



# **30 New Walks**

A Walking Reports Project

**Sean P Drysdale**

## 30 New Walks

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## Disclaimer

Walking in the woods is inherently dangerous, and walking in the mountains is even more so. It is up to you the walker, to ensure that you are appropriately trained, prepared, and behave in a way that keeps you safe as well as those travelling with you. If you think anything in this publication in any way makes the author or the publisher accountable or responsible to you the reader in any way for decisions or actions you may take, you are horribly horribly mistaken. Really, dear readers, please think. Neither the author nor the publisher are responsible or accountable for any of your actions or decisions.

## Resources

I am grateful to the following people and organizations for providing such clear and useful books and resources. Gilleen Daffern (the queen of hiking in Kananaskis Country <https://kananaskistrails.com>), Leigh McAdam (wonderful traveller, adventurer and blogger <https://hikebiketrael.com>), Barry A. Taylor (a great hiker and blogger - website retired), Topographic Maps by Gem Trek 1:50,000, <http://banffandbeyond.com/>, AllTrails.com, [www.albertaparks.ca](http://www.albertaparks.ca).

## Introduction

Years ago, I did any number of multi-day hikes in the Canadian Rockies and the Coastal Range near Whistler, BC. Time passed. Three days before my Mum died, I started to walk in the woods again. That walk became a second walk, which in turn led to more. I started to report (Walking Reports) on those walks on my website and to post some of the photographs I captured. Somewhere along the way I decided to go on 30 new-to-me walks. Others have stated that photographs should be printed. I agree and so the idea of a book was born. Initially, it was going to be only one image per walk, but on some days the gods smiled. The text herein is based on walks and Walking Reports done in 2020, and all the photos are also from 2020.

A year has passed since the digital version was released. For this version, the layout has been refined, and text has been edited along with many of the photos. Some photos have been added, and ones that don't work well in print have been removed.

## Conventions

- Panoramas span the whole width of a page and do not have a hairline border. All others images have margins and a hairline border.
- The “Aftermath” sections, where they exist, contain additional notes, and reflect some of the

comments I received. The comments for this book were chosen based on whims of the moment.

- The “For the Record” sections where they exist, have the complete unedited text from information plaques I found in my travels.
- Numbers within round brackets refer to a page in this book, and only pages with text have numbers.
- Times are written using a 24-hour clock.
- I rate my photographs on a five-star scale. A *five* is my highest rating, and these are rare.
- A “+” after a name denotes that the person came with others. Liz was sometimes accompanied by other people, and was always accompanied by her wonderful dog, Miss Kitty.

## Acknowledgements

To my digital community, thank you for providing support, encouragement, and inspiration even if you didn't know you were doing so. My website is a small digital outpost in the vast ether of the web. To those who visit it and my Facebook friends, thank you for visiting and commenting, and a special thanks to Keith for being such a diligent and consistent commenter. To those who walked with me, thank you for the pleasure of your company, especially Michelle and Liz.

Heartfelt thanks to Allyson and Brooke for their suggestions and editing prowess.



## Long Prairie with Death Valley Loops (Sheep Valley)

<> 7½ km - Counterclockwise

Saturday May 9

Below the snow line, in the trees at this time of year, the ground has not yet fully thawed. Water sits on the surface. The mud is at times impossible to get around. On the hillsides the grass is still brown. There are gaps in the trees where I can see a stack of possibilities.

The rain never arrives.



## Alder Trail (Bragg Creek)

<> 3¼ km - Clockwise and Counterclockwise

Tuesday May 12

There is pleasure in walking a short loop like this one in both directions. It provides an opportunity to see the same forest from two different perspectives. Though most of the snow has melted, there are still clumps in shadowed upper branches. As the morning warms, a slight breeze brings these clumps to the ground. They fall like heavy pine cones. The forest is then briefly still until the next bird call or the wind whispers.

In her earlier years, Mum would have loved this interpretive trail with its large plaques introducing the foothills, Chinooks, and how duff captures moisture. On two of the plaques, someone has scrawled, with a blue sharpie, corrections to the wording to make them more politically correct. Across the road, in Bragg Creek Provincial Park, on a short trail down to the Elbow River, someone has kindly left gifts for others to see.





## Rawson Lake (Upper Kananaskis Lake)

<> 7½ km - Out and Back

Thursday May 14

The exit from the Trans-Canada to Kananaskis Country is less than an hour from home. As I hadn't pre-calculated driving time, I am only vaguely aware that another 45 minutes pass before I arrive at the Upper Kananaskis Lake parking lot.

Except for a small car and an older RV, the parking lot is empty. Today I remembered both a walking pole and the bear spray. The latter was not required. Ice cleats and the former prove to be immensely useful. The trail is covered in snow from start to finish. It is divided nicely into thirds. The first third is along the lake. The next third is a series of switchbacks. Then there is a gradual incline to the shore of Rawson Lake.

Off to my left, D who is from Wetaskiwin and drives the RV, has been watching and listening to the mountain for the past two hours. He quietly tells me of a previous walk somewhere else, where he watched a bull moose chase a cow moose into a lake. A ranger, off to unlock an outhouse, briefly joins us. He tells us of a mama grizzly known to live in the higher altitudes. D and the ranger move on.

I exchange brief hellos with two others, who continue a couple hundred meters further along the shore – they feel like intruders. I spend time playing a game of where's the avalanche. I hear the snow releasing from the mountain in front of me. The game is to then spot the slide. More people start to arrive. It is time to leave.



Barrier Lake Interpretive Trail (Barrier Dam)

<> 4 km - Out and Back

Tuesday May 19

This is a popular location. There is a web of paths that spin off the main trail. Those paths go to picnic sites or the mud flats of a very low Barrier Lake. The main trail ends at a pleasant but not particularly memorable lookout over Barrier Lake. I can see and hear the vehicles along Highway 40. Two young women on another trail are laughing. The afternoon is grey with the occasional spit of rain. The forest is quieter and calmer than the lookout. The forest is also beginning to turn green. I am glad for the walk. When I get home, I am pleased with the photographic rewards.





# Prairie View Lookout (Barrier Lake)

< 10 km - Out and Back

Saturday May 23

The mood is one of grief (personal and societal), contemplation, and reflection. I start relatively early. For the most part I have the trail to myself on the way up. There is a hollow thunk as my boots hit the last of the ice patches. In another hour, the ice will have collapsed onto the mud and water. In one section, water appears from nowhere, creates a small stream down the edge of the path, and then vanishes into a large patch of soggy moss.

When I arrive at the lookout, I am not alone. A woman agrees to be photographed.

On the way down, I encounter many groups of all sizes, ages, and varying degrees of preparedness. Messages about social distancing appear to have been remembered by only a few. Most people I meet say hi or hello. The cohort most likely to not acknowledge my greetings are young men in their late twenties or early thirties – hmm.

The Barrier Dam parking lot is packed when I return to it - it had been nearly empty when I left.



## Horseshoe Canyon (Drumheller)

### < 5 km - Wandering

### Thursday May 28

The drive on familiar roads fits me like a worn and comfortable shirt. There is one other vehicle in the parking lot when I arrive just before 06:00, hoping to capture early light. I spend the next two and a half hours (and that is not enough time) wandering through a web of trails in a constant state of amazement.

At one point it dawns on me that though my wife knows where I am, it would be very easy to catch my ankle in any one of hundreds of small fissures, only to be slowly consumed by the sandstone (according to Wikipedia the canyon is composed of mudstone, sandstone, carbonaceous shales, and coal seams) – I should be careful.

Pairs of Canada geese monitor many of the hilltops within the canyon. When I get close to them, they lazily fly to another vantage point. They don't appear to mind that I am there, but they do let me know that I am being watched.

### Aftermath

There were two sets of images in the original report. The second set of images was the result of an initial half-thought. In post-processing that idea was expanded. Once upon a time, so long ago that even myth has forgotten about it, we were visited by aliens of short stature. If you look closely, you can still find vestiges of their homes and frightening rituals (17).









## Powderface East Ridge

### < 5 km - Out and Back - with Andrea

### Friday May 29

Today I have a new walking companion. Andrea is good company, and our paces seem to be well matched. The narrow trail though not well used is easily discernible. Dappled light and a soft forest floor absorb our footfalls. At the top of the first hill, we decide the snow-covered trail that would take us to the top of the ridge can wait until another day.

