

# BMN Hike Report

## East Canyon Trail (Sunday, October 16, 2011)

By Mark Johnston

Over the years we have returned time and again to the East Canyon Trail in Golden Ears Provincial Park. This beautiful trail runs along the east side of Gold Creek for several kilometres. It begins as an old logging road, climbing to an elevation of 335 m before descending 60 m to a wide shingle beach. It continues as a narrow footpath through an impressive forest featuring old-growth cedar and festoons of aerial mosses.

For our latest excursion along the East Canyon Trail, we had a magnificent October day. Earlier in the morning, a few of the 11 of us who turned out had scraped frost off our car windshields. But now, as we hiked up the logging road, we began to shed extra layers of clothing. It was by no means a warm day, and it was cool in the forest, but when out in the sun on the gravel bars, we were more than comfortable.



**Backpackers Beach, looking across Gold Creek to Edge Peak and Golden Ears.**

*Terry Puls photo.*

Our first stop was at the aforementioned shingle beach, which is often referred to as “Backpackers Beach.” In the early morning sunlight the smooth stones glistened. The creek was flowing swiftly by, making little rippling noises. Across the creek towered some of the peaks of the Golden Ears group. Although the forested slopes were very green, a few trees along the stream bank sported yellow leaves. As we ate a snack, a dipper searched for food along the creek’s opposite edge.

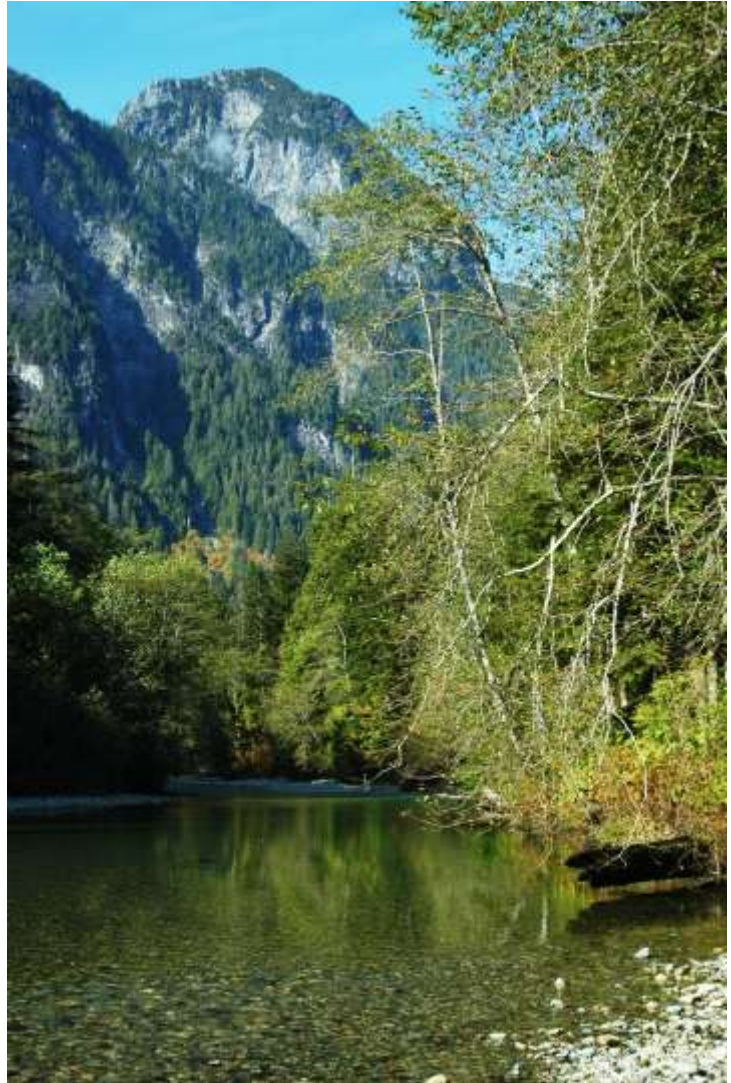
After a generous break, we continued along the logging road and then by the narrow footpath into the well-watered forest. It seemed as though every square centimetre was painted in some shade of green. The trees—some of remarkable size—support a variety of mosses, while at their feet grows a profusion of ferns, mosses, and lichens. From time to time, we were able to glimpse the creek. Its current was unhurried and its waters clear, revealing a bed of coloured stones.

For the most part, our hike was an easy ramble, except for one log crossing. Not long after starting up the footpath, we came to a tributary channel. The only way across, save for removing one's boots and wading, was on a brace of narrow logs, which slanted down from the high bank on which we stood to the sandy shore opposite. Although venturing out onto the makeshift bridge gave one pause, a rope strung between trees provided a handhold and measure of safety.

**View up Gold Creek toward Raven Peak.**  
*Terry Puls photo.*

We went as far as the nine-kilometre mark. Here the creek makes a lazy S-curve, and the valley opens to the north. We looked longingly at the sun-drenched gravel bar in the middle of the S, but with no easy way to get out to it except by wading, settled for having lunch on a partially shaded pocket beach just off the trail. As we ate, we watched a lone water strider navigate the edges of the stream.

We had talked about going another kilometre or two up the valley. I remembered that just a little bit farther along there is a nice view of Mount Judge Howay, one of the more striking peaks in Golden Ears Park. But with an eye on the clock, we decided we had better start back. We were now hiking directly toward the low-lying autumn sun, and the forest was spectacularly backlit, shining with a green-gold luminance. Just before reaching the log crossing, we stepped out of the forest onto a gravel beach. A downed tree parallel to the creek easily accommodated all of us as we sat and basked in the afternoon sun. Some commented that next time we should make this our lunch spot!



Rather than walk the logging road all the way back, when we reached our high point, we decided to follow a connector trail down to the Lower Falls Trail. This gave us the opportunity to view the Lower Falls, first from a rock bluff opposite the top of the falls, and then from the shore of the creek. Despite the coolness of the day, we braved the flying spray for a group photo.

Although the hour was hastening on, we stopped one final time at a sandy beach affording another look at the Golden Ears group. It had been the kind of day that invites lingering, and we were only too happy to oblige.