

TRAVELS IN 2012

A Pictorial

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

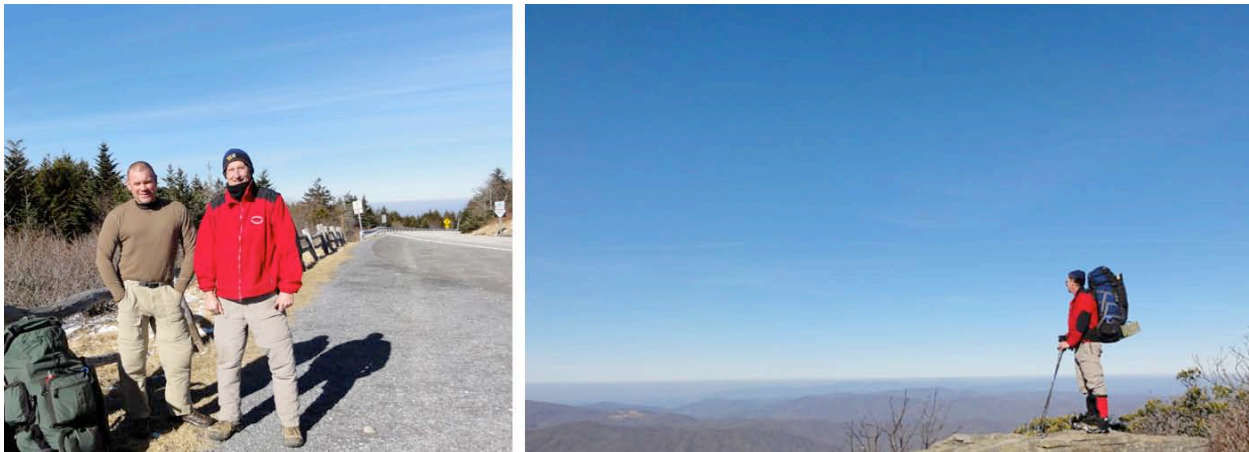


Fig 1 and 2: I made four separate hikes on the Appalachian Trail in 2012. Each trek ranged from 1 – 4 days. I walked a total of 130 miles, between Roan Mountain, TN (mile marker 374) and Pine Mountain, VA (mile marker 504). I did winter, spring, summer, and fall hikes. I started in early January from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



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



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



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



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



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



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



Fig 15 and 16: Unique mushrooms along the way



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



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



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



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



Fig 25 and 26: Morning sunrise. After a quick breakfast all the gear is packed away, then the long hike down the mountain.



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



Fig 41 and 42: August 2012: I went to Newfoundland, Canada to hike in Gros Morne National Park.



Fig 43 and 44: Six members of our local hiking group made the trip. Part of the reason we went to Newfoundland was to see the Northern Lights. This was the only clear night of the trip. We did not get to see the Aurora Borealis.



Fig 45 and 46: We rented a cottage in one of the park's coastal towns and did day hikes. Gros Morne NP is known for its unusual and diverse geology. One of our treks was to the Tableland Mountain. It gets its name from its wide, flattened summit. The rocks here are all yellow-brown in color (peridotite) and contain a high concentration of heavy metals which are toxic to most plants. As such, there is little vegetation. It resembled a landscape from the planet Mars.



Fig 47 and 48: Another trek took us down to the seashore. This is the Atlantic Ocean, but specifically it's the Gulf of St Lawrence. The terrain along the coastline was rough and mountainous.



Fig 49 and 50: Red Adirondack chairs were placed throughout the park at scenic locations. They were a welcome resting spot. Heavy rains the day before caused the water level in this stream to rise, making the river crossing treacherous.



Fig 51 and 52: Gros Morne Mountain is the second highest peak in Newfoundland at 806 m. The name means big lone mountain. The mountain is flat-topped and treeless except at its lower elevations. It is actually a slice of Arctic tundra far south of its usual range. The trail climbs through the rocky gully to the right. It is a steep climb through frost-shattered rock.



Fig 53 and 54: Weather conditions can deteriorate quickly near the summit. But if the weather holds, the views can be spectacular!



Fig 55 and 56: The park is home to over 4500 Moose and a lesser number of Caribou. We only saw one from a far. A view of Baker's Brook Falls.

