

Honeycamp Branch Trek
Panther town Valley, NC
Saturday, July 28, 2018

Those present:

Jennifer Loow

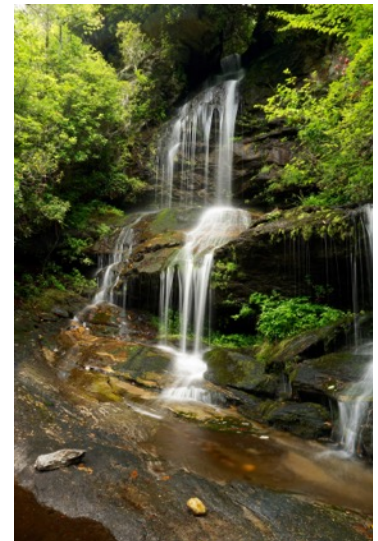
LG

Beth Bradshaw

While looking at the topo map near Lichen falls in Panthertown Valley, I noticed Honeycamp Branch just upstream. It seem to have some potential for waterfalls. This spring, Mark Oleg messaged me about a trek he was planning to Lichen falls. I mentioned Honeycamp Branch and he pulled the liar data for me. We agreed that it definitely looked like there were at least 2 waterfalls there. Mark explained how to read the lidar and suggested a few points of interest, which coincided with the topo. It also looked like it was going to be a difficult trek based on the elevations on the topo and on the lidar. I did some research online, but found no mention of Honeycamp branch on Facebook or with various search engines. Bernie Boyer said he hadn't been to Honeycamp but suggested contacting a mutual friend who had files from a hiker who did a lot of exploring in that area back in the day. No mention of Honeycamp there either. I reached out to a few other people as well without any luck. Bernie was kind enough to share his route to Lichen falls, which goes in from Rattlesnake Knob. I kept suggesting it to my hiking companions but there was always something else to do. Fittingly enough, it was Jennifer Loow who agreed to go on this crazy hike with me. On a bright sunny morning on July 28th, we met and rode to the trailhead off Rocky Ridge Road.

Following Bernie's directions, we hiked Rattlesnake Knob trail for about a mile. This is a really nice trail through the woods. Jennifer found an amazing leaf that had just the veins left, but was perfectly intact. At 35.189312, -83.006816, we turned onto an old logging road that is marked on the Kornegay Panthertown Valley Map as River Cliffs Path. This turned out to be in pretty good shape and was a really pleasant walk. Looking at the topo, Jennifer and I decided to leave the path and head down a ridge before Bernie's track did. Take it from me, if you are lucky enough to have anything from Bernie Boyer, follow it to the letter. It will be the easiest way to reach your goal. As you might have guessed, the ridge soon deteriorated into an unpleasant bushwhack with lots of dense vegetation and liberal sprinkles of deadfall. Despite our misstep, Jennifer and I managed to make our way to the unnamed branch that enters the Tuckasegee River just below Lichen falls and followed it downstream to the top of Lichen Falls.

Getting to Lichen falls was interesting. River left had a cliff that was definitely not a good option. River right seemed very steep but we went away from the falls and worked our way to the river without too much trouble. After that it was a matter of scrambling around boulders and under a large tree trunk to get a view of Lichen. This is a delicate beauty with many fingers of water dripping from ledges. Jennifer had been before but it was my first visit. I was stunned by the beauty. Despite the forecast for sunny skies, a few clouds covered the sun long enough for us to get decent pictures and eat a bite of lunch.



Lichen Falls



7 foot cascade

Next on the agenda was a riverwalk upstream to Honeycamp Branch. Jennifer led us around the deepest spots and we were soon at the area where Honeycamp enters the Tuckasegee. The only problem was that Honeycamp was nowhere to be found. We walked up and down the bank, unsuccessfully searching for Honeycamp branch. Hmmm, well, it's a named branch so it has to be up there somewhere. Jennifer suggested heading up the bank into the forest and I concurred. This turned out to be the right move. We heard the sound of falling water to our left and followed it to the branch. From there it was a matter of following the branch upstream. We came to a nice cascade almost immediately. It was maybe 7 feet high with a very pretty structure.

Jennifer had a deadline so I snapped a few cell phone pictures of the cascade and we continued upstream. Our strategy was the path of least resistance so we started

out creek walking. When deadfall and vegetation made that more difficult we switched to bushwhacking on river left. The terrain wasn't as bad as I had imagined looking at the topo but we did encounter a rock wall running parallel to the creek. There was room to maneuver around the face of the wall and still stay within sight of the creek. The towering wall was very impressive. It would be a great area for rock climbers. Jennifer and I continued on, working our way around boulders and vegetation until I caught my first sight of white water. I became more and more excited as we got closer. The wall led us to a profile view. It was simply gorgeous. Water was going everywhere as it hit rocks and ledges. We couldn't get down from that area, so Jennifer and I backtracked and decided to creek level. We were simply blown away by the beauty of this 20-25 foot waterfall and the mossy green setting. GPS for this waterfall is 35.180789, -83.010541.

