

Nova Scotia Fall Color Extravaganza Journal

Fall 2010

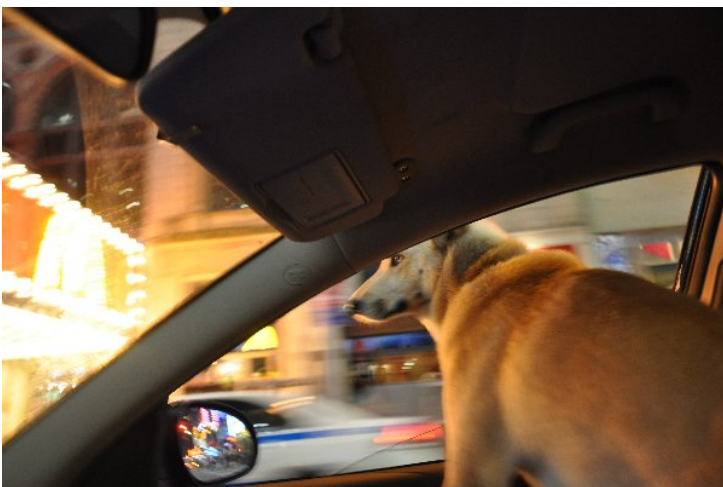


Nova Scotia Fall Color Extravaganza Journal
September 29, 2010

Left yesterday around 10:30 am... rain, rain, rain... left anyway. About an hour into the trip it became apparent that the car setup was not going to work for Luna. I had a metal gate set up that segregated her from the front of the car and the back seat was down and covered with carpet. I stopped at a Wal-Mart and purchased the necessary tarp and bungee cords to reconfigure... and that's what I did... in the rain. Much better now... we set out for real. When we hit Pennsylvania the rain let up significantly. About half way across, we stopped at Moshannon State Park and found a perfect a hiking experience that was perfect for our needs... about a 2 ½ mile trek on a very nice and easy trail with no encounters with anyone else. We took pictures of each other with my cell phone...



Took a half hour nap at a rest stop and now refreshed... continued on the journey. Arrived at the Lincoln Tunnel at about 10:30 pm. Luna was very interested in all the hustle and bustle of the city.



Of course... even at 10:30 at night... there was way too much going on. I realize that it wasn't very bright of me to take pictures while driving the video game of Manhattan traffic, but oh well... we managed to get through unscathed.

Went through the Queens Midtown Tunnel on the other side of Manhattan...



... and arrived at New Park Pizza a half hour before closing... if we do nothing else... this made the trip worthwhile... yum... just as good as I remembered!



Got to Allen's and after some chatting, had a good night's rest. Allen lives in a brownstone in the Prospect Park area of Brooklyn. It's a sweet neighborhood and less than a block away from Prospect Park.



Got up early and took Luna over to Prospect Park where even at 7 am we found it teeming with life and activity. Many, many dog walkers. There was this HUGE open area where dogs can be let off leash... and so we joined in. (Cell phone picture).



Allen is now doing some compiling work on his newest “invention”... an iPhone ap called “Word Pirate”. If you want to help test this very cool game... you need an iPhone and you can write Allen at: allenlubow@gmail.com and tell him you know him and he’ll set you up.

It will probably be released within a couple of weeks... it’s really good and he needs testers... so please... tell your iPhone friends about it too. While he’s compiling and collaborating with his employees in Bali... I’m doing this journal. We’ll be leaving soon to head north.

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Nova Scotia Fall Color Extravaganza Journal

September 30, 2010

We organized what we were going to take and what we were going to leave behind, and got the luggage carrier secured on the roof rack. It was after noon before we left. By then it was lunchtime, so of course, we had to swing by New Park Pizza for a slice.

Made a few wrong turns, thanks to my stupid Garmin, and got stuck in very annoying traffic jams... but managed to reach escape velocity and get out of New York City. Around 4, we decided to find a trail to hike with Luna... who has been a trooper for the trip so far. Even though the Garmin is fallible... between it and Allen's iPhone... we have plenty of technology to help our fly-by-the-seat-of-our-pants adventures go a bit more smoothly. For example, we were able to find Naugatuck State Forest and Reservoir just a few miles off of the highway. It was perfect! We took a 2 mile hike around the reservoir and it was just what we all needed to break up the driving.



After that hike, Luna was so spent that she rested on the console and put her head between the front seats and fell asleep leaning against my arm. At Hartford we hit ridiculous traffic (rush hour) so we decided to get something to eat. Our technology helped us find a bunch of restaurants in the same area and we settled on a place called "Fire and Spice". We really lucked out... they served some sort of Jamaican-Vegetarian fare, and I've never had anything quite like it... very interesting and delicious food.

Technology also told us that severe weather warnings for the entire area were about to fall upon us and would remain for through Friday or Saturday. Well... we're not looking to earn our macho merit badges, so we again used our technology to find a Red Roof Inn just north west of Boston and that's where I'm writing this entry.



Tomorrow we'll try to make it to Acadia National Park. It's got Forest, mountains and ocean... should be fun... once the rains have departed. The temp is great... actually... maybe too hot. The predicted rain and high winds are problematic... oh well... we'll just wait it out and throw money at the problem until it goes away.

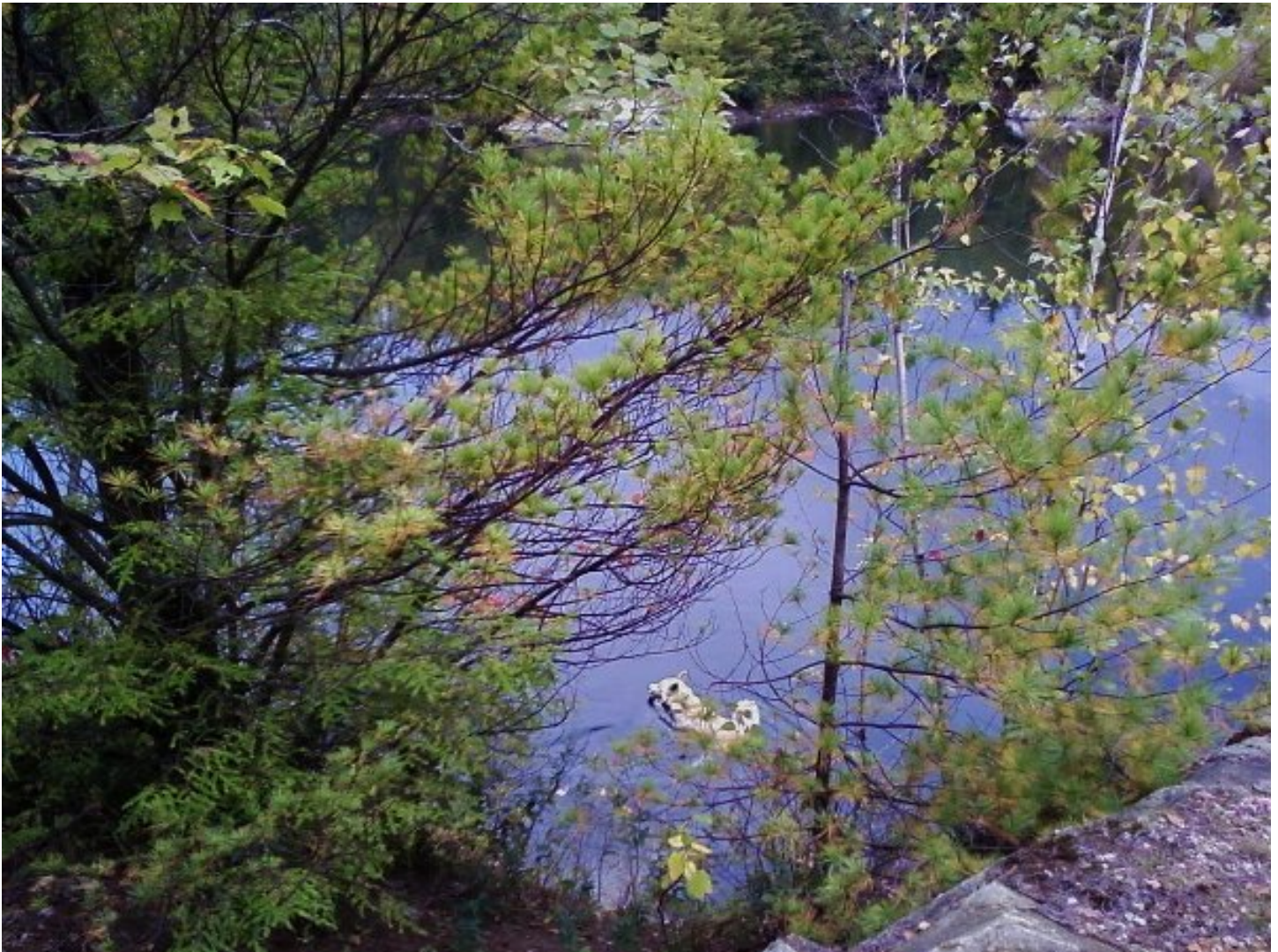
Slept well... got up and looked out the window... it looks like a big cloud has engulfed the world. Weather radar maps look like a pac-man game... where the red dot is us and the green monster with the gapping mouth is rain and 50 mph winds.