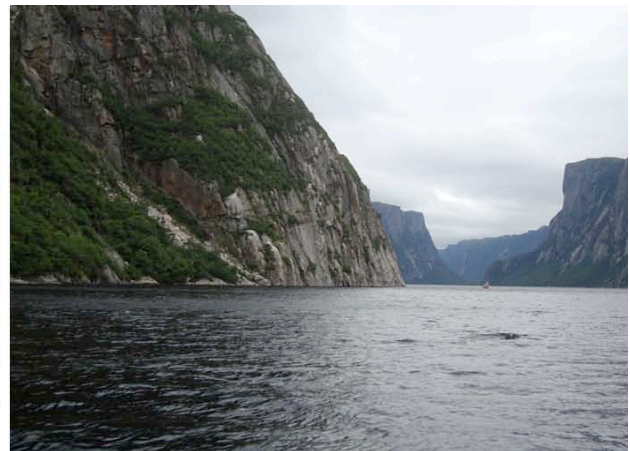


Fig 57 and 58: Western Brook Pond is a glacier-carved fjord (lake) which makes a spectacular setting for a boat tour. The lake is surrounded by steep rock walls 2000 feet high.



Fig 59 and 60: The lake is about 10 miles long and the water is cold, fresh, and pristine. There are numerous high waterfalls. Red Adirondack chairs atop the Big Lookout Trail.



Fig 61 and 62: Jim Head (hiker extraordinary) and I resting before heading back down the mountain. The most easterly point in North America is found in Newfoundland, just south of the capital city of St John's.



Fig 63 and 64: Most of my time is spent in front of birds, either examining, grooming, or sexing them. This clinic was in Ozark, MO. My '99 Honda Accord finished the year with 411,365 miles on the odometer. My wife thinks I need a new car! This is all the equipment I routinely carry with me.



Fig 65 and 66: The nails on this bird are badly in need of a trim. A male Eclectus parrot with a long beak. Feather picking in this species is very common...it is rarely cured.



Fig 67 and 68: In addition to pet bird clinics, I visit aviaries both small and large to sex and exam breeder birds and to offer advice.

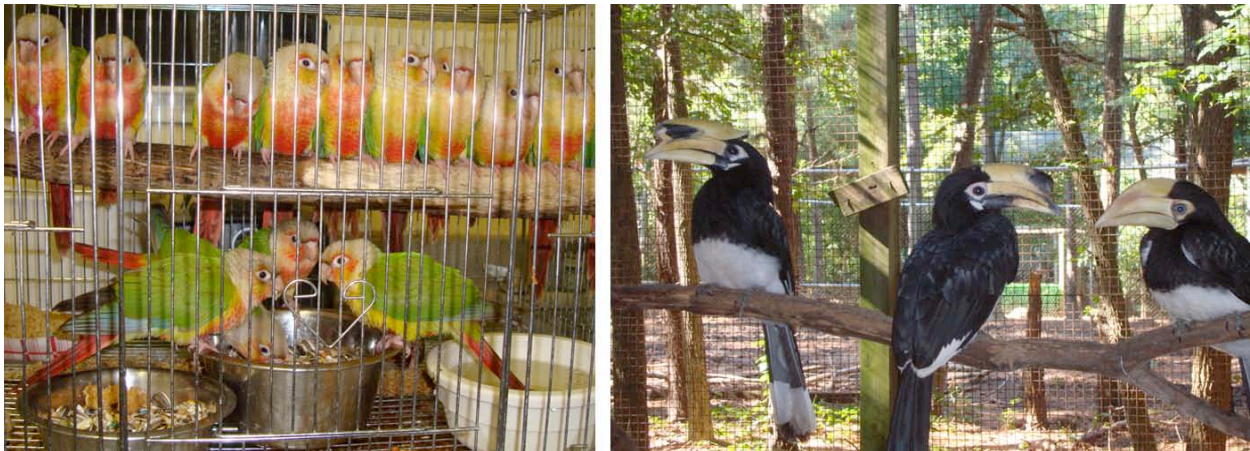


Fig 69 and 70: Most of the birds I work on are parrots. Here's a cage full of Pineapple Green-cheeked conures. Occasionally I see other types of birds, like these Hornbills.



Fig 71 and 72: Quaker parakeet that is half green and half blue. These birds are known as half-siders. Scientifically they are called bilateral gynandromorphs...being composed of both sexes. These birds are usually infertile. Dusky conure babies...yellow mutations.