

Quality Falls Hiking Trail (#9)

Quality Creek drops over a number of waterfalls as it flows to the Murray River. The Quality Falls Trail leads to the uppermost of these falls along a one kilometre trail. There is a picnic site and viewpoint at the falls.

Time/Distance: 1-2 hours/2.5 km return
 Rating: Easy, set of stairs at falls. ●
 (Moderate if descending to base of falls)

Directions to the Trailhead

From Tumbler Ridge, take Hwy 52 (the Heritage Highway) north towards Dawson Creek. The signed parking lot is on the left, 6 km from the junction of Mackenzie Way and Hwy 52. The trailhead is at the back of the clearing. The winter parking for snowshoeing is the pullout on the right side of the highway, directly opposite the trailhead.

Trail Directions

From the parking area, the trail passes through open spruce forests. Two small creeks are crossed on plank bridges. At the one km mark, the trail starts to parallel the canyon of Quality Creek, then descends towards the creek on a staircase. The picnic site and viewpoint for the falls is at the bottom of the staircase.

In addition to the common forest birds such as The Hermit and Swainson's Thrush, Ruby- and Golden Crowned Kinglet, and Red Breasted Nuthatch, the Quality Falls trail is home to some special birds. Look and listen for winter wren along wetter portions of the trail. Black-throated Green Warbler occur here at the western edge of their range.

The Quality Falls trail is where pioneering work was done by UBC researchers which led to the splitting of the Winter Wren into two distinct

species (the eastern Winter Wren and the western Pacific Wren). The eastern and western birds have quite distinct songs, and they were encountered singing close to each other beside the trail. The differences in song are as distinct in this contact zone as they are in populations far away. Specimens were mist-netted and released, and blood samples obtained for mitochondrial DNA analysis. The results show that these two species separated from each other about 2 to 3 million years ago.

The falls drop 7 metres over a resistant sandstone layer, with softer rocks below the ledge.

From the viewpoint, the trail drops down to creek level in a series of switchbacks. The extra walk is worthwhile, as it provides a better view of the falls and allows the more adventurous hiker to walk up the creek to the base of the falls for a refreshing swim. Be careful of rapidly rising water after summer rainstorms.

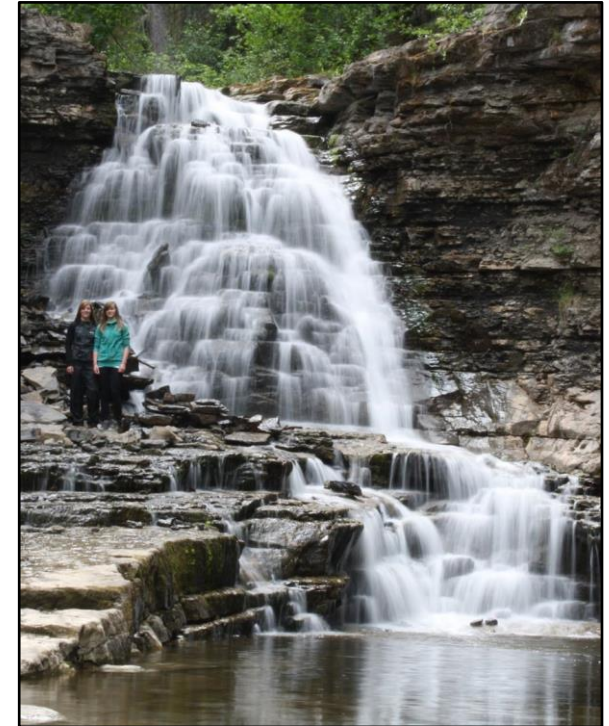
Once you reach creek level, look for American Dipper which breed in the canyon behind waterfalls, and often fly up and down the creek. Less conspicuous is the Pacific-slope Flycatcher which frequents the creek and canyon banks.

The rocks at Quality Falls are in the Kaskapau Formation and are about 95 million years old, from the early part of the Late Cretaceous Period. These rocks are overlain by sandstones and shales of successively younger ages.

From here, the creek has 3 more waterfalls and passes through a deep canyon before flowing into the Murray River.