We're going to get an early start and try to outrun the storm for a while and head north to find another safe haven. We've got to figure out how to fit a hike in... the 3 of us need exercise.

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Nova Scotia Fall Color Extravaganza Journal
September 30, 2010 ... evening

After a quick stop at the Dunkin' Donuts next door for coffee (this is THE hot spot in Farmington... DisneyWorld class line to be served), we hit the road again. We've developed a pretty effective system. When Luna starts "talking" (she makes these guttural sounds that are not particularly loud or annoying, but convey a sense of gentle urgency), Allen takes his iPhone and uses this map app that pinpoints our car on a map that shows virtually anything in the area in great detail... much greater detail than my Garmin. He has a terrific knack for finding just the right kind of place for a nice hike. This morning we found some kind of unmarked trail that took us past a myriad of baby pine trees... most with a smattering of bright orange needles played against rich evergreen needles. Very pretty... couldn't do it justice with my cell phone camera. From now on I'll bring my real camera on our hikes. The trails were getting rather maze like, so we started leaving little rock piles to help mark which direction we came from (an old boy scout trick). We came upon a small lake and walked around it. Luna had to test the waters of course...



At one point, as we circled the lake, we came upon a little cross encircled by a semi-circle of rocks. A rosary hung from the cross. There was also a small broken glass plaque with some kind of religious quote on it and a picture of a hummingbird. It looked like someone planted marigolds at the base as well. There weren't enough clues to discern who or what was buried there. We figured some kind of pet.



On the way back from to the car, we appreciated the fact that we left the directional rock piles.

Once on the road again, we checked the weather radar map on Allen's iPhone, along with the 10-day weather forecast. We were toying with the notion of not being such sissies and trying to camp somewhere regardless of the weather. When we saw severe weather warnings that included up to 4 inches of driving rain and 40-50 mph winds... we decided that the benefits of having an interesting story to tell might not be worth the consequences. We even factored in the fact that a tent that might blow away could be replaced for less money than a stay at a motel.

It's a good thing I removed the gate in the car. Luna has become very chummy with us and likes to sit on the back seat with her head and front paws on the console between the driver and passenger seats in the front. She will sleep sitting up... or put her head down... sometimes event gently leaning against one or both of us. Allen is not an "animal" person by any stretch of the imagination, but I caught him petting Luna several times as we drove.



It wasn't long before we crossed into Maine. We started to see "Moose Crossing Next 17 Miles" signs and logging trucks.

Now, one of the benefits of doing a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants trips is that you really do get to practice living in the moment. One of the disadvantages is that you will continually run across unanticipated problems that must be solved. Fortunately, we both have technology and the know how to harness it to help make last minute decisions to avoid disaster. The weather reports convinced us that Acadia might be a better visit on the return trip from Nova Scotia.



So, we were going to push on and get as close to our end destination as we could. We could see that the weather would be breaking and the forecast for Saturday through most of the week was gorgeous. That meant we have one or two more nights to spend in a motel of some sort.

Now Allen has to conduct his business, which requires Wi-Fi connectivity. He also needs to be able to make phone calls... some of which might be rather lengthy. About 20 miles before the Canadian border, we realized that phone service would be from \$.69 to \$3.00 a minute. That could get pretty pricey, so we needed to find a place to stay on the USA side of the border... but we had maybe 3 exits left before Canada... and there was nothing but trees to be seen. I mean... no traffic... no poles and wires... no lights for the roads... just trees (which by the way are starting to show the shades of fall).

The next to last exit had a barely visible icon with a bed and knife and fork on it so we got off. Found a really quaint little mom & pop type restaurant and motel there. We arrived at 6 pm and the restaurant (also motel office) closed at 7 pm. The fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants gods continue to smile upon us.

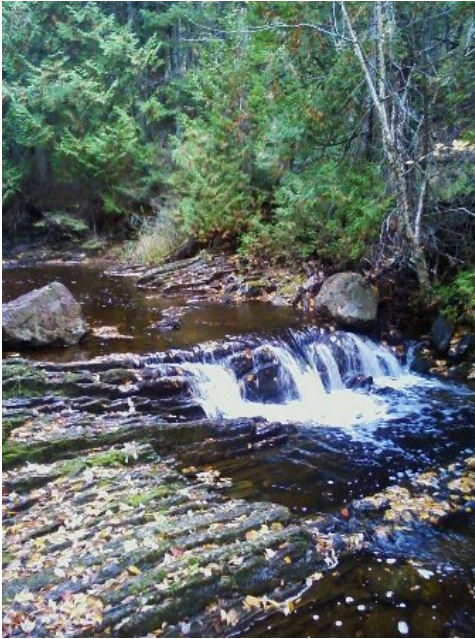


As the sign indicated... there were home-cooked meals there. I had meatloaf and Allen had Chicken Pot pie. The handful of other diners was all locals, and during their meals there was a lot of chatter and joking going on across the small dining area. All the patrons except us were obviously regulars. One couple (all diners were our age or better) replied in unison when we asked for a recommendation for desert. They both chimed in joyful harmony; "Brownbrook Raisin". It was sort of a brown sugar and caramel bread pudding. Allen had that... I opted for the apple crisp... both of us had our treats warmed... with a dollop of vanilla ice cream. We'll walk it off tomorrow.

Tomorrow we leave Maine and expect to drive in the rain and wind to arrive at or near Halifax. My only regret... we didn't stop in a sleepy Maine fishing village for our lobster sandwiches... oh well... we'll try again on the way back.

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Woke up to rain this morning.



I took Luna on a walk behind the motel and we came upon a sweet trail that went down a hill and meandered a bit along a stream with sweet little waterfalls. There are unusual mushrooms all over the place... maybe it's the wet warm weather... I don't know... but there are variations of yellow mushrooms everywhere.

Luna found a friend at the motel... there was a dog living there and they seemed to be interested in each other for a minute or two.



Just before entering Canada, we stopped in a small city called Holton. I left Luna's nice stainless steel dog dishes at the motel near Boston and did not want to continue to feed her out of Styrofoam and other improvised containers. We found a "we have everything here" store... it was sort of like stepping back in time... this place had everything... sort of a Mayberry USA Wal-Mart.

Waited in customs line for only a few minutes and after showing our passports, Luna's rabies tags, and answering a bunch of questions... we crossed the border. There are several tipoffs that you are in a different country that are apparent on the road. Firstly, for as far as the eye can see there are trees... no houses... no lights... no telephone poles... just trees. Secondly... everything turns metric. I know know that one kilometer is the equivalent of .6 miles. Thirdly... the road signs icons at exits are totally different than in the U.S.



