

BRICE CREEK TRAIL Register Guard 4.28.18

By Christine Sherk

It was as if we'd slipped on green-colored glasses. Everything, it seemed — from trailside rises and shelves of rock to the coursing aquamarine river water and towering Douglas firs — was iridescent with that manic, shiny energy of spring along Brice Creek Trail in the Umpqua National Forest.

Moss appeared to be the most rabid — carpet thick and emerald green, it covered rocks and forest floor, even draping across rocks submerged within the creek. On closer look, the lush and spongy moss served as the sprouting ground for dainty wildflowers, succulents and ferns.

We might have been seeing things, so tiny and diaphanous were some of the baby flowerheads, but no; it was all real, the sheer variety leaving us spring-drunk and stumbling.

We were more than ready to set off across the sturdy bridge crossing Brice Creek, giving us our first glimpse of the water's fulsome speed. The many hues of riverbed stones, pale green included, were visible in the clear water.

Beyond the bridge, we followed the trail marker to the right and found, a few paces ahead, the posted trail mileage: Lund Park, once a stopover for miners traveling from Cottage Grove to the Bohemia Mining District, was our turn-around point 2.5 miles upstream. We set off to the right, plunging into the green-fueled bower, the creek roaring beside us

Within moments, we curved down into a channel forged by a side creek gushing into the river. We carefully navigated across wood planks set across the water flow up to the other side.

Our attention all along the trail here was pulled left to the mossy trail bank, where miniature wildflowers, lacy ferns and tiny mushrooms made us feel as if we were in a fairy land, and then was pulled right to watch the ongoing color dance between river water and multicolored river stones.

Whenever the trail afforded an opening onto the rock shelves adjacent to the river, we stepped down and walked along the terraces.

At one series of ledges, we watched the green-tinged water plunge over a short ledge and into a narrow channel between two rock slabs. The water action was mesmerizing, inspiring. Drawing from the green around us, we left on the rocks a memento of our love for nature in the vein of ephemera artist Andy Goldsworthy. Along another series of ledges, where fawn lilies were in bloom along the north bank, and thick moss blanketed the ledges on the south bank, we enjoyed the steady rise of terrace to the base pool of Brice Creek Falls.

Walls of moss

Back on the trail, as we continued on upstream, the path coursed back down onto another series of ledges, paralleling a massive canyon wall covered in every shade of green imaginable, it seemed. Again, moss reigned, but tiny greens were tucked into many crevices. Beyond this portion of rocks, back on the trail, we

hopped over many tree roots before reaching another series of rock ledges, where we joined a couple of colorful moths fluttering about. We settled down to eat our lunch and watch the creek's rapid flow.

Continuing upstream, we climbed over a downed tree and kept adjusting to the trail's regular inclines and declines, the view of the river changing depending on our height above it.

A second wall of moss appeared as we rounded a bend in the trail, and here the green growth was at its height.

Itty-bitty monkey flowers. Rock-hardy succulents.

Feathery fans of ferns. Water oozing and dripping down the canyon face. We almost could not take it all in.

The scene shifted into more of a forestscape as the trail rose higher above the creek and farther into a thick stand of old-growth trees.

On the north side of the trail, evidence of many fallen trees through years of storms made it seem as if we were traipsing through a graveyard of sorts. Still, the beauty of these massive firs drew our attention upward to where the tree crowns poked the sky.

More rises and falls within the trail revealed such a variety of perspectives above and beside Brice Creek, that when we reached Lund Park, we were excited to revisit the walls of moss, the rock shelves and waterfalls on our way downstream.