

APPALACHIAN TRAIL IRELAND

YOSEMITE NEWFOUNDLAND 2012

Anyone who monitors my calendar knows I'm not home all that much. Most of my travels revolve around my mobile avian practice. I was on the road more than 6 months this year, working in many states. However I did get away for a few adventures, including more hiking on the Appalachian Trail, a trip to Ireland, vacation in Yosemite with my family, the more hiking in and in Newfoundland, Canada.



Fig 1 and 2 January I made four separate hikes on the Appalachian Trail in 2012. Each trek ranged from 1 – 4 days. I did a total of 130 miles between Roan Mountain, TN (mile marker 374) and Pine Mountain, VA (mile marker 504). I did winter, spring, summer, and fall hikes. I started in early January from Carver's Gap at Roan Mt with my hiking partner, Stanley. It was a cold, clear day at an elevation of 5500 feet. You could see for miles.



Fig 3 and 4 The trail was snow covered and icy at higher elevations. We had to wear microspikes on our boots for better traction on the slippery path.



Fig 5 and 6 Overmountain Shelter. It used to be a barn, but has been renovated as an AT shelter that can accommodate over 20 hikers each night. We slept on the wooden platforms on the lower level. The bathroom facilities left something to be desired; chilly on the ass!



Fig 7 and 8 Looking back at Overmountain shelter as we hike out the next morning. Beautiful weather, 25 degrees. Onward, toward the grassy, bald summit of Hump Mt. That's me in the foreground.



Fig 9 and 10 The next day the skies became gray and fog developed at lower elevations. At least no snow and the temperature warmed to the 40's.



Fig 11 and 12 March, 2012. Laurel Falls near Dennis Cove. A view from Pond Mt looking north toward Lake Watauga and Iron Mountain...where I will hike later in the summer.



Fig 13 and 14 July, 2012. On the approach to Iron Mountain. Temperatures are in the mid 90's. What a contrast. SpongeBob was my hiking buddy on this leg of the trail. Hiking along the ridgeline of the mountain you can see the remains of fence posts from a long ago fenced-in-pasture.



Fig 15 and 16 Unique mushrooms along the way



Fig 17 and 18 Crossing from TN into VA. The trail will continue more than 500 miles through VA until entering WV. Damascus is the first trail town in Virginia. The trail goes right down Main St.



Fig 19 and 20 Sept, 2012 Hiking north of Damascus near Mt Rogers, the highest point in VA and in Grayson Highlands State Park. Bears and rattlesnakes aren't the only animals to be careful of...this free-roaming horned steer is watching us suspiciously.



Fig 21 and 22 Grayson Highlands is famous for its large population of wild ponies. Here a pony along the trail is happy to get a carrot.



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Fig 23 and 24 Camping on a grassy knoll atop Buzzard Rock. The wind picked up and the temperature dropped. It was a cold night, but watching the sunset was worth it.



Fig 25 and 26

Morning sunrise. After a quick breakfast, all the gear is packed away, then the long hike down the mountain.



IRELAND

Fig 27 and 28 June, 2012 I spent a week in Ireland visiting with my two brothers and my cousin. My brother Bruce (far right) has been living in Ireland for the past 5 years. He works for Eli Lilly and was project manager for the construction of a new biotechnical facility. My brother Glenn (next to me on the right) is a protestant minister who works for a Catholic organization in Indianapolis, IN. Cousin Doug (left) works for the timber industry and lives in Oregon. This was a guy's only trip. My wife traveled to Ireland earlier in the year.



Fig 29 and 30 Ireland is a beautiful country to visit. It rains a lot but temperatures are moderate. The rocky landscape consists of rolling hills and valleys. Large parts of the country are devoid of trees. A "cow jam" on a country road.