Besides the Moose crossing signs... the signs for what's available at certain exits have some different icons. For example... and we're guessing as to what they mean... a silhouette of a soft boiled egg must mean breakfast... a hand holding a vase must mean gifts... a hiker, well hiking.

Every few exits had a question mark icon. That indicates a visitor's center. They were really useful, because once we entered Canada, we lost use of Allen's iPhone and all its magical apps. These folks had maps and recommendations of where to stop for hiking with Luna and all sorts of other useful info. Imagine that... humans... not machines to help!

The info booths were usually set up in kiosks in rest stop service areas. There's usually a kitschy statue in front of these areas.



So... we now think that we weren't so skilled at finding great hiking spots... they're hard to miss... they're all great. We hiked about 6 miles today on two different trails when the rain let up for a while.

We ended up in Saint John, New Brunswick. It's a port town on the west coast of the Bay of Fundy. This makes the third motel in as many nights... we're not feeling very rustic.



We found a Vietnamese restaurant (the Saigon Noodle) nearby and decided to give it a try.

It was a family owned place and all the patrons besides us were Vietnamese (good sign). It turned out to be an excellent place... the food was really authentic and plentiful.

We think that it's possible that after the restaurant closes, they pull out the floor mats and the family actually lives in the restaurant. I offer exhibit A... the following photos... as evidence.



Yes... there was a pile of toys right in the restaurant... just under the window to the kitchen where the food was delivered when the order was ready. Yes... the Saigon Noodle is has excellent food and a very nice family who probably live there.

The little kid was alternately watching Toy Story on the restaurant computer and playing with his toys under the shelves with piles of take-out containers.



Meanwhile, Luna has taken quite a shine to Allen. Today I caught them in bed together. I went out to the car to get something and when I returned... there was Allen working on his stupid iPhone and Luna is lying next to him in the bed. That little floozy!

Tomorrow we hope to see the beginning of the promised excellent weather we've been reading about... we figure that one night in a motel is the monetary equivalent of 5 nights at a campsite. We're running out of money... and to add insult to injury... all this rain equals mosquitoes. Nevertheless... tomorrow... CAMPING!
Nova Scotia Fall Color Extravaganza Journal
October 2, 2010

Woke up to rain AGAIN this morning. We were glad to get out of that rat trap we stayed in last night. We hit the road and headed for Fundy National Park.



We arrived around 11:30 am and the sky was just starting to clear. By the time we paid our entrance fee and located and reserved our campsite, the sun started to peek out from time to time. There's a tidal table that lists high and low tides for each day... today the low tide was around 1:15 pm and our plan was to hit the beach so we could walk around on the tidal plain when the water would be totally receded.



We found a trailhead entry point for the coastal trail which peeled off to the beach. Made a quick lunch and spent about two hours fooling around. We met a young marine biologist who was studying the snails and whelks that feed on the barnacles on the rocks strewn about everywhere. There was an interesting assortment of stuff revealed on the beach and we traipsed amongst it all for miles... pretty slippery and tenuous at times... my 5 fingered shoes got a good workout today.



The rocks revealed by the low tide were covered with barnacles... which in turn were overwhelmed by Whelks and snails... who ate the barnacles.



The variety of rocks and colors were striking... every color imaginable were present in every shape and form.



This was low tide... we set up a tower pile of rocks by the shoreline and an hour later looked to see if it was covered with water. We couldn't even find it... the tide comes in fast.



Huge mounds of seaweed clung to large rocks... waiting for the tide to come back in to so they could rejuvenate.



Luna went nuts running around and exploring all the textures and strange surfaces.



These shoes may look dopey... but they really were useful today!

We then went to Alma... barely a town... to get some groceries and maybe a lobster roll at one of the Lobster Shacks I've been craving. As fate would have it... we are in a two week period of Off-Lobster season... RATS!

There was a restaurant that serve lobster roll platters... and while it was made from frozen lobster and not fresh... they were still pretty damn good.

We did pick up a bottle of wine and an onion, some ground meat and a half dozen eggs.

Rocky Mountain Toast for breakfast... maybe some home fries.



Back to the campsite where we did a 3-stooges routine setting up the tent... but it's set up and we're ready to rough it (although "rough it" is a subjective term). There are a couple of structures about a quarter of a mile or so from our campsite where there's showers and toilets in one building and sinks and cast iron wood stoves in the other. That one also has electricity and get this... free Wi-Fi... yes that's right... free Wi-Fi. So... here we are... instead of sitting around a campfire... we're sitting around a picnic table typing on a computer while some fellow campers are doing their dishes and making a fire. Luna's sleeping on the floor.



I took her for another walk just before dusk and in Luna-like fashion... she decided to do her I-need-to-burn-energy thing and disappeared into the woods on a strange trail. I've learned not to concern myself anymore with this behavior of hers and sure enough... ten minutes later she came crashing out of the woods from nowhere and this time hung around with me for the duration of the hike... just as the sun set in a blaze of red and coral color.

We'll sleep well tonight, I think.

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Nova Scotia Fall Color Extravaganza Journal
October 3, 2010

Well... it worked!... We all slept well last night. The sky was amazing!... filled with stars... we could see the Milky Way and even recognized some constellations. The sleeping pad could have been a bit thicker, but as long as I slept mostly on my back, I was okay. We each had about 1/3 of the tent space and Luna's padded bed was by far the most luxurious.



Miraculously, no one had to get up to pee all night long... and that is indeed a miracle. Maybe the 43 degree temperature had something to do with it (not wanting to brave the cold to get up). At 5:30 A.M. we all decided it was time to get up and empty bladders and we reluctantly left the warmth of our womb-like sleeping bags. So... as daylight arrived we made our way to the cast iron stove room. There we stoked up a fire in one of the two stoves and prepared a breakfast and lunch to eat later in the day. We were soon joined by other campers... the same ones who gave us the evil eye the night before for using our computers in the very same room. Well... the nerve of them! Here we are cooking on a cast iron stove with a wood stoked fire... and there they were with their automatic coffee makers and portable propane gas stoves. I made sure they were aware of the discrepancy. Real nice folks, although a bit chatty... maybe too chatty.

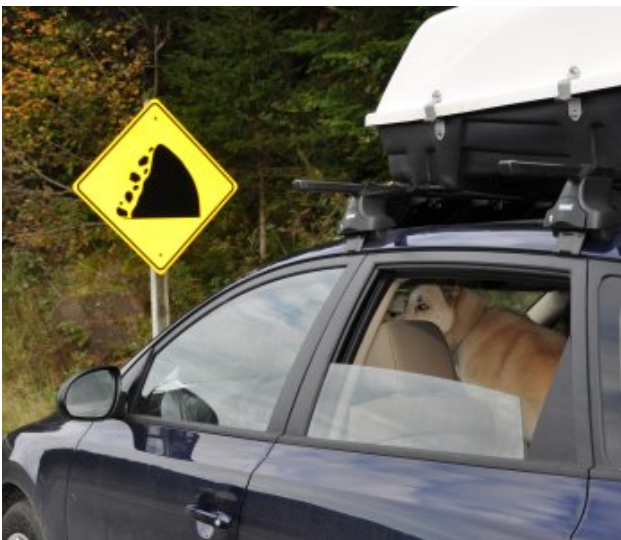


After breakfast we made our way to a trail that went past a lake. There Luna made friends with Sophie... she tried to get her to play, but alas... poor Sophie could not keep up with that crazy coyote.



We came back to camp to deposit Allen for a rest, and Luna and I set off on a more ambitious hike. We ended up on a trail that hit a sign that warned of a "strenuous" downhill trek ahead. Well, that wasn't going to stop us and about a mile and a half of steep downhill dodging of roots and rocks and water crossings, I realized that we were not going to go back the same way. Apparently they weren't kidding about the strenuous part. The trail ended at the main Park Information Office some 3.5 kilometers (this IS Canada, you know... kilos, not miles) and I figured we'd hitch a ride back with someone. So, after buying a candy bar to replenish my carbohydrates, we set out on the road back to our campsite... all steeply inclined upward. Now, I can understand a Lexus not stopping for a disheveled guy with a dog on the road... I can even forgive a Prius and certainly a motorcycle... but a Pickup Truck???? Come-on... what selfish schmucks! We had to walk all the way back to camp on that stupid road after being ignored by about 30 vehicles.