After spending quite a while photographing this beauty, Jennifer and I decided to go up river right. We initially thought we could climb on some thick vegetation clinging to a rock wall, but it turned out to be not too securely attached as it dropped alarmingly when I put weight on it. That meant going up and around the rock face and working our way back down to the creek. The creek was easy walking above the first waterfall. Less than a tenth of a mile upstream we found a double decker slide with about 4 feet on each slide. It wasn't a waterfall, but it was a nice cascade. Upstream of this cascade, the creek flattened out, so we were able to stay in it for most of the way up to the second point of interest.

We rounded a bend and saw a nice 18-20 foot slide. It wasn't as impressive as the first waterfall but it is very photogenic. This waterfall is close to some power lines

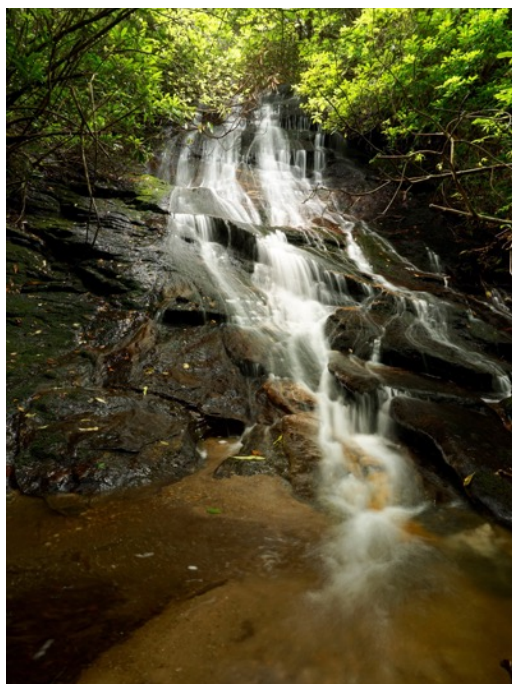


LG Falls

that run through Panthertown so I was happy to note that they do not mar the view of the waterfall. GPS for this waterfall is 35.179918, -83.013532. Jennifer and I took some photos and then talked about our exit strategy.

Plan A was to follow the creek to an intersection with the Power Line trail. Plan B was to bushwhack to the right up to an old logging road that goes around Rattlesnake Knob and intersects the Rattlesnake Knob trail. We went with plan A. This was easy for a while, but we came to an area where the creek closed in dramatically. I explored an area to the right but we decided to try and work our way through the vegetation along the bank. This vegetation, which we think is the remnants pushed away when the powerlines were constructed was extremely thick. We literally had to slither through it. As Jennifer had predicted, this area was mercifully short and we are able to continue following the creek after about 10 yards of extreme bushwhacking.

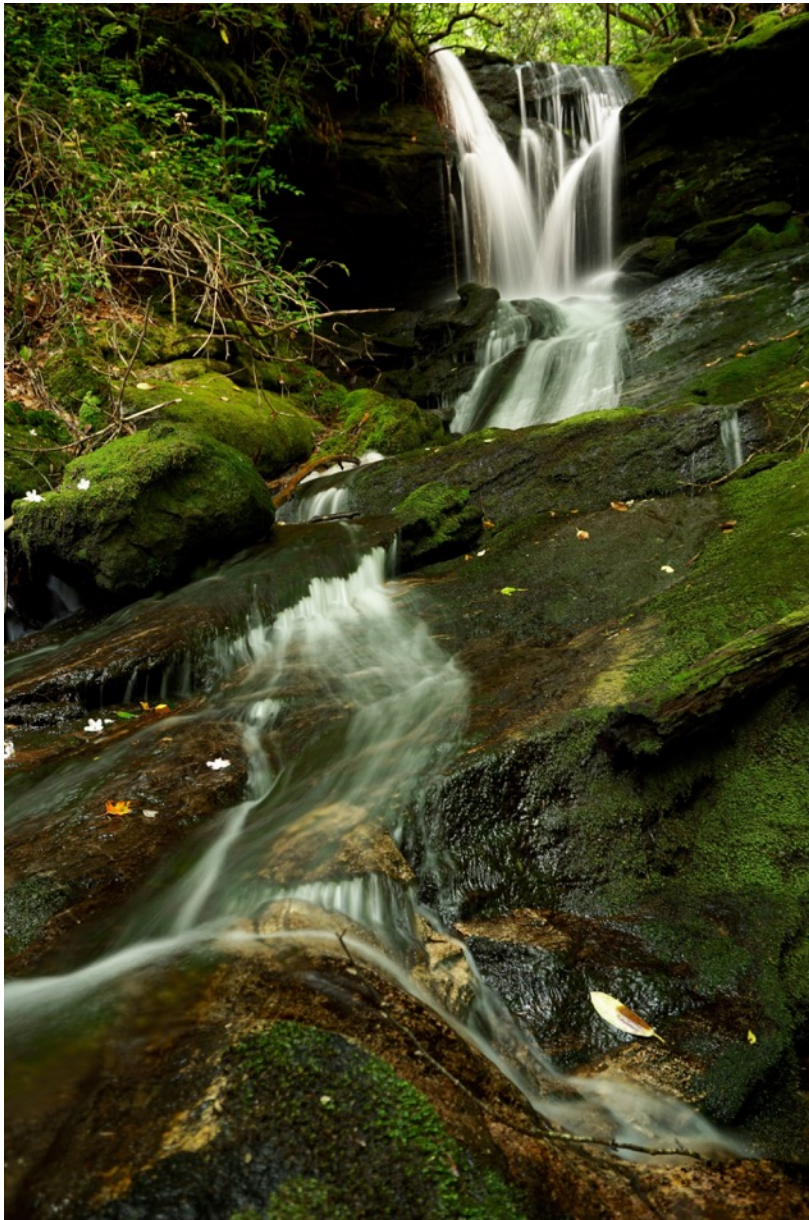
As we continued, the creek forked with the main channel veering right. We started following the main channel, but after another look at the topo, we realized that the old logging road around Rattlesnake Knob was a better option. This meant another foray



