



Backpacking the Iconic Pemigewasset Wilderness



By Jonathan G. Way

Published by Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research www.EasternCoyoteResearch.com

E-book

- Citation:
 - Way, J.G. 2022. Backpacking the Iconic Pemigewasset Wilderness. Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research, Barnstable, Massachusetts. 255 pages. E-book. Open Access URL: <http://www.easterncoyotersearch.com/BackpackingIconicPemigewassetWilderness>.
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- Previous books by Jonathan Way (most recent is on the bottom):
 - Way, J. G. 2007 (2014, revised edition). [Suburban Howls: Tracking the Eastern Coyote in Urban Massachusetts](#). Dog Ear Publishing, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA. 340 pages.
 - Way, J. G. 2013. My Yellowstone Experience: A Photographic and Informative Journey to a Week in the Great Park. Eastern Coyote Research, Cape Cod, Massachusetts. 152 pages. URL: <http://www.myyellowstoneexperience.org/bookproject/>
 - Way, J. G. 2020 (Revised, 2021). Northeastern U.S. National Parks: What Is and What Could Be. Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research, Barnstable, Massachusetts. 312 pages. E-book. Open Access URL: <http://www.easterncoyotersearch.com/NortheasternUSNationalParks/>
 - Way, J.G. 2020 (Revised, 2021). The Trip of a Lifetime: A Pictorial Diary of My Journey Out West. Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research, Barnstable, Massachusetts. 561 pages. E-book. Open Access URL: <http://www.easterncoyotersearch.com/TheTripOfALifetime/>.
 - Way, J.G. 2021. Coywolf: Eastern Coyote Genetics, Ecology, Management, and Politics. Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research, Barnstable, Massachusetts. 277 pages. E-book. Open Access URL: <http://www.easterncoyotersearch.com/CoywolfBook>.
 - Way, J.G. 2021. Christmas in Yellowstone: A Dream Come True. Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research, Barnstable, Massachusetts. 208 pages. E-book. Open Access URL: <http://www.easterncoyotersearch.com/ChristmasInYellowstone>.
 - Way, J.G. 2021. Mud, I mean April, in Yellowstone: Nature's Transition from Winter to Spring. Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research, Barnstable, Massachusetts. 330 pages. E-book. Open Access URL: <http://www.easterncoyotersearch.com/MudIMeanAprilInYellowstone>.
 - Way, J.G. 2021. Yellowstone Wildlife during Summer. Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research, Barnstable, Massachusetts. 467 pages. E-book. Open Access URL: <http://www.easterncoyotersearch.com/YellowstoneWildlifeDuringSummer>.
 - Way, J.G. 2022. A Yellowstone Summer with the Junction Butte Wolf Pack. Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research, Barnstable, Massachusetts. 481 pages. E-book. Open Access URL: <http://www.easterncoyotersearch.com/YellowstoneSummerWithJunctionButteWolfPack>.
 - Way, J.G. 2022. Yellowstone in Winter: The Recovering Wolves of the Northern Range. Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research, Barnstable, Massachusetts. 394 pages. E-book. Open Access URL: <http://www.easterncoyotersearch.com/YellowstoneInWinter>.

Pay it Forward

Dear Reader,

The White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire is truly an inspiring place. It has wilderness and a surprisingly intact ecosystem given its location in the urbanized Northeast. It is so pristine that I have previously written a book suggesting that part of it should be [given National Park status](#).

The Pemigewasset Wilderness is the [biggest of 7 wilderness areas](#) in the White Mountains. In this e-book, I – using 395 pictures – detail my 3 day backpacking trip (July 7-9, 2022) from start to finish in complete and great photographic detail. I have been to the White Mountains countless times since my youth, and after all of these visits I have gained a detailed knowledge of the area which helps to put my experiences into context.

In this e-book, I share with you, the reader, my experience while hiking the ‘Pemi’ in a photographic journey intended to awe the reader. If you enjoy it, all I ask in return is that you *pay it forward* by sharing and please consider a donation of \$10.00 to support my research and education efforts, as well as supporting the book’s Open Access format. That is about the price of one movie ticket and you get to own this book, and all of its pictures, forever. If you do not want to donate from [my website](#), you are welcome to email me and I can provide you with a physical address:

jon@easterncoyotereseach.com or easterncoyotereseach@yahoo.com.

Also, please visit the ‘Postscript’ section at the very end of this book to see how you can participate in helping to make part of this area an iconic National Park.

Thanks in advance!

Jon Way

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire is truly an inspiring place. It has wilderness and a surprisingly intact ecosystem given its location in the urbanized Northeast. It is so pristine that I have previously written a book suggesting that part of it should be [given National Park status](#). I have explored much of the region over the years, especially the lands surrounding the [Kancamagus Highway](#), colloquially called the 'Kanc'.

At 45,000 acres, the Pemigewasset Wilderness is the [largest of 7 wilderness areas](#) in the White Mountains. It can be accessed from many locations, including the Lincoln Woods area off the western part of the 'Kanc', the Franconia region off Route 93N, and areas off Routes 3 and 302. I had previously hiked in the 'Pemi' on 2 different backpacking trips, each over 20 years ago. Both times I did a counterclockwise loop, going to the eastern region of the wilderness area and camping at Shoal Pond the first night before hiking to the Bonds the next day, ultimately finishing the 2 day, 3 night hikes on the Bondcliff and Lincoln Woods Trails. My good friend and frequent travel companion, Steve Cifuni, and I started planning this backpacking trip in the spring of 2022. Steve read up and suggested that we do a clockwise direction trip by first hiking the west side of the loop, the Franconia Range, on the first day. We found many descriptions of this course online, [with this one especially helpful](#). I had been studying my mapadventures.com White Mountains Trail Map and concurred with the hike, but at the same time knew it would be a more difficult loop than my earlier adventures.

Many [online sources](#) suggested this clockwise loop starting at the Lincoln Woods Ranger Station and taking the Lincoln Woods Trail for 1.4 miles, then the Osseo Trail for 4.1 to the base of Mt Flume. From there, the Franconia Ridge Trail takes one north over Mt Liberty and to Little Haystack Mountain where it was then above tree-line for the next couple of miles, including over Mts Lincoln and Lafayette – a truly iconic part of the hike. After Lafayette, we traveled Northeast to Mt. Garfield and found shelter for the night at the Garfield Ridge Campsite just over the mountain. This was a difficult 14+ miles in one day, mind you with 45 pounds of gear on one's back, but it allowed one to get deep into the wilderness area.

The next day brought us east to Galehead Hut and Mountain and then steeply (1100 feet in 0.8 miles!) up to South Twin Mtn and towards Mt. Guyot and the Guyot Campsite. Some hikers also choose to climb North Twin Mtn and/or Zealand Mtn on this day via spur trails. Both require about 2.6 miles of roundtrip hiking to check-off these 4,000 footers. We decided to skip those extra hikes and instead did West Bond, Mt Bond, and Bondcliff on Day 2. This allowed us to reach the river (Black Brook) below, south of, the Bond range by the end of Day 2, which made for a relatively easy 6 mile hike to the car the following morning. After this backpacking trip, I also hiked another 3 miles to check my 2 trail-cameras, as described at the end of this book.

In total I hiked the following 4,000 foot mountains on Day 1: Little Haystack, Flume, Liberty, Lincoln, Lafayette, Garfield. On Day 2, I climbed Galehead, South Twin, Guyot, West Bond, Bond, and Bondcliff. Unfortunately, Little Haystack and Guyot Mtns do not count as 4,000 footers as they are too close to Mt Lincoln and South Twin Mtn, respectively, so my 'official' total for this trip was an even 10!

This project, like many of my previous e-books, came about, in part, because many of my Facebook friends (including family members) – and as of April 2022, Instagram friends @easterncoyoteresearch – continue to be absorbed with the pictures that I post when I travel. I appreciate their comments and support – both emotionally and financially – over the years which has given me the motivation to publish many of these volumes. I have found that e-books, especially of my image-oriented trips to [Yellowstone National Park \(click here for more\)](#), are the easiest and by far least expensive way of producing these attractive, pictorial tomes. I liken these tomes to being in between a 'true' book and a sort of modern day Lewis and Clark journal. The social media posts often give me a framework for organizing a given book. Accordingly, here is a link to those posts from this particular trip:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10160471003995016&set=a.467669450015>

<https://www.facebook.com/jonathan.way.3/posts/10160475606275016>

<https://www.facebook.com/jonathan.way.3/posts/10160478923045016>

Herein, I detail – in 395 pictures – this 3 day trip (July 7-9, 2022) from start to finish in complete and much greater detail than those previous sources. I have been to the White Mountains countless times since my youth, and have previously proposed establishing '[Kancamagus National Park](#)' there. After all of these visits and many days spent in the field within the Whites, I have gained a detailed knowledge of the area which helps to put my experiences into context.

Steve Cifuni has been instrumental in keeping me motivated to visit all of the places that we do during our many excursions together. He is featured in many of [my Yellowstone e-books](#) too. We met the night before this trip (7/6/22) at my sister Nicole and brother-in-law Tom's house on Lake Winnepesaukee, which was just an hour and a half from the trailhead. They kindly let us crash there to give us a head start for the following morning. This allowed us to wake up at a reasonable time (4:35 AM), yet arrive to the Lincoln Woods parking lot at about 7:00 AM. There, I made breakfast on my camp stove (which I left in the car to save weight) and we finalized our packing for the hike. We finally took off for the jaunt at ~7:45 AM.

I have a beautiful little 40-45 pound cattle-dog mix, named Rescue, who often hikes with me. However, he was nearly 10 years old at the time of the hike and was showing his age, especially after an eastern coyote bit him on the left leg in February 2020 in our backyard (it was my fault as Rescue was unleashed on the powerlines at night and ran toward it). While Rescue continues to run and hike with me, he often has a limp and tires out after 2-3 miles. Given all of these factors, I made the decision to leave him at home with my parents.

It is important to pack efficiently and as lightly as possible when backpacking for multiple days in the wilderness. While I camp multiple times a year, including in the woods away from my car, it had been over a decade since I had done a major trip like this. I decided ahead of time to not pack my camp stove, pots and pans, and fuel bottle. That saved much weight and space in my bag. I had an old MRE (Meal, Ready-to-Eat) package and a couple of tuna prepared meal for dinners. Both didn't need to be heated up. Breakfast consisted of a bagel, banana, pop-tarts, and lots of nuts (mainly peanuts and sunflower seeds) for snacks. Lunch was simple: peanut butter and fluff along with snacks. I also had bread and some tortilla rolls and somehow I managed to avoid them get smooshed up in the pack. Ultimately, I brought way too much food – like an entire extra day's worth – which probably added 5 pounds to my load. I also brought too much water; next time I'll probably 'only' bring 3 quarts and water treatment tablets for refilling. I had an extra 64 ounce bottle which further weighed down the pack.

I packed two light blankets instead of a heavier sleeping bag. That was great to save on weight and space but not as comfortable at night, since it got down to about 50 degrees. I had to sleep in all of the warmer clothes I brought: wind pants, long sleeve T-shirt, light sweatshirt, rain jacket, and a winter hat. It did allow me, however, to get all of my clothes and sleepwear into my pack's bottom pouch which was very nice.

Given the previous information, carrying around camera equipment could be viewed as superfluous. In fact, I barely saw any through hikers take the time to snap pictures and those that did exclusively used their cameras, no doubt to save weight. In addition to my iPhone 7, I also carried my Nikon P900 camera.

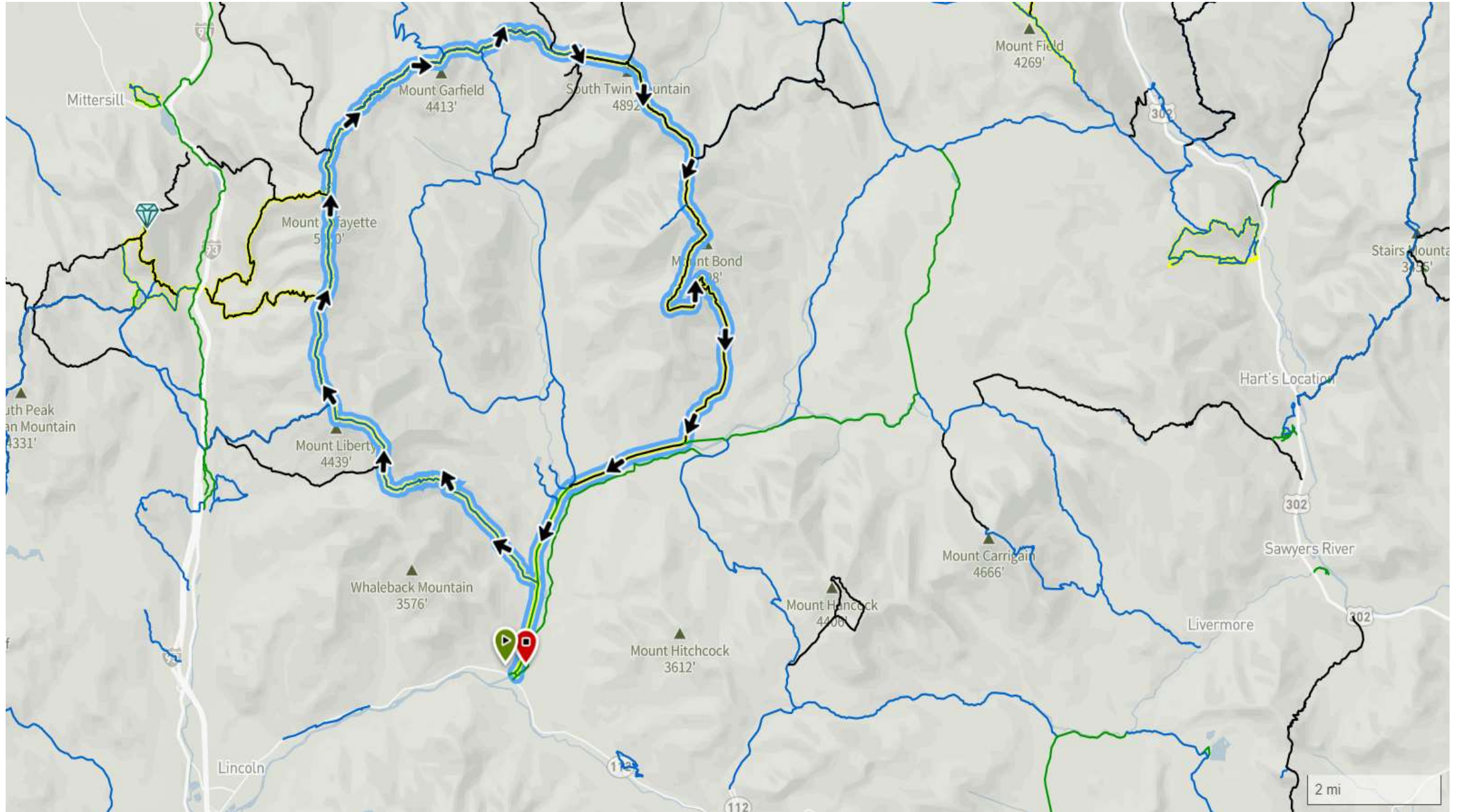
Most of the time the bulky camera was around my neck, but as the trip wore on I increasingly had to stash it in the top of my backpack when climbing up or down for two reasons: 1) I needed both hands to navigate difficult terrain and the camera and strap around my neck would sway around if I wasn't holding it; and 2) it was simply exhausting at times to try and document the trip while also fully exerting myself. Both scenarios, especially #1, made it a chore to travel with a good camera. But my perseverance to use it, and repeatedly take it out of my pack when I wasn't carrying it, made this book possible. I also was able to use my cell phone for obtaining quick images, and did this more often on Days 2 and 3 when I was tired.

During this hiking adventure, I took 74 cell phone pictures and 282 images with my Nikon. I also took an additional 58 pictures while checking my 2 trail-cameras off the 'Kanc' and 14 pictures at Lake Winnepesaukee. This totaled 428 images, not including the trail-camera images which I share at the end of this book. To show my experience during this short but eventful trip, I use my top 395 pictures (i.e., most of them) here, including some of the better trail-camera images I obtained between my last check on 4/18/22 and 7/9/22. To better tell this story I also referred to the 7 pages of journal notes I took while on the hike. I tried to summarize the happenings when we rested or I waited for Steve to catch up to me if we had separated; sometimes, I was so exhausted – especially closer to night – I would recollect what happened the following morning.

To be consistent with the maps that we used and to shorten the text, I use the abbreviations Mt, Mts, and Mtn according to how each peak is described. In that way, I didn't repeatedly write the words 'mountain(s)' and 'mount(s)'.

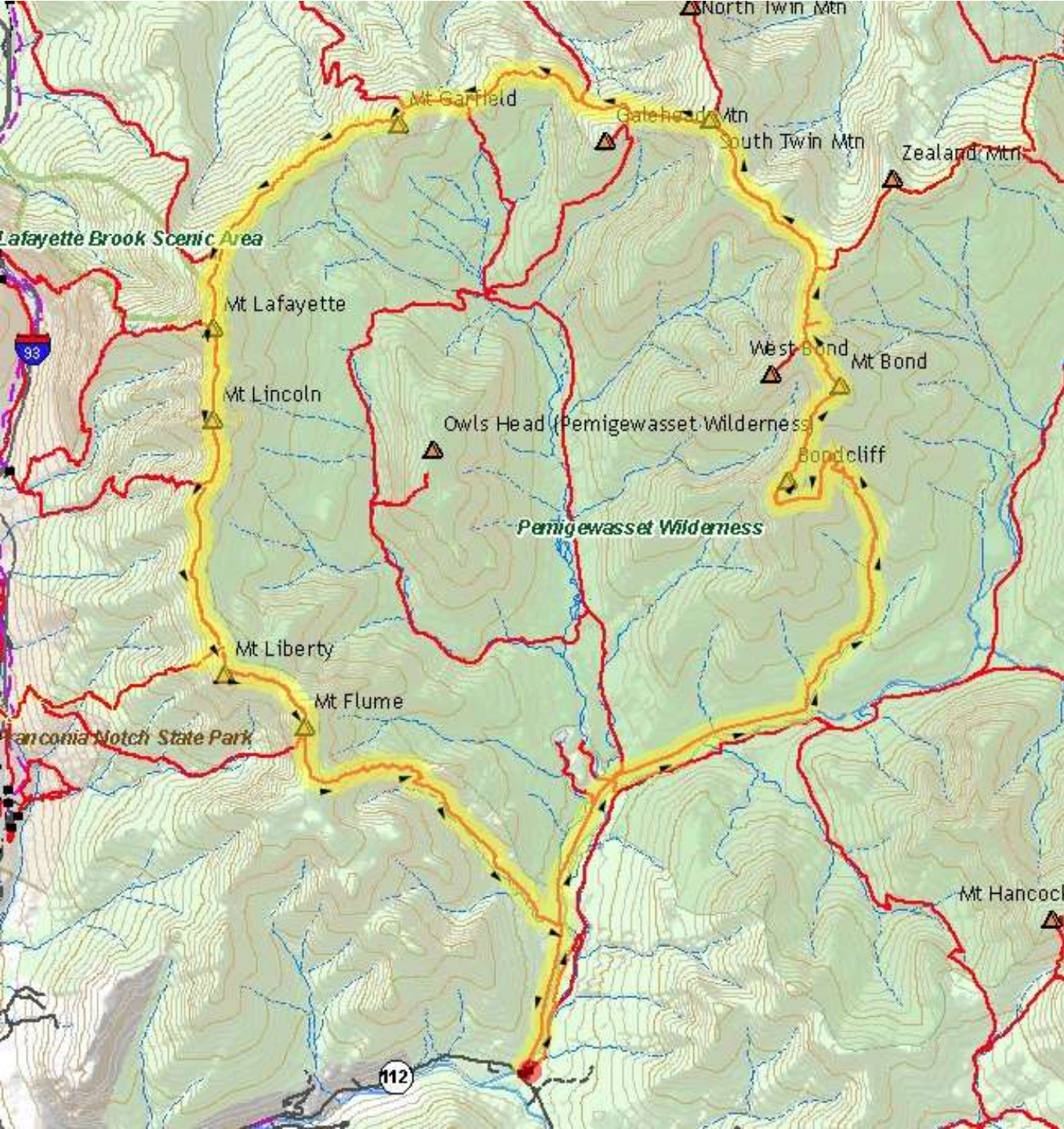
I hope you enjoy the read and are able to donate to support my research which will help keep these e-books in Open Access format. Please see the *Pay it Forward* page at the beginning of this document if you want to support my work. Thank you!

Maps of Places Visited

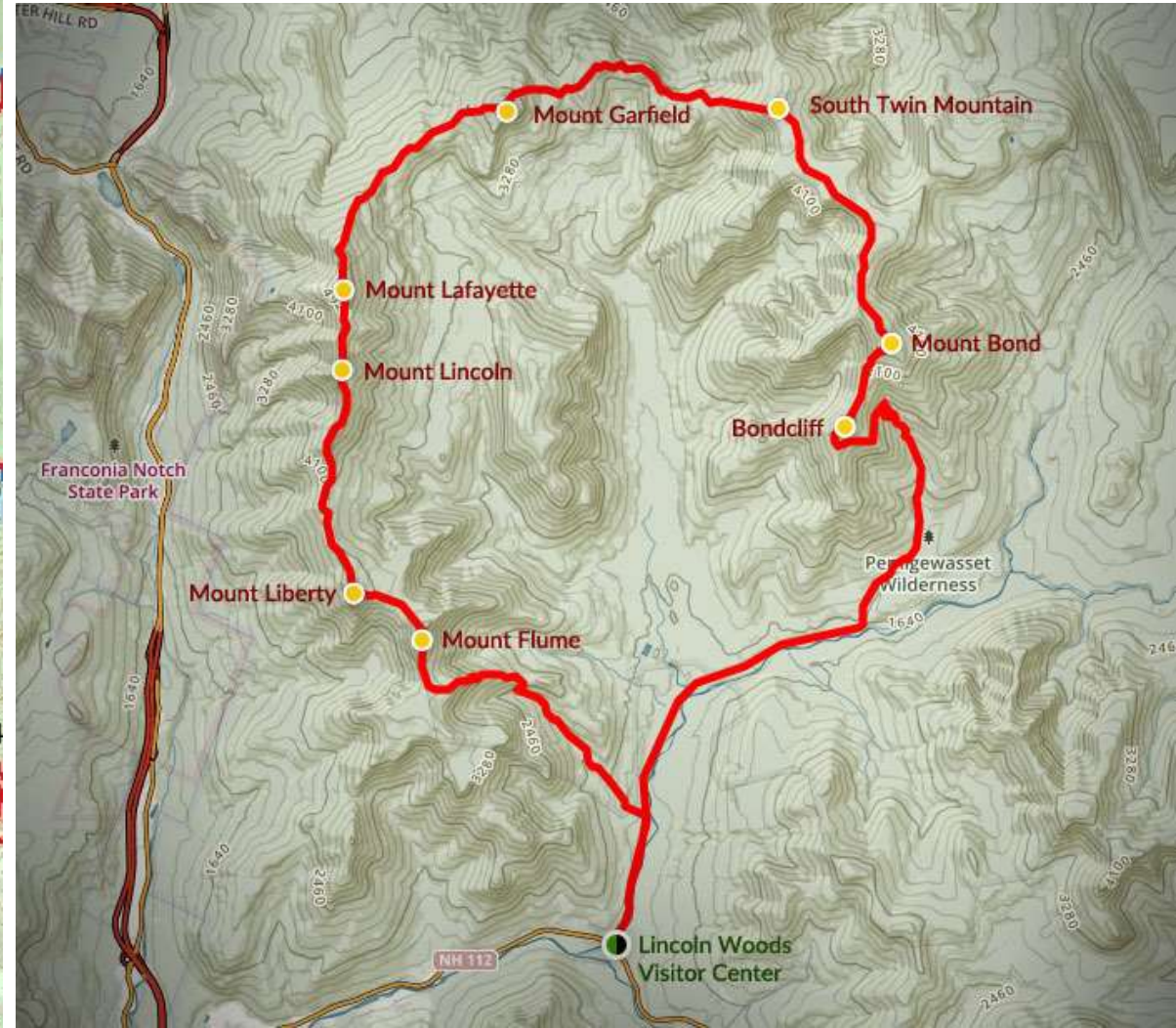


Map of our planned route in the Pemigewasset Wilderness. We left the Lincoln Woods Ranger Station at the bottom of the map and hiked in a clockwise direction. The side loops (top right) were to climb North Twin Mtn and Zealand Mtn, but we decided to skip these on this trip in order to hike the Bond Range (center right) on Day 2. Shoal Pond (circled on right side of map) is where I hiked on 2 previous trips. I finished those hikes by going south across the Bonds and back to Lincoln Woods just like on this route.





Different perspectives of the same hike. I found many [online sources](#) describing this loop and I share some here to help the reader better visualize the area.



Day 1: The Franconia Range

This adventure actually started the previous day, July 6, when I drove to Lake Winnepesaukee to visit my sister Nicole and brother-in-law Tom. I arrived there in the early afternoon to relax with them and spend the evening with their family. Steve arrived closer to dusk which gave us all a chance to socialize for a while.

My alarm went off at 4:25 AM the following morning, and I was finally up and active by 4:35. Steve and I gathered our belongings and were on the road at 5:10 AM. We saw 5 turkeys and a deer while leaving their development and before taking main roads west to Route 93. We arrived to the Pemigewasset Wilderness parking lot at Lincoln Woods off the Kancamagus Highway just before 7:00 AM and paid the \$5 a day parking fee. Saving weight, I didn't bring my camp stove and gear on the trip but did use it in the parking lot to boil water for a nice oatmeal and banana breakfast, along with a hot chocolate.

This loop is described as one of the [most popular but challenging hikes in the entire northeast](#). With this information in mind, we knew we needed to start early, because we had a full day ahead of ourselves. In fact, it was to easily be the hardest day of the trip with six 4,000 footers to be climbed. One mountain, Little Haystack, technically doesn't qualify as a 4,000 footer because it stands [less than 200 ft \(61 m\) from Mt. Lincoln](#).

The beginning of the hike was going to be a severe test for me, not because of the difficulty but due to me having a grade 3 hamstring tear. It happened exactly two weeks before the trip. I was playing basketball, hurt it early in the game, and kept playing/limping for the rest of the game. It swelled up so badly, I could barely walk for 3 full days after the injury. I regained the ability to move just 1.5 weeks before the trip and it was less than 3 days from me being able to put my left sock on without experiencing total pain. However, I was confident I could complete the hike because I have a really high pain threshold and walking was much easier than running for that type of injury. In other words, I predicted the weight of the pack and the relative slow speed of the hike up and down mountains would not affect my ligament as much as running up and down a basketball court. Fortunately, I was correct on this assumption.

We started the hike on the very flat Lincoln Woods Trail, which is an old railroad bed. After crossing a 200 foot suspension bridge over the Pemigewasset River just after the Lincoln Woods Ranger Station, it was a quick 1.4 miles to reach the 4.1 mile long Osseo Trail. This route was a long, gradual, and at some points difficult (with built in stairs/ladders), uphill section. I didn't take many images of the first five plus miles knowing that we had million dollar views coming up. What follows is a photo account of the first day of our trip, along with additional descriptions further along on the hike. Enjoy the views!



Reaching Lake Winnepesaukee (left, see arrow) and then experiencing sunset from my sister and brother-in-law's dock on a beautiful night (also see next page).





Hiking up Mounts Flume and Liberty

About 5 days after tearing my hamstring on June 22, 2022, my leg was a mixture of black and blue and yellow all the way up to my lower butt, which was the most black and blue (I don't share that area here for purpose of appropriateness). Fortunately, the trip was randomly planned with just enough time (2 weeks) after the injury to allow my body to recover enough to have adequate mobility to do the hike, even though my flexibility was still much less on my left side. While I felt light hamstring pain for most of the trip, my feet, legs, and rest of my body became so sore by the end of Day 1, the injury no longer became the focal point of my pain.



Map of the Pemigewasset Wilderness at the Lincoln Woods Ranger/Visitor Station (next page).





The 200 foot long suspension bridge over the East Branch of the Pemigewasset River. This was mere feet from the ranger station.





View to the Northeast (left) and Southwest (right) from the suspension bridge. The trail started just on the other side of the bridge (next page).

USFS

LINCOLN WOODS TRAIL

OSSEO TRAIL	1.4	→
BLACK POND TRAIL	2.6	→
FRANCONIA FALLS TRAIL	2.8	→
WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	2.9	→



View of the 'Pemi' from the Lincoln Woods Trail. I didn't take any pictures at the start of the hike on the flat and pretty boring stretch of trail. I will share more from there on my way back on Day 3. The real fun began when we reached the Osseo Trail and started climbing higher in elevation (bottom right). There is nearly a 3,000 foot elevation gain on this trail!

Next page: Perspective of the bottom right picture with the Osseo Trail starting in a hardwood forest consisting mostly of birch, maple, and beech. Beech is a climax ('old growth') stage forest in the northeast but most of these were young trees that need a good 50+ years to mature.



AMC
WEST
→ OSCEO TRAIL
→ PLANE RIDGE TRAIL 4.0
→ FRANCONIA RIDGE TRAIL 4.0
→ NYE LANE 4.1
→ LAKETT SPRING TRAIL 3.5

FRANCONIA FALLS 1.8 →





This page: Hiking along the Osseo Trail, with Steve reaching into his backpack next to a birch tree (right).

Next page: About halfway up the trail, we started to encounter more evergreen trees, mainly spruce and hemlock.





American Toad

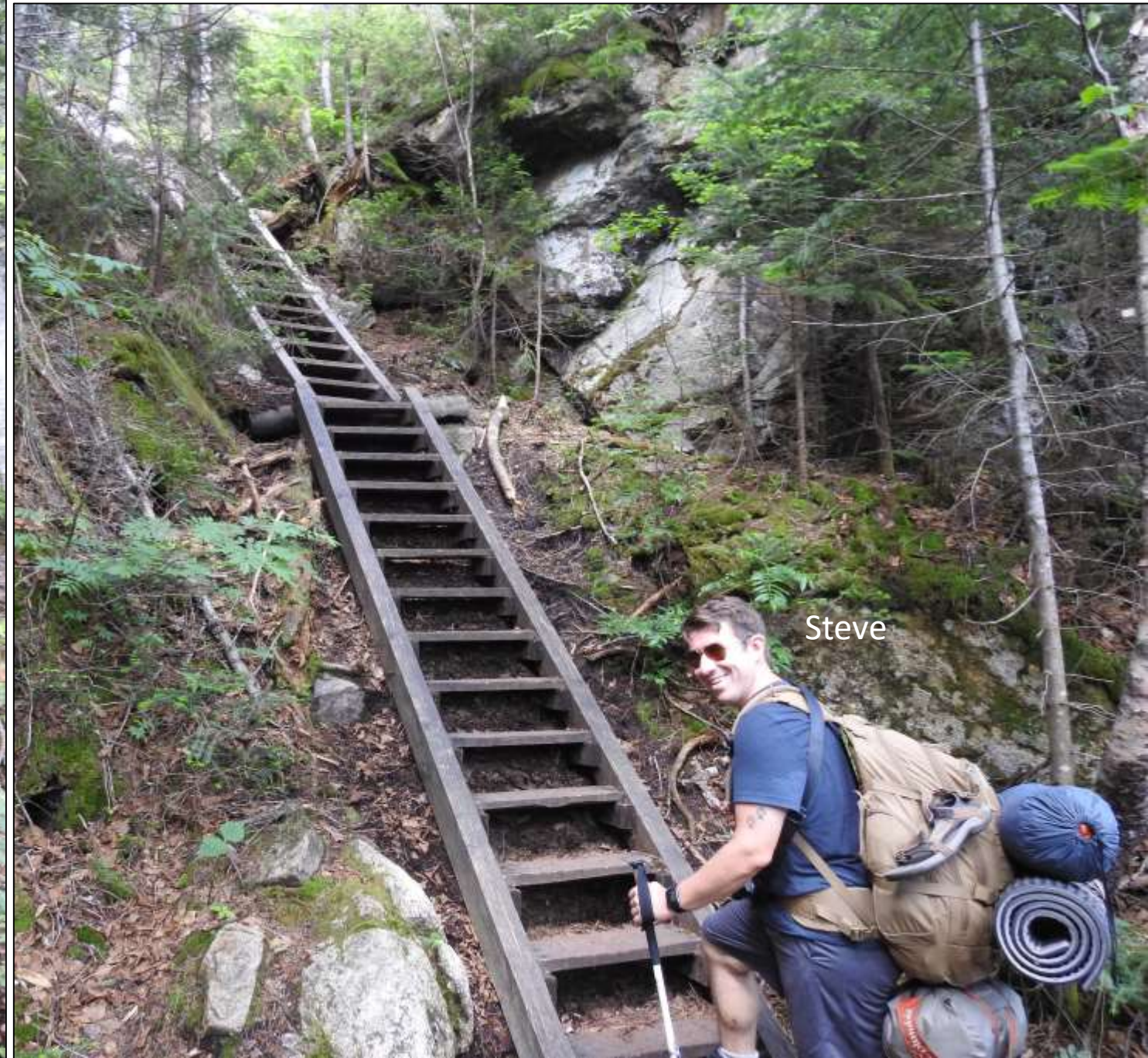




Scenes from the trail as we climbed up in elevation, eventually reaching wooded stairs or ladders (subjectively described depending on their steepness) about three-quarters of the way to the top (next 3 pages).

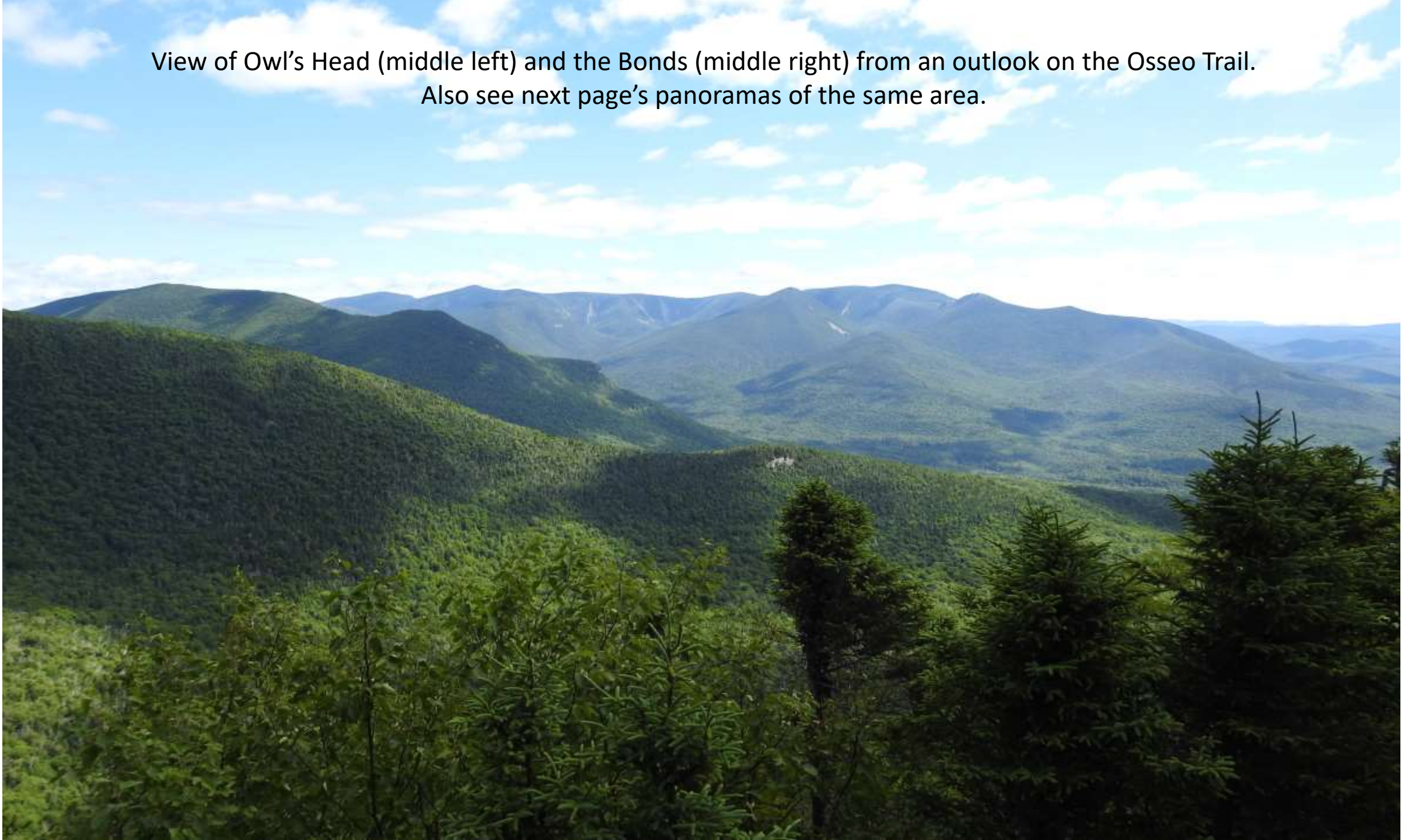


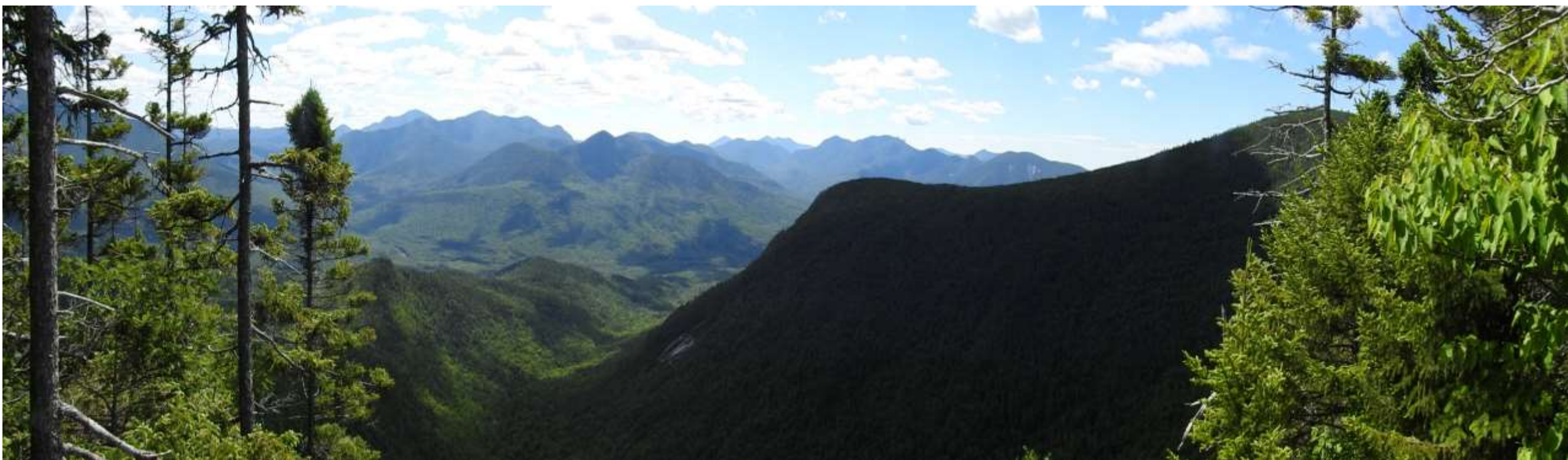
These stairs/ladders were a convenient way to quickly gain elevation.

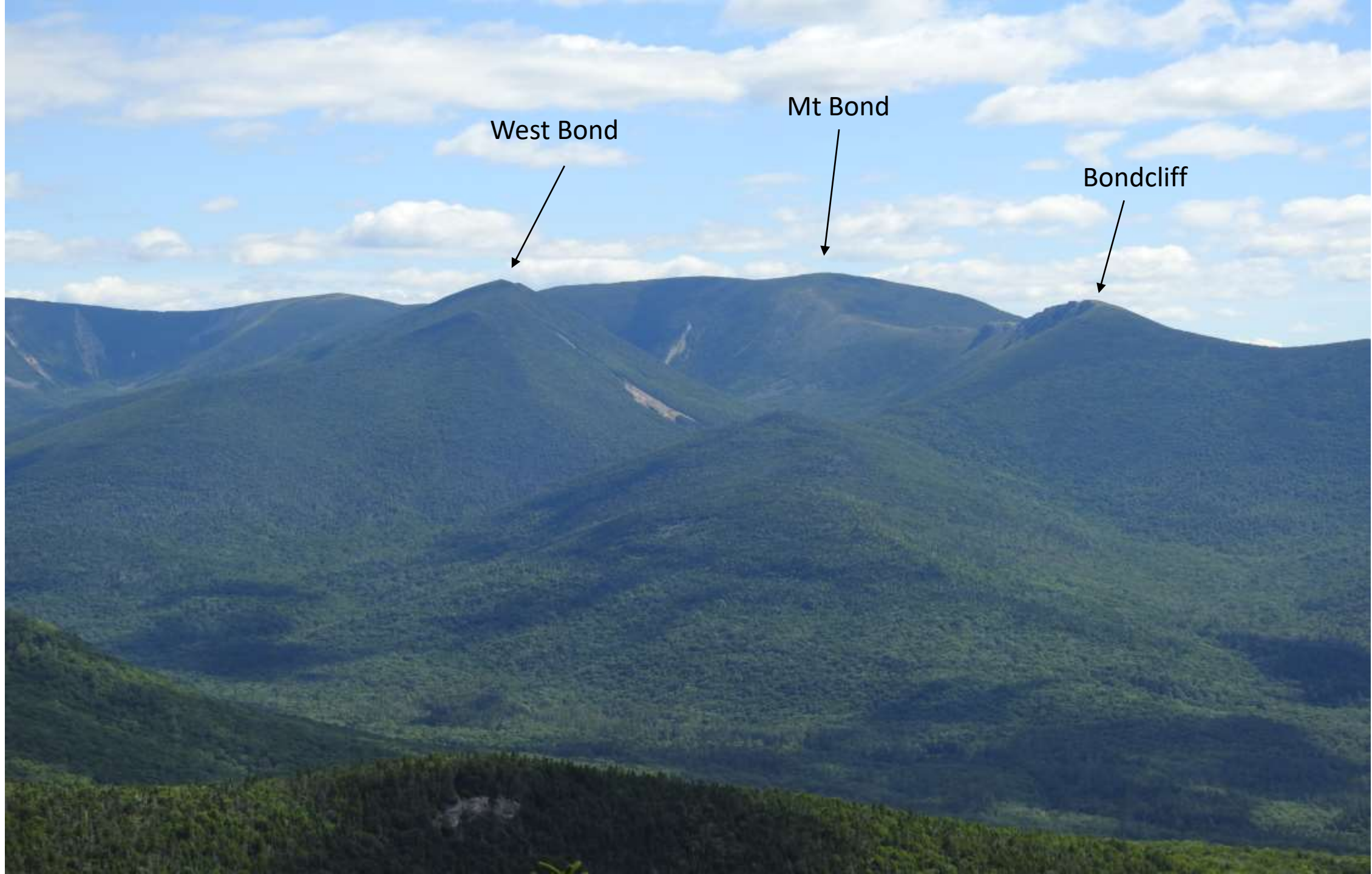




View of Owl's Head (middle left) and the Bonds (middle right) from an outlook on the Osseo Trail.
Also see next page's panoramas of the same area.







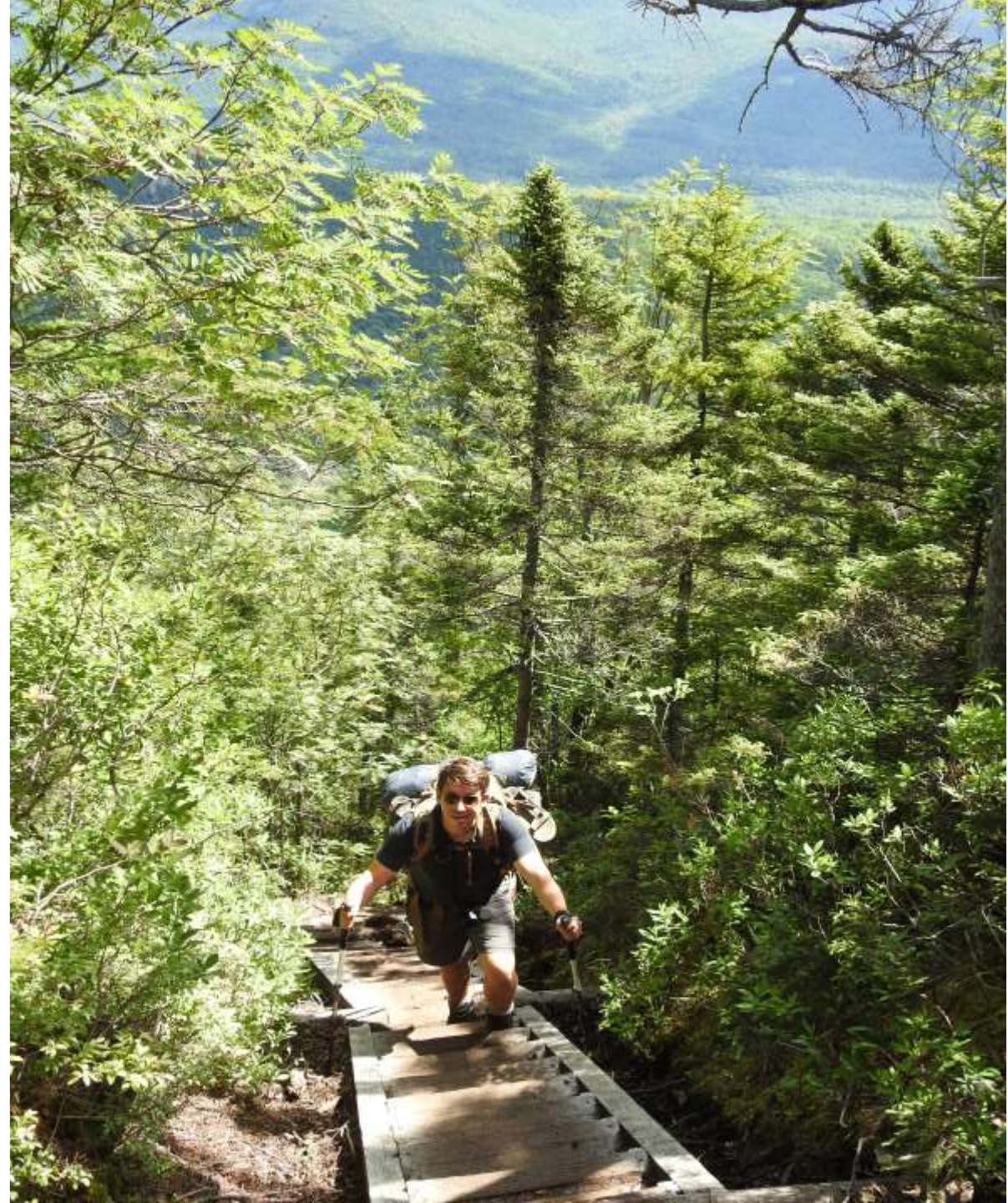
West Bond

Mt Bond

Bondcliff



It became steep toward the top. It also got muddy (next page), which became a theme for the hike.





Near the top of Mt Flume. It stayed forested (next page) until just before the peak.





Steve climbing with view of mountains to the south including Loon Mountain, a skiing resort with the marked up slopes (middle right).

Next page: Climbing Mt Flume with views to the west (top) and north, which includes most of the Franconia Range (bottom).







Me (left) near the top of Mt Flume (right).





Much of the Franconia Range was steep terrain. Mt Flume (pictured here) was no exception. It was in this area where I started to notice that the sole of my right hiking boot was detaching from the shoe. I had half a small tube of super glue but that only worked temporarily. 'This was going to become a problem', I thought.





It was a short 1.2 mile hike from Mt Flume (4328 ft) to Mt Liberty (4459 feet). It was muddy in stretches (left) before reaching the rocky top (right) with Mt Lafayette in the middle left of the picture and Mt Garfield in the middle right.





Lafayette

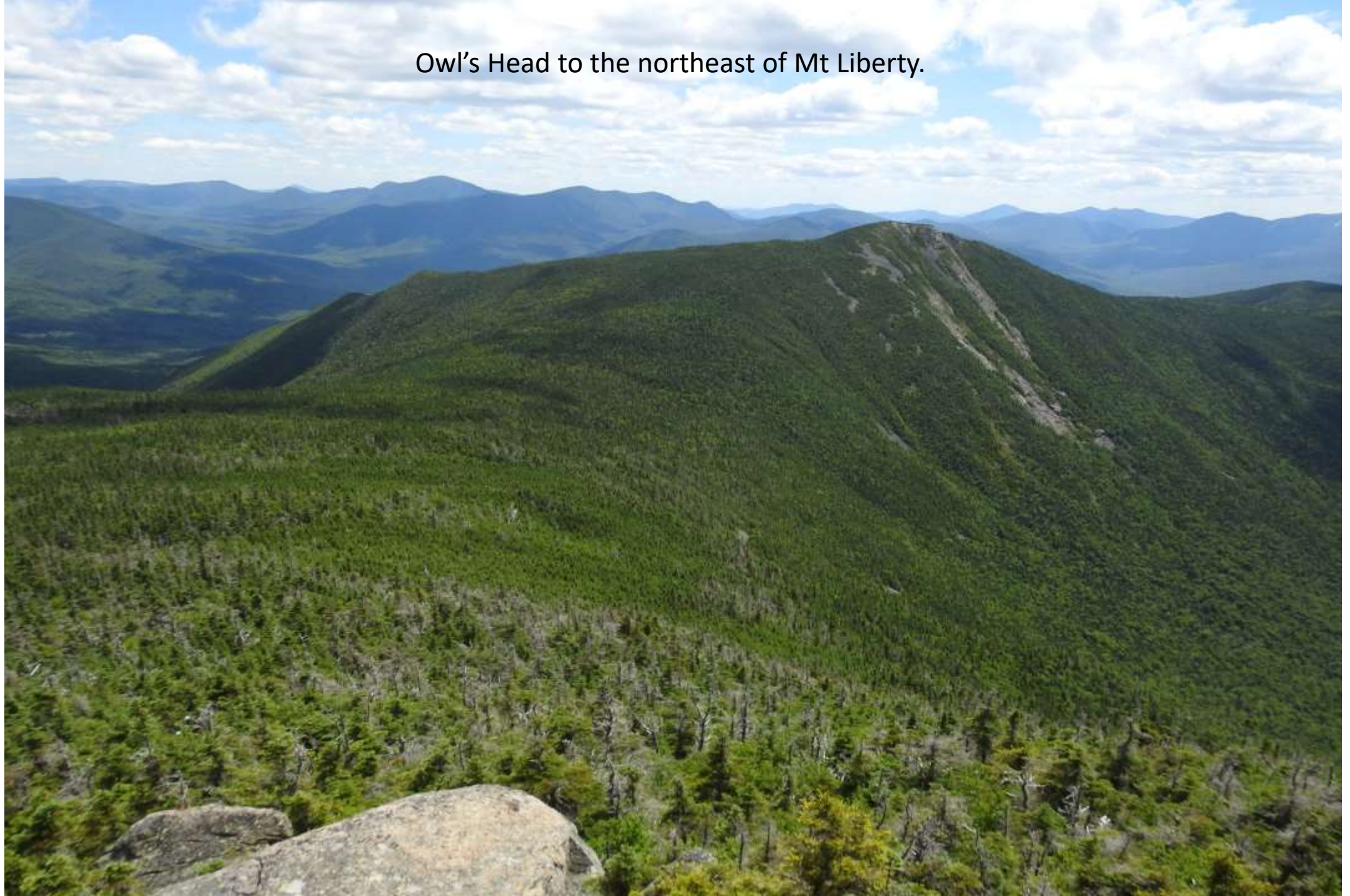
View of the Franconia Range, including Lafayette (above and below left), and Owl's Head (below) from atop Mt Liberty .



