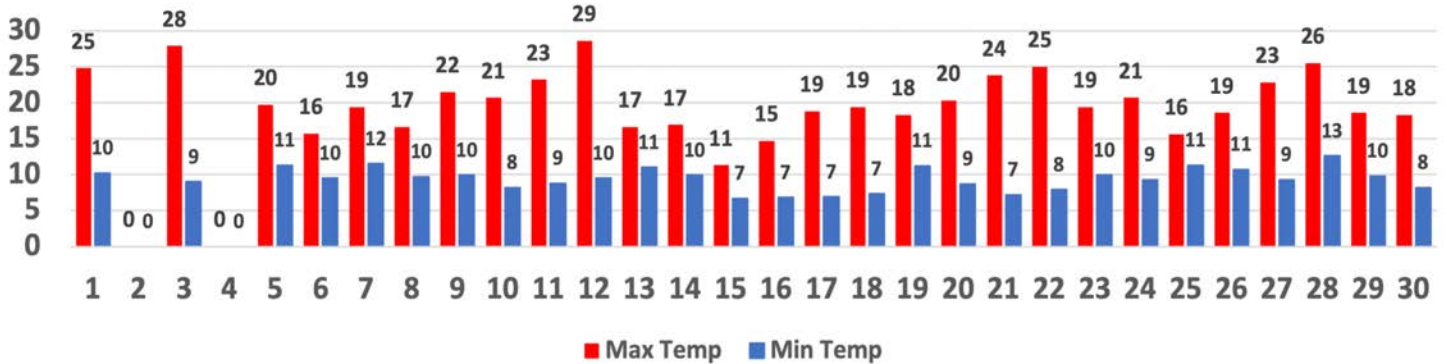
- Butts
- Containers
- Paper
- Plastic
- Wrappers
- Misc.



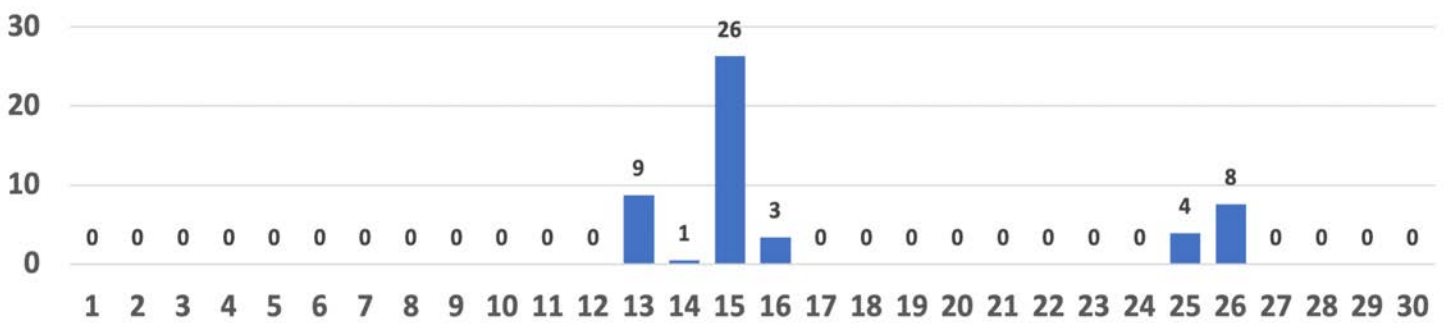
Total litter items = 169

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.

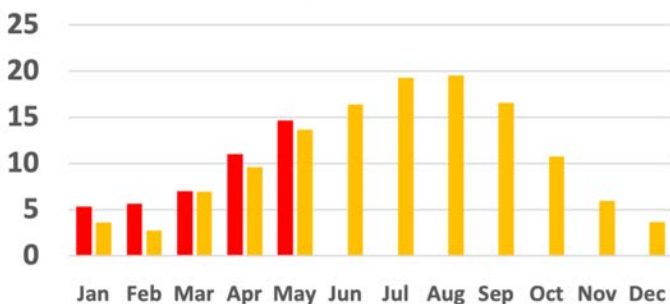
Air Temperatures at YXX May 2026 (°C)



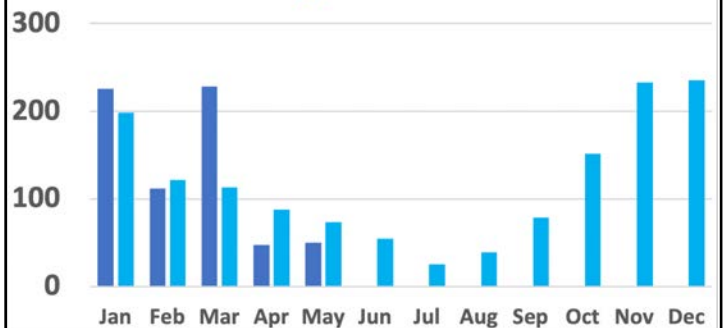
Precipitation at YXX May 2026 Total = 50.4 mm



Average Temperatures in 2026 Average: 2019-2025



Precipitation in 2026 (mm) Average: 2019-2025



For reference, I use these custom place-names:

