

BMN HIKE REPORT

Brohm Lake Interpretive Forest (June 3, 2017)

by Mark Johnston

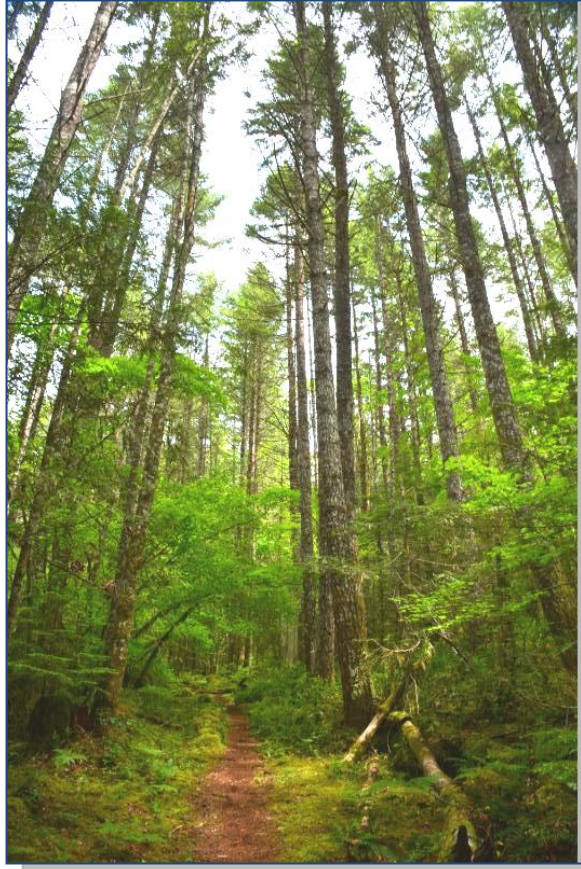


View of Brohm Lake. *Terry Puls photo.*

All who drive the Sea to Sky Highway to Whistler pass by Brohm Lake, but relatively few stop to sample what the adjacent Interpretive Forest has to offer. So, not surprisingly, of our party of thirteen, just two had visited the forest previously. For the rest of us, this would be a new experience.

Under cloudy skies, we set out from the parking area on Bridge Trail, which at first parallels the highway before crossing the lake's narrows. We didn't have to walk far to have some nice sightings of birds. Shortly after starting out, we saw both common yellowthroats and song sparrows. Farther along, we spotted a juvenile robin in a tree. Then, as we crossed the bridge, we looked up and down the narrows and noticed a few more song sparrows. Although we took our time crossing, we didn't linger long, as we found the stiff breeze blowing over the open water to be quite chilling.

Once we were over the bridge, we entered a remarkably beautiful forest. Not having been to the Interpretive Forest before, I had imagined a typical second-growth forest, dense with young trees and devoid of an understory. But I discovered the forest to be quite open, even park-like, and having a fairly rich undergrowth. In fact, if it weren't for our single-file trail, there wouldn't be any bare ground showing. Whether we looked to the right or left, the forest floor everywhere was covered in



a carpet of moss and lichen. We also took note of clumps of starflowers and, in wetter areas, the profusion of skunk cabbage.

