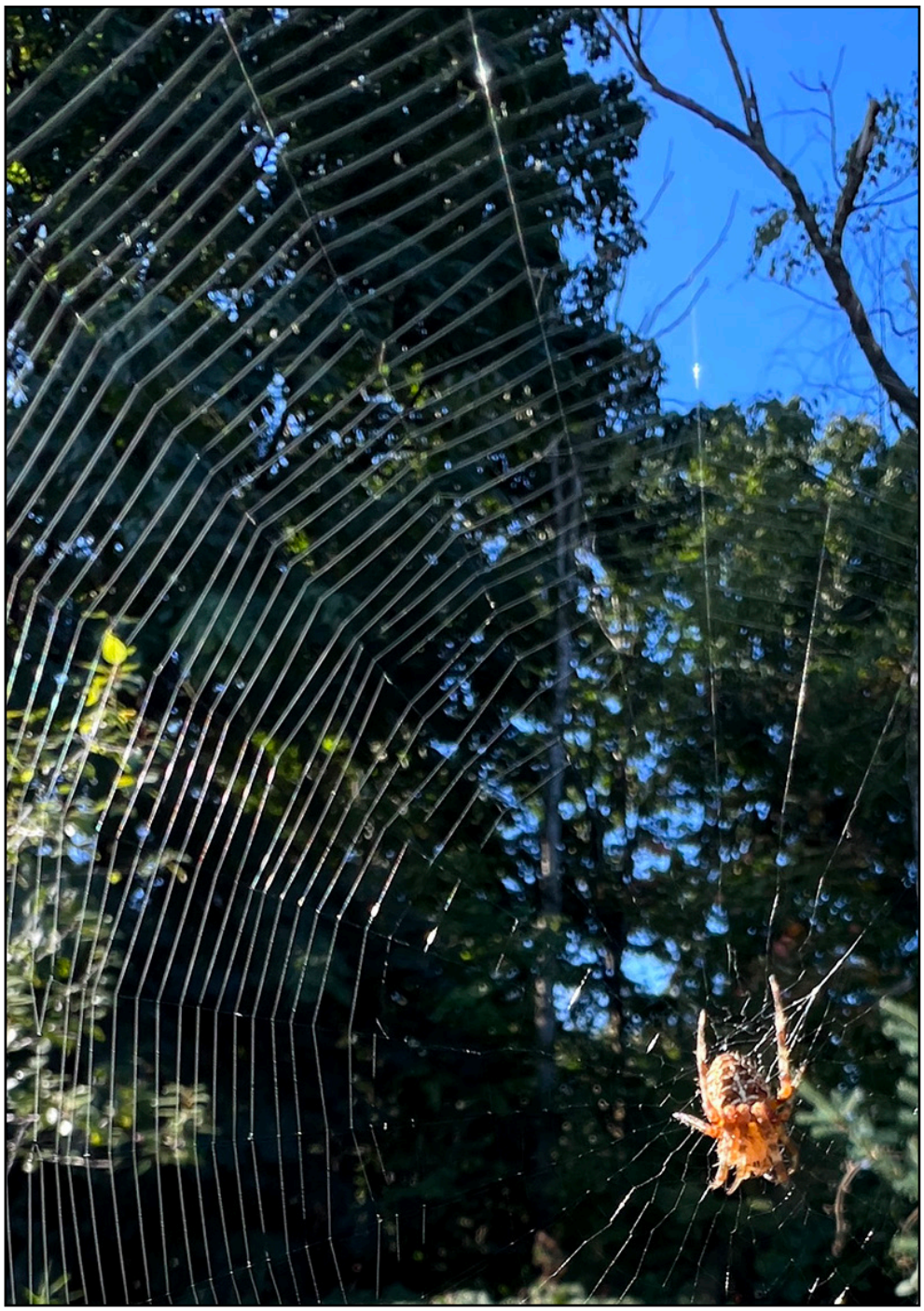

Stoney Creek Trail Report
No. 91 - October 2026

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It seems like I took the front-page photo of the spider web a long time ago, but it's been less than a month! In the photo, you are looking at a couple of **cross orbweaver spiders** (*Araneus diadematus,* "crowned spider"). These arachnids are widespread in southern British Columbia.

