

CHAPTER ~~1~~ XI

DOWN EAST TO KATAHDIN

"Here was no man's garden, but the unhandseled globe"

H. D. Thoreau

In mid summer of 1968 I was suddenly free of all entanglements for the immediate future; I headed for Thoreau country in Maine with my kayak, my little old netting tent, camp kettles, sleeping bag, and a handful of candles as well as my typewriter and a supply of typing paper. I had intended to go directly up to the Katahdin area, Henry Thoreau's mountain, but on the way I learned that the State Park there was over-crowded. Instead, I went due east, out Rte. 9, to the Down East section of the State, where, not far inland from the coast, there were intriguingly underdeveloped areas in Washington County, north of Machias. Maybe I could go up to Katahdin later in the summer, when most of the campers had left to get back to school.

Thus, instead of heading due north, as originally planned, I made a right-angled turn to the east. It had been a hot, muggy day by the time I arrived late in the afternoon at a State Forest on the Machias River, where cooling airs off the riffing stream were most welcome. The small campground, which was on the south side of the two-lane road, was empty except for an older couple, who had a tent by a picnic table.

Knowing I wouldn't stay there more than one night, I just tied up the head end of my netting tent to a car door handle to keep it off my face. This I often did, rather than bother setting it up as a regular tent. I had invented this tent some time ago, to fit my needs when camping in warm Florida. It was an Army jungle warfare castoff, originally pup tent size but which I had enlarged enough to put a cot in it and be able to sit up in it to a folding table and type. I had sewn in a canvas floor to keep out any crawling beasties. The entrance was the most improvised of its anatomy, it never having had a proper doorway to start with. Normally it should have a zipper where two sides come together but, not liking zippers, which get caught at least convenient moments, I just rolled the two edges together and fastened them with clip clothespins. At first I had used a heavy canvas tent fly thrown over it for rain or privacy, but I was now graduated to a light-weight plastic fly. In Florida I had set the tent up on a platform, because I was staying several months. But on trips like this I did what was easiest. The tent itself didn't weigh much more than a pound and a half, and the plastic fly not much more. They could have been used for back-packing.

As I usually did, when tying it up to a car door handle, I put a small pad in first, on the ground over the canvas floor, then the sleeping bag on top of that. I had found this to be a comfortable way to sleep outdoors with the stars visible overhead, so long as I had privacy and it wasn't going to rain in the middle of the night. At this spot in Maine, the stars were out all night, and no other campers had come in. The next morning, when I was assembling my breakfast, the older couple came over to speak to me. They asked if I knew that you could get in to Cranberry Lake on a tote road less than half a mile back. I told them no, but had seen the Lake on the map and wondered if you could drive in to it. They said there was a

paper mill sign, saying travel at your own risk. It was ~~7~~ six miles in to Cranberry Lake; that sounded like what I had hoped to find.

It was a one-track road, through mostly balsam and fir forest, an even-aged stand of trees about twenty to twenty-five years old. Which meant that the area had been cut off a quarter century or so ago, and was almost ready to be harvested again for pulp. The drive was a bit more strain than I had anticipated. The car tracks were ruts in loose gravel, which had been worn down, forming a hump in the road center which could easily pull off a muffler. There were many blind curves. I kept expecting a logging truck to come screening around from behind dense undergrowth. I would be the one to have to move over or the truck would tilt from the raised road center if the truck driver tried to get out of the way. That could unsettle a load of logs and tip the whole thing over. If it tipped my way both my car and myself would be flattened.

The road had obviously been created by bulldozing shrubs and trees out of the way, much of the slash still lying on the edges of the roadway, making it impossible to pull off to the side in many places. The ground in this forest was virgin soil, in that it had never been farmed; it had grown only trees and ground cover since glacial times. The soil had been disturbed, here and there, by horses in the early days of logging, and in more recent years by heavy logging equipment. But never plowed.

There were many stones and boulders left on the soil surface by the glacier, some having worked their way to the surface by frost-heaving. Much of the ground, and fallen debris, and rocks, were covered with damp, green moss. It was almost impossible to walk comfortably over that forest floor, and it definitely was impossible for ordinary car wheels. If a truck came along there wasn't much place to go to get out of its way. Private cars, as the sign said, were present at their own risk. It paid to concentrate and move slowly.

Six miles is a long drive, when traveling on so primitive a forest one-track road, anticipating trouble any moment. But no truck or other vehicle came along. I didn't realize how tense I was until I saw brightness up ahead in the dark evergreen canopy. Suddenly I came out onto an open, circular-shaped wide terrace above a blue lake which I could see glinting through a narrow band of trees off to the left. The moment I saw the large clearing, surrounded by spruces, balsam, pines and hemlocks, I knew that I could live in nature here; it would be one of my Edens.

The large, open circular campground area was delineated by a row of end-to-end logs. The space inside the logs had been cleared down to bare soil; there was only a light covering of evergreen needles which had blown onto it. I knew this was to prevent fire from spreading from one of the fireplaces which dotted the area, which were loosely constructed of round, glacier-polished stones. ~~There were~~ This was too much out in the open for me. Much as I agreed with the fireplaces being ~~out~~ in the open, away from inflammable evergreen trees, I didn't want my tent out there, which to me would be the equivalent of sitting up your tent in someone's driveway.

I did wish that the campground were nearer the top of the small bluff which overlooked the lake. But I agreed with the arrangement, which implied there were rules to be observed, as so few campers have sufficient awareness of fire hazards, and of their bad littering manners.

There was no sign, however, limiting tents to the open area. I selected a small shady nook just inside the edge of the forest, where I could see that I would be above the southern edge of the lake. The soil was soft with millennia-deep humus, with a goodly top layer of as yet undecomposed evergreen needles. There were few sticks or other forest debris around, no doubt used up by campers for kindling and fuel. There were a few

rocks. This little wilderness home base under the Maine forest canopy, redolent not only of the tonic evergreen fragrances but with race-memory-stirrings of the primitives who were here in this spot when only the wind could be heard in the trees before motors shattered the stillness; where the sixty-five-million-year-old birds were innocent of the existence of men and heard only their own songs. As so often for me, when I'm in a wild spot where there are no humans in sight, I hear whisperings of my forebears beyond the dawn of history, rustling down the corridors of time. I was part of it then, in ceremonial time; they are in my very own double helix of genes.

I set up my little netting tent in a scattering of bracken fern, a species ubiquitous from Maine to Minnesota, where dewberry vines were running over a carpet of needles and among some soft tufts of grass ^{on} the edges of the clearing, taking advantage of the light in the broken canopy. This little private nook compensated for the communal clearing, which most people preferred because they had more interests in common than I, like ball games and rock music, but also in most cases they feel safer out in the open where wild beasties can't ~~be~~ approach unseen.

I placed a small square board on my camp stool, both of which I always take with me, and placed ^d my typewriter on the board. For a seat I rolled a small log over from a fireplace, left behind by someone, and put my car cushion on it. I spread my partly folded army blanket on the ground, and placed, books, papers and field glasses on it. I was instantly at home.

No millionaire in his estate house, no queen in her castle, could be more content or more comfortable than when I am living like this out in nature. For me, this is the kind of domicile which has been in my veins from way back beyond Leskey's Lucy. And this was the epitome of Thoreau's "simplicity." I wasn't polluting the air. I was not ~~on~~ on the limited natural resources. How strange, yet fortunate for what relatively little remains

of the planet's wild spots, that the majority of mankind ~~denies~~ this primitive inheritance. Fortunately, because if hordes of humans from the cities were to over-run the wild places there wouldn't be enough nooks to go around or to make such independence possible for individuals.

I couldn't stay put very long until I explored my immediate wilderness terrain. A rather clear, open area led down to the lake not far from my campsite. Walking down there I saw a shack which looked lived in for it was in good condition, there was a large gas cylinder out back, and a brooder-size chimney. But most telltale, there were two dish towels hanging on an improvised rope line. Being Monday, I sensed no one would be coming there until the week-end. There was a very small beach at the head of the lake just a few feet below the shack, so I adopted it temporarily.

I took off my sneakers and socks and went wading. The water was relatively warm and was a great treat for my toes. I stood at the water's edge, looking down the long corridor of the lake whose full dimensions were hidden by encroaching dense evergreen forest on both sides. No human was in sight; I couldn't see the far end of the lake. I felt like a cross between a woodland nymph and Eve in the unspoiled Garden. I was so ecstatic I felt that if I didn't hang onto my senses I would start levitating.

But I was soon firmly anchored to earth when I looked down at my bare legs and the crystal clear water and saw attached to me the huskiest-looking bloodsuckers I ever saw. Nature is not always geared to the liking of mankind. It was with some disappointment that I realized that the only way I could enjoy contact with Cranberry Lake water was to bring down a basin and washcloth.

Somehow, though I had often camped in wild places and knew better, I took a chance that evening on not locking up my food in the car for the night, just because I hadn't seen any droppings around. I did put

put everything up off the damp ground into the trunk of the car, but for some reason I couldn't remember later, I didn't close down the trunk lid. In the morning, my whole new loaf ~~f~~ of unopened bread had disappeared; also an unopened package of hermits, a partially eaten package of cheese, and, to my puzzlement, a bag of potatoes. I'd never had potatoes disturbed before.

I walked around the perimeter of the campground, studying the woodsy edges ~~about the perimeter~~ of the clearing, among the densest stands of baby spruces and balsams I'd ever seen. They looked like masses of green bottle brushes, and anything from a grocery store would look very foreign among them. I came to a trail of ^{weather} beaten plastic bags and paper containers ~~in~~ the dark spruces and balsams. Then of all things I saw a potato. I never realized before how foreign a potato looks on an evergreen forest floor where nature certainly never deposited it. I walked in among the deteriorating old plastic pieces among pine and spruce and balsam needles and broken, weathered evergreen tree cones. Soon I came upon my ripped-open bag of potatoes, with all the potatoes intact. It couldn't have been a woodchuck which had carted them off. I suspected a raccoon did this pilfering. I knew now that I'd never see the bread or cookies or cheese again, so I didn't waste time hunting even for their wrappers. For once ^{the} litter was not tossed there by thoughtless humans; only by hungry forest creatures.

Not since I was a neophyte camper had I lost so much food at once to wild denizens; and, being so far from the nearest store I felt properly punished for such carelessness. Fortunately I had plenty of other food stashed away in the car so that I wouldn't go hungry, but as nothing takes the place of bread, and I had decided to dispense with ~~the~~ pancakes this time around, I didn't even have those for substitute.

Having learned from a couple of campers who had come through, and

then moved on to the next campsite several miles northward along a continuation of the tote road, that everyone carries drinking water into the area from outside, I did some thinking about it as I had only about two quarts of water left. I had been wondering about drinking and cooking water, but most State Forest campgrounds have pumps. This, of course, was not a State campsite. There were a couple of privies at the far side of the campground, but I hadn't found any pump. I had been considering using lake water for cooking, as Cranberry Lake is remote from farm lands or other sources of pollution, but the bloodsuckers down at the beach took away my appetite for lake water. I knew, of course, that the water out in the middle of the lake might be usable if I took my kayak down off the top of the car and asked the next campers coming in to help me carry it down to the lake edge.

I wasn't too keen about driving back those six miles over the tote road again so soon, but now putting together the need for bread, and more water, I decided to get the task done. Once again I was lucky; no cars or trucks met up with me either way. While out there I stocked up at the store with a better supply of food, and stopped at the State campground for the water, filling all of my containers. I ~~could~~ ^{could} break my ties with civilization for a while. But if the water started to deteriorate I could go back out for more, easily, with so little traffic on that tote road.

~~lake~~ ^{lake} The next day was warmer, and the air very calm for being so near a large ~~lake~~ ^{lake}, which usually generates breezes. With not even light airs in evidence I soon found Maine living up to its reputation. Not only were the famous little black flies in their myriads, but also mosquitos, horse flies, and no seem 'ums. The most vicious of all, as far as I am concerned, is the little black fly which extracts a tiny round ~~piece of flesh~~

circle of skin and the flesh just under it, which becomes very itchy from a sticky exudation they leave behind, probably a digester of flesh. They are so small you can't swat at them as with mosquitos. The no-see-ums don't appear until nearly evening, and stay around only two or three hours. I soon had no choice, with no wind to blow away these pesky creatures, but to move typewriter, papers and self into the netting tent.

About mid morning the next day, as I was banging away on my typewriter, reveling in the feeling of having what seemed like the whole Maine woods to myself, I heard what I thought were voices down by the lake, though no car had come in. But someone could have arrived in canoe or other kind of boat from the far end of the lake. I walked down to the beach, as much for exercise as anything else. There was one upturned boat on the lake edge, but it had been there since I arrived. No other boats were in sight. Thinking I had imagined the voices, my ears maybe affected by the constant clatter of the typewriter, I returned to my typing task. No sooner did I start typing than there were those voices again. I sat quietly and listened. Suddenly there ~~was~~ rose on the air a sound like someone yelling for help! Then silence. I was tying on my sneakers, to rush back down to the lake, when all at once the air was filled with that most glorious sound of the north country, - the cry of a wild loon! One of my favorite sounds on this planet. I scrambled to get out of the tent, but paused long enough to grab my binoculars.

I knew why nothing and no one was in sight the first time I went down to investigate voices. ~~The~~ For the loon must have dived deep into the lake when he saw me. This time I hid behind the shack where I could see out over the lake but the loon probably couldn't see me. I could see most of that end of the lake from where I stood. No bird ~~is~~

of any kind was in sight on or near the water. Knowing well how a loon can disappear completely under water, and for quite some time, I waited and waited, and searched all over the lake with my field glasses. I was studying a dark object on the opposite shore when directly in my line of vision a sleek, long periscope of a neck rose up out of the water, followed by a coal ~~black~~^{black} back with a patch of white stripes, half way between my side and the opposite side of the lake. Cautiously I moved down closer to the water and set down behind a bush in order to see but not be seen, for the loon was not surfacing completely. Soon he just sank down into the water, and disappeared as if he had never been there, without leaving a ripple on the lake's surface. I gave up, having work to do, for he could surface a quarter mile down lake, for all I could tell.

For an outdoorsy person like myself, who could never see loons in my native southern New England, it was a privilege to be where I could experience them. It is nearly a hundred and fifty years since Henry Thoreau wrote so engagingly of a loon he used to watch on Walden Pond. Like most sensitive people, he was ~~amazed~~ enamored with its wildness and the other-worldliness of its haunting call, which has been described as mournful, demoniacal, unearthly, the embodiment of all wildness. Once you hear its ~~spine-~~^{spine-}tingling yell you never forget it. But not long after Thoreau wrote of the Walden loon, it disappeared from southern New England. They were gone entirely from Massachusetts by 1925. You had to go to the tier of northern states, and Canada, to see and hear ~~them~~^{them}. But in recent years conservationists have been quite successful in luring it back so that today there are a few nesting loons in Massachusetts at Quabbin Reservoir and ^{at} Massachusetts.

The loon is a large, handsome, dapper-~~nest~~ **bird**, three to four feet long, with a stunning velvety black head, a collar of black and white stripes, a white stippled breast and garnet-red eyes. Being a heavy bird it sits

low in the water; but it has air sacs which permit it to deflate to sink, or fill with air to float to the surface, et will.

I realized there was no sense in my standing there waiting, for the loon is a fast swimmer underwater, in either fresh or salt water, able to overtake any fish, even in the sea, and they can dive down to 200 feet.

I knew that Cranberry Lake, at least at this end, was relatively shallow. But no loon which enjoys moving that fast was going to hang around a spot where it had happened to dive. It could zoom up the lake and emerge well beyond where I could spot it.

I knew they mostly feed on fish, frogs and insects, and on shellfish where they can get them, so I wondered if they would eat bloodsuckers. I have never seen bloodsuckers on any list of loon fare, but considering the size of the bloodsucker population here I doubted the loons were consuming any of them.

I was aware of loon voices the next two or three days but I was too busy writing, or exploring this choice Eden, to check the lake. But the fourth day, the loon talk was so tantalizing I walked down to the back of the shack with my field glasses, hoping to not be seen. I was astonished to see a baby loon following along behind an adult, both swimming on the surface of the water; the adult was swimming so fast the young one kept falling behind. The little thing finally dove and came up behind its parent's tail, proof, if one needed it, that the young are born swift under-water swimmers. Was it mother or father with the chick? Both parents tend the young. As I watched, this falling behind, diving and catching up, occurred several times. I kept hoping to see the little one climb up on its parent's back and ride without effort as is so common with loon families. But they soon disappeared down the lake in the spruce shadows of the far shore.

That the loons nested in my camping area was a matter for exultation, for loons are very wild birds, they don't tolerate much human activity, and

they are very demanding of just the right nesting habitat. Because they are very clumsy on land, their webbed feet being set far back, they stay as close to water as possible, building their nest close to the water's edge. A chick just out of the egg waits only long enough for its down to dry before it drops right down into the water. One parent mounts guard over it while the other stays in the nest until the second egg hatches, there usually being two in every nest. Then all four paddle off together. I was a little puzzled why there was only one adult and one young here, for even though one or both chicks are ^{sometimes} lost to a hungry raccoon, or an otter, or even to crows, usually both adults survive and stay together for years. They are known to live as long as twenty-five years in the wild, producing a new brood of young each year. In this case, however, another young and parent could be nearby, well camouflaged among the tree shadows against my not too experienced loon-sighting. They need about two hundred to three hundred acres per nest; they sure had that here, and they could be spread out around their own territory.

It was hard to pull myself away from them, for there was always hope of another sighting. As far as I am concerned, loons are the voice of Maine, but I suppose people in northern Vermont and New Hampshire feel they ~~are~~ are the voice of their states. I did see and hear my first loon many years ago, on Lake Winnepesaukee, in New Hampshire, when I was camping there with my first kayak.

The few song birds which I saw around the camp area were all typical northern friends. From the moment I moved in I heard the long drawn-out notes of the white throated sparrows, and soon there they were, easy to see, hopping about the cleared ~~camp~~ ground, their gleaming white throats a contrast to the brown of their feathers and the ground; ~~and~~ they flitted almost constantly among the lower tree branches near my tent site.

While typing one day I heard a very coarse croaking and looked up to where the sound was coming from; a large blackbird was sitting in

near the top of a spindly spruce. It was big and black like a crow, but too swollen in size for that. Getting out my ~~note~~^{bird} book I was surprised to learn this was a new species ~~for me, a raven.~~ for me, a raven. Somehow I had always thought of ravens living in Europe. Adding a mite to my ever-accumulating education, I found that ravens occur all the way from northern Maine to Hudson's Bay in Canada. They don't migrate in winter, other than the fact that some of them follow down through the cold boreal forests of the mountain ridges of the Appalachians. A Canada jay called from a perch near me. I'd seen them before, elsewhere, and in this case as well as with the others, their heads seem half dressed without the crests of the common bluejay.

One of the State Forest Pickups came through, on the way to the farther campsite at the end of the lake, to pick up the barrel trash. I, like a greenhorn, asked "What about bears? Any around here?" I must have sounded to him like people sound to me who ask that everlasting question, "What about snakes?", which I somehow never know how to answer. Since I like snakes such a question always seems superfluous. I like bears, too, but they are so much bigger than I it was best to know what to expect.

"They do come into the campsites looking for food," he said. A fact I already knew about all bears. "I know of only one in here who approached a camper; it was scared off with a ^a flashlight."

A flashlight! What an innocuous, silent weapon. Would I dare depend upon a flashlight if one came roaming into my campsite when I was there alone?

Despite the ranger's answer I decided to sleep on my cot in the netting tent, rather than be cramped in the car. My car was but a few feet away. I was sure I could scare off a bear long enough to reach it.

I admit that I slept restlessly that night, but every time I woke up I could hear the loons talking to one another down on the lake. Didn't they ever sleep?

A couple of afternoons later I was down by the lake, searching for some marvel to report on, or anything which I could scare up with my field glasses, when I was dismayed to see a loon not far down the lake, paddling along the far shore line, its head protruding through the hole of a six-pack plastic frame. My first impulse was to get the kayak off the car into the lake and rescue the loon. But I realized I would only scare him into diving, and with that impediment around his neck he might become entangled in weeds or a sunken branch under water and drown on my account. Yet I knew he could starve to death if he couldn't dive and chase fish for food.

But I also knew that a loon is a heavy bird, weighing up to fourteen pounds, which is as much if not more than a goose. Even if I could get close enough to him to get my hands on that plastic and remove it, he would be too strong a struggler, and struggle he would for he is the wildest of the wild in birds. No household pet, he. Later I was to learn that those six-pack covers are a threat to many forms of wildlife, choking many animals, getting them hung up so that their necks are broken, often causing them to starve, or to be so handicapped they become easy prey to predators.

Snug as I was at this campsite, I was ⁱⁿ begging to get restless in a couple of weeks, eager to pursue my original idea of father north. Katakhdin kept beckoning. As I soon had to return to civilization, anyway, to replenish water containers, and food, I decided to get out there on the highway and head north. From Cranberry it would be more than a hundred miles to ~~xxx~~ Millinocket, where the West Branch joins the Penobscot River. I broke camp.

My journey took me up along the east side of the Penobscot, through Milford, Costigan, Greenbush and Olaman pronounced O-lemon by the natives, then through the Passadumkeag area, where I had heard that a 7000 year old Indian settlement of the Red Paint People had been discovered; from thence across the river at Lincoln, then to Medway and into Millinocket.

By the time you travel through all those small towns on a two-lane highway, through open fields, farms, and miles of forests, Millinocket looks like a small city, when it actually is but a small town at the end of nowhere. Beyond Millinocket, past Katahdin, ^{is} the West Branch wilderness, all the way to the Canadian border; there ~~is~~ ^{are} no more towns until you get to Ft. Kent on the Quebec border. As you roll into Millinocket's streets you feel like you are living in a movie where you have come into real civilization after long detachment from the rest of the world. You are amazed that the streets are paved, that there are electric wires strung all over the place, that the buildings look normal when you had been subconsciously ~~been~~ expecting them to be in only a couple of rows, with dusty streets and false fronts like in westerns. But Millinocket is a substantial eastern town with all the conventional amenities. You wonder how they got it all transported up here.

One of the most obvious appurtenances of civilization are ^{strings of cars on} the railroad ^{tracks} ~~road~~, loaded with logs, lumber or paper products. After having passed so many log-loaded trucks you wonder how there are any logs left to pile onto railroad flatbeds.

Knowing I had to have a permit for a campfire and to camp, I found a passerby who could tell me where the Forest Service Information office was. It proved to be on a side street nearby. There they gave me a map, and a permit to camp at Abol Campsite or near Debsconeag Falls if I preferred.

About two thirds of the way from the Forest Service office ~~is~~ ^{north} along the dirt road to Katahdin, I found a narrower side dirt road which would in ^{three} ~~three~~ ^{mile} take me in to the Debsconeag area; suspecting the Katahdin area ~~was~~ might still be crowded, I turned due west into it. Knowing that Henry Thoreau had passed through the portage at Debsconeag, I decided to try camping at the bottom of the falls for a couple of nights.

I soon came out onto a vista of a large lake ahead of me, and a beach close to the road, where the road, now narrower than ever, turned due north toward Katahdin, though I knew it didn't go all the way through.

There was a rather strong current coming in from the right, from behind a screen of bushes and small trees, obviously caused by the Debsconeag Falls, which were out of sight. The rest of the lake was a ~~west~~ flat, calm expanse of water scenery, aptly named Debsconeag Deadwater. Many big bodies of water, above or below falls, are called deadwater, for by comparison to the falls or rapids they are placid water expanses.

As with altogether too many campsites today, even far in off main roads, I had to stop and clean it up of broken glass, bottle tops, wire twists, aluminum cans and their six-pack tops, paper wrappers, old plastic bags ad infinitum. This is one of those facts of modern day life which tempt you to question the stage of maturity which the human race has reached. Proof, as far as I am concerned, that the evolution of mankind is not yet as advanced as some would have us believe. We may have the biggest brains, but we sure can use them sloppily.

Once the spot was cleaned up it was a rather nice little private beach, though a little too close to the gravel road which I had come in on. I could have set my tent up further along the beach, but felt it was wisest not to get too far from my car, for here I not only had bears to keep in mind, as they are great fishermen, but maybe human interruption. I wished I could be out of sight of a civilized contr^ol^lation like a car, as the scenery was so wild and beautiful, but I didn't want to push my luck.

I settled down into the scene. There were a mile of flat water out front of me, a couple of islands with pointed firs, and a promontory to my left, which curved out like an arm half a mile long, also fir covered. I created a fireplace by filling four empty beer cans with sand, stood them to form four corners, and set a small cake rack on them for a grate, as I always had such a rack with me. I was now at home.

The mosquitos came out after supper. I lay in my tent on the cot, watching logs moving out into the current then slowing down. I could see that there were many sunken logs around the edges, some like driftwood.

Such a peaceful scene was lulling. I hoped for loons. It would be

while before it would be dark, but I had candles and a candlestick stashed handily under the cot as well as the flashlight, and the tarp was at hand to throw over the tent to keep most of the night dew off.

In the morning, I decided to go get a peek at Ketchikan, for I knew it rose up like a monadnock from a plain. I should be able to see it before actually going that far. I headed back for the surfaced road, first taking down my tent and putting it and the cot in the car, for it was in much too easy a place for someone to go off with ~~it~~^{them}. I was pleased to see not much of the forest had been cut down recently along the road, but little of the forest growth was very old.

Even though I was anticipating a mountain mass rising up through the trees, when I went around a slight curve, and there, very abruptly right in front of me, ~~was the~~^{was the} massive hulk of Ketchikan back of a frame of trees, the famous rock gashes on its sides visible even though I didn't have a clear view, made me gasp and jam on the brakes. It was a good thing no one was behind me. How could anything be that big, in such flat country? It was a mile high, someone had told me, and it sure looked it.

After years of wanting to see Thoreau's mountain I still wasn't prepared for the reality; it was a bit overwhelming, I suppose because there weren't lower foothills gradually leading up to it. ^{And,} I suppose it was but a bump on the planet, compared to the Rockies and the Swiss Alps.

Tantalized by the prospect of getting closer, and because it was still early in the day, and my permit would allow me to stay at Abol campsite if I didn't want to go back, I continued toward the mountain and soon came to Abol Bridge. As I am not a mountain climber, preferring to look up, I stood on the bridge, completely ~~by~~^{ly} mesmerized by the massive pile of rock right up into the sky, with a thin to dense forest covering parts of it. The perpendicular to angled scenery filled the northern sky. I could hardly pry my eyes away from it.

But beneath my feet, under the bridge, the gurgle of swift-moving

Abol Stream demanded some attention, for Thoreau had portaged this stream with his guides. I watched for awhile, hoping to see a fish moving around in the silvery crystal clear water, but the only motion was the water itself. I soon looked up at the mountain again, and in the mood I was in I was sure I was hearing, through Thoreau's ~~many~~ immortal words, "a sound, come faintly echoing, or creeping from afar through the moss-clad aisles, a dull, dry rushing sound with a solid core to it, yet as if half smothered and under the grasp of the luxuriant and ~~many~~ fungous-like forest, like the shutting of a door in some distant entry of the damp and shaggy wilderness. If we had not been there no mortal had heard it."

I stared at the heavily forested part of the mountain, expecting to see a tree come toppling over, but only the gurgling of the stream filled the air. This tree-fall sentence, considered by some to be the most perfect sentence in the English language, I first ^ared while in bed, waiting to get sleepy, in Florida. It rose me right straight up from my pillow, and every now and then when I'm out in what I call "my wildness", and no human is in sight, I hear that tree coming down again. I wasn't surprised that it was a rush in my mind as I stood there in this treasured wild scenery. I also now heard the Indian guide's answer, "Tree fall."

Massive Katsahdin evoked soul stirrings among the Indians, who were afraid to climb up to the top, for to them that was Pemole's abode. This god of the mountain, a huge creature with a horse-like face, the body and feet of an eagle, and the horns of a moose, was so strong he could lift up a full-grown moose. Whenever rocks rolled down the mountain, or they could see fires smoking up there, and hear thunder boom, the Indians knew it was Pemole having one of his tantrums, looking for mischief.

But there was a good god up there on the high tablelands, the Spirit of Katsahdin. Once when Pemole was exasperatingly mischievous, Katsahdin ordered him to stay on one of the highest peaks and keep away from the

Indians' council fire. The Passamaquoddy Tribe, who mostly lived in Down East, Maine, believed that the spirit of Kətəhdin married an Indian maiden called Red Rose, and brought her to this mountain to live with him. There are many varied, interwoven stories among the Maine Indian tribes who were familiar with the Mountain, for they all had hunting territories throughout the Kətəhdin region.

A few cars had now pulled into the Abol campground which I could see *from the bridge* spread out on a sandy shelf above the river, and people were beginning to move about, apparently returning from exploring some of the trails. It wasn't too hard to drag myself away from Abol Bridge and the mountain, for I was eager to experience living near Debsconeag Falls and ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Deadwater for a while. I knew I could and would come back to Kətəhdin.

I arrived back at my Deadwater site early enough to set up my tent, and go collect some big ripe ~~plum~~ red raspberries which I could see from my campsite. They were close to a tall stand of handsome fireweed, or Epilobium. It was in full blossom all over the roadsides of northern Maine, wherever the soil was even slightly damp. But when I was fooling around with the raspberries, and stepped back away ~~like~~ from the raspberry thorns into a close-by stand of fireweed, I was taken by surprise to find myself standing beside a tall purple fringed orchis. The size and colors of both plants were so similar that it took a moment for my eyes to differentiate between them. One would almost suspect that the orchis had purposely chosen this spot among the ^e firweeds for camouflage.

After my supper I sat for a while on the beach, watching the mass of logs from the Falls move quietly, almost majestically, out on the current into the middle of the lake, slowing, losing momentum the further they got from the bottom of the Falls. The mass of logs away out moved so slowly I had to line some of them up with trees on the far shoreline to be sure they had any motion.

These logs were the lifeblood of Maine. They moved inexorably down to the Great Northern paper mills in Millinocket, the greatest paper mills on earth. The perpetual moving of trees into the mills didn't bother me now as much as when I first knew about it. Great Northern is not a cut and run business. It manages its forests for sustained yields; trees keep right on growing, producing a constantly renewed volume of wood as long as the stands are cut in rotation, with a twenty year or more span of time before cut again. The process can go on forever, providing the world with a continuous supply of paper, of which I use more than my share, and creating jobs and maintaining ⁱⁿ a protective canopy over the watershed. I only wish the same could be said of the world's tropical rain forests.

In mid week, when I was cleaning up after lunch, I glanced up at the lake and was astounded to see four red canoes heading straight for my beach, so close in they had approached with the silence-skill of Indians. How could this have happened? Would I have been more alert had this been an earlier century? Could four canoes with two and three people in each have sneaked up on a real Indian maiden alone on a beach?

The canoes were bright to dark red, with Indian-type art paintings on their prow ends, and after blinking once or twice I saw that there were three girls in each. Each canoe was loaded above the gunnels with camping duffle stuffed between each passenger, making it difficult to distinguish gear from human. I barely had time to absorb their presence when their canoes were beached and instantly there was a crowd of young people around me.

Though they were silent when in the canoes, they were now all talking at once. They were from a Girl Scout camp down the road toward Ketchikan, and were just returning from a five day camping trip. They planned to stay for the night on the little cape off to my left and were heading that way when they saw me, from away out, working around my campfire and decided to investigate what kind of neighbor they were about to have. When they got

close enough to see I was a white-haired one in sneakers so wasn't anything treacherous, they decided to land and invite me to their campfire sing at eight o'clock.

What an acceptable, suitable form of evening entertainment out there in the wild. They saw my kayak atop my car and offered to take it down for me, but I decided I needed some exercise so would walk over, and as there was to be a moon it would be easy walking back. I did, of course, have a flashlight, and having the lake in sight I'd not get lost.

They were gathered around the fire when I arrived, sitting on the ground, and on one large log they had rolled into place. All of their songs were new to me, so I just hunkered in, on the ground myself, and listened. Sitting there under the tree canopy, the lake glistening like flashing jewels here and there in the moonlight, the atmosphere took on a Robin Hood quality. A gang of gal Robin Hoods, or were they all Maid Merriens, lying around in the shadows, ⁿsinging and talking. One of them had a guitar, which she let three others take turns playing before it came back to her. Now and then two of them plucked the strings together, one seeming to do chords and the other some fancy strumming. The best of the players was a counselor, a charismatic college student from the State of Washington three thousand miles away. Some of them got up and danced about to the music, cavorting like elves under Maine's redolent firs.

Scouts have bedtime rules, so they soon broke up the lakeside reverie. They wanted to escort me home, but insisting I have cat's eyes in the dark, and it wasn't dark for there was the moon and its reflecting golden path across the lake, I easily found my way back. Once in my cot, the tent clipped with its usual clothespins, I found it a bit difficult to believe that there were eight modern Indians out there so close by.

As the Scouts were supposed to be out two more days they took off in the morning for a new campsite, though they were dubious about reaching it as a log jam they had come upon the day before filled an area they wanted to paddle through. Later I learned they had to portage around the jam,

which placed them unexpectedly near rapids of which they were not aware. Putting their canoes back in the water, one was unexpectedly sucked into the swift current, as its two occupants had been fooling around instead of paying strict attention. Before the girls in that canoe realized what was happening they were forced to jump out; the canoe went over the falls, smashed beyond repair. The others, in the meantime, pulled their canoes up out of the water before getting caught. They had to return over the portage, and make space in the three canoes for another girl each.

They ~~wisely~~ wisely returned to the campsite near me. In the morning they paddled over to tell me what had happened, and that they had left some of their gear over at the cape, hoping I would keep an ~~xxx~~ eye out for anyone going in there. They started out once more, valiantly trying to stick to their schedule. By then some of the river workers had unfastened some of the jammed logs, setting them free. All of which went on too far down the lake for me to see any of the action. So many logs ended up on the shoreline ^{the Scouts} ~~they~~ couldn't carry their gear over the portage as they had no footing. Back they came, this time returning to my beach, to tell me of their misadventures, and for the counselor to ask me for a ride to their camp so they could arrange for a truck to come pick up their boats and gear. next morning.

There was another surprise in store for me. When I arrived at the Scout camp, ^{up the Katahdin road} there was a recognizable, refurbished CCC camp, almost identical to one I'd had some meals at in Connecticut in CCC days. I felt right at home as I was given a big meal, the Sunday dinner kind which I never attempt when camping, at least as far as roasts are concerned.

Knowing they were going to spend the evening at their cape camp practicing knot tying I decided to stay in my own camp. In the morning, as they had to wait for awhile for the truck to arrive, they asked me if I would take them on a nature walk close by. We stepped into nearby woods where I explained about boreal forest plant associations. There was

much running ground pine present, clintonia, pipssisewa, and painted trillium in the seed stage. This trillium produces a fairly large red seed container, almost as pulpy as a tiny apple. I was just comparing it with the red trillium when we heard the truck arrive.

They'd had a woodsplitting contest just before leaving their cape camp, and as they weren't staying long enough to use it for firewood they had brought it all over to me, piled on their already overloaded gear. As I build only small fires I was overwhelmed with so much fuelwood. There is seldom control of production when living out in the wild; either famine or an unusable surplus. Either you have too many berries to eat them before they spoil, or no berries at all in sight. You have to work too hard for a few pieces of firewood, or suddenly you have too much to use up before you move on. Storage of surplus, or transportation of the surplus, don't fit too well into the primitive life. It took primitives an awful lot of generations to work it out, and lead us to the smooth running system we take for granted today.

