

THE YEW LAKE TRAIL AND OLD-GROWTH LOOP

AN INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO THE YEW LAKE AREA

As Seen Along The Yew Lake Trail & Old-Growth Loop



© Mary Mace

CYPRESS PROVINCIAL PARK

West Vancouver | British Columbia

- Two kilometres round trip
- Wheelchair accessible
- Elevation gain – slight
- Clockwise direction
- Please stay on the trail at all times

THE YEW LAKE AREA in Cypress Bowl contains the most easily accessible subalpine meadows, wetlands and old-growth forest in the Lower Mainland. Examples of nearly all the park's trees, shrubs, and wildflowers can be seen along the Yew Lake Trail and Old-Growth Loop.

The trail starts near the Visitor Services building in the downhill ski area at the end of the Cypress Bowl Road. It follows Cypress Creek to Yew Lake, then passes alongside marshy subalpine meadows to an old-growth forest before looping back to the starting point.

At 925 metres elevation, the Yew Lake area is in a transition zone between the lower elevation *Coastal Western Hemlock Zone* and the higher elevation *Mountain Hemlock Zone*, resulting in a great range of plant species. Cypress is also at the southern end of the Coast Mountains, which extend 1600 kilometres north to the Yukon border. Some plants that are common at Cypress and further north are near the southern limits of their range here, and are uncommon south of the park.

16,000 years ago this entire area was under glacier ice, which reached 2000 metres above sea level and covered the mountaintops to a depth of several hundred metres.

Cypress Bowl was formed by glaciers cutting into the bedrock and creating a deep basin. Sediments left by the glaciers conceal this bedrock on the floor of the Bowl. By 14,000 years ago, Cypress Bowl was free of ice, and plants and animals began to re-colonize the area.



False Azalea

1 AS YOU START ALONG the Yew Lake Trail, Black Mountain (1217 metres) is on your left, Strachan (1454 metres) is on your right, and Hollyburn (1325 metres) is behind you, also on the right. Hollyburn's old-growth forest is still largely intact, but much of the old-growth on the slopes of Black and Strachan within Cypress Bowl was logged for ski development in the late 1960s before the area received park protection in 1975.

2 AFTER PASSING BLACK MOUNTAIN'S Eagle Chair and entering the forest, stop to look at the thicket on your left with examples of three of the park's dominant shrub species: *white-flowered rhododendron*, *false azalea*, and *copperbush*. Copperbush is common here and up the coast to Alaska, but uncommon south of BC. *Oval-leaved* and *Alaskan blueberries* grow along the trail, together with *black huckleberries*. These acid-loving, deciduous-leaved shrubs are all in the *heather family*, as are many other shrubs growing in the park's coniferous forests and bogs and on the ridges.