After returning, we immediately, we headed out again for Point Wolfe... another of the Fundy beaches.



On the way to Point Wolfe Beach, we stopped here (maybe a bad idea)...



... to take pictures of this. No... we didn't see Clint Eastwood nor Meryl Streep... but it was very pretty.

We had to get there right away because it was low tide. The water rushes in so fast after that. The water that comes rushing in at high tide, very quickly engulfs these enormous expanses of barren rocks and seaweed at low tide. This happens twice every day. There are tables that one can consult so as to arrive on these beaches at the right time... and more importantly...leave at the right time.



This was our first view of Point Wolfe... at low tide.



The path to the beach was mostly this kind of boardwalk stairway kind of thing.



Be careful, Luna... it looks dry and large now... but it will soon be all under water!



Allen, ever the scientist, placed piles of rocks to monitor how fast the tide waters come in... in a matter of minutes, all rocks placed were well under water... time to get out of there!

We then went to Alma again... that little town where we ate the night before. We heard that you could view the river reversing current as the tide rises in the bay. We had a bit of time to kill before that happened so we ate there again... then watched the river flow backwards.

One of these pictures was taken at 3 pm... at low tide. The other was taken 3 hours later. By 9 pm, the tide will have reached its highest level and the boats will be at dock level and the channel will be totally filled with water.

Tomorrow we will go about 40 miles north to Hopewell, where the rise in water is more dramatic (40 feet difference) and there are exposed pinnacles of rock in the water off the shore.



Low Tide - 3 P.M.



Mid Tide - 6 P.M.

This part of the country has astoundingly pristine trails and streams. The water is crystal clear and we no longer see the telltale bubbles that indicate some kind of impurities in the run-off. We've seen so many beautiful sights that they're starting to blur together. Here pics of some of them...



We continue to use technology to be *weather slaves* (as a fellow camper here put it). We will be allowing the weather radar maps determine what we will do next. Today was gorgeous, but tomorrow threatens rain... not only here... but essentially the entire northeast coastline... even Vermont... Argggh!

However... one bright spot... it looks like Prince Edward Island (just north of Nova Scotia) is forecast as having decent weather for the next few days. We will probably adjust our trip and go there next. There are supposed to be beautiful beaches there and once we cross the 10 mile long bridge to get there, we hope to hike (or in Luna's case) run along the ocean beach.

So... another night of hard ground under a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch foam pad beckons... in the morn... showers and laundry... then Hopewell for pinnacles and on to PEI... must now pray to the bladder gods for an uneventful night.

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Nova Scotia Fall Color Extravaganza Journal
October 4, 2010... morning

Another good night... Luna is perfectly mannered in the tent. She starts out lying next to me to get all loved up and then retreats to her luxuriously padded doggy bed in the executive suite part of the tent to sleep. Not a peep out of her until we rouse and unzip the door.

This morning we bought some more wood and went to the cast iron stove/Internet café room where we started a fire to get warm and made coffee and breakfast. We are now pretty much the only show in town here... Monday and everyone else is gone. Allen has to download some enormous file from Apple for the job he's working on, so while his computer is doing that, we are breaking down camp, doing laundry (separating whites from colors, of course) and showering while we have the chance.



These showers are dopey... I guess they don't want folks wasting water so they are set up like push buttons... the water stream lasts only 3 seconds and then you have to push again. The button turns to regulate hot and cold, but has no grips and is slippery when wet... which is all the time because you are in the shower. Anyway... despite the hassle... it feels great to be clean... ready to tackle the adventures of the new day!

The weather looks great for the next 3 days. We'll head to Hopewell to see the pinnacles... low tide is around 4 pm today and it's about a half hour away. That'll give us time to wrap things up and get there without a hassle. Then it's off to Prince Edward Island where we plan to set up camp and explore the beaches. It's about a 2 hour drive from Hopewell, so we'll probably be setting up camp in the dark... that should be a good story.

October 4, 2010... evening

We drove to Hopewell and arrived shortly after noon... by the way... it took us a little bit of time to realize that we are now in the Atlantic time zone. The car clock still reads Eastern Standard Time, but our technology tells us it's an hour later... it was confusing for a while. Anyway... we figured we get some lunch before going to Hopewell, but all the restaurants were closed. A woman at a nearby motel/restaurant told us that this is off-season and there were no places to eat in the area... outside of the park. Furthermore, we were told that next weekend is the Canadian Thanksgiving... not sure how that will affect us... but I'm sure it will somehow.

So we entered the park... and it's just like any other big deal natural treasure... all gussied up with gift shop and restaurant and rules and regulations and all the trappings I was hoping to avoid because I'm traveling with Luna. How am I going to let her off leash with a zillion rangers watching everyone?

Happily, the park was spectacular enough to make it worthwhile. Hopewell Rocks are located near the narrowest and uppermost part of Fundy Bay... where the difference between high and low tides is something like 38 feet (that's almost 13 meters for you metric fans). The effect that has in this area is that there are pinnacles of eroded rock that form wondrously precarious towers and archways... many with pine trees growing surrealistically on top of them. We got to a rather remote part of the beach (there are warnings everywhere regarding what time to get off the beach so you don't get stranded), and there we came across one of the guides/rangers. I asked her; "Hypothetically, if I asked you if I could let my dog run around, might you say yes?" She sort of smiled and said she sympathized with me, but she couldn't agree to such a thing. Then she said; "However, I'm about to leave this area now, and if she were to run around, I wouldn't see it". So Luna got to run around Hopewell Rocks.



The scale of these things is remarkable. The bottom of the mushroom cap shapes indicate the water level when the tide comes in.



Over time these trees were stranded by the eroding rock around them and they remain... impossibly perched hundreds of feet in the air.



It's like Natural Arches east... only instead of desert... beach.



It's just a question of time before these things erode to a point where they topple over.



This is the nice ranger who "turned her back" on us so Luna could have fun off leash.



Not only did that crazy coyote break rules by running around off leash... she also wandered into areas that are off limits.

On the way back up the steps (92 steps, as a German couple informed us while out of breath), I wondered how I was going to wash off the sticky yucky red claylike mud that were up Luna's legs and feet and covering my 5-fingered shoe toes. Then... as if a genie was answering one of my wishes, there we saw a showering station with multiple hoses and sprinkler attachments. I guess we're not the first to get muddy feet.

By now it was after 3 pm and we had a 2 ½ hour drive to get to Prince Edward Island. If we were going to set up camp while it was still light... we'd better hurry. After an hour or so, we were both fading and we decided that rather than overdo this "camping thing", we'd find a motel for tonight and then find a campsite for

tomorrow in a more leisurely fashion. We crossed the bridge into PEI (8.5 mile long bridge) around 6:30 pm and stopped at the ? (Information) center. This bridge is FREE getting in and \$42.50 getting out. At that price, we may stay.

Found a motel with Internet access (sort of) and went to a local beach to let Luna run around a bit before dinner. We got to the beach in time for a really good sunset.



Then we went to a restaurant in really big hotel and had fresh lobster dinners... beats the grilled cheese we were planning on suffering over a dirty fire pit in the cold.

Got back to the room and as fate would have it... Allen's Mac cannot connect to the Internet using the connection. Alright... I know the two of us are like Geek squared and we're on the stupid computer every night... but I knew going in that Allen would be working... and I want to continue to journal... if I don't write it down at the end of each day... I won't remember anything. So, being the nerd we are we came up with a solution... Luna and I dropped Allen off at the big hotel with the restaurant so could sit in the card room and work using the hotels Wi-Fi and Luna and I would go back to the motel so I can work on this journal. Since we have no phone access to each other, Allen will IM or e-mail me when he is done and wants to be picked up. I realize that most people think that's a nutty way to do a vacation... but adventure takes many forms.