Isabella Falls

into what we lovingly referred to as the power line hell. This one was not quite as bad though, so we were able to crawl through the worst places and soon reached relatively open forest. We reached the logging road, which seemed to dead end at the power lines. There was no getting through those briar thickets without major damage, so Jennifer and I turned back into the forest and found another logging road just uphill from the one that had dead ended. This one led to the Rattlesnake Knob trail and we had a quick 2.5 mile hike back to the car. The overall distance traveled was a bit over 4.5 miles with about 800 feet of elevation change. Those statistics in on way reflect the difficulty of the bushwhacking for this one so be prepared if you go.

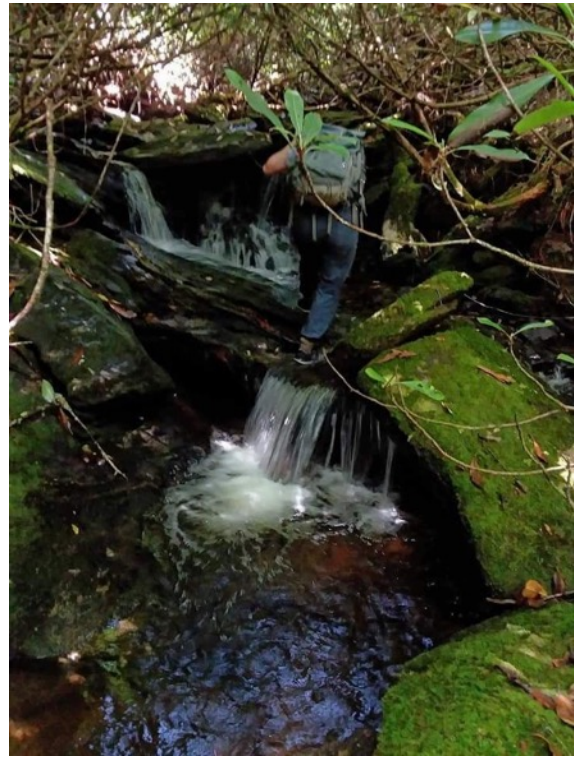
I have to say that, although I have been to many waterfalls and documented “new” ones before, this was a special day for me. Even when I had been the one to choose the creek in those other explorations, the research and planning was a group effort. This was the first time that I had noticed an area on a topo map, done the research, gathered information and planned the hike route myself. That my dear friend Jennifer Loow made this journey with me made it that much more special. As always, the boots on the ground hike was a collaboration. Jennifer is one of the most skilled hikers I have ever met and has spot on instincts. After some consideration, I decided to call the lower fall LG Falls. Jennifer is expecting a baby in November and her family calls him little guy or LG for short. He was very excited at the waterfall, so that seems an appropriate name for the lower waterfall. I’m calling the upper waterfall Isabella, after my pup, who has health issues. Since these areas have all been logged, I know that Jennifer and I are not the first people to see these waterfalls, but I can find no reference to them. As always, if someone has an older established name with adequate documentation please let me know.



LG Falls



Isabella Falls



Jennifer makes her way upstream



2nd Cascade