

Day 7, Thursday, August 7, 2008

Walking up the hill this morning with the bathroom shovel I notice how incredible everything looks after yesterday's rain. The green is not just green but emerald, new growth on everything overnight. I am amazed at how bright and beautiful everything is. As I was walking back down the hill to camp, all of a sudden from nowhere there is a Ruffed Grouse standing right next to me. She is



indignantly fluffing out all of her feathers and she looks to me like a miniature turkey. Out from underneath her feathers run four baby chicks squeaking and chirping and running for cover. Mama scolded "Brrrrddd..." at me as she boldly walked up to me as if to say, "Back off lady!" She was risking her own life to protect her chicks. I took a couple of quick pictures and then left her to collect her brood. As I shared this meeting with Allan he told me he'd been keeping track of the birds he's seen or heard over the course of our trip. Fourteen he identified were, Herring Gull, Bald Eagle, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Ruffed Grouse, Common Merganser, Redwing Blackbird, Chickadee, Flicker, Magnolia Warbler, Loon, Downy Woodpecker, Raven and Blue Jay.

After our breakfast of oatmeal and muffins, we packed up and said goodbye to our Whales Head Island and began paddling southwest. The wind was from the north so we had a very pleasant two hour paddle with the wind helping us instead of fighting us. Chris took the maps and navigated us to a nice camp site close to Sliver Falls portage. It was about 1 o'clock in the afternoon and after some peanut butter and jelly bagels Cathy and I got in the water and washed our hair and clothes. This camp site has an even more perfect bathing area. It has a larger and more gently sloping hill into the deep water. There are large rocks on the shore that make the perfect ledge for our bars of soap and towels. We try hard to follow the Park rules for soap and dishwasher and the like, but it is difficult for us city types to stay clean up here without getting thoroughly wet.

As we started setting up our tent I walked over to the grassy area that we had selected for our tent; a large black snake with yellow stripes slithered by into a weedy patch of grass and brush. Yuck! I hate snakes. Allan reassured us that there are no poisonous snakes in the boundary waters. I believe him but just the same I am sure I will not get out of my tent in the dark tonight. We are only here for one night so I forget about the snake and enjoy another beautiful afternoon. We saw two canoes go by and later 4 kayaks, more people in one afternoon than we saw all last week.

This camp site has very few comfortable places to sit and not much shade for the afternoon sun. Whoever laid the logs in front of the fire pit, put them so close to the fire ring that your knees would get burned if you sat there. I finally found a spot behind two scotch pines that offered a little shade. We had gotten spoiled at our Whales Head Point camp site. Allan has once again found nicely positioned trees to hang their hammocks in. We ate a yummy tuna and three cheese pasta dinner. But the show stopper was the desert, a blueberry cheesecake. We still had some blueberries in our baggie and they made the desert perfect. A little chipmunk just popped up over the rocks by the campfire looking for crumbs. It is running between the logs and on our bags as bold as can be. No fear his tail straight up in the air. Moving camp and Paddling 5 ½ miles has all of us yawning. The wind has been strong from the north all day and now as we have finished our dinner dishes, there is a calmer and pleasant breeze. The last two nights, sunsets have been spectacular with the clouds adding the color. Tonight is clear and the sunset is plain. The loons have begun their evening serenade. The serenade suddenly turns loud and screeching. This is the moment when Chris and I see a missile object hit the water far away and splash a lot. It appears dark brown but in the distance the image is not too clear. It appears to be flapping its wings in kind of a butterfly stroke, making toward the eastern shore. It is probably dragging something heavy along with great effort. Allan gets out the binoculars and watches the drama; it is clearly an eagle dragging its dinner to shore. About then, we see six or seven loons flying over head shouting and squawking loudly. They are heading for the next lake. The eagle's dinner is either a very large fish or a loon. We don't know. Allan says it is one of the most spectacular sights he has ever seen up here.