What little we've seen of PEI so far is very nice and tomorrow we will go to the park campground, which has beach and forest trails. As it is off-season, we expect to have the place pretty much to ourselves. We were also told that while dogs normally aren't allowed on the beach, during the off-season, there are no rangers and no one really cares anyway. So Luna will have a good time of it, I'm sure.

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We woke up and drove to check out our prospective campground. It's on a national park on the north shore in the middle of the island. Prince Edward Island is free to get into and costs \$42.50 to leave by bridge, or more by ferry or plane. Confederation Bridge is 8½ mile long and connects to New Brunswick.



The island itself is very nice... it would take about 4 hours to drive from one side to the other. We surmise that it's a moderately upscale community. There are lots of farmland and many sweet vistas.



This house was picturesque... but not at all indicative of the typical house on the island. Most were lacking in any particular style... nothing too fancy... typical upscale suburban neighborhood houses. But lots and lots of farmland and gently rolling hills. Charlottetown, the biggest city, had a college town feel to it. No less than 3 coffee shops on the main block. There was Internet access in the coffee shops and hotels and sort of access in the motels but none at the campground. We're a bit spoiled now, I think.

The beach... while nothing like the New Jersey Shore... surrounds the island and is maybe 20 – 40 feet wide. The mud is red and there are sand and dunes.



Allen took a walk along the beach while Luna and I did a 3½ mile hike on a pine forest trail in the park. The hike was pleasant enough... but except for a little swamp area, pretty much the same pine tree lined trail the whole way. I spent most of that hike looking at Luna's ass. There was only one other pair of people at the entire campground... Lance and his girlfriend... they'd been there for 2 days. The office was closed and there was a self-serve envelope for registration and payment. We decided to go to Charlettetown to get food and supplies and then come back to register.



We came to a startling realization while having coffee in Charlottetown... if Allen had to be back in New York by Friday... I would have to drive practically non-stop by myself to make the deadline. We were 1,400 miles away... that's almost like half way from New York to California. Since Allen can't drive standard shift and Luna has no attention span for concentrating on the road, that meant all me. I simply can't do it... and that's not the relaxing trip I envisioned. So... we did some techno-info-gathering and decided to drive to Bangor, Maine where Allen can take a Greyhound Bus to Boston and connect to another to New York. Amazingly, Greyhound now offers Internet connectivity on their busses.

We found a very nice motel about an hour from Bangor in a very out-or-the-way location. It's like a little lodge and all over the pine hewn walls are completed jigsaw puzzles... the kind that are in the shape of something...

like a giant Bear shape comprised of a woodland scene... stuff like that. It is the least expensive place we've stayed in... and also by far the nicest... go figure.



I woke up this morning and took Luna out for a little walk. There are the most beautiful sunrises and sunsets around here... the air is so crisp and clear.



We drove an hour to the Bangor Greyhound Bus station and dropped Allen off. I'm sad at his departure... we've been together for over a week now and I've enjoyed every second of his company. He wasn't gone 15

seconds when Luna jumped up front into his seat and muttered something in that guttural voice of hers... I could swear she said; "Shotgun!"

Luna and I headed for Acadia National Park. I inquired at the Information Center about 2 things... excellent secluded trails... and excellent lobster rolls- with REAL chunks, not that seafood salad crap I had in Fundy Bay. She provided me the info I needed and a trail map, and we set off.



The trail started out like a wide gravel road. Every now and then there were bicyclists or other hikers and I was beginning to despair that this was another instance of the park system making things too tourist friendly. Then we hit the break-off for trails up the mountain. There are several mountains in Acadia and we started up a trail to Sargent Mountain. All fears of namby-pamby-ness disappeared... the trails in Acadia are amazing! There are alternating stretches of tangled roots and large rocks to navigate.



All marked with blue blazes... sometimes on rocks... and whenever there is a junction point, there are rustic wooden signposts pointing the way.



It's a good thing too, because the trails are often steep and covered with huge rocks and roots. It's easy to lose track of them... especially when meandering back and forth along amazingly clear brooks and little waterfalls. I felt like any minute I'd come across Gimlet or Legolas or some other middle earth inhabitant... each turn revealed a scene more beautiful than the last. It was overcast and about 58 degrees... very comfortable for hiking. As we neared the peak, the terrain changed dramatically... brightly colored patches of shrubs and vast expanses of smooth rocks.



But, when we reached the peak of Sargent Mountain, it felt like we were in Patagonia... the wind was whipping around so hard that I thought it would blow us off the mountain. In fact... my map got blown out of my back pocket and I couldn't find it.

There were a couple of guys hiking up there and they had a map. While one of them blocked the wind... the other unfolded his map and while it flapped like a flag in a hurricane he showed me where we were and helped me determine a route that would eventually take us back to the vicinity where I thought the car was parked.

We took turns taking pictures of each other on the mountain top and they went there way and Luna and I went ours.

With my crappy short-term memory, I was certain that we would be having an adventure getting back.

Near the peaks there are these little Stonehenge-like piles of rocks... they're called cairns, and some have been there for hundreds of years. Along with the blue blazes on the rock surfaces, they help mark the trail... very useful and I wouldn't have known which way to go without them.





It turns out that going down is easier, but not faster than going up. It's pretty steep going up and down... but especially so a quarter of a mile or so near the peak. On the way we saw a signpost for Gilmore Peak and we diverted for a while to see that view as well.

The route we took down was even more interesting than the trail we took up. It followed a crystal clear stream that erupted into waterfalls every 20 yards or so. In some places the trail hugged rocky outcrops that skirted twists and turns in the cascading water. Luna had no trouble quenching her thirst on our 3½-hour traipse. She took the opportunity to take little swims in some of the deeper pools that collected in rock depressions.

Some parts of the trail were perpetually swampy and we crossed an interesting variety of wood hewn bridges.





Since there was no more Allen... and since we were pretty much all alone on the trail... I had to use the self-timer on my camera to take pictures of myself on this magnificent trail.



Of course, we did get a bit lost on the way back... but logic and dumb luck won out in the end and after a couple of retraces, we managed to find the parking lot with our car in it. By then I was craving that lobster roll and we drove to a part of the island that is not a part of the park called Bar Harbor. It's a touristy-kitschy-DisneyWorld/Gatlinburg-type place, but that's where the food is.

Right now, Luna is sleeping in the car and the rain has started. I just finished a delicious lobster roll and maybe the best piece of blueberry pie I ever had. As I nurse my cup of coffee I'm writing this entry.



This is what a REAL lobster roll looks like!



Bar Harbor



In the restaurant I was able to latch on to a weak but working Wi-Fi signal from the hotel across the street. I saw that the rain would be breaking in the morning and not pick up again until the evening. I was beat from the hike and want to do some more hiking, so we found a cheapo motel in the park and we'll see what kind of escapades await us tomorrow.

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~~Nova Scotia~~ Fall Color Extravaganza Journal
October 7, 2010

Okay... it's no longer the Nova Scotia Fall Color Extravaganza... just the Fall Color Extravaganza. We never did make it to Nova Scotia.

Last night on the Hospital-style-TV-high-on-the-ceiling I watched Mythbusters. They were trying to trick bloodhounds and drug sniffing dogs. They couldn't. They say that a third of a dog's brain is dedicated to smell and that virtually any dog can be trained to sniff for drugs or some other substance. I think that's why Luna never gets lost... either that, or I have a particularly strong scent.

This morning we cruised the island and made a couple of stops at various rocky outcrops of shoreline.



The weather was overcast, but in the high fifties and looking promising. At Otter Point we bumped into a young couple camping at the Black Forest campground in the park.



I decided to give it a shot... I mean... here we are... a day away from glorious color and maybe weather too. So... we set up camp and for good measure I strung an extra tarp over the tent. I used thin nylon string and I hope I don't live to regret that.

It's 4 pm now and we haven't been back to the campground since around noon... it's been raining for the last hour or so.

