Flyer column for July 2018-06-06

The streams that flow through our little corner of the world are hosts to all kinds of life, and it won’t surprise too many of you that your friends and neighbors at FBSES are collecting all kinds of data, especially numbers, about most of it. Early every April, three of Fanny Bay’s waterways get a largish, homely plywood box installed in their beds, and a barrier is put across each to direct a portion of flow through a big hose into the box. The idea is that small and large swimming creatures will be carried by the current into the box and there will rest until the next morning when someone nice will come and let them out. Stopping only to count, measure, appraise, assess and identify them and then depositing them downstream of the box and on their way.

The whole idea is to find out how healthy the stream is by putting numbers to its aquatic wildlife and some of it is definitely wild. That includes the mink which came into the box through the pipe and reduced the count of other creatures by some amount before Lorie was able to net him or her out and watch it vanish downstream. The two coho he hadn’t finished eating were survived by 69 others that day probably because the mink needed to sit on the shelf provided in the box for things like frogs, salamanders and newts, which also get id’d and counted.

FBSES members need to know their coho from their cutthroat and rainbow trout, and chum fry from trout fry, and three different kinds of sculpins (coast range, prickly and unidentified) as well as threespine sticklebacks and lampreys, and they do.

What about those numbers? There will not be a test, so just let these digits roll over you: from April 8 to May l6 of this year, 1051 wild coho smolts went through the Wilfred Creek side channel smolt fence. FBSES has been counting fish on Wilfred since 1994 and someday we’ll add up all those records. On Cook Creek, the fence counts swimmers who have reared in the Relic Side Channel that we built there in the late 90’s to restore habitat damaged by Inland Island Highway construction. This year, 833 coho smolts went to sea. In 2017, it was 1063, which shows the kinds of changes a different year brings. Other 2017 wildlife; 176 sticklebacks, 32 giant water bugs, 10 newts, 20 red legged frogs, and two snails.

On Mud Bay Creek, at the south edge of town, where people stop to take pictures of themselves with the Fanny Bay sign, the fence scoops the whole creek into the box. From April 4 to May 26, 2018 , an impressive 2171 coho smolts left this little roadside trickle, as did 61 cutthroat, 55 sculpin and nine rainbows.

Water temperatures, weather conditions, and on Cook Creek, water levels are recorded. All of this information eventually goes to Fisheries and Oceans Canada where we are assured it is very appreciated.

As always, we are at [www.fbses.ca](http://www.fbses.ca), on Berray Road every Wednesday and Saturday morning, and we welcome all.