The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America
RICK'S ROADS
Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What

BLOG POST: 2026.07.09
White Branch Falls, The McKenzie, Willamette National Forest, Oregon



My boondocking spot was just down the road (a mile or two) from another spot that had been spoken-of highly: White Branch Falls. It was once again a beautiful summer morning in The McKenzie, so I headed thataway to revel in the greenery.

WBF was a short ways up a dirt road, just before a summer camp. There were signs warning to go no further because the camp was in session, so I backed down the road a bit to where a wide clearing had been created as a parking area.

Trouble was, huge logs had been laid along the ground, blocking any access to the lot. That struck me as odd; why clear the area, then block it off?

Well, I had me a waterfall to find, so and I was not gonna take “no (parking)” for an answer. I cozied BluMaxx up parallel to one of the logs, leaving plenty of room for any other vehicles to get by, told him I’d be back in a little while, and launched my quest.

The trail head was halfway between that spot and the go-no-further sign, so I felt perfectly justified in diving into the forest.



The trail was beautiful right away! The tree trunks were large, the shade was dark and cool, and moss clung to many of the limbs. The dirt path that threaded among the low ferns was smooth and soft underfoot, and the ground was level. Man, it was nice in here!

There was a creek under a small wooden bridge that led off in the direction of the camp. The forest vegetation reflected in a brilliant green in the water.

Not much farther along, there was a square clearing with a fire ring and a couple of large, thick logs arranged as benches. Two straight branches had been tied across each other and erected as a cross on the back edge of the clearing. I knew the camp was held a religious youth organization; otherwise, it could have been a tad unsettling.





Of course, it was quiet in here. There was no wind to ruffle the leafy trees, and no human voices to break Nature's sweet silence.

Soon, a soft and steady sound made its way through the ferns and shrubs: the waterfall. It was not a roar like it had been at Sahalie and Koosah. This was a soft, whispering swooshing sound. As I got closer, the swooshing separated into more distinct gurgles and babbles on the outer edges of more forceful splashing.

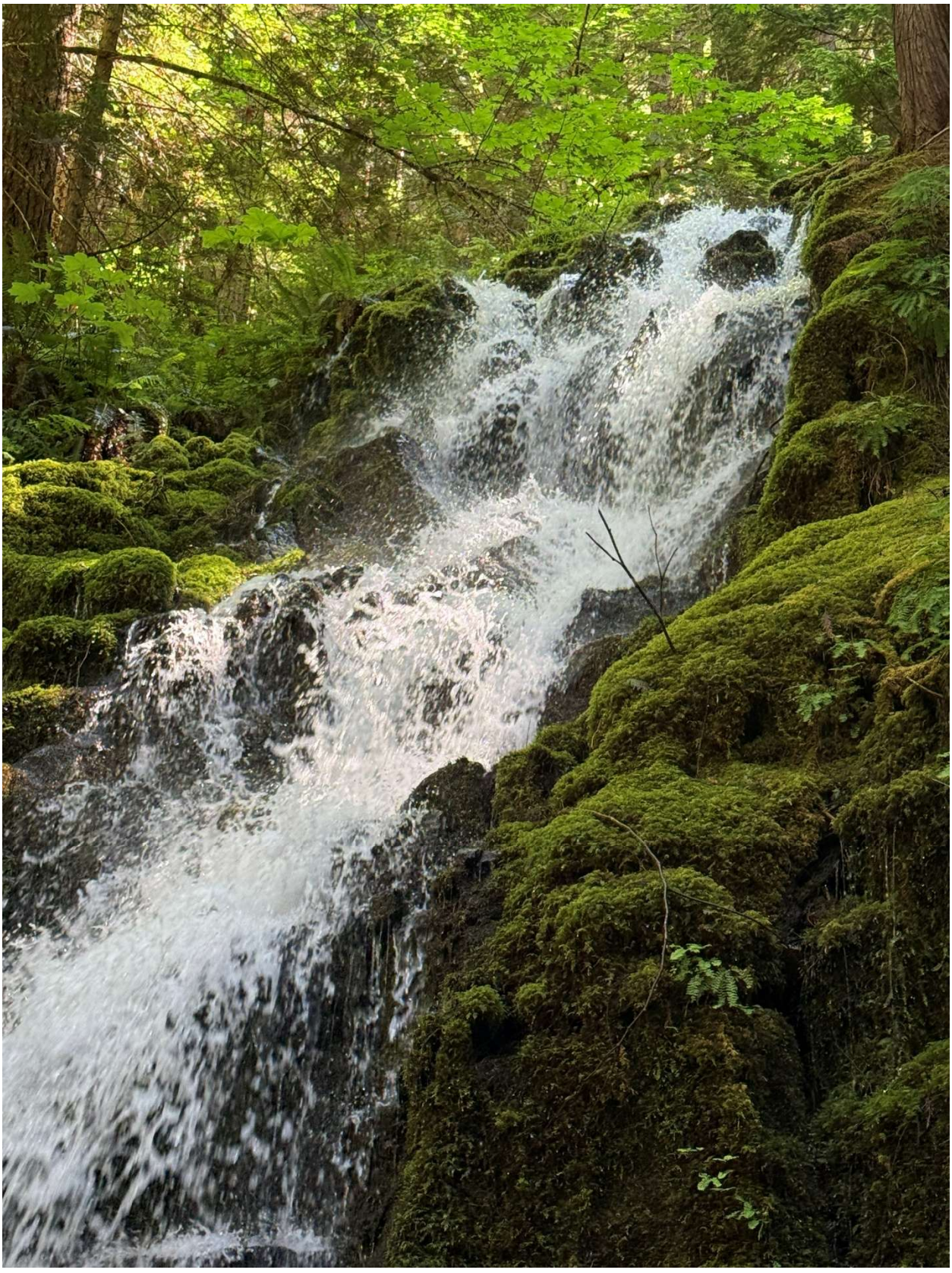
White Branch Falls is not tall. I'd guess maybe 25', tops (although I never saw what was above the upper edge of this cascade), but, man, nestled in among all that lush green moss, it was freaking beautiful. The kind of place where you find a comfy log or rock and just sit there gazing at it, slowly following the downward flow, appreciating every shift in direct between or across every rock.