It was a treat to me to have girl companions in the woods, for I seldom have come across them in my own forest life. The head counselor, who had ridden to the camp base with me, had been a kid camper herself for years. Then a junior counselor, and now an adult counselor, all in the Maine lakes area. She knew all the portages and trails, the rivers and lakes and pond. Yet she was only about twenty years old. What I could have learned from her! At the age of eighteen she had driven to Alaska by herself, having many misadventures with broken springs and dust in the carburetor. She stayed four months in Anchorage and four in Fairbanks. It sure was great to meet a young one who beat me at my own game. Hers would have been a just-right life for me.

Late the afternoon after the girls left, as I was standing watching

the ever-beguiling masses of logs moving southward away out there, a woodcock flew up from out of a depression in the ground back of my tent. It was stirring sight, to me, to see a woodcock, with its long, straight bill extending from an almost neckless head, fly within ten feet of me and land on a very dry part of the beach sand. It appeared about to take a dust bath, its wings partly open and its beak very much in the way, when it became ^{aware} of me standing there and flew off, though I had remained rigidly still. Unfortunately I had on a white terry cloth blouse, which was a glaring signal of something unnatural against the tan-colored sand. Too bad. I soon got rid of that blouse as it was tempting to wear it because of ease of laundering. But white is the danger sign in the wild, like the underside of a deer's tail which it waves like a flag when alarmed.

It was not a very birdy place in which I was camping, but I did hear a song sparrow a couple of times, and a white-throat. Starlings and redwings were hanging around the beach down beyond my spot. One gull flew over my first morning, the only one while I was there. But to my ecstatic delight, one morning I heard a loon call. His voice enriched the air every time he surfaced far out; then a power boat came along and drove him away, just as has been happening on all these northern lakes, ruining the habitat for loons. Loons require peace, undisturbed acres of watery sites. It is one of the bird species which does not adapt very well to the presence of mankind.

It was obvious that the weather was about to change, clouds ^s gradually moving in from the southwest. Not being familiar with what storm wind would do ^{near} ~~in~~ such vast stretches of open water, I decided it would be easier to sleep in my car that night than to struggle with flapping canvas in the middle of the night. I do enjoy hearing rain on a tent wall, and love the cozy feeling of being snug in a small tent. But with the car close by

and didn't have the protection of woods or hills, I decided to play sissy.

It rained off and on all night. By morning it was pouring so hard I thought I would have to take down the tent and tarp and pack them soaking wet. But by mid morning the clouds were breaking so I waited awhile. The sun came out in early afternoon, so I spread my tarpaulin out over an old high up-beached aluminum boat which looked as if it had been there a year or more. There was room for the tent, so I spread that out too. Both having waterproofing in them they dried quickly. Then the clouds came rolling in again, and I just got them folded in time to stash them in the car when the downpour began again. I had an appointment for a job at Orono the next morning at 10:00, so I spent my last night there in the car again. I enjoyed my last views of logs sliding silently by far out on the lake, after eating a pickup supper in the car.

In the morning I nibbled on an old doughnut, handfuls of Cheerios, and fruit juice. As usual I hated to part with my campsite, every one of them ever becoming a piece of me. To my surprise, a chipmunk ran across in front of my car just as I was starting the engine. It was the first and only one I saw there in my week's stay.

The people I had hoped to interview for a job at Orono were not yet back from vacation, so I returned to Cranberry Lake, feeling as if I were going home. The corollary of that being that the whole outdoors on this planet is my home.

This time there were many people at Cranberry; there seemed to be one large group, all men, but of different ages, and I am sure they were dismayed to see one ~~young~~ white-haired woman come in and set up camp so near to them. But I tucked into my old spot, well out of their way, and they out of my way. The composition of that group was a new one to me; one that I would like to see happen more often. It proved to be all grandfathers, fathers, father-in-laws, sons in law and young sons. They had two large,

wall-tents, but only two regular size cars. Maybe another car was gone on an errand. ~~Back~~

How did anyone ever persuade such an assortment of adult^t male relatives to go camping together? It seemed a neat idea to me. Probably a satisfactory answer to wives who are usually suspicious when husbands go off to the woods without them, even though the choice to stay home is their own. I sat at my typewriter out front of my tent with my back to them so they wouldn't feel watched. Eventually one of the grandfathers spoke to me, when I walked over to the top of the slope to look down on the lake. "It's my first camping trip," he said, "and I love it. The others, even the little kids, are experienced campers."

I walked down to the beach my first afternoon back; there was a small rowboat on the cove, and it looked like a father and son in it. I never knew if it belonged to the group up above. Just as I arrived at the beach the air began to fill with sound as a small float plane circled, and dropped down onto the water near the rowboat. As it taxied up to the boat I thought the pilot was going to ask ~~him~~ for a ride to shore, but with my field glasses I could see that the plane pilot was a game warden, checking on fishing licenses and life preservers. Again I was reminded of Thoreau, who said that from where he sat (at Walden) he couldn't see the state from there. There was no escaping the State in the middle of the Maine woods. You can be far out in the middle of the wilderness in Maine today and the State drops out of the sky.

I was pleasantly entertained^{ta} for awhile by juncos flitting around the campfire center, as all the man~~y~~ and boy campers had disappeared. Studying them in my field glasses I realized it was a junco family, the first for me as I have never before lived within their breeding range. I'm used to thinking of^f juncos as snowbirds, moved down out of the far north for the winter. Now I watched a male and female, with three young which were hopping and flying low around the adults who were apparently trying to show them how to feed themselves. Some of the grandfathers walked back into

the circle and lest they think I was spying on them I put my binoculars away, quite sure I'd see more of the birds later.

Even the shack was now occupied. The door was wide open, and there was a tent in the clearing just outside. Meeting ~~strangers~~^r in the woods gives both sides an edge on automatic friendship, for they are isolated entities segregated out from the great mass of humanity. And, as campers they are usually law-abiding citizens. Anyone looking for trouble would be back in civilization, where opportunities for trouble abound.

In true woods-sociality fashion, I was soon talking to the mother of this forest household. They had leased this shack from the St. Regis Paper Co; there were the two parents and ~~six~~^{six} children, all from New Jersey. There were three boys and three girls, all school age. Now that's a pocket of human interest out in the wild. For it means much food, water, clothing, everything has to be toted in from civilization.

I quickly got to know the father, as he was the traditional dominant paterfamilias, but one that even the independent^{en} like me could like. What was unusual about him was that he was able to maintain strict discipline over his brood of kids, whom I found ranged in age from 8 to 17, while at the same time they were happy to be around him, he and they being best friends. How wonderful this country would be if most parents had that skill. There would be no drug problems, no wise-guy vandalism, no thugs, ~~few~~^{less} of the now common, overwhelming prison costs.

It was soon obvious to me that this man was properly attentive to his wife, while finding time to give personal attention to each of the kids. Eventually I was to learn he was very proud of his children, though I have often wondered if he realized that was pretty due to his skill in making them tow the line while giving the freedom they needed to grow. That such a unique family could be met up with out in the Maine woods was a marvel. I was enchanted when his wife told me that when they became engaged he said

he wanted six children, three boys and three girls. And that's what he got! As if heaven had ordained it as something he deserved, Being a biologist I knew what a fluke of fate it was that the genders of his children had segregated out as they did.