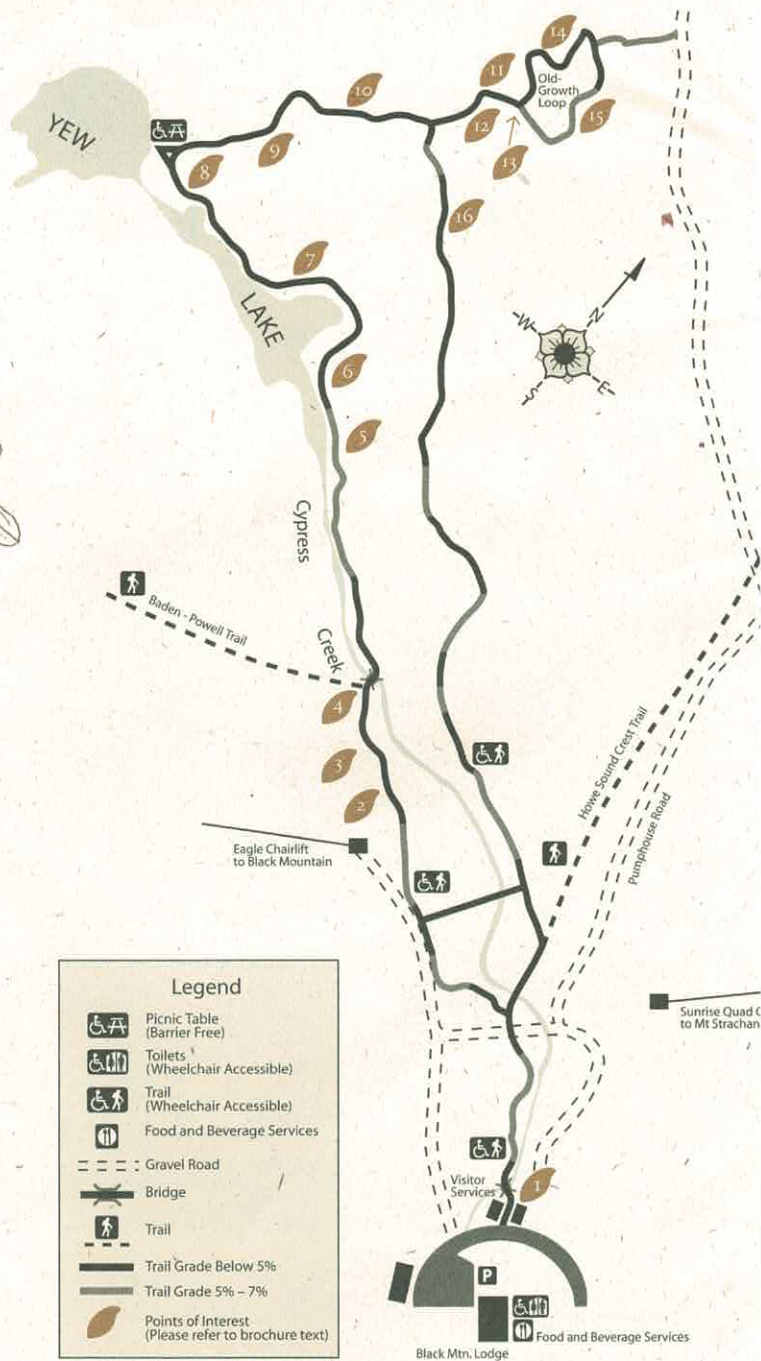
Copperbush

3 A SHORT DISTANCE PAST THE THICKET, also on your left, is a raised seepage pool, edged with the kidney-shaped leaves of *deer cabbage*. This plant is common along streams and in other wet areas at Cypress, on Vancouver Island and north along the Coast Mountains to Alaska. But although it can be seen on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, it is uncommon south of BC.

4 THE NEW BADEN-POWELL TRAIL to Black Mountain Plateau begins just before the bridge crossing Cypress Creek. Cypress Creek flows south from Yew Lake and is joined by tributaries from Strachan, Hollyburn and Black Mountains to cascade down two steep waterfalls in West Vancouver's Cypress Falls Park before reaching Burrard Inlet east of Caulfeild Cove, almost 9 kilometres away.



Deer Cabbage



Legend	
	Picnic Table (Barrier Free)
	Toilets (Wheelchair Accessible)
	Trail (Wheelchair Accessible)
	Food and Beverage Services
	Gravel Road
	Bridge
	Trail
	Trail Grade Below 5%
	Trail Grade 5% - 7%
	Points of Interest (Please refer to brochure text)

5 AS THE TERRAIN BECOMES FLATTER, Cypress Creek widens and the lower part of Yew Lake comes into view. Yew Lake used to be called Cypress Lake. Why or when its name was changed is unclear since *yew* trees do not appear to grow here.

6 WHERE THE FOREST OPENS UP, much *pink mountain-heather* and some *white mountain-heather* can be seen on both sides of the trail. These ground-hugging evergreen shrubs grow in drier, open areas throughout the park. *Pink mountain-heather* is more common at this elevation, but at higher elevations *white mountain-heather* dominates. Its scale-like leaves are better designed to withstand harsh conditions than are the needle-like leaves of the pink-flowered species.

7 MANY WESTERN WHITE PINES can be seen along the trail and in the meadows. Their slender needles are in bundles of five, distinguishing them from *shore pines* with two-needle bundles. Sadly, all these *western white pines* are likely to die before reaching maturity due to blister-rust, a disease brought to Vancouver from France in 1910.

8 YEW LAKE IS FED BY STREAMS on Black Mountain, whose northern summit can be seen rising above the lake. The world's largest recorded *amabilis fir* grows in a gully on the mountain's northwest slope. Near the lake is a deciduous shrub with flowers that are intermediate in shape between lower elevation *hardhack spirea* and higher elevation *mountain spirea*, suggesting that this shrub may be a cross between the two species.

9 AFTER LEAVING YEW LAKE, look for a pond on your right with a large boulder in the centre. This "glacial erratic" was carried here by glaciers and left in this spot when the glaciers melted 14,000 years ago.



10 TO YOUR LEFT IS A LARGE MEADOW with groups of trees that look like islands in a sedge meadow sea. The trees have created a growing mound in the wet meadows that protects their roots from heat and overabundance of water. The protection provided by the trees also allows small shrubs and other plants to take hold on the mound. The moist growing conditions have stunted the trees' normal growth. Several are contorted and bonsai-like in appearance. Despite their small size, they may be very old.