On the way down, we miss a turn, and then spend a hundred metres or so off course, breaking trail. The sound of vehicles on Highway 66 provides a useful reference point.

After returning to our cars, we drive a short distance to Forgetmenot Pond. It's a postcard (19).





## Baldy Pass

<> 8½ km - Out and Back

Tuesday June 2

There are only a couple of cars when I arrive at the Baldy Pass parking lot on Highway 40, in Kananaskis Country. A rhythm to the start of my walks is emerging. Take off sandals. Put on boots. Check pack. Make a lens decision (usually 105) for walking. Check the keys are in my pocket and not on the front seat. Lock the truck. There is a lightness and quickness of step in the first 200 metres or so. After those initial steps, which are too quick, my breathing and pace adjust. The forest begins to take form. Details and small bold patches of colour become visible.

I spend much of the first part of the trail thinking of a name for the cow that was walking on the edge of the exit ramp just west of Scott Lake Hill. I decide her name is Saraffin (Paraffin is of course the name of a horse). She had been hitchhiking back from the prairies. Using her tail, she had held a cardboard sign that read “Back to Pasture.” A flatbed truck had dropped her off and now she was home again. The cardboard sign was now in the ditch – cows pass gas, and they litter.

The trail has started to climb. It crosses a dried-up rocky creek bed. That is surprising for this time of year as snow is melting in the high country. There are a couple of small stone cairns marking the trail’s direction. A rock tossed onto a cairn bounces off – there must be a protocol to rock placement. I purposefully place a rock on each cairn.

As the trail climbs, some sections are slick from the last of the melting snow that still exists in small, sheltered crevices. Baldy Pass is marked by a large cairn. There is another cairn 40 metres higher. It marks a better vantage point to see Mt. Baldy and Midnight Peak (21).



## Ribbon Creek and Falls

<> 18 km - Out and Back

Thursday June 4

The title of this walk could also be “Too Many New Things.” The book (Gilleen Daffern’s Kananaskis Country Trail Guide 4th Edition Volume 1) says bicycles are permitted on the first four kilometres. Four years ago, I had outfitted my bike, a touring bike, with extra strong rims and extra tough tires. It is though still a touring bike (long wheelbase) and not a mountain bike (shorter wheelbase). Wednesday is spent cleaning the bike and making sure that the brakes work, in preparation for my first bike ride of the year.

I decide to use my large backpack so I can carry my tripod inside the pack. I reach the trailhead with camera around my neck, along with bike, gloves, helmet, and backpack – all this for just a day trip. It takes me nearly one and a half hours to travel four kilometres. I marvel at the scenery, push the bike at least half the way, and stop for photos. After locking my bike to the bike rack provided at the four-kilometre mark, I walk the next five kilometres thrilled by the photographic opportunities. Lunch is at the falls.

On the return trip to the bike, the trail is busy with people. We give way to each other in the covid way, and exchange pleasantries. Many people are wearing shorts and carrying very small daypacks. The clouds say it could get cold and wet for those who have started late, but then again many of them are of an immortal age.

I arrive at the bike rack looking forward to savouring a contemplative ride through the woods. The following twenty minutes are spent in deep concentration navigating rocks, cliff edges, and trees (remember that comment about short and long wheelbases). I arrive back at the truck with my heart racing and no damage done. It is my longest walk so far this year, and I vow to return soon.

Later, back at home, my enthusiasm for the trail is reflected in an amazing collection of absolutely banal, poorly conceived, poorly composed, or poorly exposed images. Few survive the digital shredder.





## Bowmont Ridge and Sideshow Bob Trail (Calgary)

<> 8 km - Counterclockwise

Saturday June 6

On Saturday, the thought of driving south or west into a forest feels too daunting. Furthermore, there isn't really enough time to make the drive. Instead, I check AllTrails.com and find a new-to-me Calgary trail, which starts at Shouldice Park. The trail is a loop that winds above the Bow River on its north side, and then returns on the same side closer to the river.

The light is flat and there are very few things that catch my eye. In hindsight, this walk was more about therapy than anything else. Sometimes the healing power of the outdoors can be found close to home (within thirty minutes drive). I did though get inspired by a couple of locations where I could extend ideas from the “30-in-30” project. Stay tuned, but don't hold your breath.



## Ribbon Creek and Falls

<> 18 km - Out and Back - with Keith  
Wednesday June 10

Following on from my vow on June 4 to revisit this trail soon, Keith and I meet at the trailhead. We begin walking around eight. The parking lot and trail are mostly empty at this time of day. The sun is still low enough to illuminate scenes with long slanting rays. The walk to the falls is a cycle of walk -> look -> stop -> explore -> capture. I enjoy both the cycle and the company. The sun is much higher in the sky on the return walk. Our energy wanes. The focus is more on our feet than our lenses. We finish the day over a delicious beer at the Kananaskis Golf Course.

After my first visit to Ribbon Falls, I decide that this walk will be themed water. I get distracted from my theme multiple times. This resulted in a presentation problem.

I have always loved the line where land meets sky, and until earlier this week I didn't know what to do with this genre of images. Now I know. This walk resulted in three sets. *Category 1* images are diary or reference images. *Water Works* is a container for explorations about water. *Land Mass* is also a new series that is now a work in progress. Today also has a rarity – one of only three *fives* so far this year.

## Aftermath

Keith's report on the walk is here:

<https://keithsodyssey.blogspot.com/2020/06/182-k-of-ribbon.html>

In one case, we both captured an image from nearly identical places and our results are quite different – different eyes, different visions.





## Prairie Mountain Trail (PMT)

<> 5 km - out and back - with Andrea; < 6½ km

Sunday June 14; Tuesday June 16

The trail is a relatively short 3¼ kilometres one way, but it is not for the faint of leg or heart. The trail's shortness is due to the lack of switchbacks as it ascends 666 metres straight up the side of Prairie Mountain, an average grade of over 20 per cent.

Beginning earlier this year, on Sundays there has been a 10:00 family Zoom meeting that crosses multiple time zones. I figure I can drive the 75 minutes to the trailhead, walk the entire trail, and return home all before the call. Andrea and I begin shortly after 05:30.

The trail is slick from the previous night's rain. At 07:45, I run out of time, and Andrea joins me on the retreat from the false summit. I recently stumbled upon the term false summit. I love the meaning some people give it. It is wherever you decide to turn around before reaching the peak. The term has a wonderful sense of both humour and accomplishment.

There is also a lesson in today's walk. Do not put a fixed end time to a walk. Being conscious of a time constraint establishes a sense of urgency that is

antithetical to my still inarticulate ideas on walking.

On Sunday we meet people of all shapes, sizes and preparedness going up as we descend. On Tuesday I return by myself. The walkers are different. Vancouver has its Grouse Grind. Calgary, unbeknownst to me until today, has Prairie Mountain. I encounter (they can't really talk as it might slow them down) any number of men and women who are running the trail competing for bragging rights in a conversation that I imagine goes something like, "I do the PMT in 47 minutes – what's your time?" One man around my age and wider tells me that this is his second time hiking the trail this week. He tells me that he is training. When I ask for what, he says to stave off the grim reaper.

A fledgling raven (Johnny) and I share the summit. Johnny the Raven is named after Johnny of Johnny Crow's Garden – a book written by a distant relative first published around 1903. Johnny obviously owns the summit. He stays less than 10 feet away preening himself and playing with a stick. When I start eating my snack, he comes a little closer. When I don't feed him, he flies off in disgust.





## Eiffel Lake

<> 11 km walk; 22 km bicycle - Out and Back

Monday June 22

Moraine Lake has many claims to fame including being on the old twenty-dollar bill, having a gorgeous turquoise colour, and being a gateway to the Valley of the Ten Peaks. This last claim is of today’s interest. For over half the year the 11 kilometre road to Moraine Lake is closed, and a large metal barrier prevents access.

Two days from now, the road will be opening to admit the annual barrage of summer visitors. Before the barrier there is a gravelled area that can hold maybe 30 vehicles. Spandex clad cyclists park their vehicles and cycle to Moraine Lake and back. A small subset of cyclists, like me, forego the spandex and wear hiking clothes.

