

BMN Trip Report

Mosquito Creek Cascades (Saturday, April 30, 2011)

by Mark Johnston



Mosquito Creek Cascades. Photo by Alan van der Woerd.

While those of us who lead our club's hikes like to plan our own routes, occasionally we pick one out of a guidebook. So after our previous hike's novel route, this month's was straight out of Dawn Hanna's *Best Hikes and Walks of Southwestern British Columbia*.

Five of us turned out on a cloudy morning to hike to the seldom-visited Mosquito Creek Cascades. As Hanna recommends, we started from the Grouse Mountain parking lot. We noticed that the door in the high chain link fence designed to keep people off the Grouse Grind in the winter months was open, so we passed through it to access the Baden-Powell Trail heading east. At the present, the Grind and Baden-Powell trails coincide for a few hundred metres but judging by the construction equipment outside the fence and a new trail leading north inside it, it appears that the two routes may soon be separated.

Even after leaving the steep Grind route behind, we continued to climb on the Baden-Powell Trail. The Baden-Powell Trail is an ambitious Boy Scout/Girl Guide project to

mark the province's centennial in 1971. It stretches 48 km from Horseshoe Bay to Deep Cove. Our portion, which has been re-routed a bit lower on the mountain from its original alignment has much to offer. We noted the nicely recovering second-growth forest, enjoyed a few tree-framed views of Vancouver and took interest in the flood-scoured west and east channels of Mackay Creek. According to Hanna, during the big rains in the fall of 1996, Mackay became a torrent of water, carving the creekbed down bedrock and flooding houses below.

**A decaying cedar along the Baden-Powell Trail.
Photo by Ian McArthur.**

We continued on the Baden-Powell Trail to Mosquito Creek and crossed the creek via a very substantial wooden bridge. Hanna reports that the flood waters of 1996 washed away an earlier bridge but curiously, her guidebook, revised in 2006, fails to mention this new bridge though clearly it's been in place for many years now. Her book still advises, "You'll have to boulder hop across the creek. . . ."



Once across the creek, we passed the side trail to an old dam (visited on previous club outings) and turned off instead at the next junction onto the old Pipeline Trail. This trail, now deteriorating, parallels the old pipeline that once supplied drinking water from Kennedy Lake (behind Grouse Mountain) to the city of North Vancouver. Although the system was abandoned in the 1980s, remnants of it are still visible. As we ascended—quite steeply!—we came upon



lengths of pipe and a couple of rusting fireplugs, the latter bearing the name "Terminal City Ironworks." Farther up, we found sections of the trail to be fairly rough but our slower progress meant that we had time to appreciate the few surviving old-growth Douglas-fir trees along the way. Now high above the creek, we also had one peek-a-boo view looking back toward Point Grey.

**A Mosquito Creek fire hydrant.
Photo by Ian McArthur.**

At the point where the Pipeline Trail begins to peter out, we followed flagging steeply down to a level spot amid several large cedars. Turning right leads to a view up the creek but difficult access. We decided to go left and drop down even more steeply to the creekbed. Here we found the talked-about cascades, the water funnelling through a narrow high-walled passage and out over a couple of tiers of rock into a small basin. We made our way ever so carefully to streamside, as the rocks were dangerously slick, and settled down to enjoy—as Hanna suggests—“a long lunch break.” The air temperature was cool and we put on extra clothing but from time to time the sun shone through, spotlighting the falls and providing welcome warmth.

To return, we retraced our steps to the bridge and a little beyond. Then we followed the power line road back to Grouse. By now the sun was out though clouds still hung along the tops of the mountains. Thus we never realized our hoped-for view of the Lions. Still, we had good views looking out over Vancouver and its surrounding waters. As we recrossed Mackay Creek, it was also interesting to note the elaborate flood-control dam built just downstream.

Back at the parking lot, would-be skiers were waiting an hour and a half to take the skyride up Grouse. We were happy to have spent our time on the trail and in the woods—a most satisfying early spring outing.