

# The 2015 Summer Camp

by Nigel Peck

**NATURE VANCOUVER CAMPS** saw a challenging year in 2015. The 2015 camp was to be located next to a pristine alpine lake near Mount Renshaw, just to the northeast of McBride. The location, which connects with the National Hiking Trail, featured spectacular alpine meadows and terrain suitable for rambling ridge walks and circumnavigation of Mount Renshaw on the Trail. Located at an altitude of 1890 m (6,200 ft), the area had great botanizing, birding and photographing opportunities.

The year started smoothly with two successful recces to the Mount Renshaw location by Art Winckers, Susan Garber and Nigel Peck in August of 2014 and then again by Diane Fast, Don Griffiths, Sally McDermott and Nigel Peck in July of 2015. At that point the biggest challenges were concerns about the record breaking temperatures, forest

fires and organizing for a camp so far from Vancouver.

Of special note for past campers, the 2015 camp offered an opportunity to connect with the ever popular former cook Jane McClinton who, with her husband Len, hosted a special pre-camp Saturday night feast at their farm near McBride. For a small number of lucky campers, Jane and Len offered B&B rooms before and after the camps to spend more time in the beautiful Robson Valley. Some participants camped at the farm.

The quality of meals was assured with the return of Mim Andrews for her third season who would be ably assisted by Dee Iscaro this year.

Who could have foreseen that with the hot and absolutely parched weather of southern BC that in the three weeks preceding the camp that the McBride area would see steady and heavy rains which would turn



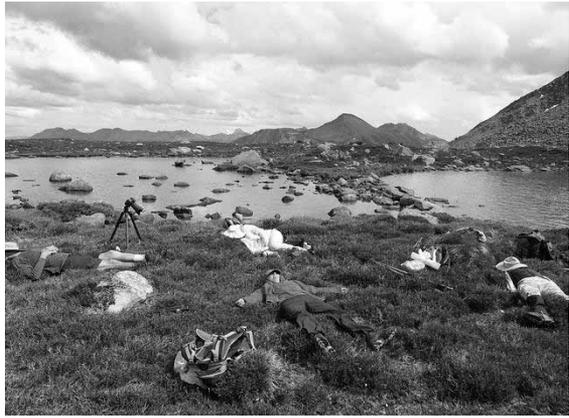
Mt. Renshaw camp. View from the top of the waterfall. Photo by Janet Snell.

the access road from just a somewhat rough access road to a muddy quagmire? With great assistance from Len and Jane McClinton, the 23 km distance drive to the staging area was managed, the helicoptering was successful and the camp was set up. Len accompanied the campers and the supply truck along the decommissioned logging road

up to the staging area. He provided wooden planks so that the trucks and cars could drive over the water bars. For the second camp he did this again and had to clear the road by sawing off the fallen trees at two spots.

The area was beautiful but with the rains and saturated grounds, campsites ended up soggy than normal with at least one flooded out personal tent, and a cook tent that turned into a muddy mess. The extent of the inclement weather was illustrated in the final order for Week 2 camp items which included two packs of playing cards for campers stuck (at that point) at the camp, waterproof winter shoe-packs for both cooks who had frozen feet from working in wet mud all day and extra diesel for the dining tent heater used for the first time since 2012.

The middle week camp turnaround was executed successfully but again, with challenges in the access road in and out to what turned out to be better weather negating the need for playing cards. The week was a success but marred by one camper getting lost



Mt. Renshaw camp. Photo by Judith Holm.

and having to call search and rescue, before having the camper walk out of the area to McBride and allowing the shutdown of the operation. Not a particularly proud moment for Nature Vancouver camps!

The second week broke camp, making it out successfully although taking much longer than anticipated. The two camps give much fodder for improving planning for future camps. Camp committee and volunteers who managed to pull the camps off should be mentioned: first and foremost camp managers, Art Winckers, Cathy Walker, Don Griffiths and Sally McDermott, ably assisted in a multitude of ways by Bill Kinkaid, Diane Fast, Harry Crosby, Nigel Peck, Paul Vasicek, Rick Gee, Sandra Booth and Tom Gibson. Finally heartfelt thanks have to be extended to Jane and Len McClinton who were of huge assistance hosting and expediting in McBride even when Jane was taken down by a severe gall stone attack!

Then came the frustrations and ultimate cancellation of our 2016 camp, the first in sixty seven years.

After the challenges of Mount Renshaw and the increasing difficulty in finding camp locations, two previous camp locations were chosen. The first was McGillivray Pass where the camp was held in 2004 and the back-up second choice was the 2003 Ghost Peak camp location near Revelstoke. Both camps fell through as a result of conflicts between commercial alpine recreation operations and the proposed two week camps.

Efforts to resurrect the camps in 2017 are taking several directions. Art Winckers, assisted by Liz Dohan, is investigating the new ground rules for Crown Land usage as required by the BC government agency, Front-Counter BC. This summer will see travelling around the province scouting for new camp locations, both for the alpine and drive-in camps. Suggestions for locations from NV



*Dryas drummondii* yellow mountain avens fruit. Photo by Judith Holm.

members are very much appreciated, so please give us your ideas and help make future Nature Vancouver camps happen again!

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## Mt Renshaw—the beautiful

by Lyn Grants

We all luxuriate about our wilderness camps and determine every year to go again. We forget the bugs that bite and whine. We forget the ground that's hard beneath our ageing bones. We forget. . . What do I forget (and remember) about Mt Renshaw?

When I close my eyes to remember this year's camp I see Mt Renshaw standing tall, paintbrush in colours I'd never seen before and gentian blooming inky blue and thriving—in the bog!

Yes—we of Week One not only had the best of the flowers (or so we

thought), we had the best of the bog! We approached the cook and dining tents with care, pulling our feet out of the wet patches between the drier heather mounds, afraid that Mim and Dee would drown in mud that rippled under, over and around their feet. Those on higher ground kept watch each day over Art's tent that threatened to slide a little closer to the muddy patch he was adjacent to.

Of course we had sun, and beautiful sunsets, (and fierce winds), and wonderful days—but we did have rain, we did have wet ground!

And so one afternoon, idling in my tiny tent while my wet and soggy Goretex dried and I sought out drier socks for sodden feet, I summoned up the bard and with apologies to him (and with Portia in mind), I penned the following and that night declaimed it.

*The quality of mercy is now strained  
Rain droppeth as a flood upon the ground  
Beneath our feet which squelch and sink  
Into the mud  
Mud moves relentlessly unto the site of Art  
Who labours mightily to disperse the mire  
Threatening to suck into the bog  
His very tent.  
And ah! our chefs, our Mim and Dee who cook  
With skill to fill our quaking guts and raise  
Our spirits high  
Whilst we of them think much as many days  
Of wet and spongy feet are still to come  
Dear God of rain and sun we beg for mercy  
Command the threatening clouds to break apart  
Reveal to us again that mighty peak  
Of Renshaw which so had us in its thrall  
That caused us to exclaim when we arrived  
What joy it is to be upon this marvellous, stupendous, flower filled plain  
Now wet and boggy, miserable, soggy, cold and foggy  
Marred by never ending  
Rain.  
I have spoke thus to plead our case—have mercy!*

And oh to what effect! The rain stopped, the skies cleared and Campers for Week Two had clement weather!