It has been nearly 13 years since I was here, and that was by car. The pedal to the lake is mostly uphill with a small descent at the end. I arrive at the trail head sweating and aching. I lock my bike.

The first two kilometres or so of the trail is a sequence of switchbacks past babbling streams and small waterfalls, all glowing in the dappled light. I have the trail to myself, and yell out the occasional “Yo Bear.”

This is primarily for my peace of mind. Once the switchbacks begin, I am sucking wind. A bear could hear me over a kilometre away. Speaking of bears, I have now figured out that bear spray hanging from my belt makes much more sense than being tucked away where I can’t easily get to it. Ah yes – every walk is an opportunity to learn a little more.

At the top of the switchbacks a hiker overtakes me. He is headed right for Larch Valley. I turn left into the Valley of the Ten Peaks. Surprisingly, the trail is fairly flat. The valley floor slowly rises up to meet the trail until a moment of decision is required. Less than half a kilometre from my destination, I am confronted by an 8-foot-high barrier of snow. On one hand, I have thoroughly enjoyed having the trail to myself. On the other hand, crossing this band of snow of unknown width and stability, with no one to find me, might not be a good thing.

I have lunch and turn around. The return cycle to the truck makes me smile as do the day’s photos.









## Plains of the Six Glaciers

<> 15 km - Out and Back

Thursday June 25

This is turning out to be a dramatic week, as I try to complete two walks in areas that I fear may get difficult to access once July arrives. Eiffel Lake was on Monday. Today I am off to the lookout beyond the Plains of Six Glaciers Teahouse. There is still lots of parking at Lake Louise when I arrive around 08:30. Lake Louise has held a special place in my heart for so many years I no longer know or care why. It's a thrill to start walking at the Chateau. The trail follows the lake to the end. There are many benches along this section. The trail then climbs to the teahouse. There is something deliciously appealing about walking less than 6½ kilometres into the sub-alpine, and then find a small cafe, in a building initially built by the CPR, serving decent soup and lemonade. I stop for both before walking the remaining kilometre or so (one way) to the lookout. After returning to the teahouse, I fall for the temptation of chocolate cake. As my server says, it's the best cake on the mountain.

### For The Record: Plaque Near Teahouse

Plaque includes a picture of Charlotte the Marmot.

“Life at The Top Tea houses are comfortably furnished buildings built for trail hikers or riders to relax for short periods while on the trail. They are located at vantage points of unusual interest and beauty... (CPR 1932)

This tea house was built in 1926 by Swiss Guides employed by the CPR. The first operator was Martha Feuz, wife of guide Edward Feuz. In the early days, she slept on the floor to keep the two cabins available for paying guests. Joy Kimball and her husband Peter bought the tea house in 1959. Joy ran it for 45 years, raising her two daughters in a mountain meadow surrounded by glaciers. Her family still runs the tea house today.

Imagine life as a tea house operator — serving guests, packing in supplies, and assisting lost climbers are all in a day's work.

Charlotte was a large pet marmot that Joy's daughters carted around for eight summers - don't try this yourself!”













## Ptarmigan Cirque

< 5 km - Out and Back - with Kathy, Cam+, Michelle+ , Liz+

Wednesday July 1

Last week April asked me to give better guidance on not only where I would be, but when I could be expected at parking lots and at home. She wanted to know when she should start getting worried.

A walk in the alpine (if returning to one's starting point) inevitably means the elevation gains equal the elevation losses. Going up is slower than going down. There are more photo breaks in the first half of a walk than the second. Lunch breaks may take anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour. The pace I am now using for planning purposes, including all breaks, is 2 km/hr.

There are dozens of walking groups in and around Calgary. Their focus doesn't appear to have a photographer's pace in mind. Most of them appear to be about hiking (how odd!) and not about visual and mental meanderings. The previous week I had thrown out an invitation for walking companions to fellow members of a Facebook photography group. Over a dozen people voiced an interest. Most of those people said yes please, but can we start near the beginning (i.e. short and easy).

I had visited Ptarmigan Cirque a couple of times last year. As the trail starts at the top of the highest paved road in Canada, a short walk (less than 5 kilometres return) puts one above the treeline and in a rocky alpine area with wonderful views.

The weather had not looked promising for the previous three or four days. Yesterday evening (June 30) I sent out the walk-is-on note. As I drive the nearly two hours to the trailhead the sky is at times blue, grey, black, rain, fog, and drizzle. It is not raining when we leave the parking lot for the cirque. It is a muddy and slippery trail to the tree line. We cross snow to the base of the first rockfall and spend over an hour wandering under grey skies. Cam finds a great vantage point from which to capture the waterfall (41).

We descend back to our cars in drizzle, and pack our respective vehicles just as the rain hits. I drive south for a long loop home. Some peaks are shrouded (42).









## Upper Galatea Lake

<> 16 km - Out and Back

Friday July 3

I was originally thinking of something a little longer, but my blisters from last week are still healing. For those with more years of walking than me, Galatea Lake is an old and popular standby – it is new to me. The first part of the trail crisscrosses the thoroughly entertaining Galatea Creek on nine bridges. Then the real hill climbing begins. This uphill section ends at wooded Lillian Lake with its formal and informal benches, many of which are occupied. I am headed an extra 1¼ kilometres to Upper Galatea Lake. When I arrive, I have the lake to myself. I spend an hour watching clouds, icebergs, and reflections. A couple arrive and I bequeath my lovely lunch spot to them.

The trail is much busier when I descend in early afternoon. Once again, I am amazed at the footwear, and the lack of preparedness of many of the walkers. Some have backpacks and are on multi-day hikes. Others are wearing something with the grip of a sandal, and are carrying only a water bottle.

Speaking of preparedness, when I get home, I do a little bit of research on how many calories I consume per hour of walking. It appears that I burn about 500

calories per hour. Eating only a couple of Cliff bars for lunch helps to explain why I run out of energy near the end of my longer walks – the lessons continue.









## Fullerton Loop

< 7 km - Counterclockwise

Monday July 6

As much as I have been enjoying my stupid o'clock mountain walks, sometimes the thought of a long drive to a trailhead is exhausting. Today I break with my customary behaviour. I go with something a little closer, and I start late afternoon.

Initially, the path is a forest highway used by hikers, cyclists, and equestrians. Eventually, the path becomes a narrower but still wide trail. Based on who I encounter, the trail is well used by runners. Initially, I see very little, and the views though pleasant are not enticing. Instead, I experiment with different perspectives.



# Lundbreck Falls Ramble

## Thursday July 9 – Friday July 10

### Introduction

It is time for my first overnight camping trip in about 4 years. Today, I travel south to Lundbreck Falls and the Crowsnest region of Alberta. The report is divided into three parts, Driving with Joni, Driving with Cows, and The Walk.

### Driving with Joni - Thursday July 9

That would be Joni Mitchell and a line from the song Coyote, “A prisoner of the white lines on the freeway.” I have loved and kept that line for decades. Highway 40, the road to Lundbreck and back, is not really a freeway. It does though have white lines, and expanses that nearly make me cry. Today is the first day of an overnight drive to the Crowsnest Pass area, inspired by a photo of Lundbreck Falls I saw on Facebook. I will be pitching my tent near the falls.

So often I forget to adequately explore my subject. This is an opportunity to try out multiple ideas and perspectives during capture and post-production. Some of the images work and some not so much. I

also manage to wreck a polarizing filter (the lens is fine) by capturing an image too close to the waterfall’s spray. Once the cost of the filter is accounted for, the resulting image (not the facing one) turns out to be rather expensive and not particularly remarkable — ah well.

### Driving with Cows - Thursday July 9

The stars are just beginning to fade as I turn south onto Stoney Trail. I would like to be south of Chain Lakes by sunrise. By the time I get there, I have missed the sunrise.

I start wandering west on dead end dirt roads that end up against the Livingstone Range. The dew is still on the ground when I am stopped more than once by cows. As Corb Lund says, “Everything is better with cows around.” They are only vaguely annoyed by my interruptions to their morning meanders. One dead-end road leads me to the Bob Creek Staging Area. It is a parking area used primarily by equestrians and off highway vehicles to access Bob Creek Wildland. I go for a short walk up a longer





## Lundbreck Falls Ramble (contd)

than expected rise. Looking back roughly towards the Porcupine Hills, the sky rolls like the ground. As I make my way towards Lundbreck there are multiple distractions including a new addition to the Thin Line Series. These additions don't happen often, and when they do I smile.