In autumn, mature male spiders actively search for females. The larger spider in the center of the web is a resident female. The spider perched near the top is a male waiting for the opportunity to approach and mate. He will be signaling his presence by plucking the web strands in a specific rhythm so he won't be mistaken for prey.



"Orb" refers to the classic circular, wheel-shaped web, constructed using two types of silk. First, there are non-sticky lines that radiate outward from a central hub like spokes on a bicycle wheel. These provide the web's structure and allow the spider to move around without getting stuck. Next, there are lines woven in a spiral pattern across the radial lines. These are coated with sticky droplets that trap prey. Finally, there are anchor lines attached to surrounding foliage. These are under tension and hold the web open.

Many orbweavers build a new web each night, often in about an hour.

Isn't it amazing that the complex engineering feats of these spiders come from a brain the size of a pinhead.

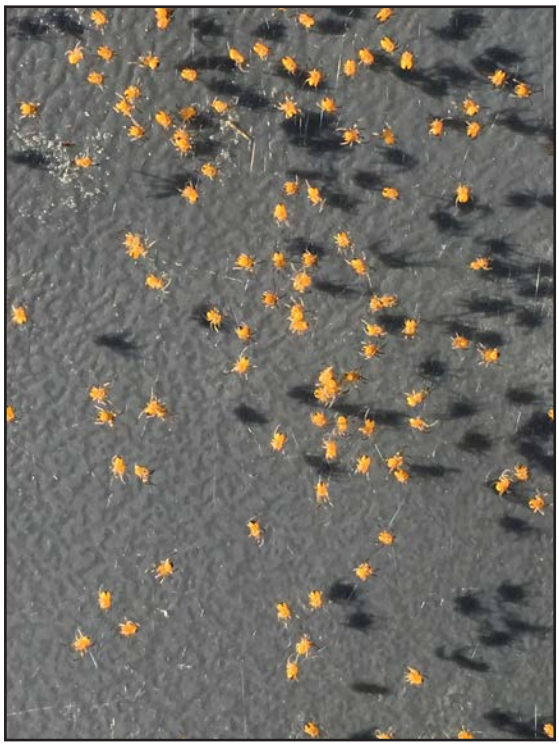


Cross Orbweaver Spiders





Above: the name of this spider comes from the pattern of white spots in the shape of a cross on the back of the abdomen. The large abdomen of the one on the left indicates it is a female, while the one on the right with a thin abdomen and very long legs is a male.



Adult spiders mature in late summer and fall. The female produces an egg sac in autumn and then dies. The eggs—not the adult spiders—survive the winter.

An egg sac can contain several hundred spiderlings. Newly emerged spiderlings such as these will soon disperse by "ballooning." They climb to an exposed point, release fine strands of silk and allow air currents to carry them over surprisingly long distances.

This high-risk strategy, as well as subsequent predation, starvation and bad weather, means that only a small fraction of the little creatures will survive.

Stoney Creek Macroinvertebrates: The Caddisfly





Some caddisfly larvae encase themselves in sand grains, plant fragments and small twigs, making a portable home.



This is an adult October caddisfly (*Dicosmoecus gilvipes*), a member of the *Limnephilidae family*, commonly known as the northern caddisflies.

Caddisflies belong to the order *Trichoptera* ("hairy wings") and are close relatives of moths and butterflies.

These caddisfly larvae will have hatched from eggs laid by adult females along the creek margins in late fall.

Caddisfly larvae are able to produce silk from glands near their mouths. Using it as both thread and glue, they collect materials from their surroundings and fasten the pieces together to construct a protective case around their soft bodies. (You may see the head and legs protruding from one end).

Caddisfly larvae have varied diets. They may scrape algae from rocks, shred fallen leaves, collect decaying organic material, filter particles from the current or prey on other small aquatic animals. In doing so, they help recycle nutrients through the stream ecosystem. They are themselves an important food source for fish which is why trout anglers are very familiar with caddisflies and frequently use artificial flies that imitate them.

The caddisfly larvae spend winter and spring feeding, molting, and growing inside their cases. Before pupating (morphing into adults) they attach themselves tightly to rocks. After emerging as flying adults, their lifespan is brief, typically lasting days to a few weeks. Their adult lives are primarily devoted to reproduction. They feed little or not at all, relying on fat stored during the larval stage for flying, mating, and egg-laying to complete their life cycle.

