

# Visit Crystal Falls ... A Superior Waterfall in Kings County

BY PETER WALLACE

Looking for a beautiful winter walk with charisma? The northern edge of the South Mountain from Windsor westward has numerous brooks and rivers cascading down the north-facing slope giving rise to cataracts and rapids, fast water and waterfalls. Crystal Falls is a great example of one of these on Mumford Brook, just south of Kingston/Greenwood. It is a four-season waterfall: in winter it cascades a beautiful array of ice formations; in the spring and fall the waters vary from moderate to torrential; and in the summer water flows over the rocks at lower levels. The falls occur where erosion-resistant, quartz sandstone beds are adjacent to eroded slate, their juxtaposition most likely caused by ancient earthquakes. The pool at the base of the falls is quite deep and a wonderful swim on a warm day—beware though, the water can be very cold!

This is an easy walk of less than 4 km round trip. The soil at the start of the trail and east of the brook is mainly derived from granite boulder till and is sandier to the west of the brook. Some boulders along the brook are several metres in diameter, attesting to the strength of the brook during glacial melting. They make great icons and are worthy of close inspection, especially looking at the ferns, mosses and lichens

that grow on them. Up on top of the banks is a pioneer mixed forest, with mainly spruce and fir conifers. Down near the river is a more mature hemlock-bearing, mixed forest. On the west side, the tree cover is quite variable and younger because of more recent logging operations. Along some parts of the brook where the flow is low there are groves of alders. In the hemlock-bearing parts of the forest next to the brook, the ground is almost completely covered by moss. In the spring and summer the usual suspect wildflowers can be found like Red Trillium (*Trillium erectum*), Nova Scotia Mayflower (*Epigaea repens*), Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*), and Blue Flag (*Iris versicolor*), to name a few but not abundant species.

*Trail Directions:* Park on the Harmony Road just south of Greenwood where the Greenwood Road T junctions into the Harmony Road. The trail in looks drivable from Harmony Road but don't attempt it. Even with a high clearance vehicle you will only go a short distance before having to park in a clearing. The access road is active with ATVs, and occasionally with logging vehicles doing work south and west of the falls.

From Harmony Road, walk a little over a kilometer to a fork in the trail just before the river (see map), the





key decision point. If you take the right fork, go over the bridge, up the rise, and past the next cleared area, going straight through for about 500 m. At that point, on the left, is a well-worn flagged trail going down a steep bank and across a swampy area with alders. Exit the other side of the alders and you are on the west bank of the pool looking full-square at the cliff and falls. If you take the left fork before the bridge, go up the road about 200 m and on the right is a sign pointing to a woods trail going to the falls. The short trail leads to the northern bank of the pool and a series of rocky outcrops. The falls are on the east side along the cliff at the back (the view is not full on here).

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To return to Harmony Road from either trail, go back to the fork near the bridge. On the bank on the east side of the brook, about 15m up, you will see an obscure narrow trail leading off to the north (trending downstream). This is an old mountain bike trail that follows the brook, which goes through the hemlock-bearing forest, a delightful forest walk. About 500 m along this brook meander, the forest trail T's onto an ATV trail that goes back up to the main trail and Harmony Road.

The Crystal Falls trail crosses private land but the owners are amenable to hikers. The hike is easy but that does not mean there are no muddy bits, roots across the trail, or boulders on the trail that you must hop over. Hike the trail at your own risk. The pool at the base of the falls looks wonderful but contains hazards like rocks, sharp debris, and dead wood. Swim in it at your own peril. All hikers should practice good etiquette/ecological practices with regard to garbage and personal hygiene (take out what you pack in no matter how it was carried).

### Make It a Two Waterfall Day!

If you have a bit of time left over at the end of the walk, check out McMaster Mill Historic Park and falls. Go 400 m further west down the Harmony Road and right for 50 m on the Rocknotch Road. It's a Nova Scotia Historic site with short (a couple of hundred metres), easy access trails showcasing beautiful rapids and dramatic falls with large easy to read and informative displays on logging and homesteading. This site is on Fales River, which has more water than the tributary Mumford Brook.

**Peter Wallace is a retired geologist who lives on the South Mountain and leads a weekly hiking group of retirees to areas of natural beauty and interest in the region. Peter Wallace contributed the photos and map specifications.**