### Aftermath

Funnily enough, the image on the next page was one of the first images captured on the trip. It is by far the best image of the drive. I am getting even fussier about my *fives*. The last one took me nearly a month to see if it had staying power. This one is in the running. I am still undecided on whether cutting off some of the hay bales is a good thing or a bad thing.

### The Walk - Saskatoon Mountain Loop < 10.5km - Counterclockwise Friday July 10

Today begins with a drive along Highway 3 past the Frank slide and onto Coleman. In a little piece of serendipity, I stop at the Burmis tree, which had been on my photo list.

The trailhead is at Flumerfelt Park, which has Coleman's contribution to "Big Things", the world's largest piggy bank. The first three quarters of a kilometre is shared with a trail called the Miner's Path, and follows a lyrical creek. If fairies and nymphs exist, this is their home. There is a gate with a handwritten sign asking walkers to "Please Keep Gate Closed." The gate is off to the side of the trail. It hasn't been closed in decades.

From the waterfall at the end of the Miner's Path, today's trail ascends quickly. At one point it is nearly a scramble. I start to notice that my phone is quickly losing power, and I am not carrying a topo map for this area. It dawns on me that this is how walkers get into trouble. There are roads east and south of me. If



## Lundbreck Falls Ramble (contd)

I get turned around, I could walk down in either of those directions and make my way back to the truck. I start to think about turning around and begin to hear voices ahead of me. I catch up with the voices. It is a family of five covering three generations. The granddaughter is in a child carrier on dad's back. As, they are doing the same trail in the same direction, I ask if I can join them. I am grateful for their acceptance and camaraderie. They are a family of campers and hikers, and I am conscious of maintaining their pace. It is not a photographer's one.

We stop for lunch just off the mountain summit to escape the wind and look west towards Crowsnest Mountain. To the right of it are all that remains from the Canadian Druids. Stonehenge was just a draft. By the time the Druids reached here, using pyramid power and sound waves, they were able to build truly massive temples.

Lunch now over, we make the return leg of the loop. Back at the waterfall, I thank and say goodbye to my walking companions. I also thank them on April's behalf. I return to the truck at my easily distracted

photographer's pace. Before leaving Coleman, I order a truly great clubhouse sandwich from Chris' Restaurant. My original plan was to drive home along the Forestry Trunk Road. Instead, I return via Highway 40 in the afternoon haze, past roads to be savoured another day.

### Aftermath

The phone was losing power too quickly because it was constantly looking for a wifi signal. At the start of a walk, I now put my phone into airplane mode to conserve power. The GPS still works and downloaded maps are still usable.

At the waterfall I photographed, without his permission, a child in a yellow raincoat. Before posting the image to my blog, I blurred his face in post-production so that he is not recognizable.

The Frank slide is where 400 vertical feet of Turtle Mountain slid into the valley on April 29, 1903.





## Edworthy Falls via Elbow Lake

< 10 km - Out and Back - with Liz +, Michelle

Monday July 13

There is still plenty of room in the parking lot when Liz, Michelle, and I meet around 08:30. The wide path is surprisingly steep, though not as steep as the one for Ptarmigan Cirque. In less than 1½ kilometres we arrive at Elbow Lake. It is an easy walk around the lake and onto the falls. The wide trail goes through an open valley that is pleasant on the eye. Today, I am more like a sponge – soaking things in but focusing on very little.

Technically, I choose more automated settings than my normal manual mode – I am an unhappy egg. Furthermore, I inadvertently continue to perpetuate my mistake of yesterday into part of today with my camera set to capture jpg instead of raw. This results in images without my regular set of adjustment possibilities – more egg unhappiness. I think I need a big sticker on my camera which says, “Check your settings dummy.”

The company is enjoyable.





## South Buller Pass

< 18½ km - Out and Back - with Michelle+, Liz+

Sunday July 19

By definition, stupid o'clock comes early. I enjoy having the gravel road of the Smith-Dorian nearly all to myself. Michelle, Cathy, Liz and Miss Kitty are all waiting for me when I arrive around 08:15. Aside: the outhouse is at the second parking lot. The first parking lot is the one closest to the trailhead. After the normal pre-walk rituals, we cross the road and begin one of the most varied walks so far.

The trail is initially a combination of easy to moderate walking through a dry forest, past a waterfall, through a couple of burn areas, across a meadow or two, and then we slowly transition into the alpine. Just before the base of the scree, Liz decides to admire the pass from a distance. The trail is no longer moderate. It becomes a great huffing and puffing fest. The weather has started to turn. It adds drama to the scene and a degree of apprehension. The marmots don't care whether we come or go.

The view from the pass is spectacular. To the south-east, less than three kilometres away, there is Ribbon Lake, which feeds into Ribbon Creek via the waterfall of the same name. To the northwest is lies both the way we came up and the way back (60).

## Aftermath

A reader comments on the blog that marmots are cheeky little buggers that should be slapped. I reply that I am pretty sure marmots really don't give a damn about us humans, and I am also sure that if they could give us all a finger they would. They make me smile.

I also reply to a comment on my use of toning. I have used sepia on occasion, but I have recently started to use a copper toning. I like the hint of age it gives an image. It also sometimes adds some depth and warmth. I don't have any real rules on when to tone an image (copper or selenium) except that sometimes it feels like the right thing to do.

The images captured from this day were as varied as the trail. There was everything from postcards, flowers, additions to both the *Water Works* and *Land Mass* series, and emerging ideas.









## Wedge Pond

< 2 km - Counterclockwise - with April, Rod, Gail

Wednesday July 22

On an earlier drive I had checked this trail to see if it was an appropriate introductory trail. April and I drive out to the parking lot where we meet Rod and Gail. There is a great variety of wildflowers to appreciate. I am only wearing sandals on my feet. I have no camera around my neck, and the daypack is in the car. My whole body feels light and airy as we saunter around the pond, babbling about absolutely nothing of consequence.

After the walk, we drive to the Kananaskis Golf Course. We have a beer and lunch on the patio overlooking the golf course with Mt. Kidd in the background. The whole outing is delightful. The walk is a success, and there is agreement that a longer walk would be nice.





## Mt.Allan via Centennial Ridge

### < 16 km - Out and Back - with Michelle

### Friday July 24

Gillean had warned me, Leigh had warned me, and AllTrails warned me. This trail is not for the faint of leg or knee. Michelle and I meet in the Ribbon Creek parking lot around 07:30. We begin a little later after the ceremony of donning socks and boots. The first two kilometres follow a series of old logging roads. We gain a little altitude and wonder about the warning. The well marked trail leaves a logging road and becomes steep. Thus, begins a great long huff and puff section which eventually places us on a ridge looking down onto the lifts and ski runs of Nakiska.

We continue walking along the ridge to the “Rock Garden.” The wind is no longer benign. It has delivered a pelting drizzle. Lunch becomes soggy. My gloves only partially protect my fingers from the cold. We decide that another 45 minutes or longer walk to the summit of Mt. Allan is not a must, and declare a false summit. We meet a dozen or more hikers in foul weather gear on our descent. By the time we reach the treeline, the rain has passed and the sky has blue again.

Throughout this summer’s walks I have found hiking poles to be very useful and helpful. They do however

have their limitations. On a particular steep section of the descent, I put too much weight on one of the poles. One pole bends and the other snaps in half. The now broken pole stops my forward fall, and I escape a gravel burn across the face. The broken pole goes partially into an outside pouch of the day pack. Near the trailhead, I adjust my pack only to find that I have lost half a broken pole somewhere in the previous five kilometres. I try not to leave a trace. It bothers me that I have left one.

### Aftermath

A reader suggests some ideas on cropping to accentuate the interplay between the clouds and the mountains.

I am not happy with my “Rock Garden” photos and I hope to return before the winter winds.



