

BMN TRIP REPORT

Diez Vistas Trail (May 10, 2008)

by Mark Johnston



The new eleventh viewpoint, “Vista Electra”, on the Diez Vistas trail. *Photo by Ian McArthur*

On Saturday, May 10, six of us hiked the Diez Vistas Trail. We travelled the length of the trail (along the top of Buntzen Ridge) from south to north, and looped back via the west side of Buntzen Lake.

An initial concern was the availability of the floating bridge which we hoped to cross at Buntzen Lake’s south arm and begin our loop. After hearing conflicting reports regarding its closure and a further report suggesting the approach to the bridge was inundated, I had gone out a few days before to see for myself and discovered that BC Hydro had begun work on a new crossing, largely consisting of a rock-and-earthen dyke. As for the water level, I found it to be as low as I’d ever seen it, the south arm reduced to a narrow stream flowing through an as yet unbridged gap in the dyke. Just upstream, the remnant of the floating bridge continued to provide a means of getting across the moving water. It seemed as though we would be able to do our hike as planned, but then, as the new crossing was a work in progress, one couldn’t be sure.

On hike day we found that little had changed. Construction, if it had progressed at all, had done so only incrementally and the lake level continued to be low. We crossed the south arm without major difficulty, though in getting from the dyke to the floating bridge and back, we had to step on strategically-placed pieces of wood to keep from sinking into the soft mud of the lake bottom.

A second concern was the weather, the forecast calling for rain showers. But this too proved a needless worry. It “spat” once or twice and there was a two-minute shower near the end of the day; but otherwise it was mostly dry and the clouds high enough so as not to obscure any views.

After visiting the trio of viewpoints at the southern end of Buntzen Ridge—one overlooking Indian Arm; a second, Sasamat Lake; and the third, Buntzen Lake’s South Beach—we proceeded on to the Diez Vistas, taking note of many young white pines along the way. We heard the brown creeper’s high-pitched song and the nuthatch’s familiar “yank-yank.”

The first of the Diez Vistas is arguably the best. It looks directly down on Twin Islands in Indian Arm, down the arm to Burrard Inlet, and out across a broad swath of Greater Vancouver. As we settled in to admire the view, our eyes caught sight of a half-dozen turkey vultures circling below. As we watched, a group of three vultures climbed in a tight spiral from water level—past our perch—up into the sky before flying north up the arm and beyond our sight. Quite a thrill!

We breezed past most of the other viewpoints, where maturing vegetation limits what one can see, but paused awhile at Vista No. 5, which still affords reasonably good views up and down Indian Arm. We also stopped at No. 10, not because there is much to see, but because we were hungry and in need of nourishment.

But we also moved along quickly because we were excited to reach a “newly available” eleventh vista, which one of our number, Brent, likes to call “Vista Electra.” Dropping down from the heights of the ridge and approaching the Old Buntzen Trail, we followed an almost inconspicuous side path up and over a rocky rise and out through dense trees to a moss-covered, rocky bluff. And what a view! We could look straight down to the roof of Powerhouse No. 2, across to the range of mountains that stretches from Seymour to Howe Sound, and had unimpeded views up and down Indian Arm. We also had a pretty good look at most of the west side of Buntzen Ridge itself. This is a spectacular lookout and probably deserves to be better known. On the other hand, it was kind of nice to have it to ourselves!

After leaving the viewpoint—I took one last look and saw an eagle fly past just below—we dropped down toward the powerhouse to have a look at the large holding tank and the massive pipes that comprise the facility’s waterworks. Then we worked our way back round to the Old Buntzen Trail, from which we enjoyed views of beautiful Swan Falls plunging down the side of Eagle Ridge. Although we were a bit behind schedule, we stuck with our plan of returning via Buntzen Lake’s west side, and thus of

visiting via a sketchy side trail another “newly available” prospect: a splendid overlook of lower Buntzen Lake and South Beach.

A short while later, as we left the trail proper and walked out on Pumphouse Road, we experienced the two-minute rain shower, most of us not even bothering to break out our raingear. Before we reached our crossing point, it had let up. The birds didn't seem much bothered either. As we stepped onto the dyke, we heard (I believe) a Wilson's warbler singing its little heart out.

Despite our initial concerns, everything worked out just fine. We all had a most enjoyable day.