

Week 8: CHASING THE WILD SIDE Beginner 6km / Intermediate 11km

Wild Thing! You Make My Heart Sing and my thighs, glutes, calves and hip flexors *Scream!* Get ready for an adventure this week folks, pack a water bottle and a power bar. You will have a choice of 6 or 11km of wilderness wandering on the backtrails of CNSC. **This week and next you'll be starting from the Piccadilly Circus Junction accessible from the upper parking lot.** CNSC is hosting the BC Champs (XC) March 4-6 and Biathlon NATIONALS Mar12-17!

Heading from Piccadilly, you will pass through Canada Cup Junction and up to the Iceman Trail. Wind your way right, down Iceman and jog left onto Pine Flats. When you get to Santa's cabin, Go CHECK IT OUT!. Maybe he's THERE! When you see he's actually not, keep going straight and you are going to enter into WILD NEW TERRITORY.

First of all, you will be climbing Up the Creek. This scenic trail follows a winding creek draw through a mature Spruce/Balsam/Fir forest. At the Big FIR Junction (just ignore the Big SPRUCE there) is a decision point: *Keep left onto the Hickory Wing Trail to cover an 11 K route OR if you found last week a little bit too much you can take a shortcut, right, to grab the last 4 k making your route a total of 6km.* After reading the next part of the description you might decide that that is the way to go, because there will be some technical terrain including some heart pounding ups, and exhilaratingly terrifying downs. However, we DO know the various safe hill options from former routes, so what the heck? If the 6km is still your choice, you can ignore this next part of the description, and turn right to meet up with the rest of the route at the Fir Out junction about 50m away.

11km: Make your way east (left) up the Hickory wing on an easy gradual grade. You will reach the half way point. You may notice a painter's palette hung on a Fir tree on your left in that area. This was hung by the family of Willie Wolfe who ended his last ski on the Hickory Wing on December 27th 2007. Willie was an artist and a sample of his artwork is the pastel that is hanging on the wall when you enter the upper lodge by the washrooms. Willie still skis and hikes these trails. I've seen him. Once you've said a quick hello, there is one more little climb and then a nice bit of easy respite down to the Sawmill Junction.

At that point you will turn right onto the Sawmill Loop where you will see an old saw blade that has been transformed into a magical scene by Ruth Hanson, an old-time member of CNSC. Ruth also painted the banners and created the felt hangings that are hanging in the upper lodge. What talent! The majestic cathedral-like canopy of the Sawmill will make you feel like you are in another world and wonder "Why the heck have I not come here before?" ..And also, "Next time I come maybe there's a shorter way to get here!" (There is) The Sawmill is definitely a good hard climb until you reach the highest point just past the Sawmill Connector where Lynx can give you an escape route to the Northern Lights. But DON'T DO THAT, carry on winding your way downhill back to Sawdust Junction where you will join the Hickory Wing again for a short jaunt before heading down "Fir-ther" Up the Creek. (yup). Now this section will have a lot of downhill, and the downhill will get trickier as you get closer to the end of the trail, so depending on conditions, you do need to be wary and in charge of your control. The last couple of hairpin turns before you reach the Hickory Wing will be the most exciting part and we don't want anyone ending IN the creek as opposed to UP the creek!

Keeping left on to the Hickory Wing West, where your timid friends are having a picnic waiting for you, you will pass the Greenway Trail which comes all the way from UNBC. A little bit of uphill and then a nice big downhill is just ahead. Once you've mastered the Crux of Hickory Wing West, you've got one more fun little up and down before you're into some relaxing and cruising. This last section, before reaching Thumbs Up junction, will be another surprise treat. Many are not even aware it's there. But now you know! From here you will see some familiar territory. The last two km will take you on Iceman cut-off veering left at Yeti Junction and following the Larch loop past the Gravel Pit and back to Piccadilly. That's 11k (or 6) of heart-wrenching, muscle strengthening, fat burning, wind in your facing, YAHOO inducing, FUN. Grab your water and drink up **WILD THANG!!!**