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Trip Report

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Sun Jun 30 to Mon Jul 01, 2013

Leader: **Carol Hunter**

Co-Leader: **Bob St.John**

On a beautiful Sunday morning, 9 members came together at Buckley Bay in time for an 8:30 departure. We made it to Lake Cowichan by 11 and enjoyed a coffee while we puzzled over our first decision. Should we take the North shore road or the South shore road around Cowichan Lake? Thanks to Bev's quick thinking our dilemma was short lived, we would take the south shore road on the way there and the north shore road on the way back, that way we wouldn't miss a thing.

The thought of destination made the logging roads bearable. We stopped to marvel at and look down into a limestone box canyon, 150 ft deep, before we continued on to have lunch with an expansive view of the ocean in the distance (thanks to a clearcut).

A little backtracking took us to the trailhead of the Cheewhat Lake Cedar. Hiking a trail that was at times brushed in, at times muddy but for the most part okay, we passed monumental cedars over a thousand years old. Our reward at the end was the opportunity to be humbled in the shadow of Canada's largest tree. This majestic red cedar has a circumference of 18.34m or 60.2 feet and a height of 55.5 m or 182 feet and is the second largest of its species in the world.

One more short drive took us to Carmanah-Walbran Provincial Park. Wanting to make the most of the daylight hours we immediately set of to explore the Lower Carmanah. Once you hiked into the valley bottom, this trail had a lot of boardwalk put in place to protect the forest from human impact. With its aged wood and moss covering the boardwalk, while appearing to be a part of this ancient world, was slippery and at times hazardous to walk on. We were however treated to our first moments of relaxation on the shores of Carmanah Creek and to our first glimpses of the massive Sitka Spruce this west coast rainforest is known for. At the Randy Stoltman Commemorative Grove, we not only saw sizeable spruce with heights of 75 - 89 meters, we learned about the young man who was responsible for the Carmanah being protected from logging and who died tragically in an avalanche at the age of 31.

Apparently the Carmanah valley forest has almost twice the biomass as a tropical rainforest. Our experience there has led us to believe that while a large amount of this biomass comes from incredible volume of wood found in the trees, an almost equal amount of biomass would come from the vigorous population of mosquitos. Staying still for any length of time brought on these blood sucking beasts by the hordes, so dinners were eaten on the move and everyone headed into their tents for an early night.

On Monday we were a little more adventurous with our explorations. Heading upstream through the valley the first hour was on maintained trails and not so maintained board walk. This brought us to the site of the three sisters, three breathtaking Sitka Spruce growing from the same spot, and to a sandbar on the

river that can be used for camping or, as we used it, for a pleasant break. After this point the trail got progressively wilder. The fearless group gracefully climbed over and crawled under massive fallen giants, performed great feats of balance walking log bridges and artfully negotiated an overgrown trail. Well, maybe not always graceful or artful, there was one casualty. A hidden hole caused Dave to fall and his finger to assume a new position, but being the tough mountaineer that he is, he realigned it himself and after a break to soak it in the icy waters of the Carmanah, his finger was taped and we carried on with our adventure.

Our tentative goal for the day was Paradise Pools, but with an eye to the time and the realization of a long trip home, we found our own paradise by the river and had lunch. The return journey included a swim break at Grunts Grove and a last chance to take in the beauty of the incredibly fertile and rich valley.

Upon leaving the park, we realized our good fortune with the weather as we almost immediately ran into sea fog. Our good fortune continued as it cleared before we got to an outstanding viewpoint of Nitinat Lake and the myriad of wind and kite surfers flying across its surface.

After driving 2 hours to Lake Cowichan, with 2 hours of that over dusty dappled sunlit, bone jarring, teeth rattling logging road, the group finished off their trip with an excellent dinner at Jakes on the Lake in Lake Cowichan.

A good trip with great people, and an appropriate way to spend Canada Day. After all, the wilderness with its forests and massive trees has always been Canada to me.

More pictures can be seen here
<https://picasaweb.google.com/111843407128389137437/2013CarmanahValley>



*The Cheewhat Lake
Cedar*
[Carol Hunter photo]



*our fearless leader..feeling
small ??*
[Catherine Poupard photo]



Randy Stoltmann grove
[Steve Schoenhoff photo]



Baby in the tree
[Steve Schoenhoff photo]



*Along the boardwalk in the lower
Carmanah Valley*
[Carol Hunter photo]



You can't get me now!
[Carol Hunter photo]



reaching for the sky
[Catherine Poupard photo]



The three sisters
[Carol Hunter photo]



Carmanah Creek
[Paula Field photo]



Catherine emerges from the bushes
[Paula Field photo]



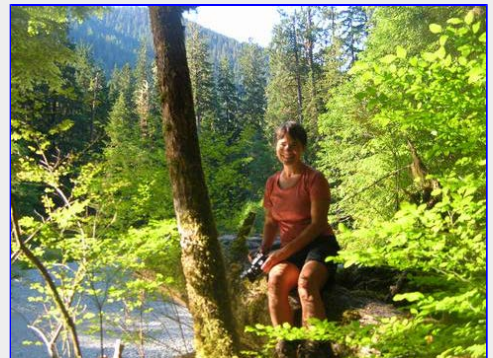
A fallen giant
[Carol Hunter photo]



carpeted in green
[Carol Hunter photo]



Watching the kiteboarders on Nitinat lake
[Steve Schoenhoff photo]



a photographer paradise
[Catherine Poupard photo]

Report contributors: Paula F, Carol H, Catherine P, Steve S, Bob S,

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