## Helen Lake Trail

<> 12½ km - Out and Back

Tuesday July 28

### Introduction

It is time for a change of scenery. Inspired in part by the road trips of Byron, Steve, and Heather, I had spent time over the previous four or five days considering where to walk and camp along the Icefields Parkway. The first come first served no reservation Waterfowl Lake campground emerged as a great base for three days of walking. According to the very helpful woman at Parks Canada, getting there at 10:00 and expecting to find a spot would be a bad bet. This morning, I left the house around 05:30. When I arrive at 08:30, there are spots available. I self-register, pitch my tent, and get ready for the day's walk. The campground is not only in a lovely location, it has flush toilets – truly a camping luxury.

### The Walk

I drive around 23 kilometres back down the highway to the Helen Lake trailhead. The trail is shaped a bit like an open safety pin, as it follows the base of Crystal Ridge, and then ends with a vertical section coming off the top arm. Sometimes I hear water, and

sometimes I hear water-wind as I walk the first arm. It is a relatively easy and steady incline through forest. Tens of thousands of footsteps have exposed and polished tree roots, and yet the trees continue to survive. The second arm is unusual for my mountain walks so far, as the mostly up is interspersed with the occasional noticeable loss of elevation, which of course must then be recouped.

Once above the treeline, the visual landscape is one of texture, line, and blue, with clouds for punctuation. At around 2,400 m elevation, the sky is so clear and the blue so vibrant I rub my eyes in disbelief.





## Wilcox Pass and Lookout

### < 12 km - Out and Back

### Wednesday July 29

Today is the second day of my three-day camping trip to the Icefields Parkway. Last night’s supper was freeze dried what’s it. I added too much water. Even after boiling off some of it, I was still left with something that had the sole benefit of providing calories. Except for the one night at Lundbreck Falls, it has been four years since I last slept in a tent. Though the thin ensolite pad was not horrible, I have decided to make a concession to my body. I will have an air mattress for my next camping trip.

The day starts early. In true camping fashion, I seem to easily make the transition to “just being” time. This morning’s breakfast with fresh coffee is so much better than last night’s questionable meal. After putting everything away, I drive north for less than an hour, just past Sunwapta Pass to the Wilcox Pass trailhead. I squeeze the truck into the penultimate parking spot.

There is a short introduction before the ascent begins. Initially the walk is through an old dry forest where some of the trees are thought to be over four hundred years old. As I climb there are viewpoints. One of them even has a couple of red chairs. They provide a

point to revel in the vistas to the west, across the valley to the Columbia Icefields. The trail starts high and it isn’t long before I am well above the treeline, in a land that looks like how I imagine Mongolia. The sense of space is immense, and I have absolutely no sense of scale. My jaw drops.

### Aftermath

In response to a suggestion to consider using a tripod, or neutral density filters, or speedlights, I replied, “I was carrying a tripod on my initial walks and was not using it (really out of laziness). On recent walks, I have not been carrying a tripod, and realized that I have missed some opportunities. So, it is time to both carry and use the tripod.”

One reader suggested, “As you probably know, in post-processing of B&W, you can employ a red filter in order to greatly darken the sky, thus creating even more drama.” I did not know that.









## Bow Glacier Falls

< 9 km - Out and Back

Thursday July 30

Today is the third day and walk of my three-day camping trip along the Icefields Parkway. The day begins with coffee, a short wander to the edge of Waterfowl Lake, camp tear down, and packing.

Vultures looking for a camping spot are circling through the campground. I speak to a pair of friendly and appreciative vultures, and let them know my campsite will be free in a half hour or so. I recognize the couple's camper from the previous night. As I was sipping scotch by a fire, they were late arrivals looking for a campsite and had found nothing. As I finish packing, they register, and then wait on the road until I leave.

I drive a short way south to Bow Lake and park near the Num-Ti-Jah Lodge, which is closed this year. In normal years, the place would be bustling with people. This year there are two summer employees painting chairs red. The lodge looks forlorn and abandoned.

The first half or so of the walk is nearly flat, as it goes around the north end of Bow Lake. The trail then turns away from the lake to follow a creek. There is a

set of stairs. Once upon a time, I am sure the steps had a reasonable run and rise. With time the stairs have slipped, slid, and become stairs for giants. I climb them in a series of deep knee bends. Just past the top of the stairs there is the first lookout of the falls. I pause to pepper a couple of conservation officers with questions, which they happily answer.

The falls are surprisingly difficult to photograph, as there doesn't seem to be a good angle from which to capture the water falling vertically. Only one of the walk's many panoramas survives editing. On the walk back to the lodge, I photograph a log for Keith. I then turn the truck towards home – it has been a good three days. Later, in post-processing, I decide to give many of today's images a copper tone to give them some continuity. I also like selenium toning but that seems too blue for these vistas.









## Burstall Pass

< 19 km - Out and Back - with Michelle

Wednesday August 5

The moon is just about to set behind Mt. Kidd on my drive to the trailhead. Further along, I miss mama grizzly and her two cubs. Michelle, who was just behind me, saw them in her rear-view mirror. There is also a sign at the trailhead notifying us that bears are near. We begin walking even more bear aware than usual.

The trail begins with Mud Lake on our right (north) along an old wide access road. The trail is divided into sections. In this first section the trail is nearly flat. We stroll to a lake, stop for a reflection, and a brief conversation with a fisherman. In the second section we hop, jump, and teeter on thin branches as we cross the many tentacles of Burstall Creek, as it flows across the alluvial plain and away from the creek's source, which is one of Mount Robertson's glaciers (that is Robertson not Robson). After over half a kilometre of game playing, we reach the third section of the trail with dry feet. We quickly gain elevation to a slowly sloping plateau and then another ascent to the pass and the border of Banff National Park. After lunch we wander around the area, before returning to our vehicles. There were no bears to be seen, and the walk is a top ten for the summer.

## Aftermath

I find there is a disconnect between the quality of the photos and the quality of the walk. The walk was so much better than what I captured. Back to school for me.





# Picklejar Lakes

<> 11½ km - Out and Back - with Michelle, Liz+

Friday August 7

Today’s trailhead is south of Highwood Pass by less than 20 kilometres. The small parking lot is nearly full when we arrive around 08:15. Part of the route here was on a new-to-me road south of Turner Valley, which has all sorts of photographic opportunities. Even before the walk begins, I am happy with the day.

The clouds are moving fast. The trail winds mostly uphill through a forest of aspen and spruce to the top of a scree slope. The descent to the first of four lakes is the most precarious section of the walk. We have lunch overlooking the last of the lakes, a tarn. It is nestled in a cirque – the headwall is close.

As the trail is busy on the return trip, we perform the covid dance many times. It is a bit like chicken and a bit like passing people in an office corridor. Inevitably someone says, “I’ll step aside.” Sometimes it is me. Sometimes, it is an oncoming walker.

Photographically, today is all about texture.

## Aftermath

I nearly missed the rainbow because I wanted to drive a little further to a better vantage point. 200 metres later the rainbow was waning quickly.









## Cypress Hills Ramble

Wednesday August 12 – Friday August 15

### Introduction

It is time for another change. Today I travel east to Cypress Hills Provincial Park, in the southeast corner of Alberta, with a side trip into Saskatchewan. The report is divided into three parts, The Ramble, The Walk, and The Village.

### The Ramble - Wednesday August 12

The day's drive begins shortly before 06:30. Different vehicles feel fast at different speeds. The truck feels fast at 110 km/hr, and driving requires more concentration than at 100 km/hr. At the lower speed, I don't tire as quickly, and can spend time enjoying the start of the harvest season. At some point the radio and podcasts are turned off. They have become noise. At Fort Macleod the road takes a turn eastward towards Lethbridge. Its iconic bridge doesn't capture my fancy today. I continue heading southeast until just before Stirling. My route east to the Cypress Hills, based solely on name, is Highway 61. I can't even say it is being revisited. Besides the highway signs, the road is labelled "The Red Coat

Trail." According to Wikipedia, "The Red Coat Trail' is a 1,300 km route that approximates the path taken by the North West mounted Police in their quest to bring law and order to the Canadian West." The road doesn't disappoint. There is even a *five* in the results (83).

I arrive in Elkwater a little past 15:00 only to find that I booked my campsite for different days. The helpful woman from Alberta Parks laughs with (?) me as she saves me from myself. I end up with a campsite near the east edge of the park. I make camp, inflate my brand-new air mattress, and hope for an improvement over the ensolite pad.