Stoney Creek Macroinvertebrates: The Salmonfly



Salmonflies are a type of stonefly, a common name for the insect order, *Plecoptera* ("braided wings"*)*.

On the left, a *Calineuria californica* nymph, found in Stoney Creek last month. It is a species commonly called the **golden stonefly.** They live up to three years among the stones and gravel on the creek bottom, feeding on small aquatic invertebrates and other organic material. As they grow, the nymphs shed their outer skin several times before emerging from the water as a winged adult. Adults are generally short-lived and most active around the creekside, where mating takes place. Females lay their eggs in the water. Like other stoneflies, this species is sensitive to pollution and therefore an indicator of good stream-water quality.

This nymph will have spent perhaps two years underwater before crawling onto a rock or streamside vegetation in early summer, shedding its exoskeleton, and emerging as a winged adult.

On the right, an adult **giant salmonfly** (*Pteronarcys californica*), one of the largest species found in B.C. It is recognizable by its large size, dark body, orange markings, and wings folded flat over its back.



As adults, they live briefly—less than two weeks—concentrating on mating and reproduction. Females release masses of eggs while flying over the water. The eggs sink to the bottom, hatching into tiny nymphs to restart the underwater cycle, while the adults die soon afterwards.

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A great blue heron fishing
in the Bateman Pool

Odds & Ends: 1/3







1. These shriveled **black hawthorn** berries are well past their prime.
2. The leaves on this young bigleaf maple are marred by a fungal growth called **powdery mildew**.
3. A red currant leaf on Hemlock Hill is surrounded by the very small vines of a **black bindweed**.
4. Those tiny "leaves" are actually **tepals** that once gave protection to the bindweed's tiny flowers.
5. Redcedar trees are not entirely evergreen: they do shed older, inefficient leaves in the fall.
6, 7. As they lose their leaves in autumn, red alders develop both **female cones** (left) and **male catkins** (right). Notice the pink leaf buds.



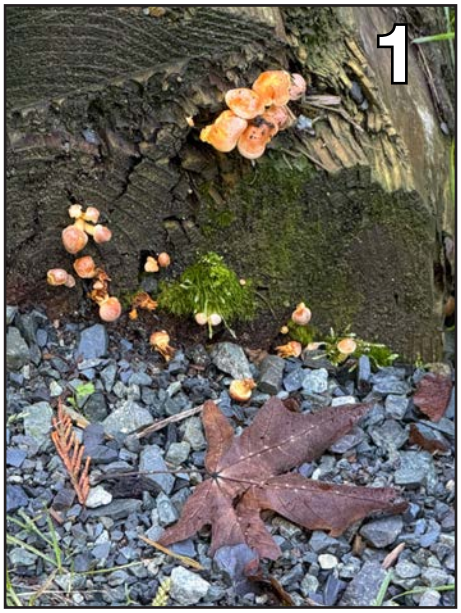


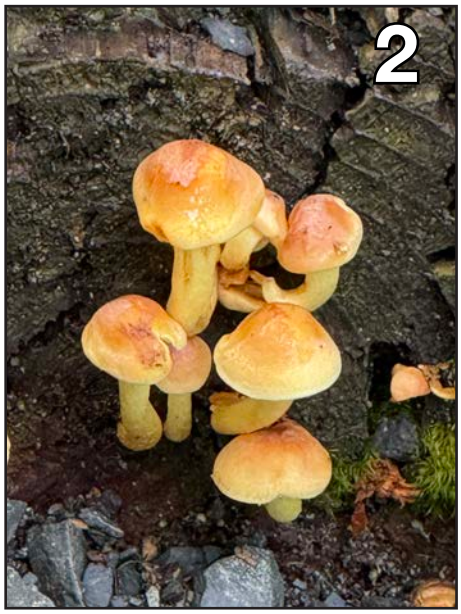




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Odds & Ends: 2/3







Cool October rains wake up the fungi:

1, 2. The progressive growth of poisonous **sulphur tuft mushrooms** on a log near Bridge 5.
3, 4. This appropriately named **shaggy parasol** would have been about the size of a button when it emerged from the soil. It would have taken about three days to grow into this shaggy, 10 cm-tall dome (above, right). Three days later, it had become a wide "umbrella," and, being in plain view from the trail, it was destroyed after nine days.
5, 6, 7. Trembling crust, a gelatinous fungus, changes as it ages on the stump beside the Bridge 5 bench.



