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Bedwell Centennial Trail Building (event) [return to Reports list](#)

Sat Aug 20 to Fri Aug 26, 2011

Leader: **Bob St.John**

Co-Leader:

From August 20 to 26 the Friends of Strathcona Park organized a camp to refurbish 11 km of what we are calling the Bedwell Centennial Trail from Bedwell Lake to Ashwood Creek, under an agreement with BC Parks. The trail, which was first established by the Friends in the early 1990's, was in need of brushing out, cutting of deadfall, and in a few sections, being redefined. All work was done with hand tools only (clippers and saws). We had 26 volunteers in total, although only 9 stayed for the full 7 days.

The Work Log

Sat, Aug 20

On the day of the Strathcona Wilderness Festival held at Price Creek at the south end of Buttle Lake (reported on by William Wright), the volunteers set out on the 3 to 4 hour hike up to Bedwell Lake (6 km , 600 m gain) and made camp in alpine meadows near Oinimitis Lake on the upper reaches of the Bedwell River (camp 1).

Sun, Aug 21

We split into 2 groups.

Group 1 stayed at camp 1 and worked on the trail from Bedwell Lake to camp 2. Group 1 participants included Kel Kelly, Marlene Smith, Steve Smith, Mandy Vaughan, Glen Christensen, Nate Poetker, Ryan May, Matthew Nicoll, Renee Poisson, and Wolfgang Carolsfeld.

Group 2 moved down the valley to camp 2 (about an hour's hike), and worked on the trail down to the 'slide', a massive avalanche debris pile originating from the upper slopes of Big Interior Mtn. Group 2 participants included Arno Dirks, Tak Ogasawara, Mick Taylor, Tilly Taylor, Linda Fear, Matthew Lettington, Bridget Horel, Dirk Septer, Jim Wright, Alberto Pozzolo, Susan Holvenstot, Carol Hunter, Bob St.John, and Karl Stevenson.

Mon, Aug 22

It rained heavily Sunday night through Monday morning with an estimated deluge of over 1.5 inches. This soaked many participants at exposed camp 1, with some deciding to depart. Camp 2 participants were somewhat sheltered in big trees, and did not suffer the full effects of the storm. They spent the morning drying out gear and in the afternoon hiked down to below the slide to continue work, but were turned back by an overflowing stream. Work was done instead on clipping out short access trails to some spectacular waterfalls. At a meeting of camp leaders it was decided that the rest of soaked camp 1 would pull out. A few at camp 2 had to return as well.

Tues, Aug 23

Camp 2 moved down to You Creek. The stream that stopped them on Monday had now receded enough to cross safely. By noon they had completed the section from You Creek up to the slide. In the afternoon they completed a trail that bypassed a

washed-out section of the old road on the way to Ashwood Creek. Three participants left as scheduled, and an unexpected volunteer arrived, giving a total of 10 trail builders who would eventually continue out to Tofino.

Wed, Aug 24

This was a big day, luckily under clearing skies. Camp was moved about 10 km down the valley to a sand bar on the Bedwell River just west of Sam Craig Creek. On the way the old road to Ashwood Creek was cleared of deadfall and brushed out. The section from Ashwood Creek to Sam Craig Creek, about 5 km, was off limits to our clippers. BC Parks stubbornly refuses to let us complete the trail, instead championing a private resort to gain commercial access into the park. Regardless, this section is easy to navigate, much of it on good elk trails. Sam Craig Creek is the up-river terminus of our trail building last year.

Thurs, Aug 25

This was an easy day traveling along our new trail, and then along the old road to the Gayle McGee swing bridge where we made our final camp. In the evening a few of us made a side trip up to the historic Pioneer Mine.

Fri, Aug 26

It took 2 hours to walk the gravel road down to Clayoquot Wilderness Resort at the head of Bedwell Inlet. From here we were picked up by our water-taxi for a 45 minute ride into Tofino. After a brief stop for lunch, we boarded our mini-bus for the 4 hour ride into Courtenay.

The Trail

The Bedwell Centennial Trail is 34 km long from the trailhead on the Jim Mitchell Lake Road near the south end of Buttle Lake to the head of Bedwell Inlet. Prior arrangements need to be made with a water taxi to get to Tofino. The trip is best done in July through September when stream levels are low. Allow 3 to 4 days one way, and travel only when good weather is predicted. Heavy rains can quickly make dry streams impassable, but they soon recover in a day or two.

Trailhead to Bedwell Lake

This section is on an official BC Parks trail. Allow 3 to 4 hours (6 km, 600 m gain) to get to the campsites on Bedwell Lake. Registration and a fee is required for camping. Parks spent a lot of money on this trail, but many of the steel staircases are in need of repair. Some bridges are out, or damaged.

Bedwell Lake to You Creek

The Bedwell Valley Trail starts just south of the map-board in the center of the campsites at Bedwell Lake. Consider the trail to be Class IV, with deadfall and brush cleared, and the route flagged. Some sections are more obvious than others, but navigation should be straightforward. Allow about 3 hours. A strong party can make it from the trailhead on the Jim Mitchell Road to You Creek camp in 6 hours. About 1 hour down from Bedwell Lake the trail passes through another decent campsite alongside the Bedwell River.