### The Ramble - Thursday August 13

I wake after a horrible night on the air mattress. Maybe if I inflate it a little more for tonight, it might work. I animal proof camp and get ready for the day's walk. Several hours later, after my walk, a bee that had flown under my hat takes hold. It convinces me that I should drive further east into Saskatchewan. It takes me the better part of two and





## Cypress Hills Ramble (contd)

a half hours to get to “The Great Sandhills.” Once there, I meet a thin grey-haired man with a sun sculpted face and a cowboy hat. He tells me he rode this land for twenty-five years, and points out Boot Hill. I am sure some of those boots are his. I wander around the closest sand dune. A woman tells me of two porcupines she just saw in a nearby tree.

After eating tomorrow’s lunch for today’s supper, I begin the drive back to my campsite. My last photo of the day is from north of Maple Creek as peas size hail bounces off a freshly paved section of Highway 21.

At the hamlet of Walsh on the Trans Canada Highway (TCH), I could take the now known road back to my campsite via Elkhwater, which would amount to three sides of a rectangle. Instead, the more direct route beckons. I turn south.

The light of my high beams falls off the edges of the unfamiliar sharp shouldered gravel road. The stars are just beginning to shine. I am grateful for the yellow caution signs that let me know of yet another twist in the road. The scotch and beer back at my

campsite are welcome punctuation marks to a very good day. I marvel at the simplicity, functionality, and durability of my thirty-year-old Coleman lantern, as I make the initial notes for this report. Before ending the day, I add more air to the mattress, and hope again.

### The Ramble - Friday August 14

I don’t really need the alarm, which goes off shortly after 04:00. I have spent most of the night in that half land where you don’t really know if you have slept at all. Two weeks later I will give the air mattress away. The experiment was a success – the subject was exhausted. On my drive out to Ressor Lake Lookout to greet the dawn, I pass a dozen or so cows lined up head to tail, single file, and asleep along a windbreak. By the time I have broken camp, packed, and driven to Elkhwater, the cafe is open. With coffee and croissant in hand, I begin the drive up to the TCH and home. The early start and the lousy sleeps finally catch up with me half an hour east of Strathmore. I grab my pillow from its home behind the passenger seat, sleep for thirty minutes





## Cypress Hills Ramble (contd)

on the front seat of the truck, and I then drive the last leg of an excellent ramble.

### The Walk - Lake, Firerock, Horseshoe Canyon and Beaver Creek < 12.5 km - Counterclockwise

A reader took the time to read and comment on all the walking reports up to this one in a single session. I hope he had wine. One comment suggested I consider using a tripod more often. It was a seed I had already planted, and it was serendipitous to have it watered by someone else. Thank you Richard. Hiking poles are not required today, and I am using my tripod for all images on this walk.

Today's walk begins with a lakeshore stroll by tall grasses along a luxurious boardwalk. After bending inland, the well trodden path begins a long lazy climb to Horseshoe Canyon Lookout(no, not the Drumheller one). Five or six kilometres later there is a bench overlooking the canyon. Carved into the wooden railing are the usual collection of hearts and initials. Are they still together? Someone has used a

permanent marker to print "As you wish." I wonder who was Buttercup.

The trail back is also used by careening mountain bikers who talk about gnarly turns. For me, it is a pleasant walk in the woods.

### The Village - Skiff

In the pale light of a summer's day under a Turner sky a new rainbow flag flies – its colours still vibrant. A flag post away, there is a faded Alberta flag with a wind shredded edge. A block away the only life in the abandoned farm equipment store is insulating plastic blowing from a boarded up second story window. Around the corner on Railway Avenue, just past the grain elevator, a kilometre of grain cars lie in wait for their annual journey west, soon to be filled with grains or pulses. Past the grain cars, there is an equally long line of oil cars. Across the Canadian prairies there must be thousands of these oil cars, waiting for a future need. I wonder if CN and CP use these sidings as cheap storage. I return to Highway 61.





## Cypress Hills Ramble (contd)

### For the Record: Murder of Constable Graburn

From a plaque of unknown date near my campsite, “Constable Marmaduke Graburn N.W.M.P. was shot and killed by unknown persons in the Cypress Hills November 17, 1879. He was the first mounted policeman killed by violence since the force was organized in 1873. Star Child, a Blood Indian was accused of the murder but was acquitted in 1881.”

### For the Record: Horseshoe Canyon Lookout

From a plaque at the lookout, “Thousands of years ago, glaciers advanced from the north. They flowed into and around the Cypress Hills, leaving the plateau where you are standing untouched. This is one of the few areas in western Canada that escaped glaciation. As the glaciers melted, water carved steep-sided valleys into the northern and western slopes.”

### Aftermath

Two readers commented on the photo on page 89. To their credit both gave me the benefit of doubt, but they did wonder what on earth I was thinking. Here was my reply, “I was thinking of Turner water colours, the washed out heat of a prairie summer day, and how the heat adds to the sense of rail, road, and hydro lines receding into a vast space.”

In response to a suggestion from April, there is now both a blanket and a pillow behind the passenger’s seat, for those times when I am too tired to drive.









## Upper Kananaskis Lakes

<> 16½ km - Clockwise - with Liz+

Thursday August 20

There are two large campgrounds nearby, which help make the trails in this area busier than most. As a result, today's start is earlier than normal. We have the parking lot nearly all to ourselves. For the first ten kilometres or so, we also have the trail to ourselves. We pass the trail to Rawson Lake. It is closed due to the presence of bears.

Further along, and off in the distance, a helicopter is carrying supplies to a construction site. We decide that those supplies are probably not mukluks. We find out later that a new outhouse is being installed at a campground near the end of the lake.

A little past the halfway point we stop to admire the waterfall on the Kananaskis River. The falls are just upstream from where the river empties into the lake. Near the end of the trail, there is a beach of wood and rock, rich in photographic possibilities. Ah, another place to return to.

### Aftermath

Keith and I have had an ongoing conversation about the difference between what the eye perceives and the camera records. The photo on page 95 is illustrative of that conversation. During capture, I was drawn to the separation between foreground and background, and the absence of any middle ground. The camera, as it is inclined to do, flattened the scene and the separation appeared to be lost. I tried several experiments (black and white, contrast, toning, etc.) to get what I had originally seen. Eventually, I ended up desaturating the blues, which achieved the desired effect.









## Karst Spring Trail

< 10 km - Out and Back - with Liz+

Friday September 11

Let's just say you were staying at Boulton, Canyon, or any other campground near the Kananaskis Lakes. Furthermore, let's just say you were new to hiking and wanted an easy and rewarding hike to make you feel good about the whole walking in the woods thing. If this has your attention, then I have a trail for you. Today though, I am not camping, and so it took about two and a quarter hours to drive from Rundle in Calgary's North East to the trailhead, which is at the Mount Shark Day Use Facility. The parking lot is over five kilometres along a narrow dirt road off the Smith-Dorian, a wide gravel road. Before I get to the parking lot, I pass a helicopter pad. I am curious. The parking lot has a surprisingly large number of vehicles, and it is not even 08:30. I am even more curious.

Besides a sign for our trail, there are multiple signs for various biathlon circuits. For those who love the sport, I am sure it makes sense. I have always found it one of the odder traditional winter Olympic sports.

The trail from the parking lot is a flat easy stroll along an old wide exploration road. We pass a pond, which has thin films of ice from the previous night.

We pass three spruce grouse. The grouse have learned their people skills from marmots – go away, and I don't give a damn whether you are here or not. After about four kilometres, we arrive at a fork in the trail. A longer trail goes off to the right. We take the trail to the left. It takes us to the edge of the lovely Watridge Lake. I think about returning for a sunrise and a sunset.

A long set of half-cut logs form what Liz calls “The Bog Bridge.” The segments zigzag to the start of a gradual incline that ends at the spring's outflow, which is the start of the stream. There is no sense the outflow is the source for such a large and constant flow of water. Very little light makes its way through the forest to the stream. The moss is thick, green, and lush.

On the return trip we name a mountain Jumping Fish Mountain based on the oval of last year's snow, which looks like an eye. Another mountain is named Mount Leopard. The skiff of last night's snow on its slopes resembles leopard spots. The films of ice have melted.





