

Chasing Waterfalls - North Country/Watertown - Part 2

by Donna McCabe

My family I are on day 2 of our vacation and today's plan is to visit four waterfalls. Looking at the waterfall

map of the area, I chose four to visit based on their locations and proximity to each other.

We have plenty of

time to explore all four in one day and not be completely exhausted when we're done. We could easily make a

day of this trip by taking our time and explore but not be completely exhausted when we're done.

Our first visit is to Kilbourn Falls in the town of Croghan, which is east of Watertown. Before heading to this

location, there are a few things to make note of. First, you are in what's really the western part of the

Adirondack Mountains and you need to be aware that running into wildlife is a possibility.

Second, you will be

driving in some very remote and challenging areas. We have a mini-van and would not recommend anything

smaller. Your vehicle will need adequate ground clearance since it can get pretty rough in some points.

Kilbourn Falls is located on private property but there are public fishing rights that allow you access to the area.

Following the "Public Fishing" signs but keep your eyes peeled as they might be hidden behind some

overgrown plants. We missed one of the signs and turning around took a bit of effort. After making it to the

easily identifiable parking area, you'll see the DEC public fishing signs pointing the way to the trail. This path,

while not overly long, was pretty rough and has quite a few ups & downs; I highly recommend sturdy footwear.

Heading in, my two sons were walking ahead of my husband & me. Before too long,

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they went out of view

down one the declines but came running back pretty quickly saying there was a bear on the trail ahead of us!

No joke - there was a black bear! I have a few things to be thankful for at this point ... 1- bears do not want to

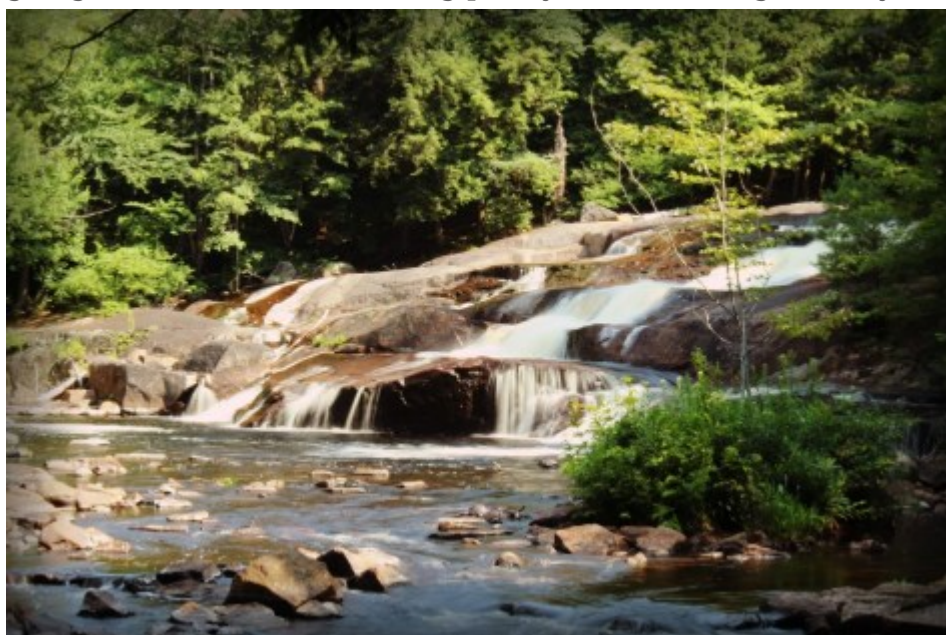
be around us just as much as we do not want to be around them, 2 - the bear was heading away from us, 3 -

this was a male bear meaning no mama bear & her cubs, and 4 - my boys had the good sense to move away

from the bear first and not try to get pictures. No picture is worth risking your safety for - especially when it