Lafayette

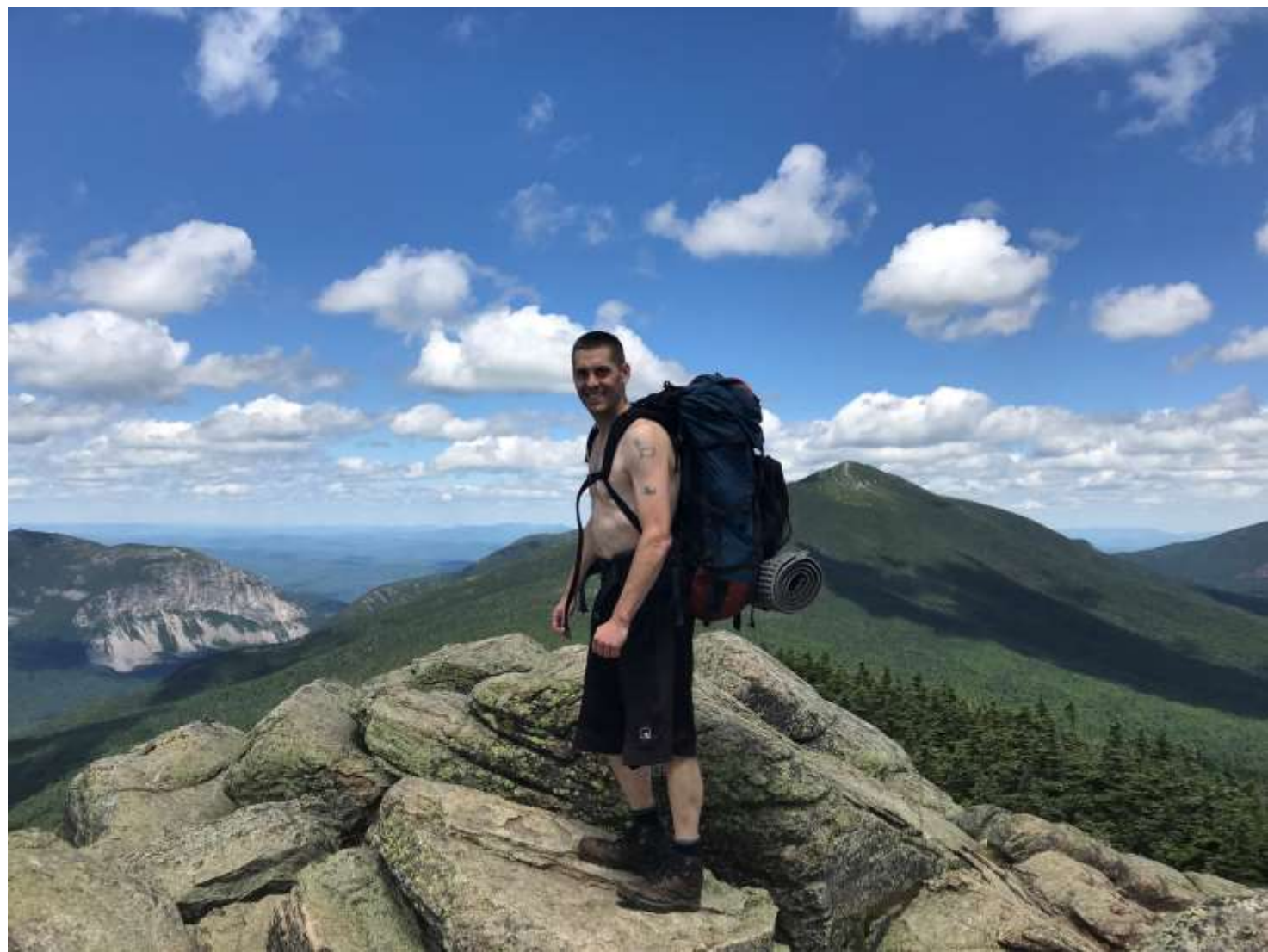
Owl's Head

Owl's Head to the northeast of Mt Liberty.





Different perspectives from atop Mt Liberty. Note the size of the backpack.





The hike down Mt Liberty became rocky (left) and steep (right) as we headed into the woods. The area is also popular with day-hikers (right), who mostly start their hikes from Franconia Notch State Park off Route 93.



Trail markers 0.3 mile north of Mt Liberty on the way to Little Haystack Mtn and the above tree-line alpine region that the Franconia Range is famous for.



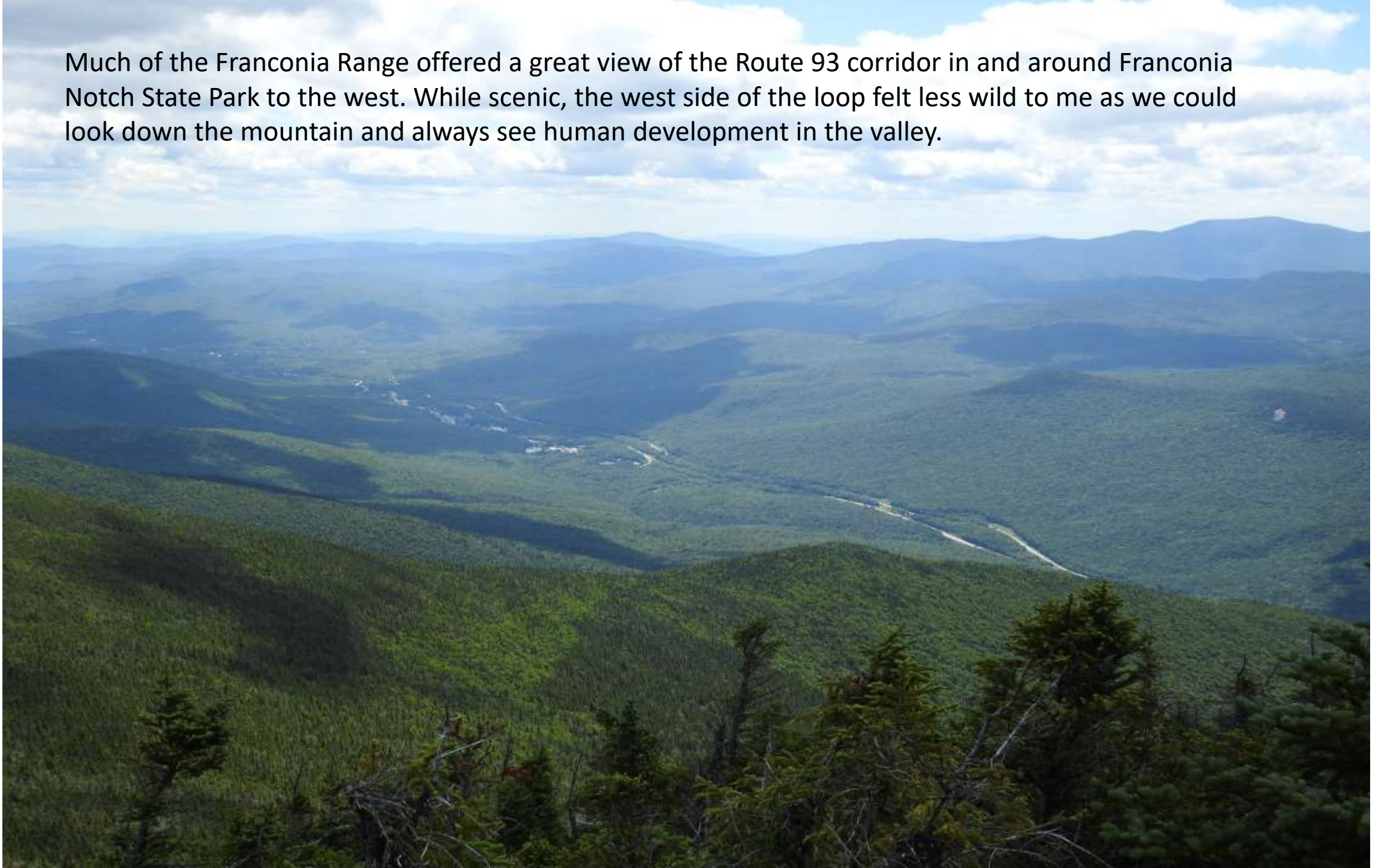
Next page: A really steep section of the Franconia Ridge Trail between Mt Liberty and Little Haystack Mtn. It was nearly vertical with a small ladder on the left side. Carrying a large backpack made every traverse like that more difficult.



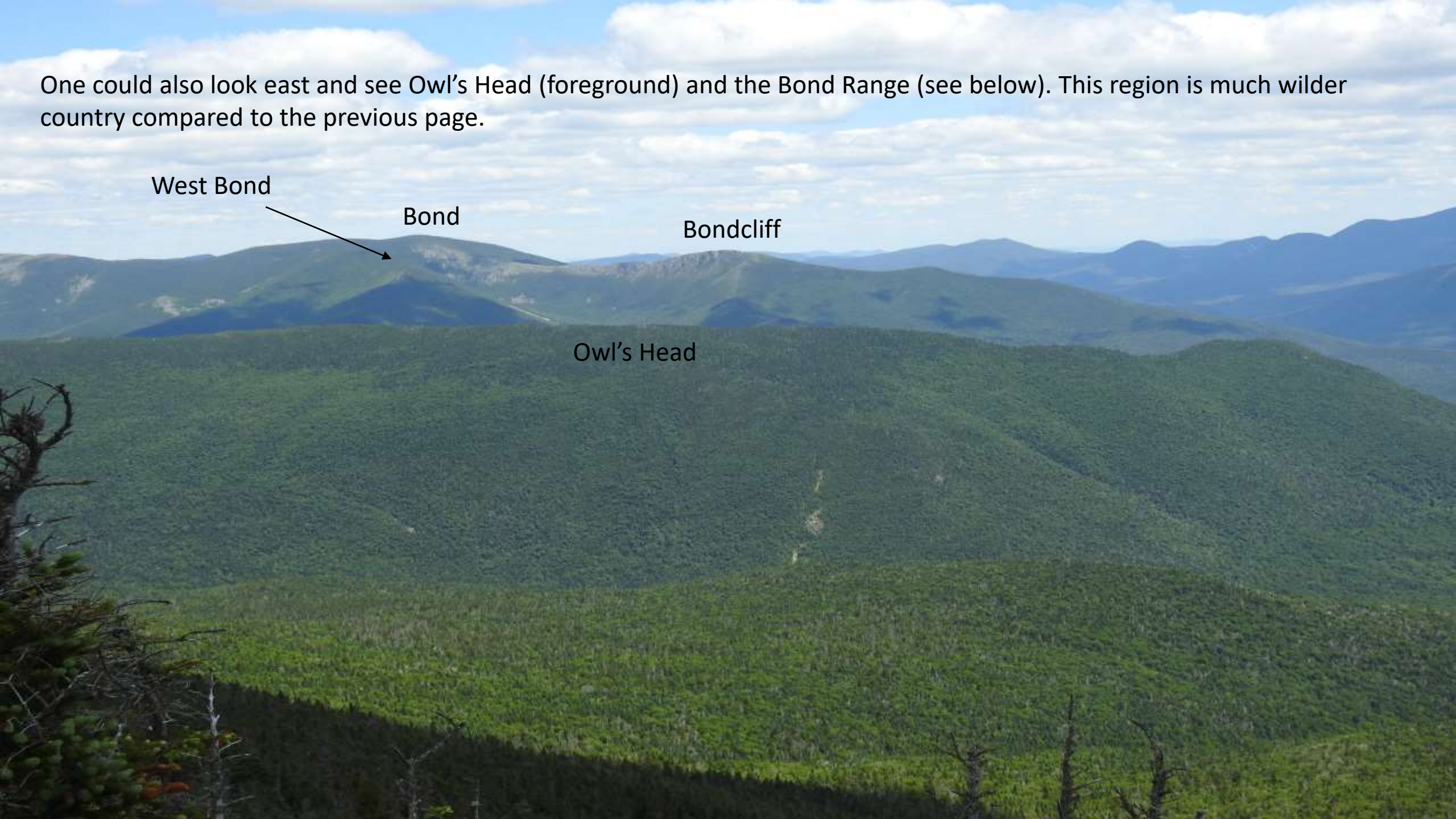
Looking back to the south where we just came from while climbing to Little Haystack Mtn.



Much of the Franconia Range offered a great view of the Route 93 corridor in and around Franconia Notch State Park to the west. While scenic, the west side of the loop felt less wild to me as we could look down the mountain and always see human development in the valley.



One could also look east and see Owl's Head (foreground) and the Bond Range (see below). This region is much wilder country compared to the previous page.



West Bond



Bond

Bondcliff

Owl's Head

Little Haystack Mtn to Mt Lafayette – An Iconic Stretch

Approaching Little Haystack Mtn, with Mt Lincoln in the background.

Mt Lincoln

Little Haystack





The trees become much shorter close to the peak of Little Haystack Mtn. Ravens (bottom left) started appearing at the top. I consistently saw 3-4 of the birds from Little Haystack to Lafayette. They were loudly calling to each other for most of the time I saw them.



Trail markers at the top of Little Haystack Mountain. We continued on the Franconia Ridge Trail to the north.





Ravens were frequently seen flying (right) in the steep valley to the west of the mountain.





Panoramas from Little Haystack of Mts Lincoln and Lafayette in the distance.





One could see the trail all the way to the top of Lafayette to the north (left and next 3 pages). Cairns, which are human-created rock piles, are used to mark the area. They are especially helpful for navigating during poor visibility conditions, like in cloudy weather or snow storms.