## Karst Spring Trail (contd)

Later that day, I consult the Google, and discover the trail to Watridge Lake is the first stage of one of two major routes to Assiniboine Lodge. In summer it is a long day’s walk to the lodge. Most people take two days. In winter, people cross-country ski to the lodge. The other option is to fly in by helicopter. I am thinking I should walk in, maybe next year. April can fly in, and we can spend four or five nights there – it’s only a lottery win away.

### For the Record: Plaque at Spring’s Outflow

“This creek springs from a system of passageways buried in the layered limestone of this mountain.

Rainwater and snowmelt seep into tiny cracks and fissures in limestone and dissolve it. When the water finds an outlet, streams begin to go underground. As speed and volume grow, water erodes the fissures into larger passages, smashing the tunnel walls with rock debris and smoothing them with abrasive rock particles. This system of underground passages is called karst, named for an area in Yugoslavia (me: So,

the plaque pre-dates 1992) where these are common.

On the mountainside above you, water enters the Watridge karst system and tumbles through many passages to the surging outlet in front of you. The only known section of this karst system is what you now see – a creek that looks like it flows from rock.”

### Aftermath

Alan says the Karst makes a spectacular display in winter, the deepest darkest time... whether by foot or sometimes better by snowshoe. Furthermore, Alan and I agree that if timing permits, we will walk (27 kilometres one way) to Assiniboine Lodge next year.

Given that the camera flattens scenes, it is up to us to add depth back into the image through what is still called dodging and burning. So, I have started to consciously and I hope transparently emphasize light and shadow by using Lightroom’s adjustment brush. For instance, the image on page 99 had good bones but its flesh needed some touch-ups.





## Sentinel Pass via Larch Valley Trail

<> 12½ km - Out and Back - with Liz+

### Friday September 18

The alarm goes off at 02:45. I am out the door half an hour later and headed west. Over two hours later, I am surprised to see there are Banff National Park employees controlling traffic at the Moraine Lake Road. I heed the waving flashlight, take the turn, and about twenty minutes later, I arrive at the parking lot. It is already three quarters full, and it is only 05:45. Liz and her daughter are about six vehicles behind. The stars are still out. The sky is clear. There is no sign of smoke from the US West Coast fires. Some people are waiting in their cars. Others are climbing out of their rented camper vans, and still others are putting on their headlamps. By 06:30 the stars are gone, and the once smokeless skies are no longer clear. We begin walking the constantly climbing path until we get to a wooden bench. On a previous walk, I had turned left towards Eiffel Lake. Today we turn right, on a new-to-me trail, towards Larch Valley and Sentinel pass.

Smoke has obscured the dawn. An unnatural orange light accentuates the needles on the larch trees. The light will remain eerie until we return to the pine forest and the bench three or four hours later. We reach the largest of the Minnestimma Lakes at the

foot of Sentinel Pass. Liz and her daughter decide to forego the climb. I huff and puff my way to the top of the pass. The trail to Paradise Valley is below me. That trail will have to wait for another day. Pinnacle Mountain (101), like most scenes on this walk, looks post-apocalyptic.

Weird light but not without its rewards.





## Bryant Lake Trail

### < 17 km - Out and Back

### Thursday September 24

Today’s walk is a milestone event. This is my 30th new-to-me trail this year. The morning begins more slowly than other walking days. Eventually I make it into the truck for the drive to a new trail and a new road. I am excited. My research has suggested that this is a particularly wild part of Kananaskis Country. The trailhead is about twenty minutes north of Forgetmenot Pond on the road called “Powderface Trail.” Even though the parking area for the trailhead is just a partially gravelled flat area on the side of the road, it does have a name, the Canyon Creek parking area.

Once upon a time before the floods of 2013, I have read, there used to be a trail. The first 5 kilometres or so of the walk is really a slow game of find the trail. Most of the time I am walking on gravel, shale, or rock, as the creek beds are much wider than they were before the flood. Every once in a while, I catch a glimpse of the old dirt trail. Those segments are short, and then it is back to the stones. At the beginning of this year’s series of walks, the lack of trail would have made me apprehensive. Now, I am just taking today’s route in stride. The wind has been silently howling down the valley all morning,

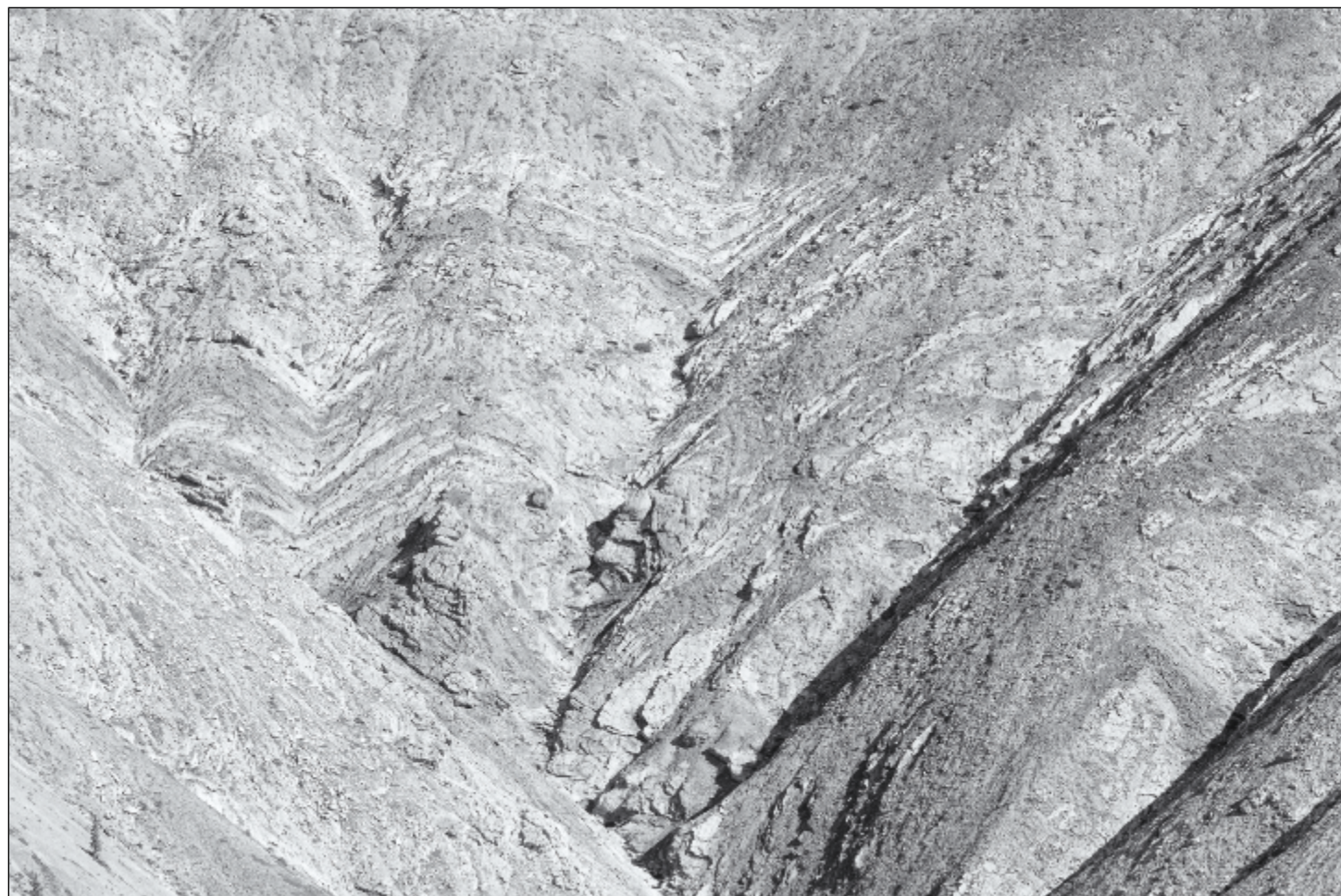
whipping the straps of my pack against my face. The route leaves a stream bed, and climbs up towards a tarn, Bryant Lake. The forest is still and provides pleasant relief from the wind. Once above the treeline the land looks wild and, except for a trail, untouched. After a snack at the lake, I play with a combination of multiple exposures and ICM (intentional camera movement) in an experiment to capture both structure and wind. There are also some straight ICM experiments because the idea of stone on the move makes me smile.