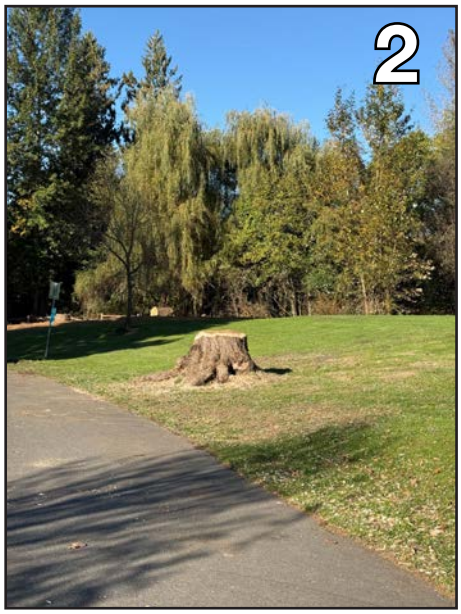


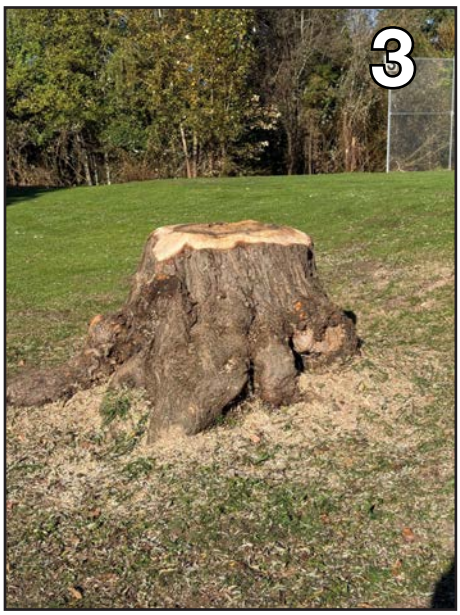




Odds & Ends: 3/3







1, 2, 3. Reluctantly, Parks & Trails cut down this very old weeping willow in Bateman Park. The stump reveals the core of the trunk was severely decayed.
4. Very few people will have noticed this **imitation dragonfly** suspended from a twig on Hemlock Hill.
5. **Woolly bear caterpillars**, the larval stage of the Isabella tiger moth, regularly appear underfoot in October.
6. This **downy feather** perhaps belonged to an owl.
7. An **Asian lady beetle**, basking in the warm sun on a pleasant fall day, will eventually crawl into a sheltering crevice somewhere to survive the winter.









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Canine Companions: The Special Bond Between People and Dogs

Dogs mean different things to different people. For owners, they are far more than pets. They are companions, family members, sources of comfort, and a connection to the natural world. Their importance lies not only in what they do for us but also in the unique relationship that develops between two very different species.

One of the greatest gifts a dog can offer is unconditional affection. Dogs do not judge us by our achievements, appearance, or shortcomings. Their joyful enthusiasm or quiet companionship can make us feel valued simply for being ourselves.



For people who live alone, a dog can ease loneliness and provide a reassuring presence throughout the day. Dogs can also provide emotional comfort during grief, illness, anxiety, and other difficult periods. Their wordless presence and affectionate behaviour can help us feel calmer and less alone.

Caring for a dog can give structure and purpose to our lives. The routine of feeding, grooming, playing with, and walking a dog gives us a sense of responsibility. Knowing that another living creature depends on us can be deeply rewarding.

Dogs encourage us to appreciate simple pleasures. A walk, a game of fetch, or the excitement of exploring a familiar trail can bring enjoyment to an otherwise ordinary day. At the same time, these experiences can strengthen our connection with nature. Venturing outdoors encourages us to notice the birds, wild animals, insects, trees and plants, and to experience the weather directly. A dog can help us become more attentive to the world around us.

The bond between a person and a dog is built on trust, familiarity, and shared experiences. Because dogs often become cherished members of the family, losing one can bring profound grief. The pain of that loss reflects the depth of the relationship.