Fig 31 and 32 Coastal view from the island of Skellig Michael looking back toward the western coast of Ireland. The island in the foreground is Little Skellig, a rookery for thousands of seabirds. Ireland has lots of ruins but Blarney castle is the most famous. This is also Ireland’s most visited tourist attraction...everyone wants to kiss the Blarney Stone.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK



Fig 33 and 34 July 2012 Family vacation to Yosemite National Park. But first we paid a visit to our tortoise “Spike” who now lives near Lodi, CA. When Spike grew from 2 lbs to 30 lbs, he just got too big for our house. So we shipped him to a family in CA who has other tortoises of the same kind. Pretty view of Lake Tahoe.



Fig 35 and 36 Entering Yosemite Valley. That's El Capitan on the left, the largest sheer face of granite in the US. My kids wanted to swim in a pool beneath one of the large waterfalls...that's them in the water. The water was so cold, ice cubes would take hours to melt!



Fig 37 and 38 Family photo on top of a granite dome overlooking Tuolumne Meadows. That's my son, Blake, on top of Lembert Dome.



Fig 39 and 40 Glacier Point. Looking down into Yosemite Valley. The tourists on the lookout can peer straight down 3000 feet. As you look up the valley, you can see Half Dome on the right.

NEWFOUNDLAND

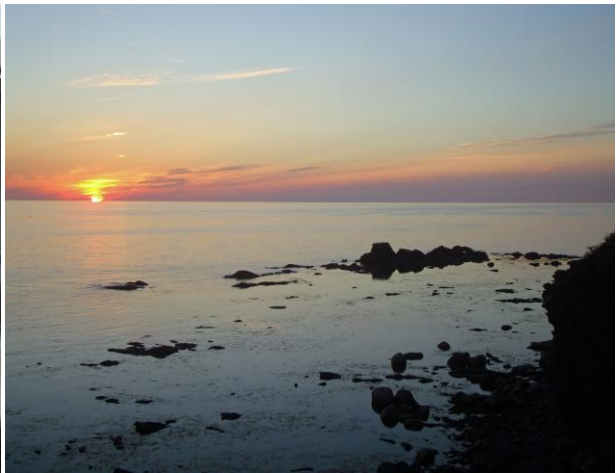


Fig 41 and 42 August 2012: I went to Newfoundland, Canada with six members of our local hiking group to trek in Gros Morne National Park. We were also hoping to see the Northern Lights. Unfortunately our first day there was the only clear night of the whole trip. We did not get to see the Aurora Borealis.



Fig 43 and 44 We rented a cottage in one of the park's coastal towns and did day hikes. Gros Morne NP is known for its unusual and diverse geology. One of our hikes was to the Tableland Mountain. It gets its name from its wide, flattened summit. The rocks here are all yellow-brown in color (peridotite) and contain a high concentration of heavy metals which are toxic to most plants. As such, there is little vegetation. It resembled a landscape from the planet Mars.



Fig 45 and 46 Another trek took us down to the seashore. This is the Atlantic Ocean, but specifically it's the Gulf of St Lawrence. The terrain along the coastline was rough and mountainous.



Fig 47 and 48 Red Adirondack chairs were placed throughout the park at scenic locations. They were a welcome resting spot. Heavy rains the day before caused the water level in this stream to rise, making the river crossing treacherous.



Fig 49 and 50 Gros Morne Mountain is the second highest peak in Newfoundland at 2644 feet. The name means big lone mountain. The mountain is flat-topped and treeless except at its lower elevations. It is actually a slice of Arctic tundra far south of its usual range. The trail climbs through the rocky gully to the right. It is a steep climb through frost-shattered rock.



Fig 51 and 52 Weather conditions can deteriorate quickly near the summit. But if the weather holds, the views can be spectacular!



Baker Brooks Falls



Fig 53 and 54 Western Brook Pond is a glacier-carved fjord (lake) which makes a spectacular setting for a boat tour. The lake is surrounded by steep rock walls 2000 feet high. The lake is about 10 miles long and the water is cold, fresh, and pristine. There are numerous high waterfalls.



Figs 55, 56, and 57 Additional views of Western Brook Pond. A picture of our group on our boat cruise.