On the return trip, in the middle of absolutely “now-here”, I start to exchange pleasantries with two hikers walking towards me – it’s Alan and his brother. It is a treat to see Alan after such a long time, and we spend the next 30-40 minutes chatting. I head back along the creek beds. They continue up the valley on the first day of their three-day hike. This route was into the wildest country I have walked this year, and the first time I have met people I know on the trail.

Now what? The walking doesn’t stop. There will at some point be some sort of a summary post, and perhaps even a something else.









## Larch Valley to Sentinel Pass Trail

### < 10 km - Out and Back

### Tuesday September 29

I have now gone beyond stupid o'clock. When I wake at 02:17, I declare the time stupidest o'clock. Today, I am off to walk at least part of the trail I walked with Liz and her daughter eleven days earlier. There has been snow and wind since that first walk, which should have cleared out the smoke we experienced that day. Around 03:15, with coffee in hand, I am headed west. It is just me (or so I think) and the long haulers out on the Trans-Canada at this time of night.

Somewhere a little west of the park gates (Banff National Park), a semi-truck is driving east on the shoulder of the west bound lanes with its lights flashing. Well that is odd. Was this planned or not, how, and why? I drive on in my padded cocoon listening to Mark Gruber talk about the location of consciousness. It is around five o'clock when I slow down for another small set of flashing lights. A cyclist is pedalling along the highway. He doesn't look like a traveller. He looks more like someone on his way to work. I give him a virtual tip of my toque.

Around 05:30 I make the now familiar left turn off Lake Louise Drive towards Moraine Lake. No one is

controlling traffic. I am no longer alone in my cocoon, there are over a dozen of us all in a line driving towards the parking lot. Forty-five minutes later, my headlamp is on, and I have started the climb to the wooden bench that marks the fork in the trail between the one to Eiffel Lake and the one to Larch Valley. By the time I reach the bench the stars are gone, and the false dawn has begun. Maybe, I can get to the largest of the Minnestimma Lakes before the real dawn. I increase my pace.

I choose not to huff and puff my way to the top of Sentinel Pass. Instead, I spend nearly an hour and a half in the alpine before walking back to the truck. The trail is busy on the return walk. By the time I get back to Lake Louise Drive, there are RCMP constables controlling access to Moraine Lake Road.

Dear Reader, you and I are now at the same place – walks and reports are now current. I am really pleased with this set. I believe there may be more than one *five* here, and that makes me smile even more. I am not sure when my next walk will be, but I have ideas on new approaches. After today, my bar for my art and craft is a little higher.













# Afterword

This was my second “30” project in 2020. The first one was a series of 30 original (to me) photographic experiments done in 30 days. As with the first, I didn’t know what I was doing at the beginning of this project either. In those first walks, I was walking to get out of the house, to avoid driving my wife completely cuckoo, as a way of grieving the loss of my mother, for physical activity, as a travel alternative, to confront and to avoid my demons.

As the weeks progressed, patterns of process and behaviour began to emerge. I also learned a little bit about walking, a little more about photography, and was reminded of simple pleasures.

A walk needs a starting point, and for that I begin with research. Where to go? How far away is it? Is it within my abilities and capabilities? How long is the walk? Is it marked or not? Is it well used? Is there an outhouse near the trailhead? What are the visual rewards? What does the weather look like? Who will join me? What is a good day? Though these questions are not written down as a checklist, they all get some consideration.

Over the summer my pace improved, and breaks got longer. The pace for planning purposes changed from 2 km/hr to 2½ km/hr.

Walking days became days of early starts, and some days were so early that it was just stupid o’clock. Once at the trailhead, I came to appreciate the transition from driving at 100 km/hr to taking off my sandals, to putting on my boots, to walking at 2½ km/hr for up to eight hours. Though my now broken-in leather boots are now so very comfortable, I still like the end of walk ritual of switching back into sandals. I am still not used to switching back to driving at 100 km/hr - the transition is too quick. I have learned 101 little things that make me happier in my walking skin, and I have 1001 more things to learn.

My daypack is still too heavy (a tripod and two lenses will do that). I carry less water now. I do carry a high-tech filter so that I can purify water. I may not need much for lunch, but I do need an afternoon snack. Bear spray is more useful if it is attached to the belt and not inside the pack. I lace my boots differently for each foot.

Photographically, I am thinking about my image making more intently. Also, I have reinforced to myself that good work requires good work. Though I didn’t capture images specifically for the walking reports, a walk was not finished until the associated report was posted.

It has been said the longest distance in art is the one between very good and truly great. Some of these images are very good, and many are among the best I have ever done. When I joined a particular Facebook group, I was asked to place myself somewhere along the photographic journey. At that time, I said I was somewhere between further along and further to go. I am still there, and a little further along.

Thank you kindly once again for being a participant, wittingly or unwittingly in my travels.

Regarding those demons from the top of this section, I have fired the judge, jurist, and psychoanalyst in my head multiple times, but they all keep returning - most unfortunate.

Walking continues ...

Love to all,  
Sean  
December, 2021

Page 114 (overleaf) lists the 30 new walks and the associated posts from <https://SeanDrysedale.com>.



No	Walk	Date	Post	Post Date
1	Sandy McNab	2020-05-09	A Walking Report 01	2020-05-20
2	Alder Trail	2020-05-12	A Walking Report 01	2020-05-20
3	Rawson Lake	2020-05-14	A Walking Report 01	2020-05-20
4	Barrier Lake Interpretive	2020-05-19	A Walking Report 01	2020-05-20
5	Prairie View Lookout	2020-05-23	A Walking Report 02	2020-05-30
6	Horseshoe Canyon	2020-05-28	A Walking Report 02	2020-05-30
7	Powder Face East Ridge	2020-05-29	A Walking Report 02	2020-05-30
8	Baldy Pass	2020-06-02	A Walking Report 03	2020-06-09
9	Ribbon Creek and Falls	2020-06-02	A Walking Report 03	2020-06-09
10	Bowmont Ridge	2020-06-06	A Walking Report 03	2020-06-09
-	Ribbon Creek and Falls	2020-06-10	A Walking Report 04	2020-06-17
11	Prairie Mountain	2020-06-14	A Walking Report 04	2020-06-17
		2020-06-16		
12	Eiffel Lake	2020-06-22	A Walking Report 06	2020-07-05
13	Plains of Six Glaciers	2020-06-25	A Walking Report 07	2020-07-07
-	Ptarmigan Cirque	2020-07-01	A Walking Report 05	2020-07-04
14	Galatea Lakes	2020-07-03	A Walking Report 08	2020-07-13
15	Fullerton Loop	2020-07-06	A Walking Report 09	2020-07-21
-	Lundbreck Falls	2020-07-09	A Walking Report 10 - With Joni	2020-07-23
-	Bob Creek Wildlands and Drive	2020-07-09	A Walking Report 10 - With Cows	2020-07-24
16	Saskatoon Mountain Loop	2020-07-10	A Walking Report 10 - With Family	2020-08-01
17	Edworthy Falls	2020-07-13	A Walking Report 09	2020-07-21
18	Buller Pass South	2020-07-19	A Walking Report 11	2020-08-03
19	Wedge Pond	2020-07-22	A Walking Report 11	2020-08-03
20	Centennial Ridge	2020-07-24	A Walking Report 12	2020-08-08
21	Helen Lake	2020-07-28	A Walking Report 13	2020-08-10
22	Wilcox Pass	2020-07-29	A Walking Report 14	2020-08-11
23	Bow Glacier Falls	2020-07-30	A Walking Report 15	2020-08-16
24	Burstall Pass	2020-08-05	A Walking Report 17	2020-09-16
25	Picklejar Lakes	2020-08-07	A Walking Report 17	2020-09-16
26	Cypress Hills	2020-08-(12-14)	A Walking Report 16	2020-09-31
27	Upper Kananaskis Lake	2020-08-20	A Walking Report 17	2020-09-16
28	Karst Spring Trail	2020-09-11	A Walking Report 18	2020-09-27
29	Sentinel Pass Via Larch Valley	2020-09-18	A Walking Report 19	2020-09-29
30	Bryant Lake Trail	2020-09-24	A Walking Report 20	2020-09-30
-	Sentinel Pass Via Larch Valley	2020-09-29	A Walking Report 21	2020-10-02