

D. L. Anderson

P h o t o g r a p h y

Proxy Falls

Proxy Falls trail is located along one of Oregon's many scenic bi-ways, just inside the northwest boarder of the Three Sisters Wilderness Area. Both upper and lower Proxy Falls cascade over basalt cliffs carved by the last ice age approximately 8,000 years ago.

Directions

From Eugene travel east on Highway 126 to the junction of Highway 242 (McKenzie Pass Scenic Bi-way). After approximately 9 miles a hiker sign and road side parking area designate the trailhead. From Salem travel east on US Route 20 and then south on Highway 126 to the 242 Highway junction.

The Trail

This short but very enjoyable trail is a loop with two short spurs to each of the falls. From the parking lot walk to the right where the trail starts by crossing over a 4500 year old lava flow from cinder cones near the North Sister. The flow is composed of jumbled rocks which are covered in moss and vine maple, which provides a splash of color in the fall. Where they can find a foothold, the occasional old growth Douglas fir or hemlock towers above all. After crossing the lava the trail forks. A few hundred yards down the right fork the trail ends at the Lower Proxy Falls view point. Douglas fir, hemlock, and cedar trees frame the view of the falls as it cascades down the face of the glacier carved cliff.

Continuing along the main trail you'll pass through old growth western hemlock, Douglas fur, and yew trees. A spring hike will yield blooming rhododendrons, vanilla leaf, Oregon grape, and the occasional Oregon iris. At the second fork bear right for 0.1 miles to the smaller Upper Proxy Falls. The trail ends at the collection pool formed at the base of the falls which has no visible outlet. The water flows through the porous lava and emerges at the springs creating Lost Creek and White Branch Creek located several miles down the canyon.

From the upper falls collection pool, it's only a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile hike back to the main trail, over the lava, and back to the parking lot.

Raven, woodpeckers, Stellar Jay's, Clarks Nutcrackers, and various songbirds all frequent the area as do mule and white tailed deer, chipmunks, Douglas' squirrels, and raccoons. Also frequenting the area but rarely seen are black bear, bobcat, and mountain lion.

Photographing the Natural Pacific Northwest

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