After setting up camp, we headed towards the "quiet" side of the park. The colors are just about starting to come in fully and this weekend, so will the tourists. The owner of the cheapo motel we stayed in told me that they were booked full this weekend. We found an out-of-the way trail to Beech Mountain and it was terrific.



Along the way were many treasures to be seen... impossible to do justice to the grandeur in images alone.



The rain started just after we reached the peak. The trail is loaded with large granite rocks and they can be quite slippery when wet. That made for a return trip down the mountain a slow and careful journey... at least for me. Luna didn't seem to be affected in the least and bounded and ran the whole way and then some. She seems to get more energized the longer we hike. The good news is that she then sleeps like a rock in the car while I get something to eat. I slipped several times, even though I was very careful... nothing of consequence and all of my electronics and I are intact.

When we entered the park yesterday, a ranger recommended a place called "Manly Meats". That's where I am now... writing this journal entry and checking weather and such. There's no Internet connectivity at the campsite (as there shouldn't be), so this one won't get out for a day or two... no time to process images. I had their special of the day... "Surf 'n Squeal"... Lobster and Ribs. I pulled the meat off of most of the ribs and that will be a treat for Luna tonight. The lobster was delicious.

I read in one of those motel pamphlets that the colonialists fed their workers mostly lobster when they were building the area. The workers would complain that they were sick of having it every day. Not me... so far, anyway.

It's 5 pm now and the sun is threatening to peek through the clouds... it stopped raining. It's time for a short hike before returning to the campsite and hopefully a dry tent.

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Fall Color Extravaganza Journal
October 8, 2010

So... last evening around 5:30 p.m. we found a trail up a not too tall mountain and off we went. It was starting to get a bit dark, so I brought a flashlight in my knapsack. My cell phone charge was low, so I had it charging in the car... consequentially, I forgot to bring it with me. I only mention this because it's dumb to go hiking without another human in the dark up a mountain with a dog and not have a cell phone with you (of course it's iffy if there is a signal in the woods.)

Anyway... it was easy going at first and then the trail started to do that big granite boulder thing... only this time, with a lot of wetness because of the rain earlier today. So... we got to what I thought was the top, but my judgment may have been tainted by the fact that it was starting to get dark... and if it's dark on the top of the mountain... it's REALLY dark on the trail. Of course... crazy Luna decides to disappear. She gets wind of a critter's scent and goes exploring... she always comes back, but the time varies... and this was not a situation where it would be convenient to wait. I did my whistle thing and my calling thing and my loud whistle thing... no Luna. Just when I was pondering spending the night on the mountain... there comes Luna... happy as a clam, trotting towards me as if we had all day to f*ck around.

We started back down and it was indeed dark... not so dark that I needed to take out my flashlight yet... but dark. It was about a mile down and there were a lot of steep, rocky and sometimes wet and slippery spots to navigate. A couple of non-incident slips and we managed to get to the lower easier trails... but by now it was nearing total darkness. Of course we got turned around and after walking a while on what I thought was the trail to the long wooden bridge over the wetlands, I realized that I was lost. Not only that... Luna decided to disappear again. A couple of minutes later, I caught sight of that elusive white ghost through the woods and I went off trail to go to her... she was just standing there.



When I got to her, she was standing on the wooden bridge. I had to turn my flashlight on to find where the trail picked up again after crossing a road, but beyond that, we were able to get back to the car unscathed.

I am now rewarding myself for my stupidity and bravery with another slice of that delicious blueberry pie.

I'm having fun.

Well, the tent was bone dry and without Allen... very roomy... AND... I had 2 skinny mats to sleep on instead of one.



We both slept very well and awoke refreshed to a sunny day. I was planning on breaking camp and then taking a hike and start the trip to New York. While I was reorganizing the car and putting things away, I decided to stay another day, so I left the tent set up.

It's Columbus Day weekend and everything is booked solid... including the camp ground, so it looks like this will be the last night. We went to the "quiet side" of the park again and hiked Acadia Mountain and took a trail from there to Saint Sauveur Mountain. The hiking was nothing short of astounding. Challenging, interesting, beautiful... there are no clunkers in Acadia. The sun was a big plus. Luna is the perfect hiking companion. It's no fluke... she regularly finds the correct path when I am floundering around looking for the blue blazes.



We bumped into an Armenian guy named Garo on the trail between mountains. Despite the fact that he likes Ron Paul, we had enough in common to chat and keep each other company as we completed the last 3 miles or so of our hike. He is a dead ringer for a guy I used to work with named Bob Hohman... so much so that when I first saw him I almost blurted out; "Bob! What are you doing here?"

Learning from yesterday, I decided not to eat and then do a second hike. Instead, we stopped at a market and I picked up a package of turkey slices and mixed it with a big bowl of dog food. Luna wolfed it all down... uncharacteristic of her. These 3-hour hikes really work up her appetite. Normally on a long hike I have to bring water for her. Not here... there are so many crystal clear rivulets and puddles of water from all the rain we've been having. She stops to drink practically anytime she wants to.



After Luna ate, we drove to a more populous part of the park and hiked to mountains called North Bubble and its neighbor Carson's Nubble. Redundantly... it was another fabulous hike. The fall colors are just approaching peak now and the payoff views rewarding each grueling ascent make my heart stop



On the way down the trail started to level off a bit as we approached Eagle Lake. We did 6 hours of hiking today and I was really grateful for the change in terrain. We walked through a corridor of pine trees with a soft cushiony path made of layers and layers of pine needles. Just when I was thinking; "I can do the last 2 miles of this stuff!" Then we came to the trail that edged Eagle Lake. The pine forest continued and Luna took the opportunity to enter the deep water just off trail and swim around in circles a bit. When she came out of the water, she did that crazed running around she does after she gets wet. It was very funny to watch her rip up and down the trail, jumping over roots and making cartoon-like screeching changes of direction.



It seems like the more we hike, the more energized she gets. I know it's taking a toll on her though... as soon as we returned to the car and I fed her the last of the turkey and more dog food, she fell unconscious on her bed in the back seat.



Anyway... right after I was looking forward to an easy return trip, we hit a ¾ mile stretch of something that I cannot accurately classify as a trail... it was more like someone dropped a gigantic bag of gigantic boulders in a line along the lake's edge. The only way I knew it was the "trail" is that every now and then there were faded blue blazes on the rocks.

Also... Luna went bounding away down the helter-skelter arrangement of rocks with me carefully struggling behind. As is her way, every now and then I would see her head peeking at me from over a boulder... she comes back to check up on where I am and to see if she's on the desired path.



I've been pretty much without Internet connectivity and cell phone signal for a couple of days now... that's not such a bad thing really. Right now I'm sitting in Stewman's, a sweet, quaint dockside restaurant on the water. There's no Wi-Fi, but there is electricity, so I'm writing my journal while I nurse a cup of decaf... after I finished my Lobster Alfredo and of course... blueberry pie a-la-mode.

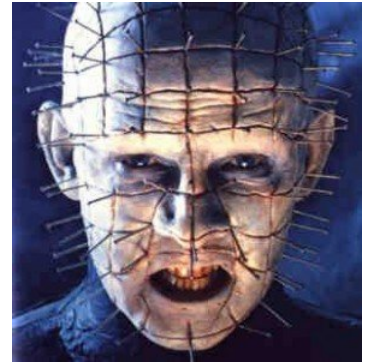
We'll head back to camp now... it's 7:30 pm and pitch dark. It's a 20-minute drive from here to the campsite and we'll cash in for the night and try to get on the road early tomorrow morning. I think I'm hiked out for a while... overdosed on beauty.



October 10, 2010

It had to happen sooner or later... today disaster struck.

It's been so incredibly nice In Acadia, we stayed for 3 days. I was booted out this morning because even the tent campsites are booked solid this holiday weekend. There's no cell phone service and no Internet, so I'd go to town and drive around parking in front of motels until I get a Wi-Fi signal. I've been writing my journal entries, but will have to wait until I am somewhere where I'm not surreptitiously lurking outside a motel to post. I could barely check e-mail before losing signal. Anyway... this morning after breaking camp and packing up to head south, Luna and I decided to take one more excellent hike.