Ultimately, dogs can give us a sense of being needed, accepted, and loved. Sometimes, their greatest gift is simply their quiet presence, a reminder that companionship does not always require words.

What a Difference a Rain Makes!

On Monday the 26th, the chum salmon (on the left) desperately tried to leave Bateman Pool and reach a suitable spawning area upstream. It had to give up.



Then, overnight on the 27th-28th, came the salmon rains. Taking advantage of the deeper water, coho were observed racing past Bridge 3. (Coho will travel upstream as far and as fast as possible.) That day, they were moving upstream in surges: one was reported at noon and another in mid-afternoon.

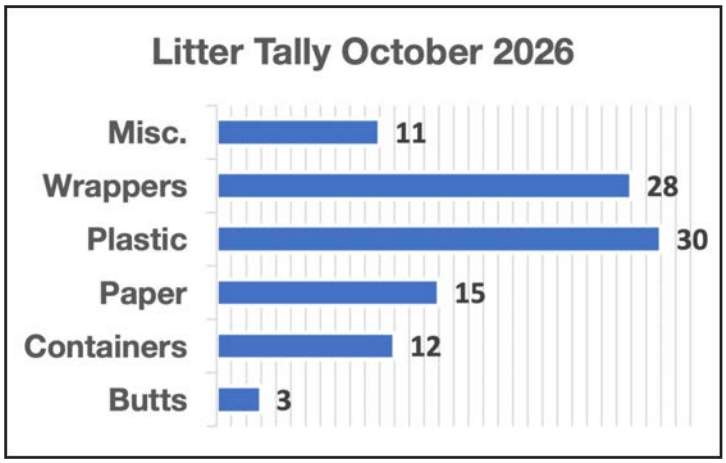




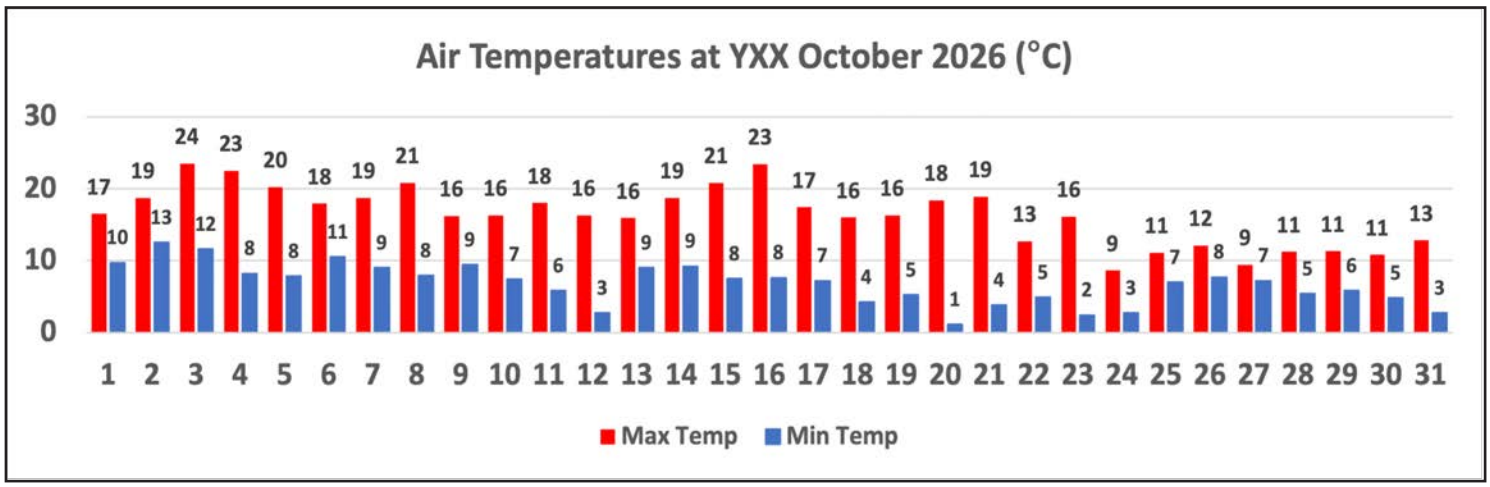
Chum are not as energetic as coho and are content to spawn in the lower reaches of Stoney Creek. Below Bridge 1, this pair were observed enjoying a long, relaxed swim together in the rapidly clearing water.