Trail through carpeted Brohm Lake Interpretive Forest. *Terry Puls photo.*

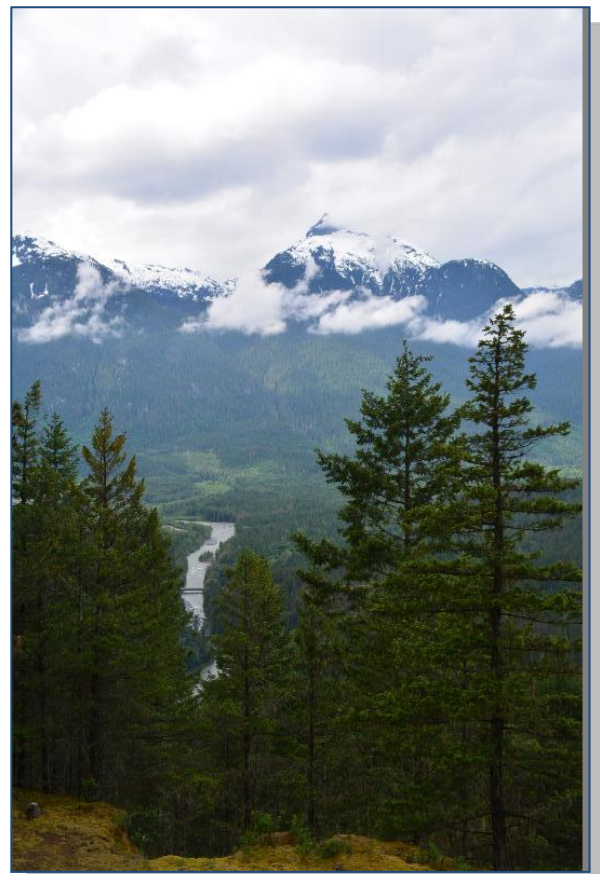
Our route proved to be something of a rollercoaster. We gained elevation steadily until we reached High Trail. Then on High Trail we dropped down a little to Cheakamus Loop Trail. On Cheakamus Loop Trail we resumed climbing, but halfway round the loop, we were once again descending.

Before finishing Cheakamus Loop, we stopped at a series of viewpoints. We stayed longest at the first, which has the most expansive views. Standing or sitting on open rock bluffs, we could look down on the Cheakamus River and across the valley toward the Tantalus Range. While the summits were in cloud, it was still possible to

study the various mountains' lower slopes. When our gaze returned to our immediate environs, we took care to identify the flowers at our feet, including tiger lily, yarrow, and pink corydalis. We also spent time at the third viewpoint. While having less expansive views, it is arguably more thrilling. Its outcrop is very small, so only one or two of us could access it at a time. When we did, we had a vertigo-inducing view of the Cheakamus River valley. While we visited the other two "viewpoints," we found their vistas to be limited or nonexistent.

View from Cheakamus Loop Trail, looking down on the Cheakamus River and across the valley toward the Tantalus Range. *Terry Puls photo.*

Curiously, they both feature weathered picnic tables. The first of the tables is unnervingly close to the edge of a shear drop, though given the lay of the land and the surrounding vegetation, it isn't initially obvious that danger lurks.



Back on the “rollercoaster,” we ascended the western branch of High Trail and then Tantalus View Trail to what the Forest Service map identifies as a “fire lookout.” Concrete footings give evidence of such a lookout in the past, but the current, smaller, metal structure has neither the appearance of a lookout nor the requisite 360-degree view. Nevertheless, just below the structure, we found rock bluffs that afford fine views of the Squamish-Cheakamus divide, as well as downriver toward upper Howe Sound, Stawamus Chief, and Shannon Falls. We each searched out our preferred place and sat down to eat lunch and contemplate the view. We felt a few drops of rain, but it appeared as though the weather was improving. We could see more of the mountains than before, though the summits remained mostly enshrouded.

After lunch we dropped down to Brohm Lake Trail and began a clockwise circuit of the lake. On the descent and then along the west side of the lake, we encountered a particularly beautiful stretch of forest. Difficulty of access seems to have prevented the removal of trees, and there are many magnificent specimens of Douglas-fir growing here. Besides admiring the trees, we also had an opportunity to see a field mouse up close. I saw something move in a hole below a trailside boulder and stopped to see if I could determine what it was. As I waited, the little creature came out in plain view, went back in its hole, came out a second time, and in the end scurried along the trail ahead of us.



The rollercoaster ride up and down along the power line right-of-way.

Chris Wright photo.

