

## An ideal season for *Cepaea nemoralis* in my neighborhood by George Holm

During the mandatory COVID-19 pandemic lock-down from March to May, I stayed around my house and only ventured out to give my dog Zoe her necessary daily walks.

This past winter has been quite mild and it was followed by a spring and early summer that was very wet, and that made wanting to stay inside during lock-down so much more desirable for all. Cars were parked as neighbors worked from home and school children continued their education online. The neighborhood during our walks appeared to be virtually deserted.

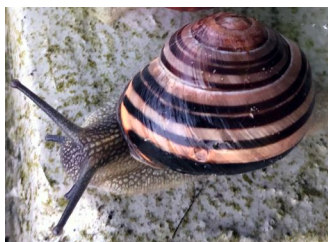
Zoe's necessary need to go outside was welcomed by me, and it was during those times that I observed how many more *Cepaea nemoralis* there were this year compared to years past. The ground had not dried out even once from winter to summer, and it had made for the lushest vegetation I have seen since I moved here eleven years ago. Since *C. nemoralis* will bury into the ground when the soil begins to dry, the mild and wet weather had to have been the reason the snails were so plentiful this year.

I did see occasional snails along the River Walk that borders my neighborhood on three sides with the Fraser River, but it was by an apartment building, one that has a long retaining wall with a hedge

growing between it and the sidewalk, where snails were especially plentiful.

What stood out, aside from how many snails there were, was the variety of shell colors and numbers of bands, or lack thereof, that was present among them. I was looking at a single colony along the wall but it was rare to see two snails that appeared to be alike.

*C. nemoralis* is an introduced species. They survive by scraping algae



from hard surfaces using their radulae, thus the shaded retaining wall made for an ideal habitat. They will also eat foliage and are considered a plant nuisance for gardens and in nurseries. Their many colors and designs have helped speed their spread into new yards or neighborhoods as they are tempting for people to pick up and take home. I have seen and heard of children in the neighborhood collecting snails after the lockdown. One small boy wanted to look at them in a terrarium and a girl wanted to watch them in her garden.

The photos in the article were taken this year during my walks with Zoe and show some of the many variations within the species.