The white canoe, which had been upside down on the far shore of the near end of the cove when I was first there, was now missing my first day back. It turned out to belong to a retired couple from southern Connecticut. She was the one who mostly used it, going out fishing nearly every day for a few hours. They, too, leased a piece of land from the paper company, at the south end of the lake, up a rise of land so that they had an overlook view of the whole length of the lake. It was within easy distance of my campsite; they often walked down to the big campground and usually stopped by to speak to me, having walked up to me the first time when I was sitting on a railing fence. No car had come in and I wondered where they had walked in from, thinking they must have come from the camp beyond this one.

In no time they had me visiting their camp building. It proved to be two buildings, the smaller at the back of the one in front. The back one was just a bunk house, big enough for the two of them, the bunks being wide shelves with air mattresses and sleeping bags. The windows had an overhang to prevent rain from getting in. The front building had two parts; its back half was a kitchen, built in against the walls. The front half was a living-dining room with a huge picture window looking out over Cranberry Lake. All the lounging type chairs faced the lake, but regular chairs were snuggled up to a small dining room table back of the loungers. I never understood how they got all that stuff in there, as there was no road in, and the canoe could only go the end of the beach.

They were both retired physical education people from New York City. While they had several over-civilized city ways not typical of camp-type forest dwellers, such as having real liquor cocktails every afternoon and evening, they fitted into the woodsy life otherwise as if they had always lived that way. Nothing fazed them, from little black flies to the threat

of bears breaking into their cabins while they were away, or even when they were home.

Back at my own primitive campsite by myself, after this exotic visit in the middle of the wild, there was a flycatcher flitting around near my tent. I couldn't be sure which one, though it was the size of a yellow-breasted chat, meaning it could not be of the Empidonax group. I did get a glimpse of some yellow on it, which seemed to eliminate it from being a common phoebe though it was the right size for that. It had to remain one of those tantalizing "What was its?" I could also have sworn I saw a hummingbird flit by, then perch for an instant on a tree branch, but I couldn't see the bill, nor was the bird's outline clear against the tree. Birdwatching is an activity full of dubious identification decisions. Usually if you can hang around long enough, your first hunch proves right, though you can also be very fooled.

But I did spot a brown creeper, looking weird as it always does, walking head down on a tree trunk or as this one was, under the heavy branch of a tree. Watching this one became quite entertaining for a long time. A hairy woodpecker on the same tree. It walked up the trunk to where the creeper was close to the tree bole, seemed to pause a moment, then set motionless on a small branch just under where the creeper was still moving about. Soon they became close enough to one another for a personal encounter, and just as I expected the much larger woodpecker to cause the creeper to back down, the woodpecker did the backing, right all the way down the tree trunk, as if routed out.

All of these birds were very silent. Except for an occasional song sparrow warbling, or for the plaintive call of the white throat, if you used only your ears to determine if birds were present in the Maine woods, it would seem a birdless place. Even the chickadees were silent. Of course that was in part due to the fact that the nesting season was about over, but some birds keep on proclaiming their presence and their territories well into summer.

One early evening, a blue and white jeep station wagon pulled into the camping area from the tote road. An unkempt looking man, whose appearance was more that of a bum than a camper, parked his car not far from my tent site, got out of his car, looked around, walked to the clear spot near my tent and looked my campsite all over as I watched him as I was just walking up the hill from the lake. To my relief he got back into his car and backed it over to the farther end of the guardrail logs around the campgrounds. He pulled out his camping gear and dropped it on the ground, then looked all around again while I stayed out of sight behind a clump of young evergreens. This went on for about an hour, as the sun was sinking lower behind the trees. I happened to be alone in the area, except for the two older people out of sight up in the two small camp buildings.

This has always been a concern for a woman camping alone. In general I had come to feel that most crimes are committed in a city or town and brought out and dumped in the woods. Men who are out looking for trouble¹ seldom would want to waste time looking for it where there is nothing, and few people to commit mayhem on. But I well knew there was always the exception. The guy with the distorted mind stumbling upon an opportunity. Yet, in this case, who would drive in that long narrow tote road, with ruts and only woods to look at, if they were a trouble maker? But he did seem to have camping gear, which should imply he was just a camper. And, there was a² no¹ stop his car.

I was apprehensive nevertheless, so I remained hidden behind the trees. If he weren't³ satisfied with the site he would be leaving soon, before it got dark. But I didn't want him making a decision to stay if he found a lone woman in that little tent. But I'd never seen anyone so hesitant, looking around so long, without actually doing something about unpacking or leaving. Not wanting to risk waiting until dark I walked over to the retired gym people, a bit ashamed that I should go looking for help when it was my own choice to be out camping alone. The wife was out fishing in the white canoe, but he came over to the campsite with me and engaged the guy in conversation.

My friend discovered that the newcomer had a fishing license, meaning he wasn't totally unknown. And the car was full of very good, expensive camping gear, in addition to what he had pulled out. He didn't want any help getting his boat down, or setting up his tent, as he was going to sleep in his jeep. How often I had done that. He stayed but the one night, was off and away the next early morning. To my relief, though by then I was no longer disturbed by his presence.

It is amazing how personal appearance can set one's imagination off on a wrong tack. I myself tended to look like a hippie at times, though I admit women never look very threatening because of their style. I feel much more threatened by an over-dressed woman than by ^{one with} a humble outfit. But this man had been a little older than the usual hippie. And, for all I knew, his expensive camping gear could have been stolen since it didn't match the rest of his appearance.

Two sets of campers came in for Saturday night, one was a boy of about ten or eleven, with his father. The other was a young teenager with his father, apparently neither knowing the other. Both had power motors for their boats. Both, by themselves, went zooming up and down the lake the next morning. Both left by noon, within a half hour of each other. What fun is there in that? I bet they didn't know a spruce from a balsam or a chickadee from a brown creeper, nor did they care. But then, there be them as gets their inspiration from speeding in wind they create.

About the time they left I saw a northern yellowthroat flitting through the trees and among some tall blueberry bushes between my campsite and the lake. The chickadee group which had been hanging around landed in among the pine needles over my head and "talked" to me. And there with them, as I'd suspected I'd seen a couple of times but wasn't sure, was a black and white warbler. I happened to have my field glasses in my hand as this little band of feathered ones arrived so there was no guessing maybe, perhaps about the warbler. I never can remember what I did in my life

before I owned field glasses, for they now seemed an extension of my left hand and they sure could bring those tiny, elusive flitters of the wild up close without having to disturb them to find out what they were. I have never found a wild niche where I'd stayed from several hours to several days but that some feathered creature put in an appearance. Nature leaves few niches unoccupied.

But there I go again, said I to myself. For now I could see there were two other warblers besides the black and white. One was all ~~yellow~~ gray underneath except for a bright yellow spot in the anal area. The other was all yellow underneath but seemed to have a gray patch under his chin, or could that be a leaf shadow? As far as I could tell, both were just passing through. Then when I thought I was done seeing new birds, there was a small, almost gray bird, all fluffed out, sitting on something at almost ground level under an alder down the lake path. He was preening and scratching. Now and then I got a glimpse of a yellow spot in the middle of its breast. But leaves were in the way so I couldn't get a good look and to step nearer to him would have sent him off.