While we could have settled for a short circuit around the lake, we decided to make a larger loop by hiking up Brohm Creek a ways, and then returning via the power line. This turned out to be a very good decision. We found the trail along the creek—really, an old road—to be delightful. Nearly level, well shaded, and moss covered, it runs between rocky outcrops on one side and the babbling creek on the

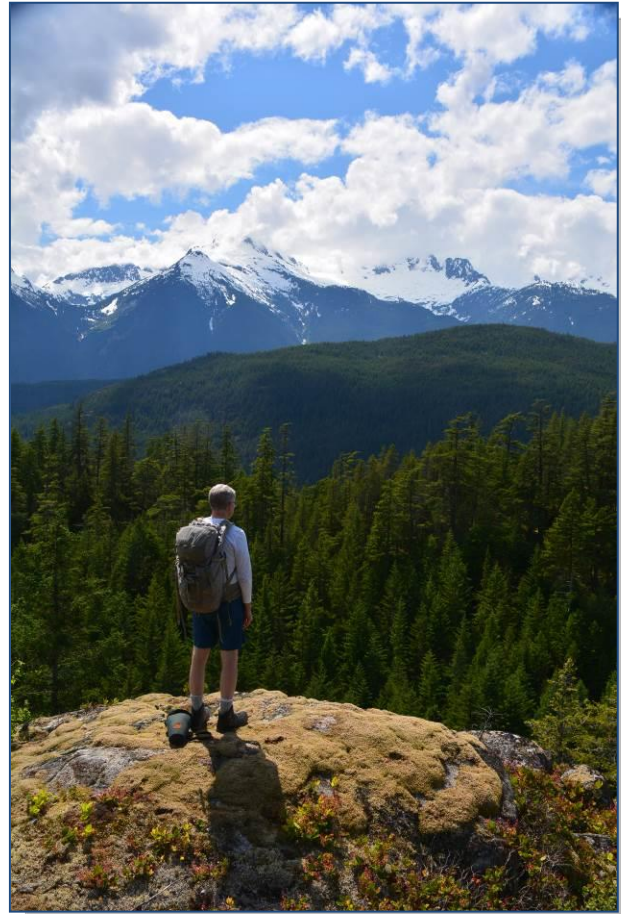
other. By now the sun was fully out, and though it hardly penetrated the canopy over the road, it did play upon the pooling waters of the creek. After a kilometre or so, we crossed over the creek on a sod-covered bridge, hardly recognizable as such, and began what would prove to be the most adventurous part of our “rollercoaster ride.” The power line pylons sit atop a series of lateral ridges, so we had no sooner climbed to the top of one ridge, than we had to lose elevation and regain it on the next ridge. But the views from the bases of the successive pylons were the best we had all day.

This was partly due to their situation but also to the clearing skies. We could now see the Tantalus peaks Omega, Pelops, Niobe, Lydia, and Alpha Mountain, all rising above the Lake Lovelywater basin.

View from the power line right-of-way, looking toward Alpha and Serratus mountains.
Terry Puls photo.

To the right of Alpha, we could see Serratus Mountain with its impressive glacier. And looking down toward Howe Sound, we could make out Mt. Habrich and the endlessly long Goat Ridge.

After leaving the power line right-of-way, we travelled along the east side of the lake, but at an elevation high above the water. Although by now we had nearly circumnavigated the lake, we'd had only a few glimpses of its waters. It was not until the end of the day that we got right down to the lakeshore. Plopping down on open rock at the water's edge, we enjoyed the full strength of the sun. Some of us dipped our feet in the water, and one, Ian, went for a swim. (More accurately, he jumped or dove into the lake three or four times.) One person commented that she'd have been content to come here first and hung out all day!



Now that we know the allures of its forest and lake, I imagine we'll begin to think of Brohm Lake Interpretive Forest not simply as something we pass on our way to somewhere else, but as a worthy destination in its own right. I, for one, am already thinking about coming back on a warm summer day and going for a nice long swim in the lake's inviting waters!

Testing the waters of Brohm Lake.
Chris Wright photo.