

Vancouver Island Nature Viewing Region

Comox Valley Area

Puntledge River Recreation Area (BC Hydro Trails)



Northern Flicker:
Bill Heybroek drawing



Puntledge River: Krista Kaptein photo



Round-leaved sundew: Krista Kaptein photo

Starting from the Comox Lake Dam picnic area, BC Hydro maintains a large network of hiking, mountain biking and equestrian trails. River Trails “East” and “West” explore both sides of the scenic Puntledge River through a mixed forest of Douglas-fir, western hemlock, western redcedar, western white pine and bigleaf maple. On the east side a small bog has unusual acid-loving plants. Other trails include the Twin Lakes, a short hike to two pretty lakes, and the short Loop Trail, which features views of the river, lake and forest. In the spring, check the edges of the trail for spotted coralroot orchids, candystripe and gnome plant. In the fall, the river supports numbers of spawning salmon, and the woods are full of interesting fungi. Birds are abundant in the riparian areas and forested habitat. Check the river for American Dippers and Common Mergansers, and in the spring listen for Townsend’s Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglets and Pacific Wrens in the forest. Hiking, mountain biking and multiuse (equestrian) trails are well marked on a map available from the BC Hydro website. The Dam trailhead is located nine kilometers southwest of Courtenay and six kilometers north of Cumberland.

[Site Map](#)

Geographical Description	Along both sides of the Puntledge River from Comox Lake to 4 km downstream.
Area/ Trail Length	Approx. 240 ha. total wooded area; mostly flat, short hills, bridges. River Trail West: approx. 5.5 km trail one-way. River Trail East: approx. 4 km. trail one-way.
Habitat	Riparian 2nd growth forest, bog on east side.
Highlights	Returning salmon in autumn; American Dippers; mushrooms in autumn; saprophytic & parasitic (symbiotic) plants; bog plants on east side.
Best Season	Spring for flowers; late summer & autumn for spawning salmon, year-round for woods.
Main Access	West side trails: from west side of Comox Dam; from Upper Puntledge hatchery off Forbidden Plateau Rd. East side trails: from east side of Comox Dam; from Lake Trail Rd. at Bevan Rd.
Secondary Accesses	West/north side trails: from Nymph Falls Park to the east. East/south side trails: from Penstock right-of-way to the east.
Cautions	Trails can be wet in winter & flood occasionally; trails may be unsafe during strong winds. Water releases may occur suddenly by BC Hydro - if you hear a siren, the water level is rising - stay out of the river channel area.
Jurisdiction	BC Hydro.

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Birds	Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck, Harlequin Duck, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Barred Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, American Dipper, American Robin, Varied Thrush, Western Tanager, Northern Flicker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Pacific Wren, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Belted Kingfisher, Common Raven, Steller's Jay, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Willow Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Hammond's Flycatcher, Cassin's Vireo, Spotted Towhee, Song Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, House Finch.
	Bird List
Mammals	Black-tailed Deer, Red Squirrel.
Reptiles	
Amphibians	Pacific Tree Frog.
Fish	Summer & Fall Chinook, Pink, Coho, and Chum Salmon; Winter Steelhead, Cutthroat Trout.
Insects	Woolly bear caterpillar.
Other Species	Banana slug.
Trees	Douglas-fir (some large), redcedar (some large), western hemlock, grand fir, red alder, bigleaf maple. Some cottonwood in wet areas. Some white pine, shore pine, arbutus.
Shrubs	Red-osier dogwood, Oregon grape, salmonberry, thimbleberry, red huckleberry, salal, twinflower, Pacific ninebark. Devil's club in wet areas. Labrador tea, hardhack, sweet gale, bog-cranberry, bog-laurel, in bog.
Flowering Plants	Skunk cabbage, vanilla leaf, herb-Robert, wall lettuce, foamflower, prince's pine, Menzies' pipsissewa, pink wintergreen, white-veined wintergreen, pussytoes, clasping twistedstalk, trillium, lady's slipper, Siberian miner's lettuce. Pinesap, gnome plant, ground cone, candystick, spotted coralroot around Two Lakes Trail on west side. Floxglove, fireweed, vetch sp., common toadflax, wild ginger at old homestead site on east side trail. White bog-orchid, slender bog-orchid, yellow monkeyflower, marsh cinquefoil, sticky false asphodel, in bog.
Ferns, Lichens, Mosses	Sword fern, bracken fern, lady fern, deer fern.
Other Species	Step moss, cotton moss.
Invasive/Non-native species	Invasive: holly, Scotch broom.
Mushrooms	Polypore species, turkeytail, witch's butter, rosy gomphidus, angel wing, hydnum species, sulphur tuft, russulla sp., amanita sp., coral fungus.
Geology	Fluvial sand & gravel.
Regulations	Multi-use trails.
Facilities	Gravel parking lots; Roadside parking; occasional benches, signage, pit toilet at Dam parking area.
Other Features	Dam & power infrastructure, fish hatchery, remnants of coal mining & old homestead on east side.
Other Connections	To Nymph Falls trails on north side of river to the east.
FMI	BC Hydro Puntledge River Recreation Area BC Hydro Puntledge River Recreation Area Map K'omoks Important Bird Area Fish Species in the Courtenay River Estuary and Baynes Sound 2001 pdf