

## **Black Bears and Blackberries**

**Author :** blueseas

**Date :** June 19, 2015



***Image:*** Trailing blackberries.

Although we are itching to start work on our homestead, we are still waiting for the last of the legal paperwork to be done, and the property to be transferred into our names. So instead, we spend our time hiking around the site, trying to become more familiar with our new home.

Today, we have decided to walk the entire length of the logging road on the site and see if it connects with the active logging road that runs along the base of the mountain above the site. We work our way up the little creek that tumbles down from the spring along the road – at the moment, this is our only way to access the logging road, which seems to start without any preamble at the center of the property. Walking along the road, we are in a living green cathedral formed of alders stretching up from both sides of the road and intertwining their branches above our heads. The smell is rich, redolent of leaf mulch, fungus, and green growing things. Although the day is hot and a bit muggy, it is cool under the trees. The bird song provides a wild accompaniment to our hike.

At the top edge of our property, the point of the “triangle”, we can see the main logging road. A short scramble through some thicker bush, and we are on a gravel surface. The road stretches for miles in either direction. I have looked at the satellite photos for the area, and know that this road will lead us up to a number of lakes in the mountains above, places well worth exploring in times to come. Today, however, we have decided to follow the road for only a short distance, down to a landing by the shore.

Immediately, our attention is focused on a particular type of vegetation. All along the road, sprawling along the edge, and sometimes stretching right up to the middle, are creeping briars with little black berries. I study one a bit closer – I haven’t seen one of these for many years – and take a taste. Heavenly! Trailing blackberries! Although tiny by comparison, these native wild blackberries are much sweeter and more flavorful than the large Himalayan blackberries that are found in great abundance around Vancouver. We walk along the road, stuffing our faces and making our fingers blue. Salmonberries are also abundant, and the first ripe thimbleberries are tasty as well. Similar to the trailing blackberry, but more upright, is another *Rubus* species which I later identify as black raspberry, or black cap. They are not ripe yet, but soon! Also to be seen are a few Himalayan blackberries, introduced by the logging activity. They have long arching branches which reach out onto the road, their curved thorns looking for unwary hikers. Their fruit is still green, but they will be a tasty payback for some scratches later this summer.

In the wild country, where there are berries, there are bears. And sure enough, as we hiked and foraged along the road, we came across lots of bear sign. Apparently the bears were just as crazy about the berries as we were! However, the bears remained polite – we never saw or heard one – but on our return trip back up the road to our home, there were fresh black bear tracks on top of our recent tracks. The bear must have only been minutes behind us!