And so it was... we drove again to the quiet side of the Island (the park is getting quite crowded now and it's just as well that we are leaving... nature and this kind of crowd don't mix well for me.) We were having a lovely time... another in a series of great hikes. This one was to the top of a mountain and then along a ridge trail that skirts a bay, back up to another smaller mountain, and then down to the car and goodbye Acadia. When we hit the trail along the bay, it turned into something that didn't even remotely resemble a trail. Imagine a gigantic bag full of gigantic boulders that is dumped along the edge of the bay at the base of cliffs of even bigger boulders. Every so often there's a faded blue blaze... that's the "trail". We got to a place where it angled up this great smooth granite surface along the cliff. Straight ahead were more of those ridiculous boulders at the shoreline. Well at that point, Luna ambles off into the rocks by the shore. I figure that she'll be back in a few minutes, so I decide to wait for her on the smooth angled surface. About 5 minutes later I hear barking. That usually means that Luna has cornered a critter. I try to make my way to wherever she is, but cannot navigate the jumble of rocks, so I go back to the smooth surface to wait for her return. It's sunny on where I am and I set my camera timer and take a couple of pictures of myself to kill the time.

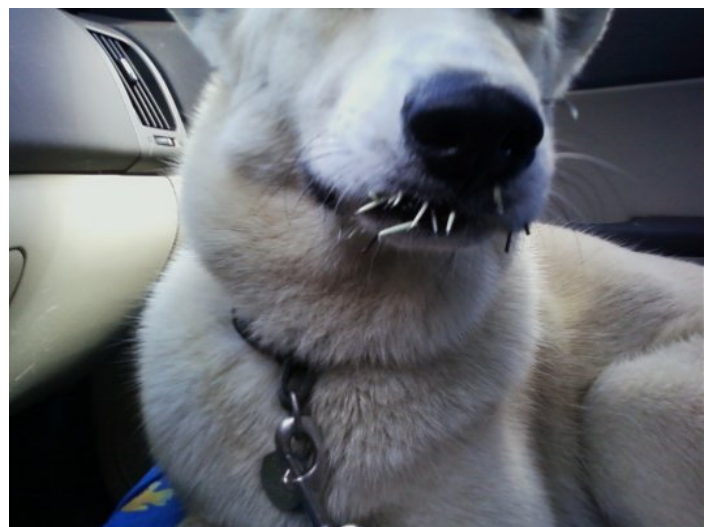
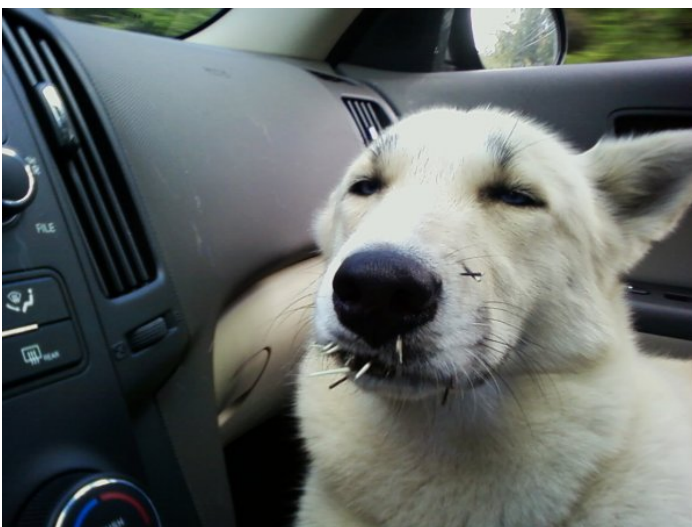
Then I just sit in the sun and reflect on the beauty around me. I saw that I was getting a signal on my cell phone, so I called my friend Jo Ann and while I was telling her about how peaceful and beautiful everything was, there comes Luna climbing up to where I am and I see that once again she has been swimming... her fur is all spiky. But as she gets closer, something doesn't look quite right... she has porcupine quills sticking out all over her lower face. They're in her nose, upper and lower lips, mouth, cheeks and all over her front paws (thankfully none in or around her eyes.)



I try the best I can to pull the quills out, but they are barbed on the end and there are so many of them that I cannot do it... especially not on a smooth cliff with a crying struggling dog. Rather than die, I pull as many as I can out of her paws, leaving her face looking like Pinhead in "Hellraiser." I put her on her leash and now face the impossible task of getting her off the mountain.



This path would be challenging under the best conditions... but with a dog in pain on a leash with quills sticking out of her paws and face... it was ridiculous. Nevertheless, we must do what we must do. We manage to navigate the boulders, the uphill climb of rocks and roots, the narrow bridges over wet muddy areas and 3/4 of a mile later we come to a gravel road. The trail continued on the other side of the road, but I know it's going to take us up the smaller mountain before leading us to the parking area. I make a calculated reckoning... I have a pretty good woods sense and I guessed the road would take us to the parking area while bypassing another trek up the mountain. And so it did. A passing hiking native told us of a nearby vet and I hustled the 15-minute drive over there. It was closed. I called the emergency number on the door, only to get someone in Ohio. I went to a nearby store to get the area code and tried again. The voice at the other end of the line told me the emergency vet they use was 50 miles away and off island. I asked if there were any other vets on the island and she told me there was... in Bar Harbor... about 30 minutes away. I called and they were there... I got there as fast as I could with all the goddamned holiday traffic.



We arrived at 12:45 am. The vet was to close at 1:00 pm. When I took her in, the vet said; "Oh, that's not so bad". He further told me that quilled dogs are the most common emergency and he sees it all the time. He also said that he'd stay open for another half hour and I could pick her up then. While I waited, I spoke with several people and ALL of them had dogs that were quilled stories to tell. When I picked her up, I noticed she was limping. I checked and I felt a quill in her paw. I told the vet and he came out with a hemostat and pulled it out to a squeal of pain from Luna and a spurt of blood from her paw. For the record, "not so bad" plus antibiotics and pain killer tablets cost \$240 (cheap, if you ask me). We then started the journey south. Luna slept in a drugged slumber on her big bed in the back seat. I stopped to give her a walk and bit of water, and I noticed she was still limping, obviously in pain. I checked and found another quill. I tried to remove it with my fingernails and the tweezers in my Swiss Army knife, but couldn't get a good grip. Now I had to find a pair of hemostats. I haven't seen them since my pot-smoking days many years ago, but I had to find something to pull that thing out of her with. I continued the drive until I got to a town with a mall strip. I went to a drug store and Walmart... no hemostats. I looked up a medical supply store... but they were closed. I found a hospital, but their pharmacy was also closed. So I McGuyvered it... I went to a hardware store and bought a pair of curved needle nosed pliers and a magnifying glass.



I stopped to give her pain and antibiotic pills mixed in with some shaved turkey meat and Bavarian ham I bought earlier in a market. She wolfed it all down and I figured I'd drive for a while and then get a motel and don my surgical mask. We got off the highway around 7 pm and got on route 1 going south looking for a motel. We stopped at over a dozen of them and all were booked for the long weekend. I even tried to get a room at a biker motel/campground/bar... but they were also booked full. After 45 minutes I decided I'd get back on the turnpike and drive as far as I could... maybe all the way to New York. I was sick about Luna having that stupid quill in her. About a mile away from the turnpike turnoff, I came across a motel with that ever-elusive "vacancy" light turned on... not "no-vacancy" or "sorry" like all the others...

... but "VACANCY". I pulled in and the nicest lady gave us a room and ran out to the car to fawn over my drugged dog. Get settled in to a pretty nice room at a pretty good price and turned on all the operating lights I could find, took off my outer shirt, scrubbed and grabbed my surgical hardware pliers and magnifying glass. I found 4 more quills... mostly around her nails and pads and with some difficulty and complaining from Luna... managed to get them all out. There was blood and tears and grateful licks for me, and her wounds afterwards. I checked and rechecked and will continue to observe and check in the coming days... but she seems all right now. I gave her the rest of the Bavarian ham and she is now conked out on the bed as I write this.