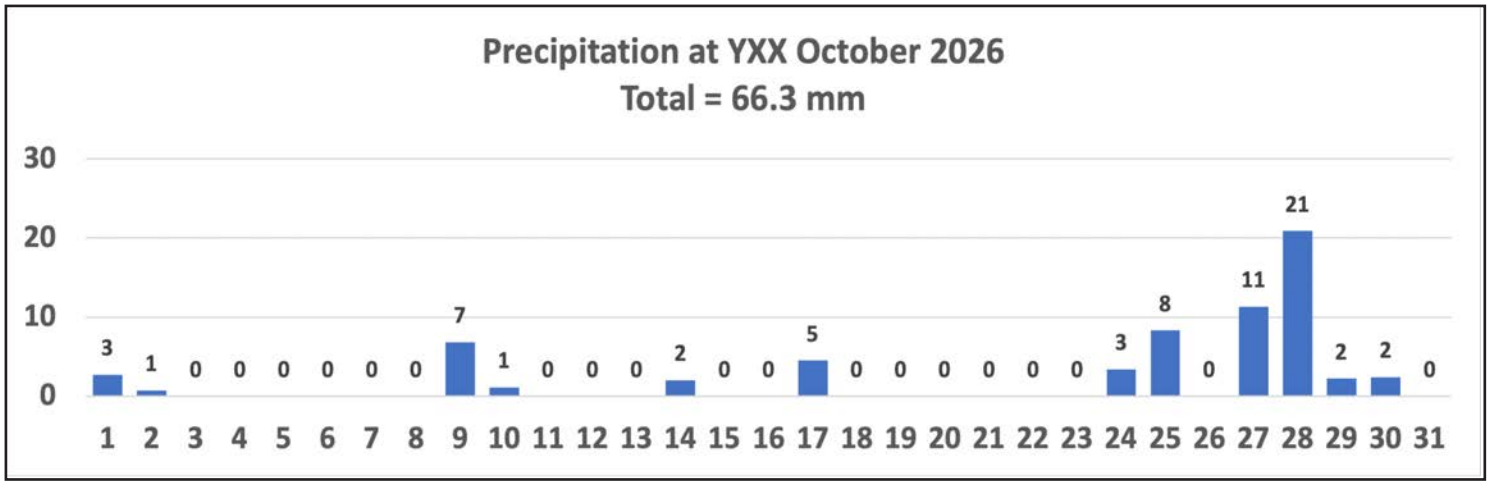
Chum salmon usually return to spawn in Stoney Creek in late October, a little earlier than the coho, which reach peak numbers from November through December.

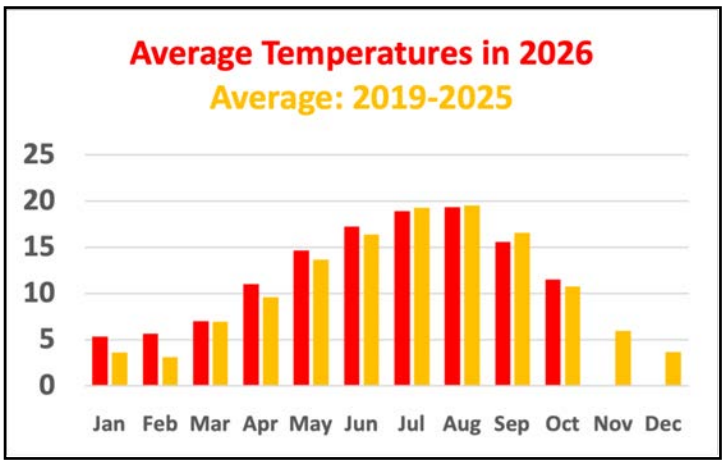
Dog owners beware: There is strong evidence that *E. coli* counts in the creek rise dramatically after the first heavy rains.

