

Waterfalls in the Shuswap

A *Shuswap Passion* column for the Shuswap Market News

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Currently in the Shuswap, the water is gushing out of the hills and there is more snow yet to melt. Although our region cannot boast about huge waterfalls like the ones in Wells Gray Park, there are many spectacular falls throughout the Shuswap. While some of these are popular park or recreation site features, others are far up logging roads or can only be accessed through private land.

It takes a river to make a good sized waterfall and in our region, only the Seymour and Shuswap Rivers have falls, although the Perry River does have a small falls as it tumbles through a narrow canyon just north of the highway. A regional district park trail for the Perry River is now in the planning stage, so that one day this amazingly deep and narrow gorge will be available for viewing by cautious hikers along the cliff's edge.

On the Shuswap River, there is Brenda Falls below Sugar Lake, and the actual Shuswap Falls is at the dam and thus it receives little flow during much of the year as most of the water flows through the turbines to generate electricity. The Seymour River falls is certainly worth the long drive on gravel roads and the trail meanders through some old growth cedar and hemlock to the top of the falls. One can also hike along a trail on the other side of the river that begins at the bridge over the narrow canyon to view the falls from the bottom.

There are no shortage of scenic waterfalls on Shuswap creeks, and the larger the creek, the more exciting the falls. While most of us have enjoyed Margaret Falls at different times of the year, the falls on Crazy Creek are far more spectacular with deep funnels carved into polished rocks. But now that this creek is a tourist attraction, locals avoid the visit because of the fees. Sunday is the best day to see these falls and enjoy the view from the suspension bridge and viewing platform, as this day is free. Of particular interest is the history of this creek, as it once powered a large sawmill that provided employment for the residents of Taft, a long ago town that is now the site of a growing resort.

In order to determine how much water might be flowing over a waterfall on a creek, one can first see on a map how large the drainage area is for that creek. In the southeast, Spectrum Creek flows out of Spectrum Lake and drains much of Monashee Park, so that Rainbow Falls is quite the sight and well worth the trip. In the opposite corner of our region, Cayenne Creek drains a very large area to the east of Adams Lake and thus the falls, located in Momich Lakes Provincial Park are massive and the fishing is excellent in the pool below the falls.

The Celista Creek drainage is also quite large and includes Humamilt Lake. The falls on Celista Creek are at Albas Provincial Park. Of all the Shuswap waterfalls, these are my favourite, because there are a series of five falls, with a circular hiking trail that includes a log bridge and great terrain. Albas is named after the original settler Alfred Bass, the trapper who lived there before it became a logging camp with a water-powered sawmill. Rusting parts of the old mill still remain next to the creek.

For waterfalls on smaller creeks, it is the terrain that adds to the viewing enjoyment, as the steeper the hillside, the higher the falls. Homestake Creek flows out of the hills below Johnson Lake into Sinmax Creek, which empties into Adams Lake at Squaam Bay. Its high set of falls can be seen from the road pouring over the orange coloured rock, long ago stripped of vegetation as this was once the site of a gold mine.

A great circle trip for a Shuswap waterfall enthusiast would be to head up the Perry River forest service road, where at about 15 km, one can see a high falls pouring off a rock ledge. This road connects to the Seymour River road, where there are multiple falls to the west in the Upper Seymour River Provincial Park and then heading south one can view the Seymour River and Albas falls before journeying home through the North Shuswap.

Much closer and more accessible is the waterfall on Syphon Creek in Gleneden, where we hiked today in awe of the towering grano-diorite cliffs that resemble Easter Island statues jumbled together. Although it is a small creek, the approximately 10 to 15 m high falls are magnificent, as the water flows through a half funnel into a small pool before spilling over polished rock down to the creek below where we stood. This hidden gem of a recreation area was once part of an old homestead and is now very popular for rock climbing, with many bolted routes.