

Nature Vancouver's Summer Camp at Meadow Mountain

July 25 to August 8, 2010

by Nigel Peck, Viveka Ohman, Carol Monaghan, Elly Brok, Rowan and Arley Morris. Introduced and compiled by Marian Coope.

MEADOW MOUNTAIN IS WELL NAMED. Although 2,550 metres high, it has no jagged peaks or glaciers, but a long ridge covered with low-growing alpine plants, even on the summit, where at least during the second week, there was a fine display of wildflowers. The first campers up in both weeks gained the ridge via quite a steep slope, but those in the second camp soon discovered there was an easier route up an ATV track, and practically everyone made the climb. Down below where we camped, the meadows stretched endlessly, dotted with tarns and covered with grasses and wildflowers interspersed with occasional lines of trees, especially along the ridges: alpine fir, larch, whitebark pine and Engelmann spruce broke the open sightlines provided by the meadows. The camp accounts by Viveka Ohman and Carol Monaghan are published by kind permission of the authors and the White Rock and Surrey Naturalists in whose Newsletter of Summer/Fall 2010 these accounts first appeared.

Getting the Truck to Camp

by Nigel Peck

Meadow Mountain saw Nature Vancouver's first attempt at an alpine drive-in camp. On July 4, the reconnoitre for the drive-in started on a disconcerting note, with kilometres of snow blocking even 4x4 access and so much snow that the recon party of Don Griffiths, Daryl Sturdy, Susan Garber and Nigel Peck didn't even come close to where the camp eventually ended up.

In Vancouver, on Friday, July 23, loading of the truck was as efficient as ever with nine people loading the gear in just over two hours. Then two of us, Susan and Nigel, headed out to Agassiz where another hour and

a half saw the loading of the food. We were sure we would have made it to Grand Forks, except that the 5-ton truck died twice while trying to ascend the Hope Slide hill. It did rise again from the dead twice, just long enough to make it back to Hope where Susan and Nigel and a wonderful truck company employee spent just over two and a half hours on the Friday night transferring the entire contents to the replacement 5-ton truck.

The replacement was a gem, and made it all the way north of Nelson to Meadow Creek, the rendezvous point, where campers without

4-wheel drive were to leave their cars and double up with those who had them, with the surplus gear going into the truck and making it even fuller than before. Sunday's drive-in day, sunny and hot with a glorious blue sky, began auspiciously. The truck set off with the cars behind it. The truck's huge load, though, caused the engine to overheat within the first half hour. So we had the pleasure of bouncing in a special desert atmosphere with the heater and fan on full to cool the engine.

With the weight, the steeper pitches had to be taken at full tilt to maintain the momentum. Nigel

gunned it while Susan sensibly closed her eyes. These tactics worked admirably until we hit a rock jutting out of the road bank which took out a tire and rim. Then, after gunning the truck a couple of hundred feet with only three rear tires, we abandoned it in a beautiful flowery dell still some kilometres from camp. Now all we had to figure out was how to transfer all the gear from the full truck to the convoy of pickups and SUVs and get them the rest of the way up to the camp, so the train of cars stuck behind us, laden with the truck stuff, could get past us and on to the camp at last.

Piece of cake, really!

Camp 1: July 25 to August 1

Life is Good!

by Viveka Ohman

We had an exciting arrival at the Meadow Mountain campsite. The van carrying our gear had a flat about three miles from the campsite so we all hiked in except for the few driving vehicles. People pitched in and helped wherever it was required and, thanks to all, we made it in. It was hot, muggy with lots of bugs yet camp assembly went well and our wonderful cooks, Jane McClinton, Ingrid Visser and Gabi Gust, provided the best iced tea and lemonade I have ever tasted. And so began Camp 1. The next day we took it slow with local easy hikes. Some of us hiked the easy South Arm and North Ridge, others walked the

road or explored on site. Overhead a soaring Golden Eagle greeted us and down below Columbia ground squirrels scurried about, now and then standing up to whistle their alarm calls at the newcomers.

The hikes progressed as did our observations of plants, flowers, butterflies, birds and other animals, and we saw pale yellow columbines and glacial lilies, fritillaries, Gray-crowned Rosy Finches, a Brown-headed Cowbird, hoary marmots and mountain goats. On one of our outings hiking the West Ridge and tarn, we noticed a medium-sized gray bird following us upon our return to camp. We were initially challenged



Members of Camp 1.

by its ID because it was a juvenile bird and in a most unusual area for such a bird, but he soon proved to be the most opportunistic cowbird ever and became our mascot Oliver. What better place to get insects and other tidbits than at a large campsite? Oliver hopped about the site and on us for days and then suddenly disappeared. We wish him well wherever he went as he was a joy to have about.

One of the highlights was climbing Meadow Mountain, a short but steep climb up the flank of the mountain and onto a scree area. During our climb, our intrepid leader Leo Eutsler insisted we not stop, we just keep on going; however some of us just needed that five minute break and eventually we all made it to the summit at 8,366 feet. Silky phacelia, or more aptly named sky pilot, a fascinating plant because of its ability to survive in such a harsh environment, was one of the few alpine flowers encountered

growing out of the rocky scree areas. Upon the descent, Gail Ross, one of our number who turned out to be a park interpreter and who aptly guided us with her environmentally sustainable ways, found a Rock Ptarmigan, a highlight bird of the trip.

