



Red Squirrel

My encounter with a black bear was not the only excitement I experienced yesterday. I became lost last night when hiking 3 miles to my camp in near total darkness. It took me a nervous 15 minutes to relocate the trail with the help of my GPS unit and flashlight.

This morning I awake at 4:30 a.m. to begin, what I hope will be, another exciting day. I hike over a mile to a marsh in Misery Gore, east of the West Outlet of the Kennebec River. Fresh tracks of moose, deer, coyote and raccoons abound. Bear scat seems to be everywhere, much of it containing seeds from wild raspberries. The fur-laden scat of coyotes is found near the trail.

A cold mist floats lazily over the marsh. A red squirrel pokes its head into my blind, unconcerned with the intruder in its home. A pair of loons flies overhead, calling aloud to each other; their yodeling temporarily drowning the buzzing from a distant logging operation.

At dusk I return to the site where I encountered the black bear yesterday. Could I repeat the encounter? The bear itself does not make an encore, but a patch of reddish-brown fur, contrasting against the bright green underbrush, catches my immediate attention and stealthily disappears behind the vegetation, never to be seen again. My first bobcat sighting in the proposed Maine Woods National Park!

My intimate meeting with the black bear has ignited a fighting fire in me....a stubborn fire that will not be smothered until these woods are permanently saved from continuing exploitation.

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