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October 11, 2010

We opted to take Route 1 for about a 60 mile stretch along the coast instead of the turnpike and that was a good decision. The colors in that part of Maine were in full glory and driving through the little coastal towns was fun. It was touristy to be sure, but very quaint and picturesque. We stopped at a harbor side lobster shack and I finally got my authentic lobster roll... it had a whole freshly cooked lobster chopped up into large chunks and looked spectacular. I think it tasted good too, but I can't be sure... I'm sort of numb to lobster by now.



While waiting for the food, I walked Luna around a bit and she was limping and biting at one of her paws. Sure enough... another quill. I pulled it out there in the parking lot, using the hardware I bought. Eventually we got to the turnpike and since Allen and his iPhone were not with us to find a place to walk, I had to rely on my very unpredictable Garmin to find a State park. Troy (my Garmin) immediately found a dozen or so. I selected one called Silver Lake... mostly because it indicated that it was 30 miles away in a southwest direction from where I was. I knew that the highway was headed in that direction, so I hoped that I could go to the park and then pick up the highway again later on. Troy told me that I should exit in 12 miles, so I figured... okay, 18 miles to a state park is reasonable, so we placed our fate in his hands. Well, he took us through 60 miles of winding back roads and tiny towns and the drive was absolutely charming. We arrived at the park and there was a big sign on the parking lot that said; "NO PETS". I thought to myself; "that's okay, it was a lovely drive... I'll find somewhere on the way back to walk Luna". We drove just past the park to a gravel shoulder in the road to make a u-turn and I noticed a blue blaze on a tree nearby in the woods. Sure enough... a trail! Maybe it was part of the state park and maybe it wasn't... I didn't care... we took a walk.



It was a perfect trail for a doggy with sore paws... a wide path covered with soft pine needles that ran along the length of a long narrow body of water covered with lily pads. We went about 15 minutes when I saw Luna limping a bit so I decided to turn back to the car... enough exercise. Then she laid down on the path and started

biting at her paws... damn it!... 2 more quills. I got her back to the car and set up a triage in the back seat. She is very brave and trusting and now knows to lie still while I work on her... even though it is a painful ordeal. After about 15 minutes I was able to get both quills out.

We made it to New York without incident and after a couple of short "parking lot" traffic jams arrived at Allen's house around 4:30 p.m. Allen and I took Luna on a walk in Prospect Park and Luna showed us that she had yet another quill in one of her paws. These quills are broken off in her skin and only a little nub sticks out. You can't see them because of her fur... must feel them with your finger. Often they are on an angle so you have to rub the correct direction to detect them. Then, the fur around the area must be removed to see the tiny thing sticking out and then it must be grabbed and pulled on. I didn't have my hardware with me, so I used my Swiss army knife tweezers and after about 5 minutes of probing and pulling, got it out. Even though just a tiny tip is showing, when it's pulled out the quill piece is almost an inch long.

I'm now trying to coordinate visits with long lost friends and my brother while I'm in town. It's tricky trying to get it all together at such short notice... I didn't know when I'd be coming to town... and people have busy lives and schedules. I must balance the desire to see everyone with the fact that I've got an injured dog in tow and the abominable traffic that accompanies every trip to anywhere in the city. I want to remain relaxed and comfortable and not succumb to the crazy stress of running around trying to do everything.

We slept well and I'm doing laundry now... long overdue. This morning when I woke up, Luna was pawing at her face a bit. I pulled out an inch long quill from her chin. When will this end?

When we get back to Ohio I'm going to have Dr. Bob look at her.

October 12, 2010

Today we made the mistake of going to New York City by car. Mary (Allen's significant mate) has a loft apartment that is literally right next to ground zero. She was disallowed access to her home for a year and a half after that catastrophe. Allen wanted to show me the new construction which is now well under way. Rather than go over every detail... I'll highlight the standout events of the day...

- Went up to the 8th floor to see Mary's place and while I was talking to Mary, the door was open. Next thing I know... no Luna. I walked all the way down to the first floor and back up looking for her... and it turned out she went upstairs instead.
- An old camp friend, John Kalish, went out of his way (literally... he accidentally took a train from uptown Manhattan to Brooklyn instead of downtown where I was) to see us. We had a nice walk and talk by Battery Park with a perfect view of the Statue of Liberty in the background. There are signs all over Battery Park that say: "KEEP DOGS OFF GRASS!"
- Went to see Allen uptown at his beautiful, but now defunct office and dropped John off near his home. Allen and I drove back to Brooklyn and all the driving, expense, traffic, one-way streets, people in every place imaginable doing everything unpredictably... was starting to get to me. I mean, here I was... coming off of a couple of weeks of nirvana-like communing with nature and I'm in some kind of quiet, peaceful Zen zone... and now this bullshit!
- I visited brother in Staten Island and spend the night before tracking down some other old acquaintances who weren't available until later in the week. Well, I took the wrong turn getting on the Belt Parkway (A.K.A. sometimes as the Belt Parking Lot) and hit nightmare traffic. Finally got off. That's when I decided that I was done with New York... having a car and an injured dog is no way to do New York.

- But it wasn't done yet... I went back to Allen's to get the rest of my stuff because I wouldn't be returning after all. Of course that means finding a parking spot or double parking on a two way street really meant for one way traffic. Go loaded up... hugged Allen and made our apologies and goodbyes... and left to once again try to get the right turn onto the Belt Parkway to head towards the Verrazano Bridge and Bro Howie in Staten Island. Well, I managed to make a DIFFERENT wrong turn on a very busy street in Brooklyn... but in a rare opening in traffic both ways, I decided to make a quick U-Turn. That was a bad move, because as I whipped the car around... Luna went flying out of the window onto the street. The other assholes on the road just honked at me as I stopped to get out of the car to rescue her before she was run down. I did... and now... it was Xanax time.

October 12, 2010

Got to Howie's... watched the Jet game with him (actually worked on my journal while he watched the Jet game)... slept well... helped take down blinds (Howie and Gloria were getting new windows put in that day)... bid them farewell with an invite to come to Ohio sometime soon... and left.

We drove to the New Jersey/Pennsylvania border and stopped just before the Delaware Water Gap to hike a few miles on that portion of the Appalachian Trail. That was just what we both needed. This was Luna's first excursion hike since her "accident" and I managed to rediscover Nirvana.



The colors on the trip home were gorgeous, but even the pretty fall colors could not mask the tedious 310 mile trip through the length of Pennsylvania on I-80... I've done it over a hundred times.

October 13, 2010

Slept well and took Luna to Dr. Bob this morning. I've been regularly pulling out quills (as of this writing... a total of 15 since the vet in Bar Harbor "got them all"). There was one that I thought was buried in what may be an infected swollen spot on her paw. Bob couldn't get that one, but he pulled another one out and told me that quills will be working their way to the surface and I shouldn't be surprised if I am still pulling them out a year later. He said we should finish the antibiotics we got in Bar Harbor and let him know if there is an infection... other than that... there was nothing else to do about it. I took Luna on a nice long hike in Strongsville, got home, cleaned out the car, removed another quill, and just finished this journal.

I'm considering a winter hiking/camping trek. This time we'll be going south... we want to avoid porcupines. Maybe we'll try our luck with alligators.

EPILOGUE (October 14, 2010)

Today I picked up a stuffed porcupine toy for Luna...



...it took her 53 seconds to rip its nose off and remove the squeaker and disembowel the poly-fill entrails.



POST EPILOGUE (October 25, 2010)

For several days, Luna has been periodically having sneezing jags... often followed by rubbing her snout with her paw. I figured fall leaf mold allergies or something. Then on a whim... I put her under my lighted magnifying glass (the one I use for fine detail art work) and looked into her nostril. There I saw a black dot on the soft tissue way back in that cavern. I took her to Dr. Bob and he put her under and pulled out a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long quill.