

BMN TRIP REPORT

Slollicum Peak (October 11, 2008)

By Mark Johnston



The summit cairn on Slollicum Peak, looking down on Harrison Lake
(photo by Andrea Ledingham)

After checking the forecast as to which day of the Thanksgiving long weekend would be the driest, we scheduled another of our “more difficult” hikes, Slollicum Peak (on the east side of Harrison Lake), for Saturday, October 11. Even with only a few days notice, five of us signed up to go.

As we drove out to Harrison Lake, we contemplated that one of our party had attempted Slollicum a year ago but without success. We were reasonably confident about our own prospects, but when, upon reaching the lake, we experienced difficulty in trying to find the trailhead, we wondered anew whether we would indeed attain our goal. While we had fairly reliable instructions, a recent clearcut had altered appearances. Although we were longer in searching for it than we would have anticipated, we eventually found the trailhead and started up the mountain. At first, we gained elevation via the usual logging roads, except for one section where we scrambled up frost-slickened boulders between levels of roadway. Once at the higher level, we paused for water and a snack and to admire the view of Harrison Lake. A little farther along this upper road we stopped again for an even better view of the lake.

We continued along the alder-lined road for some distance. Then, at a creek flowing over the road, we turned off onto the trail proper. From this point on, we rose

more steeply, staying near the top of a low ridge between adjacent streams. After an invigorating climb in the cool autumn air, we reached a rocky outcrop and decided on a well-earned rest and perhaps an early lunch. Again, we had an outstanding view of Harrison Lake—its waters, with our every gain in elevation, receding farther and farther below, but its surface area opening up to a greater and greater extent. Looking up, we could also see the mountain's heights, seeming nearer and nearer to us. With curiosity, I noticed that the hemlocks along the top seemed to have snag-like crowns—bleached white against the brilliant blue sky. Later, we would discover that the tree tops were, on their windward side, ice-encrusted, apparently the result of the previous day/night's freezing rain. It was quite a spectacular sight!

Once we reached Slollicum's north-south running ridge, we still had a fair hike to reach the more demanding of its two summits: the north summit. But, as compensation, views were opening up in all directions. Especially eye-catching were Slollicum Lake, on our right and below, and the triple-peaked Old Settler rising up beyond it. From the top we could look north to the glaciated summit of Mt. Breakenridge, west across Harrison Lake—now visible for much of its length—to the peaks of the Chehalis, and south to Mt. Baker and the summits of the Cheam Range.



The final approach to Slollicum Peak with Slollicum Lake and Old Settler in the background (photo by Andrea Ledingham)

It was cold at the top. We had enjoyed sun for most of the day, but, as we looked on, high cloud was streaming in from the west. We took refuge from the chilling wind behind shielding rock and finished our lunch. As it was approaching three o'clock and it had taken us five hours to ascend, there was some concern about getting down before dark. Still, it was hard to tear ourselves away from so much mountain majesty. As it turned out, we needn't have worried so much about getting back; our descent took only half as long. And with daylight to spare, a couple of us were able to linger awhile in Harrison village and enjoy looking from lake level back to the heights we had just scaled.