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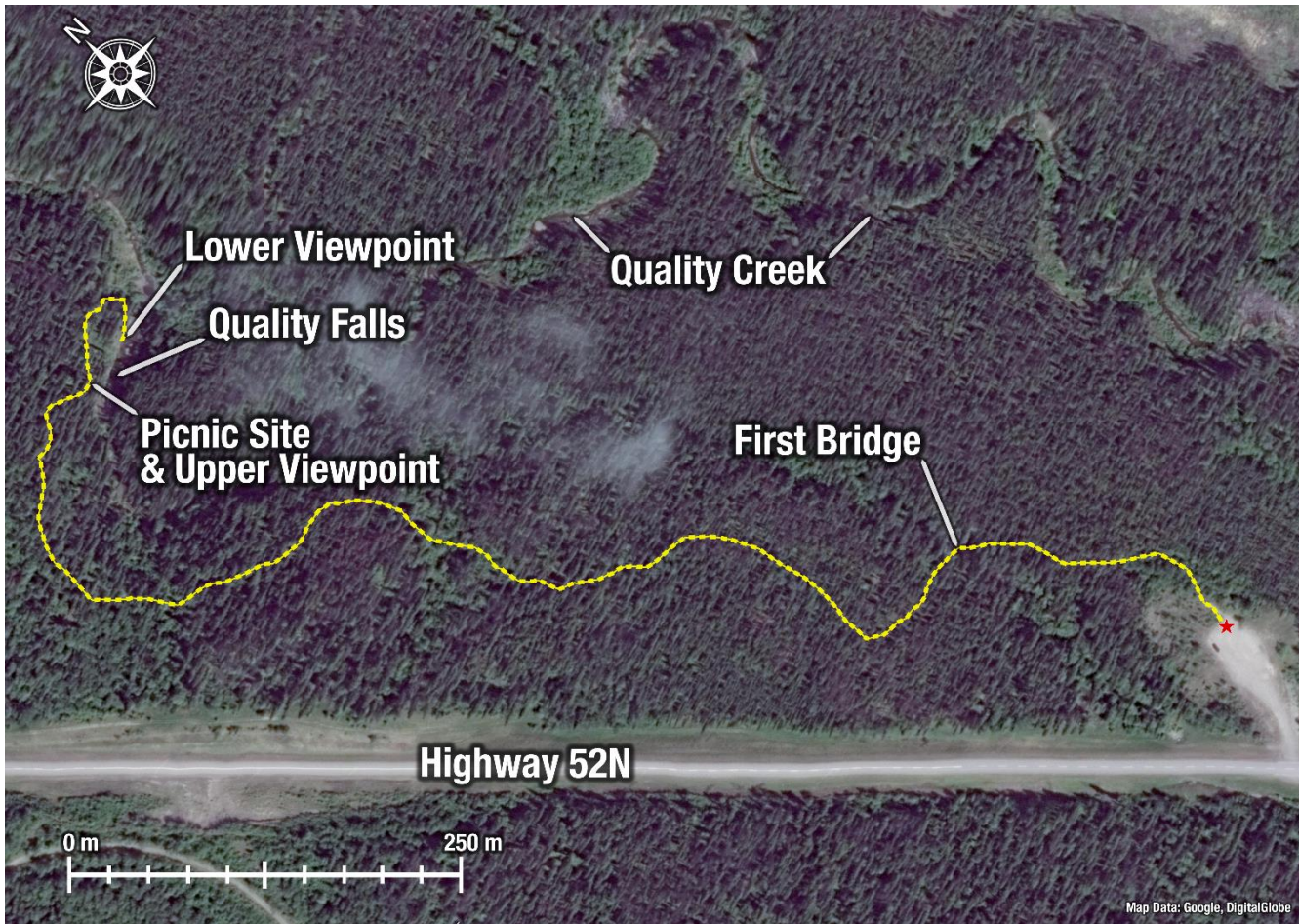
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Rating: Easy ●

Time: 1 - 2 hours





Quality Falls Hiking Trail

- *This trail is in bear country – travel in groups and make noise*
- *Please pack out what you packed in*
- *Use caution at the edge of the escarpment and at the falls*



Quality Creek in Flood

For more information, contact:

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Photo Gallery website:

www.wnms.ca

Tumbler Ridge Visitor Center

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Tourism website:

www.TumblerRidge.ca

Photo credit: Kevin Sharman Map: Steven Tory



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