



SOCIETY FOR
ECOLOGICAL
RESTORATION

Day Tour of Kelowna & Environs



STOP ONE

Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park (0900-1200 hrs)

The 13 of us in attendance car-pooled to drive 45 minutes up a gravel switch-back road from the lower elevations in the City of Kelowna at 350 m elevation, up to the Myra parking lot at 1265 m elevation. From the lot we walked 4 km, return, along a level segment of the former Kettle Valley Railway. Multiple tunnels and trestle bridges occur along this section of the KVR, and the location is a popular summer and weekend hiking and biking location.

The surrounding landscape was burned in the large stand-replacing crown fires of 2003. Much of the interpretive information along this trail in a Provincial Park focuses on “restoration” of the trestle bridges after the original century-old structures were burned. Little information exists about fire effects, forest regeneration, and the causes for these large catastrophic fires due to infill growth and fuel build-ups resulting from a century of fire suppression. Much of the forest at this location is comprised of Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*), Western Larch (*Larix occidentalis*), and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). It was a great location to observe those fire effects directly, see the peak of Little White mountain above, and the City of Kelowna below.

In terms of Biogeoclimatic Zones, we travelled from a Ponderosa Pine, Okanagan Very Dry Hot variant (PP xh1) at the lowest elevation up to an Interior Douglas-Fir, Kettle Dry Mild variant (IDF dm1).

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/myra/>





STOP TWO

Creekside Pub
(1200-1330 hrs)

We had lunch at this older pub in the Mission neighbourhood of Kelowna, near the mouth of Mission Creek where it empties into Okanagan Lake.

<http://creeksidepub.ca/>

STOP THREE

Mission Creek Restoration Initiative (1330-1430 hrs)

Most of the City of Kelowna sprawls across a nearly level alluvial fan of gravelly-sand, with the major stream Mission Creek running through the centre of it all. Lower Mission Creek used to have 30 km of meanders, oxbows, and swales from former channels spanning a width of 60-80 m across this plain. Vegetation at the time of settlement was dominated by swamps of River Birch (*Betula occidentalis*) and Red-Osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*) among drier meadows of Basin Wild Rye (*Elymus cineris*), Wild Rose (*Rosa acicularis*), and Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*). Ribbons of Black Cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) lined the banks of all active and abandoned channels and oxbows. This landscape was transformed into a manicured agricultural and urban area thanks to channelization and diking of Mission Creek in the 1950s that reduced the creek width to 30 m, length to 11 km, and increased water velocity. Approximately 700,000 to 1.2 Million Kokanee Salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) spawned along the creek in the 1940s, but by 2010 only 16,000 Kokanee spawned. Kokanee is a freshwater or land-locked form of Sockeye Salmon. Fishing is no longer permitted along Mission Creek due to depleted fish stocks.

The Mission Creek Restoration Initiative began in the 1990s to acquire adjacent lands and restore the original creek meanders and reduce velocity where possible, improve habitat for fish and wildlife, and engage the local community and partners. Between 2014 and 2016 the first phase of this initiative was constructed, and we had a chance to observe the set-back dike, excavated older dike, pools and channels, vegetation plantings, and other structures. Several cottonwood trees were considered danger trees, and the removed wood was re-used to create snags or stubs in a wetland on former forage cropland, and to install overhangs in pools. We had many questions about the project, as it appeared there was still much compacted ground on the old dike right of way and no coarse woody material yet placed as planned. The pools constructed in the floodplain were disconnected from the channel flow and we were concerned about the risk of trapping fish in these isolated ponds. Finally, many wondered if using cottonwood logs for overhangs in-stream was a wise decision, as these will quickly decay and reduce the duration of the desired effect for improving fish habitat. Plans are to write a letter to the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative with these observations and questions in the interest of helping advise the organization and to seek more information.

<http://www.missioncreek.ca/>



STOP FOUR

Tantalus Vineyards **(1430-1500 hrs)**

effluent, protection by covenant of a 10 acre portion of natural habitat within the 75 acre property, and partnership with Arlo's Honey Farm to raise bees in their pesticide-free fields. We hid out from the rain and sampled five wines, mostly white grapes, while admiring the spectacular view of the vineyards and Okanagan Lake from the hillside. Jennifer isn't admitting how much she spent on bottles.

<http://tantalus.ca/>

STOP FIVE

Knox Mountain Park **(1500-1630 hrs)**

This 310 hectare City-owned park immediately north of downtown Kelowna, and along the shores of Okanagan Lake, is a favorite for tourists and City dwellers. Natural vegetation is still the dominant feature, with bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoregneria spicata*), rough fescue (*Festuca campestris*), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), basin big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menzeisii*) the dominant species. Two features of the park were highlighted on our tour. Recreational trails have proliferated across the park over time, but became increasingly problematic in the past decade with the rising popularity of extreme mountain biking. The Apex Trail was badly eroded and compacted with parallel, braided trails, and many weedy plant species like Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and Knapweed (*Centaurea spp.*). The City has chosen to use a combination of fencing, signage, trail re-routing into a switch-back, the placement of coarse woody material, and selected tree planting to try and restore the trail. We noted much of the efforts have been vandalized by mountain bikers, with woody debris and fencing purposely removed. We also noted compaction has not been actively alleviated and allows an obvious trail path to persist. Perhaps most concerning was the placement of signs and fencing highlighting where the former trail occurred. This was drawing undesired attention and vandalism to the site, rather than deflecting attention and promoting natural recovery.

No tour in the Okanagan is complete without a wine stop. Tantalus is one of the oldest vineyards in the Okanagan, with vines planted as early as 1927. The vineyard has a number of environmentally friendly aspects, including a LEED certified building and facility, wastewater treatment and reuse on site to avoid contributing to



A second feature of the park was examined by drive-through on Knox Mountain road. Much of the Ponderosa Pine and Douglas-fir have been thinned to 100 to 150 stems per hectare in an effort to reduce the risk of a crown fire. A park management plan and city fire prevention plan have been implemented since the 2003 wild fires. While the thinning and downfall have been removed and chipped for use at a composting facility at the Kelowna landfill, the efforts have inadvertently restored the structure of Ponderosa Pine parklands prior to the era of fire suppression. Vigorous bunchgrass growth in-between the trees was evident. We ended the outdoor portion by watching the light fade on Lake Okanagan from the Knox Mountain peak lookout.

<http://www.kelowna.ca/CM/page2063.aspx>

STOP SIX

Train Station Pub (1630-1930 hrs)

Located in downtown Kelowna, this pub is in the 90-year old former CPR train station that was the end of a branch line from the North, through Vernon and Salmon Arm. People used to take a ferry to cross Okanagan Lake from here to Westbank, until a bridge was built in the 1950s to connect highways on either side. We closed out the day with supper here, and we

narrowly beat the rush of hockey fans trying to get in a drink before the Saturday night game of the Kelowna Rockets.

<http://thetrainstationpub.com/>

