

# Insanity Falls

February 16, 2019

Present:

David Holle

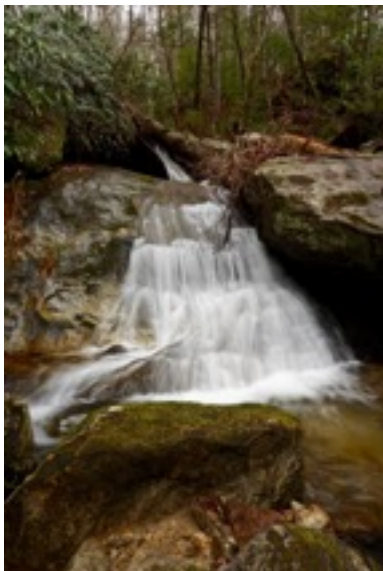
Beth Bradshaw

Submitted by Beth Bradshaw:

In February, Andy Kunkle and I explored Tough Hill branch, following a tip from Georgia waterfaller Mark Oleg. It was a very productive day, so I started scanning the area for more streams with potential. I had been up Woodruff Branch and seen the 3 well-known waterfalls along the Woodruff Ridge trail. On a trip with Mary Gavlik last summer, I went upstream from the point where the trail turns away from the creek and saw a nice drop but didn't have time to explore more. This seemed like a good place to start looking.

The topographic map looked promising, so I scanned with another tool. There was something there, not on Woodruff Branch as I had expected, but on a tributary of a tributary. Well, there was a drop there, but the question of the day was would there be any water going over that drop? This is the kind of hike you hate to ask other people to go on because it can be really disappointing to put in a lot of effort only to find a damp rock.

My hiking partner of the day, David Holle, was given two options. Since he hadn't been to Woodruff Branch, he was assured of at least 3 new waterfalls with that option so he selected it. After driving to the trailhead off Anthony Creek Road, David went up to Woodruff Branch falls for a few shots before we started up the Woodruff Ridge Trail. Winter is a good time to see the middle waterfall on Woodruff. The high water made a good show as it tumbled through a narrow section of rock. The upper waterfall was also impressive, but photo options were limited due to high water and frigid temperatures.



Just upstream of the upper waterfall on Woodruff Branch, the trail turns left. Our adventure began across the creek to the right. The vegetation was quite thick. There used to be an old trail over here, but it's so overgrown that you are better off making your own way. David, a crackerjack bushwhacker, cleared a path to a nice 15 foot two-level slide a short distance upstream. It's marred by some deadfall but was still a nice stop.

We continued upstream on river right through some very annoying dog hobble and rhododendrons. After a nice cascade, the hillside started to steepen so we crossed Woodruff and continued on the relatively flat river left side for a while. The vegetation was still dense, but we passed a few really nice cascades, making the trip scenic.

There was an old logging road or trail on the river left side of the creek, but it was very overgrown. The bushwhack was .5 mile and we were less than a quarter mile into the it. That vegetation was really slowing our progress.

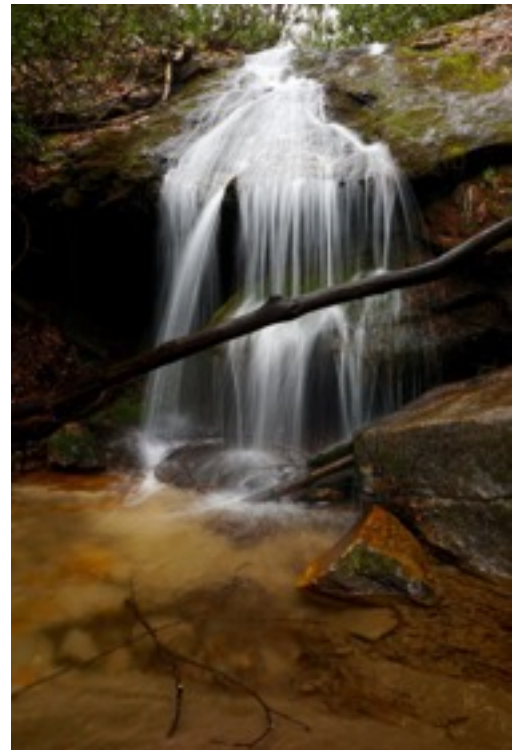
Further up the hillside looked clearer, so we went high as the creek flattened out and water levels went down. The going was much easier here for a while, then the hillside steepened on that side and we started seeing some storm damage and a small landslide. We crossed back to river right, which was flat at this point, trying to decide if we should continue struggling through vegetation or get in the creek and climb over deadfall. Neither option was easy so we went with the path of least resistance either on the bank or in the creek. The water level at this point was low enough to make being in the creek okay, but also made my heart sink as I knew this didn't bode well for our potential waterfall.