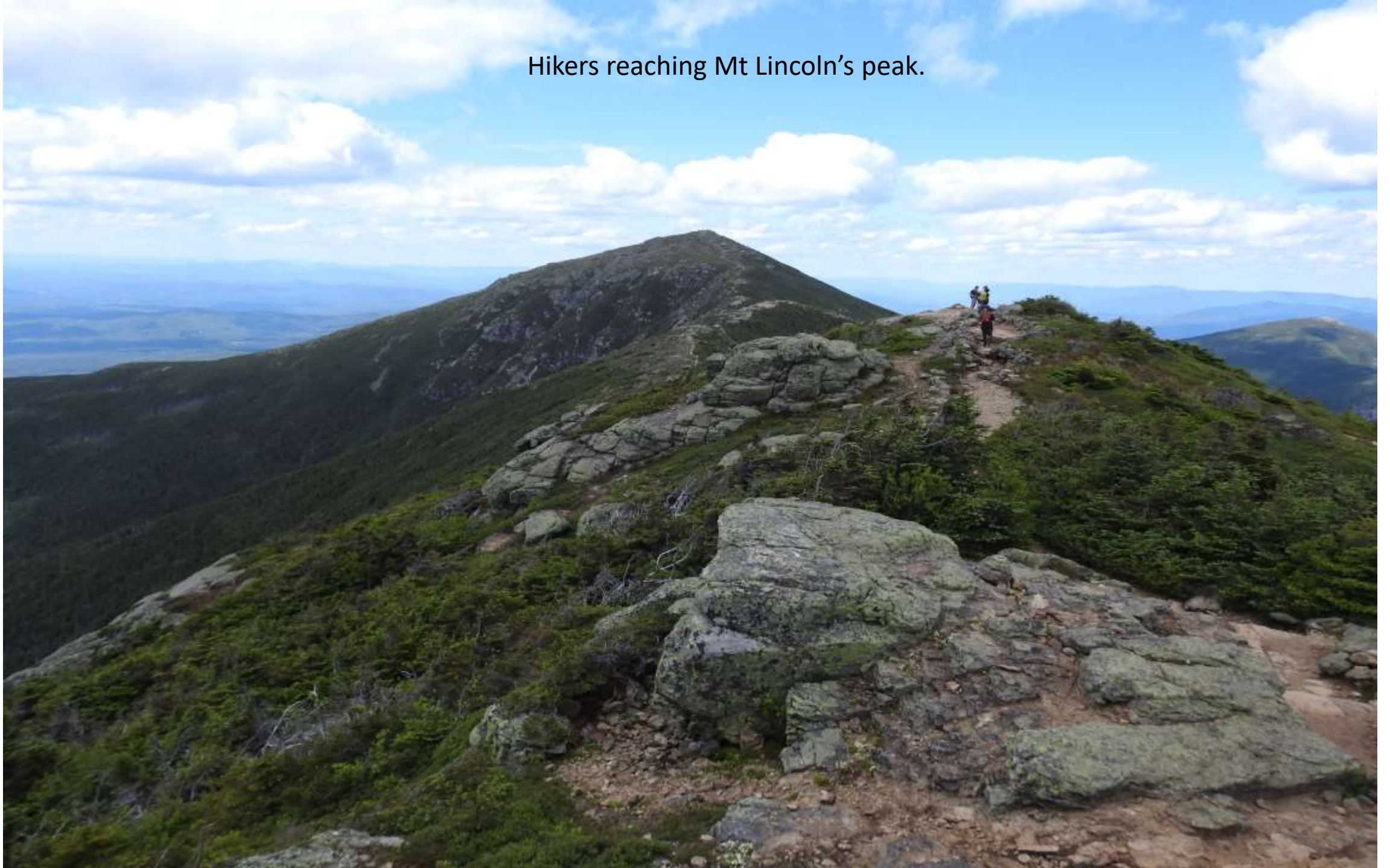




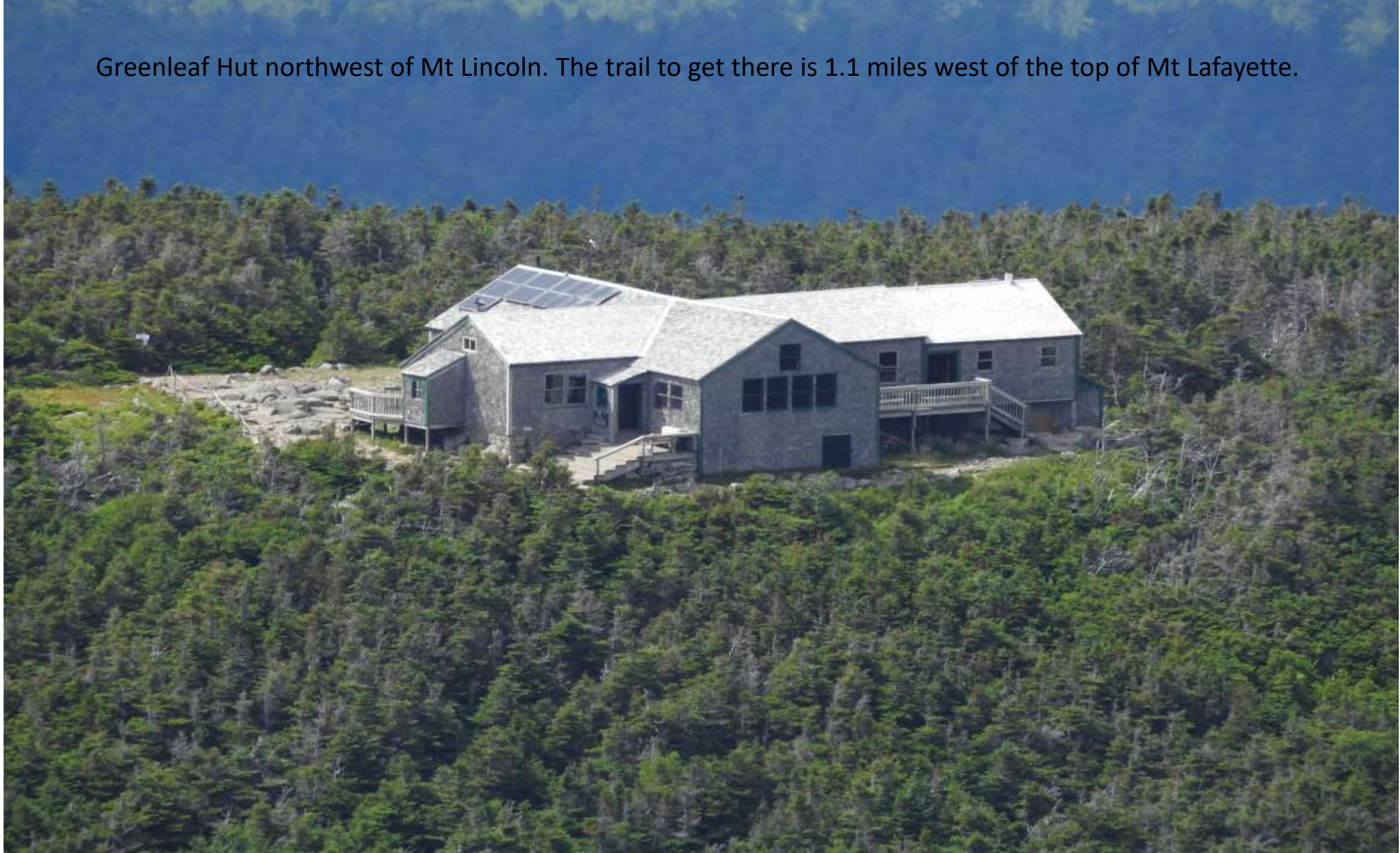
Somewhere in this immediate vicinity, Steve and I found a small, old pair of crampons on the trail, likely left from somebody hiking the area in the spring when it was still icy. Steve suggested that I try it on to secure the loose sole of my right shoe. I was skeptical at first, especially because it was a medium which barely fit my size 11.5 boot. But it ultimately worked. Despite slipping off a few times, I wore it for the remainder of the hike and got somewhat used to the odd fit.



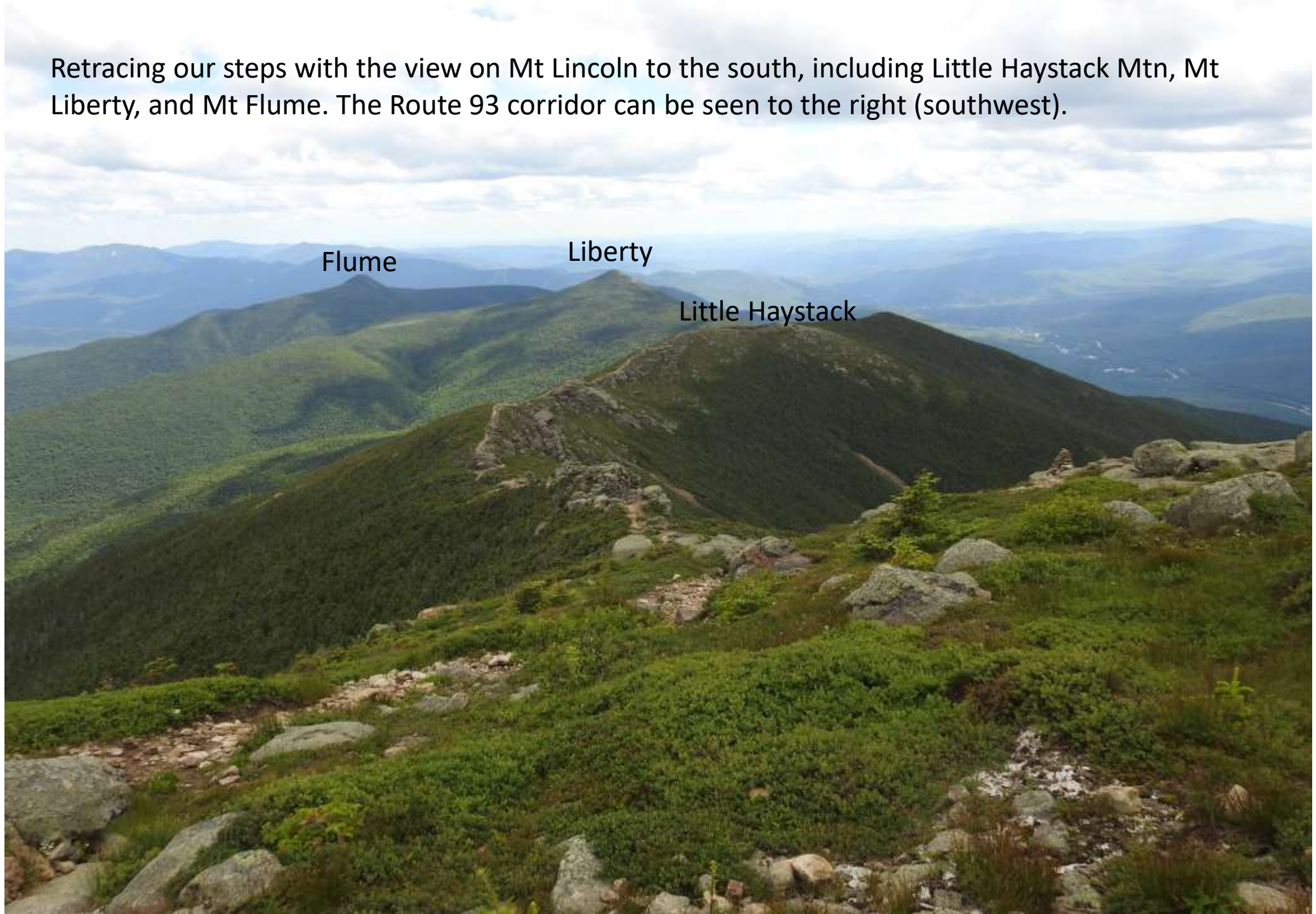
Hikers reaching Mt Lincoln's peak.



Greenleaf Hut northwest of Mt Lincoln. The trail to get there is 1.1 miles west of the top of Mt Lafayette.



Retracing our steps with the view on Mt Lincoln to the south, including Little Haystack Mtn, Mt Liberty, and Mt Flume. The Route 93 corridor can be seen to the right (southwest).



Flume

Liberty

Little Haystack



Panorama from Mt Lincoln toward Mt Lafayette (top). The famous trail above tree-line heading to Lafayette (bottom and next page).







Top: Mt Lafayette (left), Owl's Head (front right) and the Twin and Bond Mountain area (back right).

Right: Me next to a cairn on the top of Mt Lincoln facing south showing the mountains we had already scaled on Day 1.

Next page: The scenery is spectacular above tree-line.







Signs indicate when you are in an alpine zone. It is an attempt to keep people on trail and off of the fragile vegetation that can be destroyed if trampled.



ALPINE ZONE



Plants in the alpine zone take decades to grow
and under your footsteps, die in a day.

Help protect the fragile vegetation.

- STAY ON THE TRAIL
- KEEP DOGS ON LEASH AND CLOSE
- NO CAMPING OR FIRES

Thank you!

Next page: The spectacular hike up Mt Lafayette.





A stretch of the hike to Mt Lafayette involves traveling through low growing, alpine vegetation, as shown from my cell phone (left) and Nikon P900 camera (right).





Trail markers atop Mt Lafayette show where one can continue to the north on the Garfield Ridge Trail (right), as we did, head back south where we came from (top sign on left) or to the west (middle sign on left; not visible).