So, that is what I did. For quite a while. Eventually my "let's get another angle" urge came over me, and I clambered up the dirt path on the right of the falls. It was not easy going, and my stance was precarious as I took a close-up video.

The path I had come in on did continue up the hill, so I followed it in the hopes of finding an Upper White Branch Falls. It was a very hilly trail, and it soon appeared that it led to the camp and not more water, so I bagged it and returned to the falls.



White Branch Falls, full view

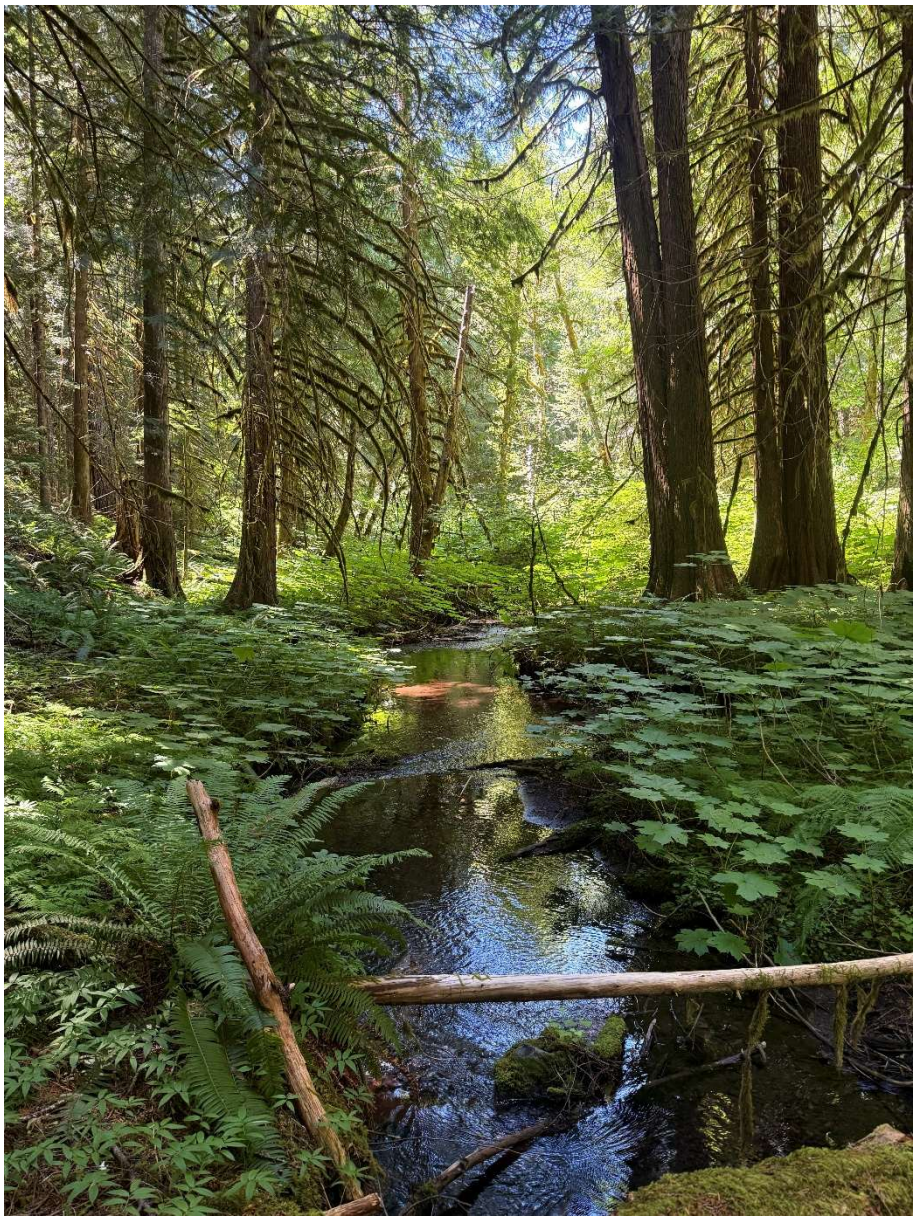


White Branch Falls, upper section



White Branch Falls, lower section

But within a few minutes, I heard the unmistakable sound of kids' all-too-loud voices. Damn, I thought, the campers are on the prowl. Time to move out.



I passed a couple of energetic boys, maybe 11 years old, who had bounded well ahead of their group. They stopped in their tracks as they saw me walking casually towards them. "Who are you?" the chubbier boy asked. I might as well have been a sasquatch the way he asked it.

Amused, I said to him, "I'm nobody," then held his attention for a moment to say, "So if anyone asks you if you saw anybody on the trail, you can tell them you saw nobody," then turned and walked off down the trail. As I passed that little bridge I could see a counselor with a dozen or so of the little munchkins in tow. He was not looking in my direction, so I slipped by unnoticed.

I wondered if he would ask the two boys if they saw anyone….