The trail follows the steep descent of the upper Bedwell River down to the relatively easy grades of the lower Bedwell Valley at You Creek. From the alpine vistas of Big Interior and Tom Taylor Mountains, the trail descends into old growth forest. There is an interesting log crossing at K2 Creek. The 2 logs are sound, but the situation may be exciting to some. Three beautiful Bedwell River waterfalls (Doran, Cliffhanger, and Appreciation) can be viewed from short side trails. The roar of the

falls will call you to them. About half way down to You Creek you come across a large avalanche debris slide. In the summer of 2011 there was a great quantity of snow to cross. In drier years the conditions may be change... be aware of the stream flowing under the slide. South of the slide is an impressive stand of maples with little in the way of other tree species or undergrowth. Soon after the trail attains the upper reaches of an old logging road. The Bedwell Valley was logged in the 1960's with BC Parks blessing. (The valley was then dumped from the park as having no park value! It was restored as parkland thanks to the 1988 blockade to stop mineral exploration drilling at Cream Lake.) Two kilometers down the road is You Creek where good campsites are found.

You Creek to Ashwood Creek

Allow 2 hours. The trail in the main follows the old road, except in 3 sections where it bypasses washouts. You Creek can be waded in low water levels, or crossed on two large logs. Just before Ashwood Creek the trail follows a side road south a short distance to intersect the Ashwood. Good campsites can be found here.

Ashwood Creek to Sam Craig Creek

The trail ceases to exist here for stupid political reasons. However a 'route' has been flagged and is quite easy to follow. Allow 3 hours. Wade the Ashwood or cross on the logjam just upstream. The route follows a side-stream coming down from a notch in the ridge to the west. Once over the notch the route winds its way through large old growth trees, past a beautiful lily padded pond, and down to the river again. Good elk trails are utilized along the river to Sam Craig Creek. Blaney Creek, about half way to Sam Craig, presents some detours around its several tributaries. Allow 4 hours.

Sam Craig Creek to Gayle McGee Bridge

Allow 5 hours. Enjoy the trail brushed out in August, 2010 from Sam Craig to the 'Living Bridge'. It travels over three humps of the north end of Ursus Mountain. Just west of Sam Craig is a good sand-bar campsite. Along the way enjoy the views of Ursus and Mariner mountains, pass by several ponds, and finally get glimpses of the ocean from open rocky benches. The trail comes down through open forest to again meet the old road at a good campsite. A 10 minute walk upstream on the old road takes you to the Living Bridge crossing the Bedwell River, now condemned by BC Parks.

The old road is followed to the Gayle McGee Bridge where good campsites can be found on the river just across the bridge. The trail along the road is not clipped, but easily passable. Two large washouts need to be navigated along the way. About half way down is the Park boundary.

The Gayle McGee Bridge was built in the early 1990's by the Friends as part of the original trail. Our government takes credit on a plaque, and was supposed to maintain it. In the winter of 2009 it collapsed due to a heavy snow load. Later that year the Friends re-anchored and re-tensioned the bridge as part of their efforts to re-open the trail.

Gayle McGee Bridge to Bedwell Inlet

Allow 2 hours. The old road has been maintained and is in good shape for vehicles, although it is the most boring section of the whole trail for hikers. Near the inlet the road passes through land now owned by Clayoquot Wilderness Resorts. The hiker is presented with a vista of cleared pasture-land and clearcut hillsides. Although the road passes right by their main resort buildings, they have not to date stopped

hikers from traveling through to the ocean. (The right of passage is not clear, as the government originally funded road access.) Water taxis have access to the docks at the end of the road. It is a 45 minute ride into Tofino. A typical boat will cost about \$250, but can carry up to a dozen hikers with packs.



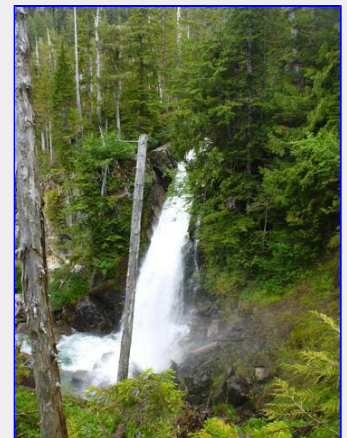
Big Interior Mtn from Bedwell Lake
[Bob St.John photo]



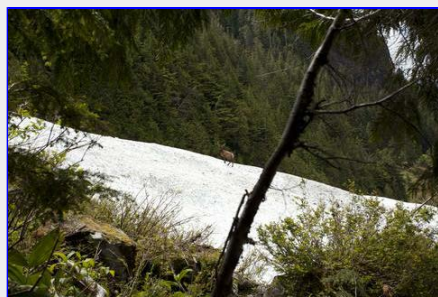
Group meeting at camp 1
[Karl Stevenson photo]



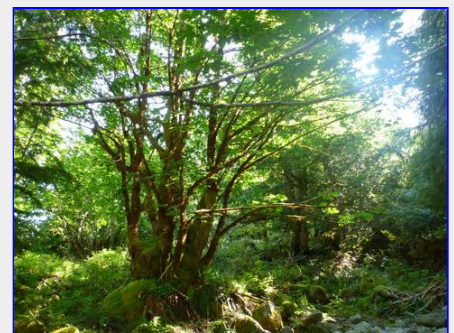
A soggy camp 2
[Karl Stevenson photo]



Appreciation Falls
[Bob St.John photo]



Elk on the slide
[Karl Stevenson photo]



Maple Grove
[Bob St.John photo]



young Bridget, old growth
[Carol Hunter photo]



Gravel bar camp on the Bedwell River
[Bob St.John photo]



Mt Mariner sunset
[Carol Hunter photo]



10 hardy souls waiting for a taxi
[Carol Hunter photo]

Report contributors: Bob S,

Participant list (5 of 26): Glen C, Susan H, Carol H, Bob S, Karl S,

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