We were a little over 10 miles into the hike on top of Mt Lafayette when we both started to get tired and sore from carrying the heavy packs all day. It was a long, exhausting stretch along the Garfield Ridge Trail to the campsite. Steve's fit-bit watch and my intuition indicated it was much more than the additional 3.9 miles, as shown on the sign.

View to the north atop Mt Lafayette.



Steve found an attractive Luna Moth atop the mountain.





The view atop Mt Lafayette was commanding, even with these afternoon shadows casted atop Mt Garfield in the middle right of both photos.

Hiking to Mt Garfield to the northeast of Lafayette required an exhausting, steep descent and then another climb to get to the peak.





Fortunately for the ravens, they could fly off the peak of Lafayette and thus were not hamstrung, no pun intended, by the difficult hike.

The intense afternoon sun created quite a contrast between the dark birds and light sky.



The hike down Mt Lafayette was immediately steep and rocky (next page). It was not comfortable wearing the tight crampon on the bottom of my right boot.

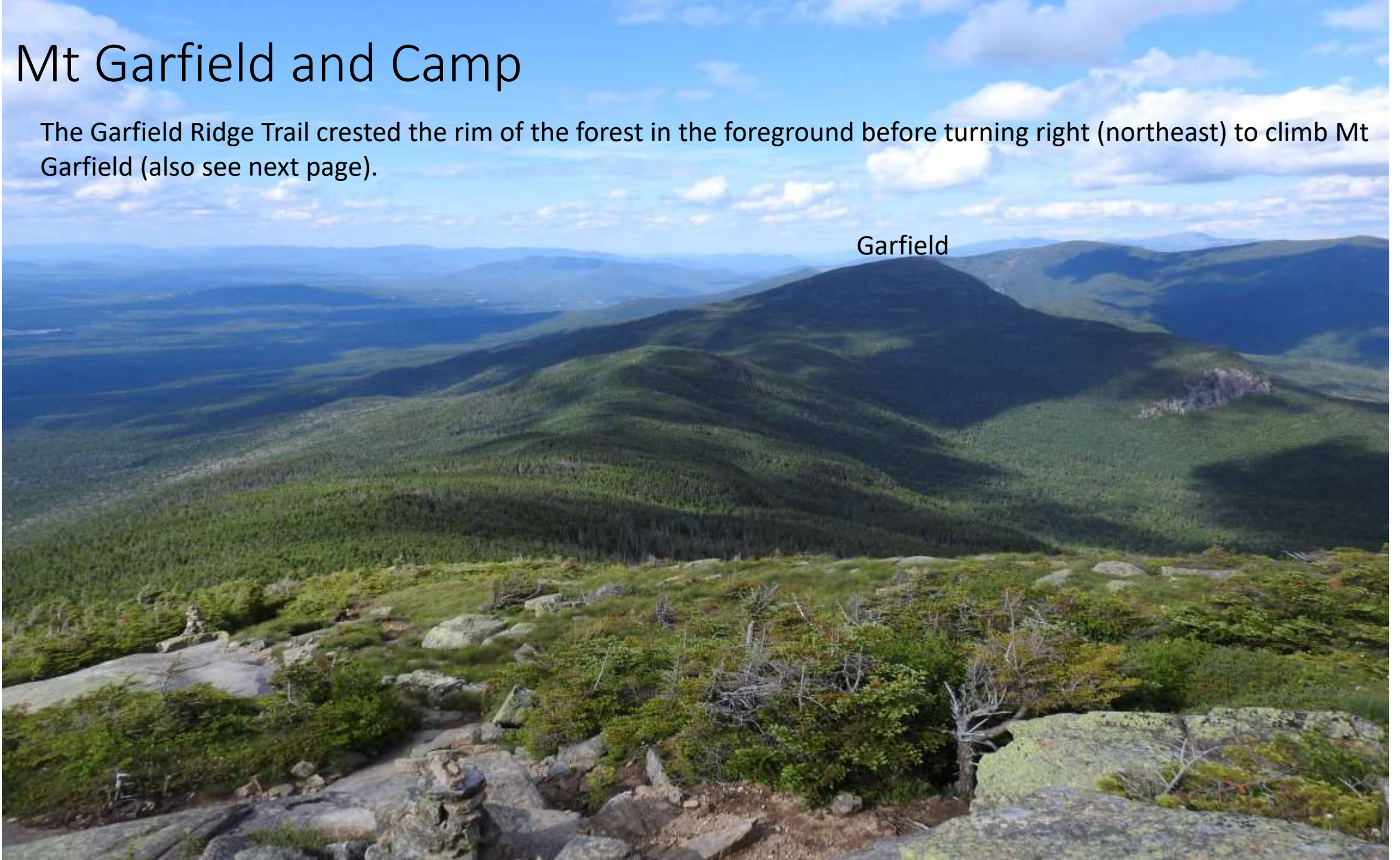




Mt Garfield and Camp

The Garfield Ridge Trail crested the rim of the forest in the foreground before turning right (northeast) to climb Mt Garfield (also see next page).

Garfield





The Garfield Ridge Trail was consistently steep, rocky, and wet, as indicated in this picture. I had to stow my camera in my pack at this point and use both hands to help keep my balance. We were 11 miles into the hike and fatigued from carrying our packs. We talked to three other pairs of hikers around this stretch and they were also worn out. At times, we were visibly swearing out loud, especially when the crampons on my right boot caused me to slip.



All rock!
This
didn't
bode well
with a
boot that
had a
crampon
on it,
since the
spikes slip
on rock.





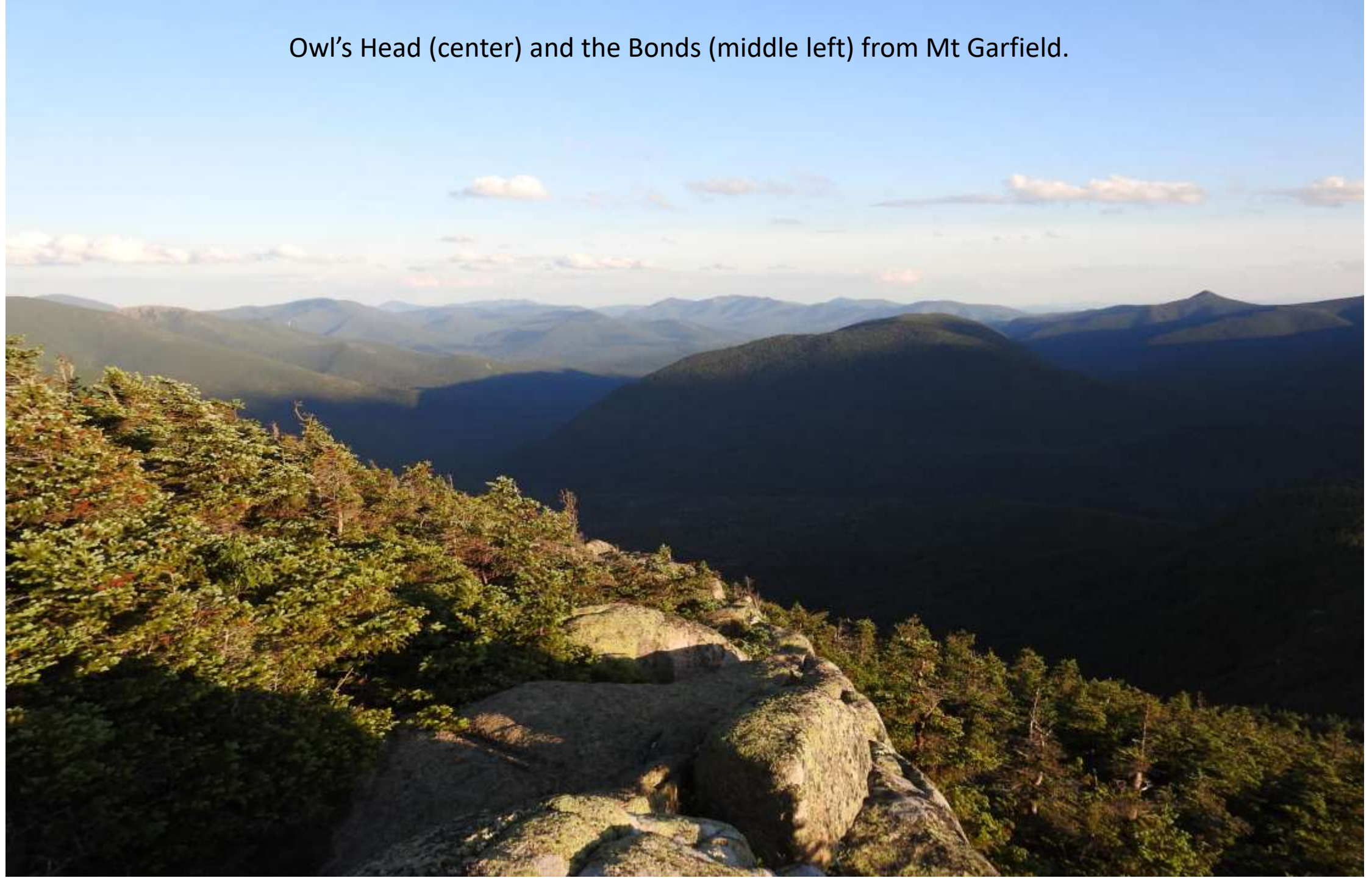
Late afternoon at the high elevation Garfield Pond. The top photo is obviously not very high quality but this is also what it looked like with my naked eye, as the sun shined right on the pond in my face. A pair of hikers were so tired from the climb to Mt Garfield, they pitched their tents right near the shore deciding to continue on early the following morning. They crested Mt Garfield (less than a half mile away) and passed the campsite where we stayed around daybreak. We caught up to them further up the trail well before Galehead Hut on our Day 2.



Looking back at the Franconia Range and the peaks that we hiked earlier in the day while atop Mt Garfield: Mt Flume is on the far left, with Liberty to its right, while Lincoln and Lafayette are in the middle. The descent to Mt Garfield is on the middle right side of the picture.

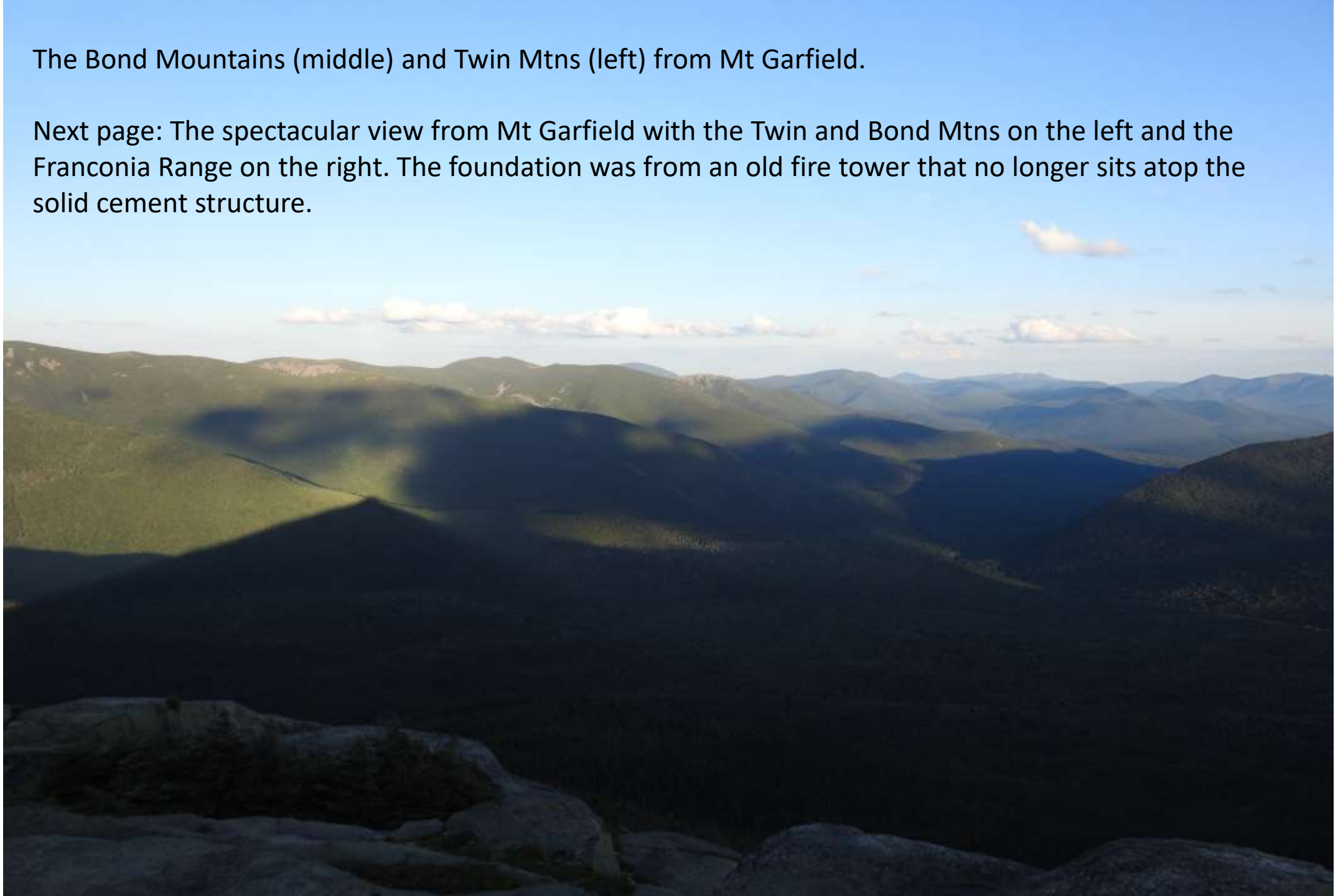


Owl's Head (center) and the Bonds (middle left) from Mt Garfield.



