

**BMN HIKE REPORT**  
**Golden Ears Park Gold Creek Loop**  
Saturday, November 14, 2015

by Mark Johnston



**The new bridge over Gold Creek. Ian McArthur photo.**

After very heavy rainfall on Thursday night and early Friday morning, and a few more showers Saturday morning, we were blessed with a break in the weather and were able to complete our hike along Gold Creek in relatively dry conditions. When we set out from the Gold Creek parking lot, it was raining ever so slightly, but as we made our way to the Lower Falls, the rain stopped, not to resume until we were almost finished with our hike.

Our interest in doing this hike at this time was to have a look at the new bridge over Gold Creek. The recently opened bridge spans the creek above the Upper Falls. In the recent past it was possible to get across the creek here via a Burma bridge, but for many years now the only way to cross has been by fording.

Eleven of us began along the easy Lower Falls Trail, which parallels the creek on its east side. This trail follows an old logging road through dense forest. Given the thick canopy, we soon lost track of whether it was raining or not. As we walked, we listened to the sound of the rushing water, resonant in the narrow valley. We passed by a number of moss- and fern-covered boulders—glacial erratics—a few of them as large as an automobile or even a small cottage. We also noticed many giant cedar stumps, remnants

of the pre-1920s forest, before logging operations began in earnest. Some of these stumps are at least two metres across. As we neared the falls, but before we could see it, we began to hear its thunderous roar.

**The viewing platform at  
the Lower Falls.  
*Ian McArthur photo.***

Then as we walked up a steep grade and out onto the viewing platform that juts toward the plunging water, we were enveloped in clouds of spray. The falls, as in spring flood, were so full as to hide completely the rock face below. We



We braved the spray to have a good look, but soon sought refuge against the hillside so as not to get too wet.

From the falls we ascended an abrupt path to the East Canyon Trail. Like the Lower Falls Trail, the East Canyon Trail is an old logging road. It has a gentle grade, and we made good progress upriver. After cresting a hill and beginning the short descent back to creek level, we had our first sightlines up the valley, although low cloud prevented any distant views.

At the foot of the hill, even though our intention was to continue up the valley to Viewpoint Beach for lunch, we couldn't resist turning aside to have our first look at the new bridge. The new bridge is located in the same place as a former rail bridge and, in fact, incorporates the old bridge's central pedestal, which is set into a midstream rock. The bridge is comprised of steel girders and a perforated metal deck. It has two spans, which are at an angle to each other. Its railings are wooden, similar to the railings of the bridge over the Coquitlam River at Colony Farm.

After spending a few minutes admiring the new bridge, we continued on to Viewpoint Beach, a beautiful sand-and-pebble strand at a slight bend in the creek. It is one of the places where hikers have forded the creek. We found a log that was long enough to accommodate all of us and distributed ourselves along its length to enjoy our lunch. Clouds wreathed the mountains towering above us on the opposite side of the creek. The water here flows over cobbles into a jade green pool. Whereas farther downstream the creek had sometimes been loud to the point of roaring, here the water had more the sound of an ocean wave as it spends itself on a sandy beach.

After a leisurely lunch we retraced our steps to the bridge and crossed over to the west side of the creek. On this side BC Parks has built a wide trail through young forest. We walked along the nearly level, gravelled path, more or less parallel to a tributary stream, and came to a junction. We noted that the path on the right crosses the stream and returns to Gold Creek. Our route, however, was to the left. Leaving the valley bottom, we began



a moderate climb to connect with the trail to Alder Flats and Golden Ears Mountain. When we reached it, our wide trail merged with the old, narrow route, which nevertheless has been improved with the addition of a number of wood block steps. We headed oppositely from Alder Flats and soon arrived at Gold Creek Lookout. Here we had a nice view looking down on Gold Creek and could see the new bridge below. While we could also look up the valley into the distance, our view was mainly of successive ridges shrouded in cloud and vapour. Still, we were in no rush to pull away and spent a fairly long time contemplating the scene.

**A view from Viewpoint Beach (our lunch spot).**

*David Mounteney photo.*

Following our time at the viewpoint, we gained a bit more elevation and then descended via a few switchbacks to level ground again. Now we were on an old railway grade and, not having to concentrate on our footing, fell into conversation. Before we knew it we were crossing Evans Creek, which was flowing well, and the two watercourses south of - it, both surprisingly dry. I imagine these rocky drainages depend more on snowmelt than rainfall for above-ground flow.

When we reached the Menzies Trail, we turned east to complete our loop. On this trail we passed through beautiful woods, rich in moss and lichen, and thereby having a predominately green cast. Our path itself, however, was strewn with yellow maple leaves—both big leaf and vine. Emerging from the forest, we picked our way down a



sandy bank to the creek and crossed on the vehicle bridge. Once back on the east bank, we had a very short walk to our cars.



**Hiking group contemplating the scenes at Gold Creek Lookout. *David Mounteney photo.***

Some of us decided to linger in the park longer in order to watch Ian take a dip in Alouette Lake. He has been on a mission to swim in a natural body of water each month of the year. He has completed “swims” in the ocean, various lakes, and even the Coquitlam River, and today was determined to take a dip in Alouette Lake. When we reached the lake, a light rain had begun to fall. The lake was smooth, disturbed only by raindrops striking its surface. Ian stripped to his trunks, ran out into the water, and dove beneath the surface. He came back up uttering a whoop or two. He wasn’t in the water for very long—just long enough to give himself credit for having swum in yet another month of the year!

As we headed home, it began to rain harder. We were thankful to have had a few hours’ reprieve in which to complete the hike. While we’d certainly been prepared to walk in the rain, it was nice to have had dry conditions!

We found this bridge-enabled loop hike to be thoroughly enjoyable. It would be good in any season. We’ll definitely do it again!