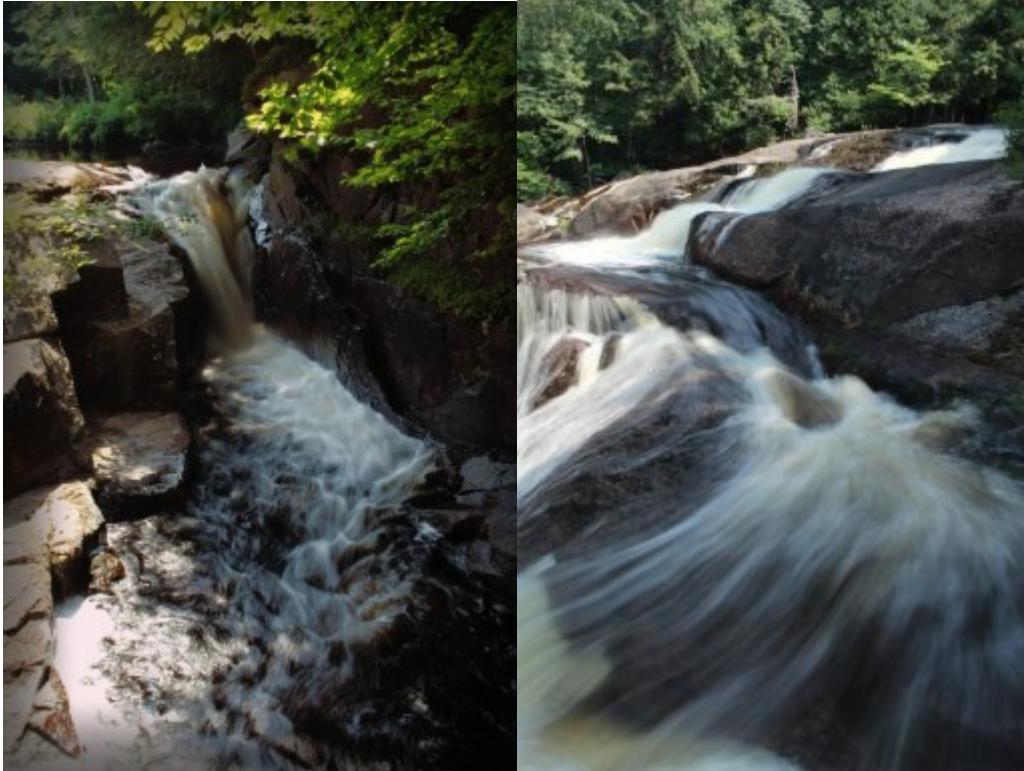
involves a wild animal. After we all took a few minutes to be sure the bear had moved off, we decided to keep

going to the falls while making plenty of noise along the way.



As you follow the trail, you'll first see the lower portion of falls and, if you head towards the footbridge, the chute-style falls is just upstream. Even though this trip was in the middle of summer, low water flow was not an issue. In fact, my boys wanted to try and walk through the water but it was moving too quickly to be done safely. We lingered for a bit checking out both sides of the river before taking the trail back out. Our noise seemed to work since no

other furry creatures were seen.



Our second visit of the day is to Whetstone Gulf Falls located in Whetstone Gulf State Park. If you choose to begin hiking from within the park, keep in mind that there will be an entrance fee but this fee allows you access to the small picnic area and a great sandy beach as well. The other option to access the trails is outside the park itself. If you head up Corrigan Hill Road (which turns into a dirt road), you'll be at the top of the trail and walking down into the park. There is a small parking area right across from the beginning of the South Rim Trail with the North Rim Trail on the other side of bridge and easily seen. We chose to walk the South Rim Trail which has some new boardwalk close to the trailhead. Before long you'll see a small 'Y' in the trail where the left branch leads down to a small overlook or the right branch keeps to the main trail.

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This overlook is not protected in anyway so proceed with the utmost caution. Back along the main trail, you'll be able to look across the gulf and, if visiting in the spring or after a heavy rain, see decent flows creating another beautiful waterfall on the gulf walls. We weren't prepared to do any creek walking to see the falls straight on so our views were from the trail only. Our visit was cut a bit short by some storm clouds moving in. We're heading north for our next stop so hopefully we can avoid them!



For our third stop, we visited Deer River Falls in the town of Denmark. Visible from the bridge as you drive along Rt. 26, Deer River Falls is one you'll want to find a parking spot and check out more. Multiple cascades and easy accessibility make this one a local swimming spot. We followed a worn path off the side of the road down to view the falls a bit closer and were greeted by a group of four who were cooling off in the water that day. This was a quick visit because it's roadside but also, the rain caught up to us.



Not too far from this Deer River Falls is King Falls. Even though the directions are pretty clear, we didn't have the easiest time finding the correct spot. Somehow, we got turned around and after multiple attempts, finally found the right dirt road. Not long after turning onto the road, we came up to a closed gate the that prevented any further vehicle traffic. I had heard this one was now posted and off limits, and, rather than risk any problems, we didn't attempt to go any further.

For now, my count in the #NYSWaterfallChallenge is at 59. There are three more waterfalls in the area that we

plan on visiting. Stay tuned for Part 3 to find out which ones they are!

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