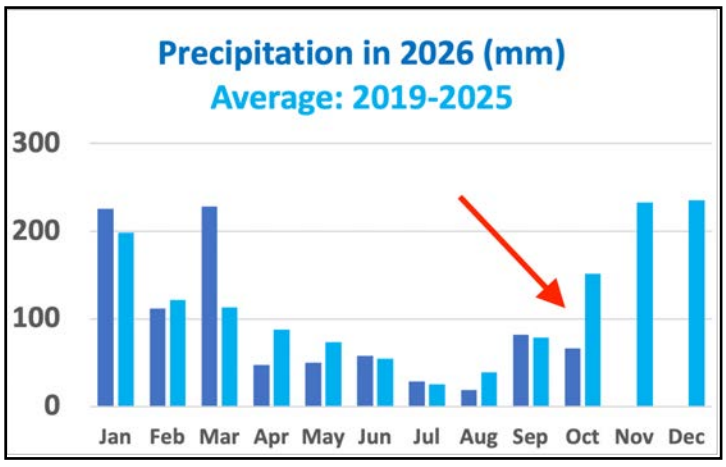


Miscellaneous: clothing, glass, chewing gum, dog balls and fragments, etc.
Wrappers & packaging candy wrappers, foil, cellophane.
Plastic: dog waste bags & shreds, other items made of plastic.
Paper & cardboard: tissues, napkins, posters, newspaper, receipts, cardboard, etc.
Containers: bottles, bottle tops, cans, coffee cups, lids, juice boxes.
Total litter items = 99



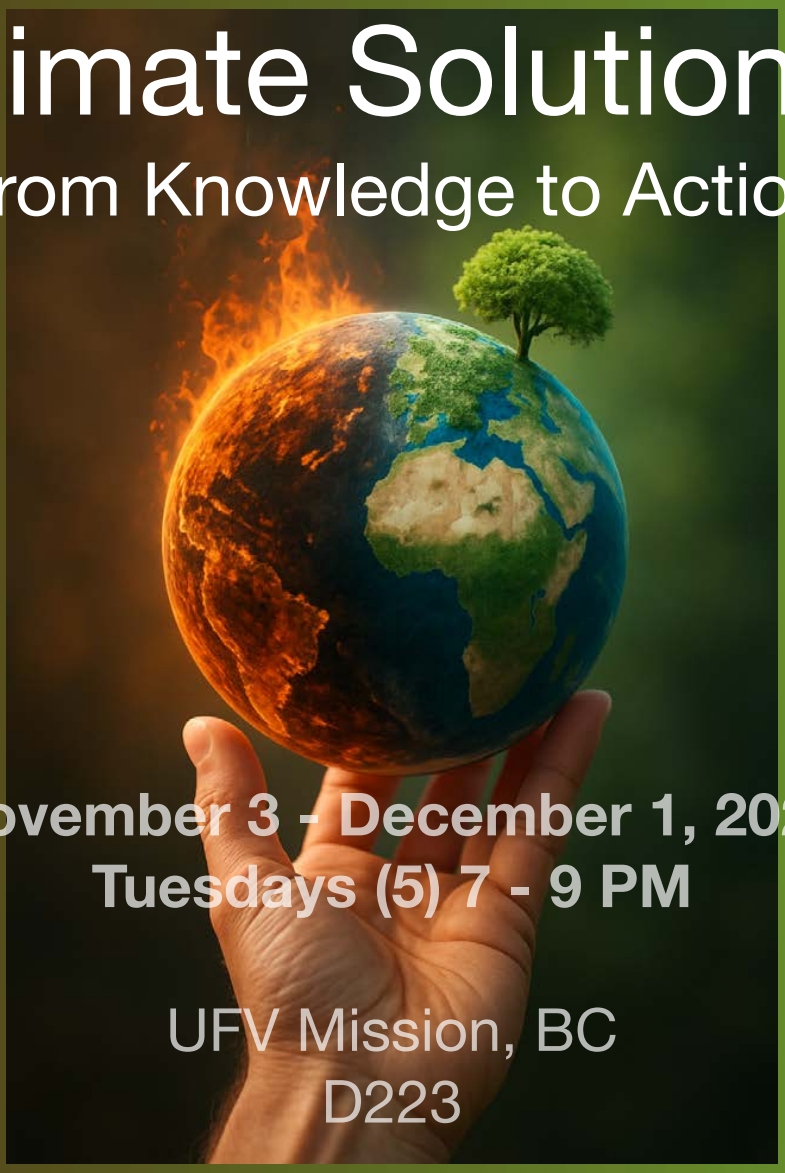






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