Another highlight, of which there were many, was that campers Peg Neilon and Howard Katz turned out to be Yoga experts. For two days we had Yoga classes in the meadow. What a wonderful way to unwind from the day's hike viewing the scenery from a yoga pose such as downward facing dog! Now Peg I hear has volunteered to be our next Camp Manager.

The scenery was spectacular, the hikes memorable and, the cooks prepared an unbelievable smorgasbord of food — I could have survived on the appetizers alone. The camp was a wonderful experience and I look forward to participating again.

Camp 2: August 1 to 8, 2010

by Carol Monaghan

“Now, just where is Meadow Mountain?” became the question for many who had registered for Nature Vancouver’s 2010 summer camp. The camp info indicated that this mountain was northwest of Kaslo in the Selkirk Range, and we would reach our 2,225 metre alpine camp after a 28 km drive on a logging road leaving from Meadow Creek. Our journey from White Rock led us to the beautiful Kootenay region where our group of 44 gathered at Meadow Creek to begin the convoy to the camp. Elvina Stewart and I were the cheering section for Vreni Blatter as she guided her trusty 4WD Liberty Belle up the twists and turns of the logging road.

When we arrived at the camp, we were delighted to have a brief chat

with Viveka Ohman who had been on the first of the two camps. We learned that the first week campers had experienced extremely hot weather and extremely hungry mosquitoes. The second week campers were in for a change of the weather... but not of the mosquitoes!

Our Home Away From Home was ready and waiting for us. The Week 1 group had assembled the cook and storage tents plus the dining tent, biffies, two shower tents and the pumping system for our water supply. All we had to do was check our volunteer duties and set up our own tents...which many did in the afternoon rain. The organization of the camp was excellent and for the next week we enjoyed great hiking, fellowship and gourmet meals. The kitchen



Photo by Ian Cumming

Our home away from home.

team was amazing, and a full page could be written about Jane, Ingrid and Gaby and their wonderful meals!

Daryl Sturdy did double-duty coordinating the hikes as well as leading some of the evening entertainment along with Lee Wright. Part of the evening get-togethers (led by camp-manager Don Griffiths) featured reports about the trips which had been organized for the day. Several different hikes were offered each day, and it was a privilege to accompany people who were pleased to share their expertise. Lists were kept of the birds and flowers seen each day, and there was great excitement when a group spotted a mountain goat and her kid on the North West Ridge.

Although there had been some magnificent thunder and lightning storms in the area, we were largely rain-free during our outings. Unfortunately a night of steady rain before we left meant that wet personal tents were packed home; fortunately the communal tents were down before the rain started. Once again, tribute



Photo by Ian Cumming

Jane McClinton, who adds much joy to our camps!

must be paid to those who organized the dismantling of the camp. Everyone pitched in, vehicles were loaded and the convoy wound its way back down the mountain.

The VNHS (now Nature Vancouver) has run summer camps since 1918, and the camp committee members are already thinking about 2011. Congratulations to the committee on a job well done.

Why the Black Ones With the Pink Hearts?

by Elly Brok

The first night in camp was so noisy and disruptive, people sawing logs and critters investigating around my tent, that I put earplugs in the next night. Wonderful hiking dreams afterwards...

Towards the end of the week some undies needed washing for the trip

home. I was happily doing my chores when I found one pair of knickers full of holes....These were black with pink hearts—I do have more colourful underwear and have been wondering why the squirrels chose my black ones with the pink hearts? If you have an explanation, please let me know!

Rowan and Arley Morris

by Marian Coope

Camp Two had the pleasure of the company of two youngsters: Rowan Morris, aged 12, and his brother Arley, aged 10. Both made special places for themselves at camp. Rowan was particularly helpful with showing campers how to manage the water supply, digging the replacement biffy, and disassembling the camp. We hope that his enjoyment when leading a hike may convert him into an enthusiastic Trip Leader in future camps. Arley's special place at camp was in the kitchen, helping Jane, Ingrid and Gabi with the cooking, and sitting with them outside the cook tent after meals.

by Rowan Morris

I liked leading the hike around the Big Tarn and trying out the water for swimming. The food was really good,

especially the party food. I learned about aperture and shutter speed from Don Griffiths and took a lot of pictures until I ran out of memory. The bugs were awful and the weather was okay but a bit cold.

by Arley Morris

I was so surprised to see snow. I brought some back to camp and put it down Jane's back. I learned how to make French toast better than Mom does. The biffies were stinky. My favourite after dinner activity was the sing-along. I got up before everyone else in the mornings and went to the cooks' tent to warm up. My favourite hike was going up Meadow Mountain. I saw Rowan on the other side. There was a fossilized pterodactyl in the eating tent.



Photo by Ian Cumming

Arley Morris leads his group up Meadow Mountain.

by *Marian Coope*

It remains to thank the Camp Committee and organizers for a most successful two weeks: Kitty Castle (Chair); Ian McAskill and Don Griffiths (Camp Managers); Bill Kinkaid and Daryl Sturdy (Trips coordinators); Nigel Peck with Susan Garber, Ian McAskill and Fred Hornby (Driving and Equipment); Elly Brok (Registrar); David Foreman (Finances); Helen

Gowans (Secretary); Hugh Hamilton (Member at Large and General Factotum). You're all wonderful! And last but not least, we give our thanks to Brad and Carole Karafil, hospitable owners of White Grizzly Lodge, who helped us in many ways, including overcoming the seemingly insurmountable problems presented by the need to repair the truck. We couldn't have managed without them!

Photo by Ian Cumming



View from Camp. Mount Cooper in the Goat Range, our nearest neighbour.