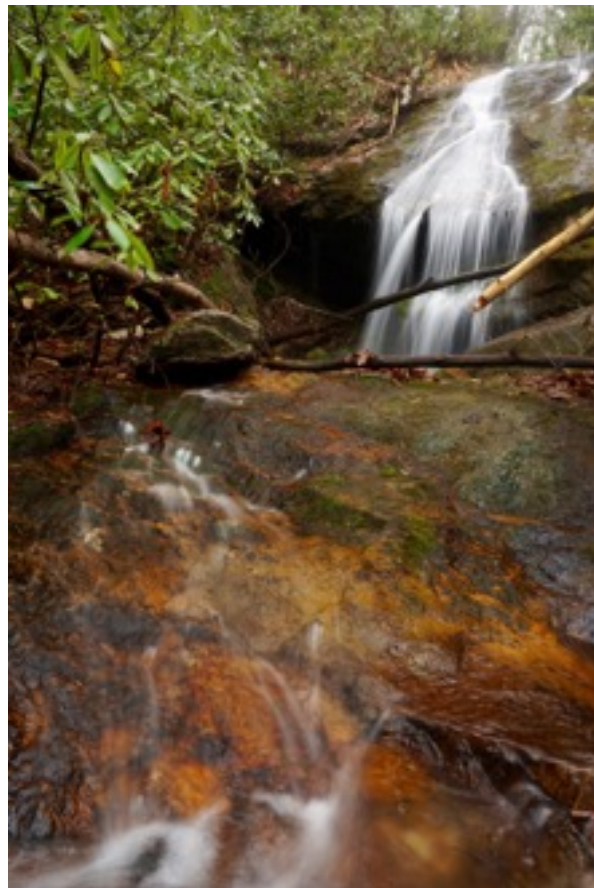
When a tributary came in on river left, we followed it. The drop I had seen is above a split of this tributary. The water had dropped to a disappointing level, but we had come too far to turn back. As we neared our goal, I suggested climbing high to head straight for the coordinates where I thought the drop was located.

The going was relatively easy and after some sidehilling, I glimpsed a ribbon of white and let out a shout of joy. The tributary of the tributary had water! We had come in near the top of the waterfall, so we went up to get a gps reading at the top. The top section of the waterfalls consists of an interesting slide with streams of water flowing over the rock face in different directions.

After exploring a bit upstream, we backtracked and went to the base. You can't see the entire waterfall from the base. There is a nice free fall with deep depression behind there. Dave took videos while I set up some shots. The waterfall was quite photogenic. Just as I was switching sides to get some shots from downstream that would include some interesting orange rocks, it started raining. I snapped a few shots and packed up my gear.

Since the hike along the creek had been so time consuming, David and I decided to climb to the top of the ridge and follow it back towards a trail shown on my topo map. It was mostly open forest with some understory brush. Following the old trail down to Woodruff Branch put us back to the area where we had first crossed to river right. It didn't take long to get back to the 15 footer and from there back to Woodruff Ridge trail and the trailhead.







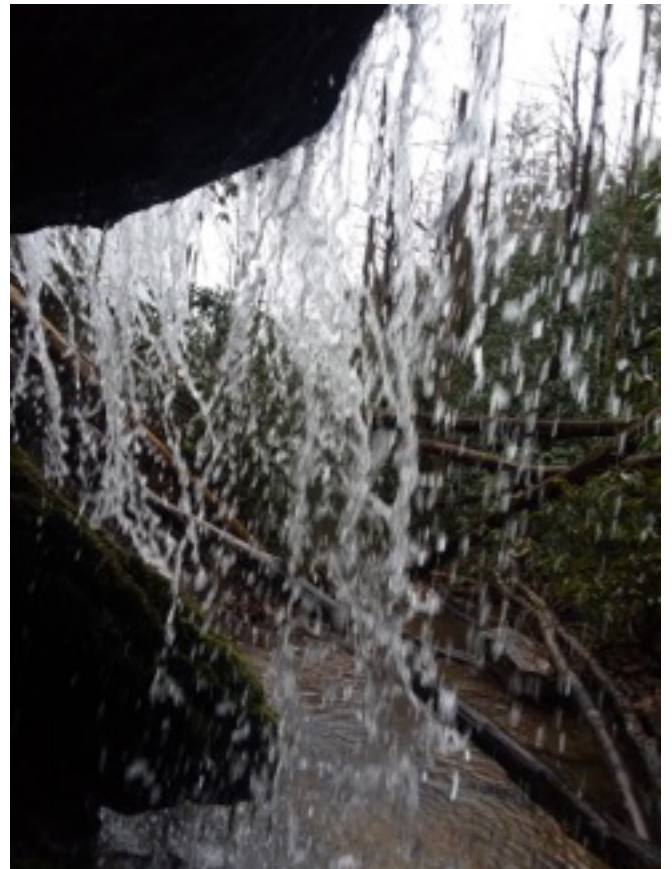
As we got in the car to go, I told David that we had to be nuts to go on a hike looking for a waterfall on a tributary of a tributary of a branch, so I called the waterfall Insanity Falls. The coordinates are 36.060051, -81.744983. It's approximately 30 feet with some really cool features. Many thanks to David for a fun hike.



**Me at the 15 footer**



**David at the 15 footer**



**View from behind free fall at Insanity Falls**