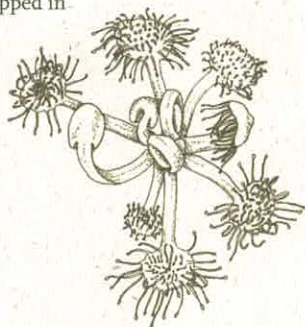
Yellow-Cedar
(Yellow-Cypress)

11 TURN LEFT AT THE TRAIL JUNCTION

toward the Old-Growth Loop. On a clear day, the Tantalus Range at the head of Howe Sound is visible to the northwest. Small *three-leaved goldthread* plants grow in a few places in this area. This plant is common north of here, but very rare at Cypress, and is known in only one location in Washington State.

12 THE IMPERMEABLE PEAT and clay in the meadow to your right have resulted in the formation of a series of small, terraced ponds which drain into one another. *Round-leaved sundew*, a very small insect-eating plant with reddish-green leaves in a basal rosette, grows in this area.

Insects become trapped in the sticky dewdrops surrounding the leaf and are then digested by the plant, providing it with the nitrogen that is lacking in these nutrient-poor growing conditions.



Round-Leaved Sundew

Yellow-Cedar, also known as Yellow-Cypress, for which the park is named.

13 ALL FOUR OF THE PARK'S DOMINANT tree species can be seen near the start of the Old-Growth Loop: *amabilis* fir, western and mountain hemlock, and yellow-cedar, also known as yellow-cypress, for which the park is named. These "ancestors of the skylines" are BC's longest-lived tree species. Many of the park's yellow-cedars are over 1000 years old. The fallen tree near the start of the loop is a mountain hemlock that fell in the winter of 2002-03. A tree ring count by the University of British Columbia's Tree Laboratory staff showed that the tree was over 740 years old. The bench on your right was made from this tree.

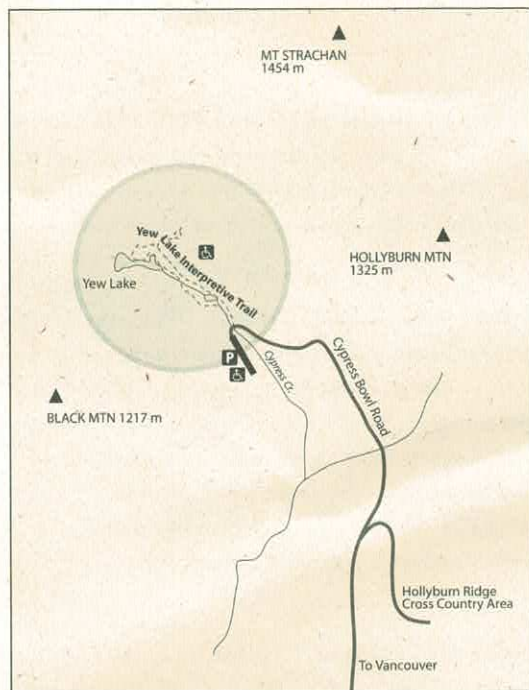
14 SEVERAL GIANT WESTERN HEMLOCKS grow along the trail. Although the age of these trees is not known, hemlocks at this elevation could reach 1000 years. Two more of these giants flank the short side trail at the top of the loop. This 2.5 hectare stand is the smallest of only four known old-growth stands in the park where conditions promote the growth of trees that are exceptionally large for their species. The stand includes the forest to the northwest, across this tributary of Montizambert Creek.

15 AS OLD AS THE TREES IN THIS STAND MAY BE, the forest itself is even older. Research by Dr. Ken Lertzman, Simon Fraser University, on old-growth stands on Strachan and Hollyburn's higher slopes showed that the natural life cycle of these ancient "snow forests" has been uninterrupted by major fire or other catastrophe for several thousand years. This forest stand is likely to be equally old.

16 AFTER LEAVING THE OLD-GROWTH LOOP, turn left to continue along the main trail past more subalpine meadows and old-growth forest back to the ski area. On your way back, consider the immense changes that have taken place in the Yew Lake area over the last 16,000 years.



White-Flowered
Rhododendron



- Environmentally sensitive area
- Stay on the trail at all times
- No dogs allowed
- Do not disturb wildlife
- Take nothing but photos

THIS IS AN AREA OF EXCEPTIONAL BEAUTY AND ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE.

Please help to ensure that it is treated with care and respect.

Recommended plant identification books, plant and bird lists for this area, and other information about the park's natural history can be found on the Friends of Cypress website.

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