



Strathcona Wilderness Institute – 2020 Annual Report Park Use Permit, Authorization 103312 / 102645

General remarks

As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Strathcona Provincial Park saw unprecedented numbers of visitors from Vancouver Island and the BC mainland, with parking areas full and overflowing. For SWI, however, the necessary distancing protocols meant a modification of our usual operations and much less direct public engagement than in previous years. In general, following appropriate protocols, we made both the SPWC at Paradise Meadows and the Buttle Hut at Buttle Lake off-limits to the public, with students and volunteers meeting visitors outside in the open, and any necessary purchase transactions made through a screened window. Both visitor centres were equipped with sanitizer, as well masks and gloves. Planned events such as an Accessibility Day and a special celebration of our 25th anniversary had to be cancelled for this season.

We employed 4 students through the Canada Summer Jobs program and had 12 volunteers staffing the Centre at Paradise Meadows, and 6 at the Buttle Hut. Although we were awarded 5 CSJ positions we could only fill 4 of them, one staffing the SPWC, the other 3 working on projects; we were unable to fill the position staffing the Buttle Hut. One or two of our long-term volunteers were unable to contribute their help this year over concerns with COVID -19, but we did attract new people to staff the SPWC to add to our regular cohort.

We did not schedule any interpretive walks or hikes, since appropriate distancing even for small groups on the trails in such contexts would not be possible. The 3 workshops (Mycology, Lichens, Citizen Science) for groups of 25-30 participants planned for 2020 were not held. We addressed our educational mandate in part by distributing free Interpretive self-guiding maps of the Paradise Meadows area. Through our brochure and our website, we invited hikers to send us or post on iNaturalist their wildlife observations. And we had 3 of our students collecting floral and faunal data from a broad range of trails in the Park. These observations were uploaded into the SWI Data Collection Project on iNaturalist and thus made available to the public. At present the Observation Count is 4951 and the Species Count is 987; approximately 50% of these were submitted by the 3 students. Two of the students have also presented



Webinars open to the Public on specific projects (Helen Anderson: “The Common Nighthawk :Population in Paradise Meadows and Erin Sketchley: “Balancing Increasing Recreation and Conservation in Strathcona Provincial Park”). These Webinars, along with others related to research projects relevant to the Park, are made available to the public through our Website. The third student (Dan Tucker) worked with Director Randal Mindell on updating the “Common Subalpine Bryophytes of Strathcona Provincial Park “ publication and preparing a new one on Lichens in Strathcona Provincial Park.

Strathcona Park Wilderness Centre : Paradise Meadows Trail Head

The Centre was open from July 16th until October 11th in 2020, for a **total of 81 days**:

12 days in July, 31 days in August, 29 days in September, 9 days in October.

The Centre was staffed by student Rupert Love, employed through the Canada Summer Jobs programme from July 16th to Sept.7th, and by a cohort of twelve Volunteers. Megin Peake was contracted to oversee the coordination of the volunteers and help with the management of the Centre.

3608 visitors were recorded at the Centre, with a daily average 45 (cf last year's 5552 with an average of 55 over 101 days. The 95 % of visitors from the Island plus the rest of BC clearly reflected the travel restrictions in place.

Visitor Provenance Summary for the SPWC in 2020 -

83% from Vancouver Island

12% from mainland BC

4.5% from other parts of Canada

0.5% foreign visitors.

Scheduled Interpretive Walks and Hikes - none

School Groups - none (while in the Fall there were a few class field-trips, we were not involved)

Workshops - none



Wheelchair & TrailRider Use

Approximately 5 visitors made use of the Wheelchairs for the Paradise Meadows Boardwalks. The TrailRider was taken out on 2 occasions for day-trips, 1 for an overnight trip to the Croteau Group Campsite.

Special Events at the Strathcona Park Wilderness Centre

We would have liked to build upon our success last year by holding a 2nd (to be annual) Accessibility Day in the Park, highlighting the TrailRider and Accessible trails and so were very disappointed to have to cancel for this year.

The Buttle Hut beside Park HQ at Buttle Lake

Our Information Hut at Park HQ at Buttle Lake was staffed between July^{1st} and Sept 13th for a **total of 20** days. We were unsuccessful in attracting a student to work weekdays at the hut, and only 6 of our regular dozen Buttle Weekend Volunteers were willing to return this year. Over the 20 days a total of **770** visitors were recorded for an average of 39 per day. The high percentage of European visitors observed last year (28%) was unlikely under the circumstances, although a few souls stuck in Canada did come to the Hut..