These are typical notes from a bird-watcher's journal. They show why birders prefer to chase birds in the spring, before the leaves come out. Leaves are a bird's best friends, not the watchers. But this little exercise so close to my camp^P gives an idea of what lives in the supposedly monotonous everlasting mileage of Maine evergreen woods. One would expect such woods to be limited in such life forms as conifers offer food only to specialized species like the pine grosbeak and the crossbills but there are always niches in such woods, where some hardwood trees or shrubs have come into sunny openings which offer sufficient variation of seeds, fruits and leaves, to say nothing of the kinds of insects they attract. Around my camp, because of the opening made by the campground,

and the wide path and yard of the shack down by the lake, ~~down~~ and the lake edges, there was enough variation in habitats to provide for a variation in bird species.

The gym couple told me that nearly every day they saw waves of small birds passing through their place, a wave of robins, a wave of chickadees, a wave of juncos, a wave of nuthatches, a wave of brown creepers. At first I thought they meant spring and fall, during migration seasons. Many birds do travel in small flocks close to the ground, feeding as they go, unlike those which get high in the sky and cover hundreds of miles without dropping down to eat and rest.

But these folks insisted it was a daily event. I tried bird watching over there, to see what that was all about, but in fear of invading their privacy I soon gave up without seeing a bird. I decided that the birds were just moving around in groups of their own kind, on their daily forage trips for food. Most of us tend to forget that birds as well as animals must go food^hunting daily; they must work constantly for their daily bread. They have no ~~gro~~cers, or warehouses, restaurants or well-stocked kitchens. With the exception of some woodpeckers and species like the squirrels, they haven't learned to gather and store food. They are in a perpetual hunting stage. Most birds do their foraging in the morning, and by noon or so, then settle down to rest and preen while what is in their full crops digests. They forage again ^{after} ~~right~~ mid afternoon, but not as busily as in the morning.

The one question I had in my mind about the story that these little birds pass through in small flocks daily is ^{that} the gym instructors must not have been including spring and early summer, when few birds remain in flocks. They spit up into families, each mostly working its own declared territory. But then, for all I know, maybe that couple were never there in nesting season. Maybe the roads were too soft and rutted to get in there then.

In any case, it made me feel more hunkered down ^{my campsite} at home, knowing so

tracks, I stepped over beside them. Though they kept insisting they could see two deer swimming, close to the other shore, and were both waving at the same spot, I couldn't see any deer there, with my bare eyes or my binoculars. They didn't have binoculars, so I insisted they check what they were seeing with mine. It was instantly obvious they had never had binoculars up to their eyes before.

These were not campers, but city people, out for a Sunday ride. They were going to see all the wild sights so they could entertain everyone at home with the wonderful wild things they'd seen. I had long since learned that such people see things in the woods which the most seasoned outdoor people never see, even those living out there. They are so used to everything being so hyped up in newspapers and on TV that they could make a giraffe out of a falling tree branch right out in the New England woods. The only bear and deer seen around that camping area in the nearly month-long stay I'd been there, were seen by city visitors just in for a Sunday outing. How fortuitous for them. I hadn't even seen deer tracks there.

The evening of my last day at St. Regis I decided to devote to the birds around there, as I was hating to part with them. No longer was I hearing or seeing loons, - the campers had become too numerous and scared them away. But I went down to the water's edge, bird glasses in hand, hoping that because I was the only one there the past couple of days maybe I'd see a loon down the lake. There were two small birds flitting around in the highbush blueberry bushes, which gave me a new species for my check list for that campers. They were myrtle warblers, a ubiquitous species which I have since lived out with from Minnesota to Florida.

I sat on a tussock of vegetation, up out of the wet. I had hardly settled down, having decided no loon was in sight, when I found myself witnessing one of the most amusing sights I ever saw in the insect world, which ended in the kind of drama one could hardly bear in the human world.

My attention was caught by a large beetle-like bug moving rapidly on the water surface. Many water striders were present, placidly moving a few inches with a jerk here and there. The big bug was just too far for me to tell what it really looked like, but when I tried the binoculars on it, it was too close. It was moving fast, that is, within its own microcosm, but it was a steady fast compared to the striders. It seemed to have antennae with some kind of knobs on top, which suggested it wasn't a beetle. And I had never before seen a water beetle surface-plowing with such constant energy.

All of a sudden its path was crossed by a water strider, its wake momentarily engulfing the strider. Instantly the strider took off after the bug, though the bug looked heftier. The bug responded by plowing ahead even faster. The strider was chasing it faster than I'd ever seen a strider move, and in a straight continuous line though still a bit jerky. The strider would almost catch up, miss by a couple of inches, then drop behind, then make what looked like a supreme effort to catch the bug, only to lose again. The bug made a curved change of direction; the strider could have caught up if it had taken a short cut across the curve, but it remained in the bug's wake. After awhile the strider gave up, but the bug kept right on going, using its surface plowing motion as if it knew just where it was going.

Looking up, I discovered there were other such bugs, and every time one of them crossed the path of a strider the strider took off after it. As I watch^{ed}, three times a strider did catch up and it appeared as if some kind of physical combat took place, but each time the strider and bug separated, and the bug went off on its own. Eventually, the first one I had been watching from the beginning arrived in my vicinity, looking as if heading for the board on which I was standing. It did come right to the board, climbed out, and set at rest. I looked down for a close look. Amazingly, it looked like a butterfly, with its wings closed, which now

made the knobbed antennæ more plausible. The whole construction of the little thing looked as if it would easily drown if it fell into the water. Yet here it had been swimming out there on the surface, and there were others like it paddling around and staying afloat. Not being an entomologist, and considering there are about 500,000 insects on earth, I had no idea what it was.

Then the most ironic thing happened, at least from my anthropomorphic view of the moment, ⁱⁿ that just as I stood up a small warbler swooped out over the water in front of me, hovered briefly like a hummingbird, then scooped up the bug and flew off. Just like that. Drama, as you just stand and look. Why that one little bug, for which I had subconsciously developed a feeling of protection?

As I walked back up the slope to my camp I pondered the human mental condition. The claim by some is that one side of our brain is responsible for our emotions, the other half ^{for} ~~with~~ logic, though all suggest there is some crossover. Here was I, but a few moments ago, almost grieving over a bug which a half hour ago I didn't know existed. Is this an example of why humanity gets into such emotional messes? Does the sentimental side of our brain tend to dominate the side of logic? Logic sure took over for me in no time, for I was remembering that birds have to ~~be~~ eat bugs if they are going to survive; that insects evolved ^{in the Carboniferous Era} ~~about~~ a hundred million years before birds did; the birds appeared on the scene with ready-made food waiting for them, in the Mesozoic. This bird-eat-bug scene has been going on for at least a hundred and fifty million years. That bug down there on the edge of that board belonged to that bird, not to me.

Every place I had ever camped for more than a night or two became a home with emotional attachments. Was this, I often wondered, the way homesickness developed in the human race? Was it a sort of territorialism such as birds adhere to throughout a nesting season? It could be a

relatively new inner need for mankind, as not so long ago, and for eons of time, mankind moved around constantly in the hunting and gathering stage. But one likes to think some families stayed together in a choice cave. In any case, some kind of sentimental attachment seems to have been developing in the emotion-oriented half of our brains which ties us to home-site places.

It just wasn't easy to break camp. My feet dragged as if weighted with stones. In stopping atop the plateau to look out over the lake once more, I was so reluctant to leave that I walked backwards toward my car until the lake was no longer in view. I was alone in the campground area. It was a week day and most campers had gone back to work.

This was all mine. My habitat. My Eden. I wanted to remain in it.