The Bond Mountains (middle) and Twin Mtns (left) from Mt Garfield.

Next page: The spectacular view from Mt Garfield with the Twin and Bond Mtns on the left and the Franconia Range on the right. The foundation was from an old fire tower that no longer sits atop the solid cement structure.





Shortly after heading down from the peak of Mt. Garfield, there was a trail junction with the Garfield Trail. We stayed on the Garfield Ridge Trail for another quarter mile before reaching the campsite area (below right).





We arrived exhausted to the Garfield Ridge Campsite around 8 pm. We quickly devoured some food under the makeshift common “room” under the tarps (below right) before storing our food in the bear boxes. We slept in a rather large lean-to (above left) with 2 other people who were already in bed in the loft (above right; shown the next morning after they left). It was a nice place but it was very difficult to sleep on a hard floor with a thin mat and an aching body. Plus, every move that one of us made was amplified. In hindsight, I wish we chose one of the many campsites where it would have been quieter and a bit softer.



It costs \$15 per person per night for either a tent site or lean-to spot at a remote campsite in the White Mtns. These spots are official sites (marked on maps) where a caretaker (Peter, in our case) checks you in and monitors the site. It even includes a compostable outhouse.

The first day was an amazing experience, climbing six peaks (5 counting as 4,000 footers with Little Haystack not qualifying). Yet we didn't see much wildlife, which is unusual on one of my outdoor adventures. We 'only' saw a toad, a good quantity of chipmunks and red squirrels, and then the ravens previously mentioned. No sign, let alone a sighting, of an ungulate: deer or moose.

Day 2: The Bonds

I didn't sleep great despite being 'in bed' for 8.5 hours. My legs were still sore and throbbing. The good news was my damaged left hamstring was now part of my many maladies and the relatively sleepless night actually helped recover my body, at least somewhat, to start the new day.

The view from an outlook at the beginning of the Garfield Ridge Campsite spur trail at daybreak.





I passed this spot the night before (left) but was too tired to shed my pack and take in the view, figuring I'd do it in the morning on our way out of the campsite while walking the 0.1 miles back to the main trail. We woke up at daybreak when our two bunkmates were packing their belongings. I was so sore and exhausted, I stayed comatose on my mat under my two lightweight blankets and rain jacket until they were just about ready to leave at 5:45 AM. Although I didn't sleep well, I was ready to go and start our second day on the trail. On my way to the outhouse, I saw 2 gray jays, a cool bird that isn't found on Cape Cod where I live. Of course, they were no longer in view when I went back and grabbed my camera at the lean-to.



View from the bench (upper left).

There is an important and well known water location at the beginning of the campsite (also see next page). The brook is supposedly crystal clear and pristine. We decided to treat the water with tablets to kill any potential giardia even though some people drink it straight from the source. It was slightly after 6:30 AM when we filled our water bottles and resumed the backpacking trip.





Watershed Area

The area behind this sign supplies public drinking water for the campsite and its many users.

You can help protect its fragile quality by:

- Not walking beyond this sign.
- Washing your dishes at the dishwashing area to prevent food scrap contamination.
- Properly using the outhouse provided.

For more information ask the onsite caretaker or contact:

AMC Trails Program
PO Box 298
Gorham, NH 03581
amcshelters@outdoors.org

Garfield to Galehead

Day 2 began a bit unexpectedly. We left the campsite area at this sign by the water fill-up spot and then hiked a short ~0.1 miles east to a small, steep brook with many larger rocks (next page). Not thinking this was the trail, we retraced our steps back to this sign (right). We spent a good 10 minutes figuring out what to do next not knowing where the trail was.





Finally realizing that the brook was indeed the actual route, I put my camera in my pack and went down the steep section of Garfield Ridge Trail. It definitely required focus and balance (hence needing 2 hands) to complete this slippery stretch. I had also screwed up in my planning and hadn't brought enough backup battery chargers. I just had 2 cheap, index finger sized batteries that collectively barely charged my cell phone. Therefore, keeping the camera in my pack preserved its battery until I really needed it like on peaks. The relatively cool 50° morning temp sapped the battery.



Notice how quickly these trees get low in elevation. It was steeper than this picture indicates.



Interestingly, around the couple mile stretch to Galehead Hut there were ~5 places that smelled like animal, specifically ungulate, musk despite no signs of moose. It reminded me of bison wallows in Yellowstone and spots on Cape Cod where I see deer. I imagine the ungulates pee in that area and leave a musty smell. I didn't even see any old scat piles indicating winter use of the area. 'Odd', I thought.

Less than a half mile along the Garfield Ridge Trail from the campsite, the trail intersected with the Franconia Brook Trail which took one south into the wilderness of the 'Pemi' toward Owl's Head. We continued east after I took a few pictures of a short detour of the trail heading south (next page). I was amazed at how much mud was along the trails and the fact that I hadn't yet observed any moose sign, 15+ miles into the hike.







The Garfield Ridge Trail was mostly forested (see previous pages) between the campsite and the hut, except for this one little overlook that provided a glimpse of Galehead Mtn (right) and South Twin Mtn (left). Galehead Hut can actually be seen from here (arrow).





Eventually the Garfield Ridge Trail went downhill, including over large boulders (left), and met up with the Gale River Trail on its way to the Galehead Hut (right and next page). I was extra cautious in these rocky sections given the crampon on my boot.







The 'million dollar view' of South Twin Mtn (left) and Galehead Mtn (right) from Galehead Hut (above pictures).



There were some neat orange colored dandelions along with the more normal yellow variety (left) just off the front porch of Galehead Hut (above).



This sign (below) was located on the front porch of Galehead Hut (left). There was also a fresh water spigot to the immediate right of the steps leading to the porch. If we knew this ahead of time, we wouldn't have had to stock up with water 2.6 miles earlier at Garfield Ridge Campsite area.



Galehead Hut is [described as the most remote of huts](#) in the AMC (Appalachian Mountain Club) system. The following is a [good article](#) on the fees and what it is like to stay at one of these shelters.



These pictures are 2 different bunkhouses inside Galehead Hut. They both are 3 beds high (the very top of both pictures is a bed). In total, there are [4 bunkhouses that hold up to 38 people.](#)





I was surprised at how many slugs I saw on the hike, especially in this area that morning (below and next page).

After checking out Galehead Hut, I did a quick 1 mile round trip hike of Galehead Mtn. Steve, feeling the effects of the day before, chose to rest on the porch of the hut to get ready for the Twinway stretch of our voyage.



A 'sluggish' get together.





The climb up Galehead Mtn produced a nice view of South Twin Mtn and Galehead Hut when zoomed in.



Close-ups of different parts of South Twin Mtn, including its peak (left) and its ridges (below right).





While the outlook (previous 2 pages) produced a nice view of the surrounding area, the top of Galehead Mtn (4024 feet) was forested and very uneventful with a rock mound surrounded by mostly spruce trees.



Twinway Trail

See the next 3 pages for the climb on the Twinway Trail up to South Twin Mtn after leaving Galehead Hut. The rocks were manageable and not as large as I thought they might be.



The most detailed [article that we read online](#) about the loop warned that the 0.8 mile stretch between Galehead Hut and South Twin Mtn was going to be rough as it climbed 1,100 feet. Interestingly, Steve and I both found the section between Mts Lafayette and Garfield at the end of Day 1 to be much harder, as this shorter stretch was steep but also was very steady with decent footing all the way up.





This view is from the first boulder atop South Twin Mtn coming from the west. There, one could see the entire Franconia Range to the west, including (from left to right) Flume, Liberty, Little Haystack, Lincoln, Lafayette (all on this, left picture) and Garfield (right picture which is to the right of Lafayette on the left picture)

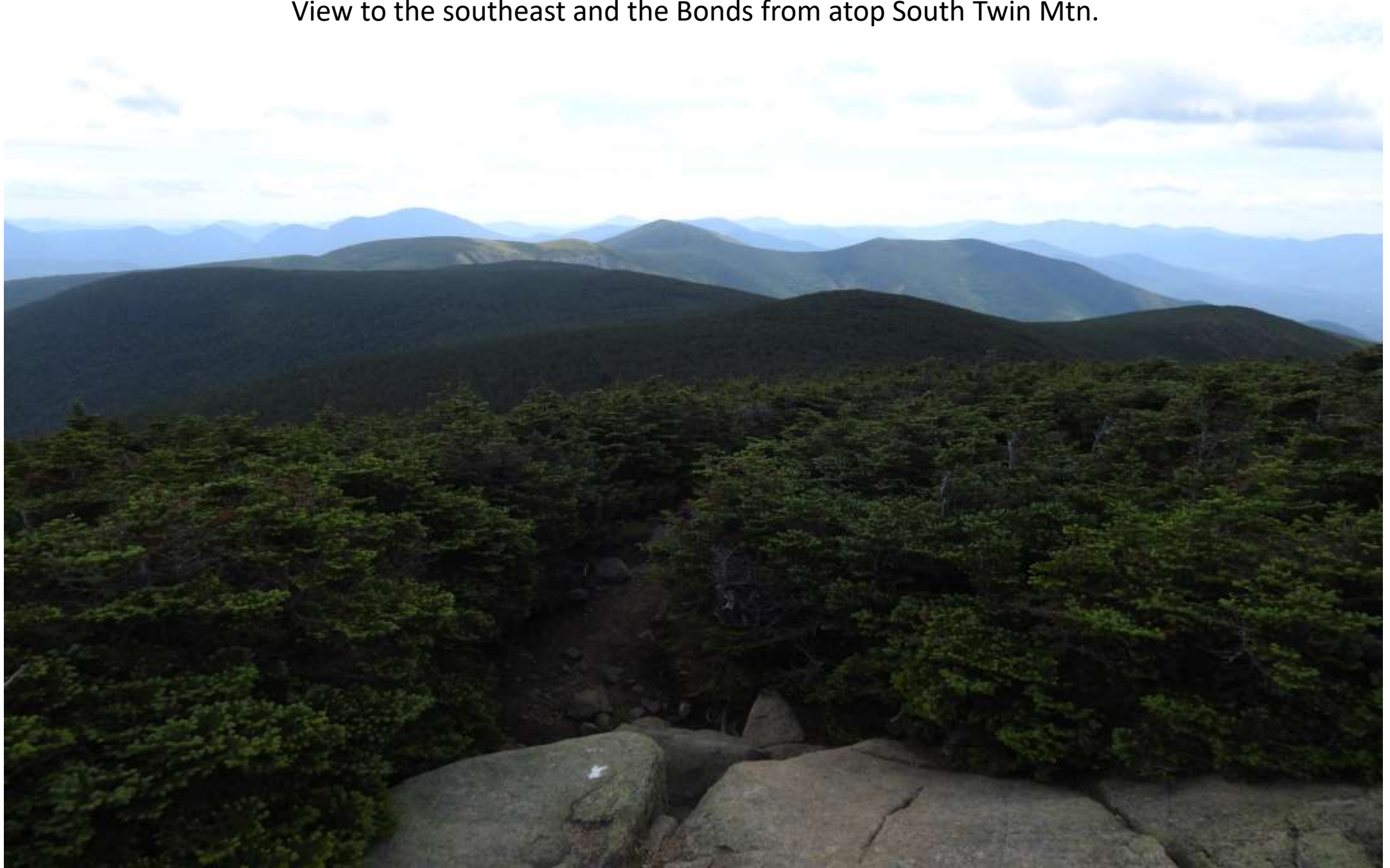


Garfield



Underrated for its views, South Twin Mtn was spectacular, especially after completing the difficult but rewarding climb to get there. Here is a panorama to the west of the Franconia Range. Including all of the peaks on the previous page, Haystack Mtn is to the right. The cone shaped top of Garfield from this angle attests to the difficulty of finishing Day 1 near there.

View to the southeast and the Bonds from atop South Twin Mtn.





A nearly 360 degree composite with these two pictures including the Bonds and Franconia Range (above) and North Twin Mtn and surrounding areas (below).





North Twin Mountain (right) and the spur trail leading to it. Originally we planned on doing this hike but considering that we could literally see it in front of us, we decided to save the energy and hike the Bond Mtns on this day instead of having a long Day 3. This proved to be a wise decision.



North Twin

More spectacular scenery from atop South Twin Mountain with selected peaks named.



Flume

Owl's Head

Lafayette

Garfield

The next stretch of the hike was remarkably pleasant as the Twinway Trail went for 2.0 miles over relatively smooth terrain after an initial descent into the forest below South Twin Mtn (next page, left). There were countless spruce trees along the way (next page, right).



The Bonds





This page: I was surprised at how mossy this stretch of trail was. There were spruce trees everywhere along the ridge to Mt Guyot.

Next page: Just before taking pictures of this female spruce grouse, I was hiking along the trail and almost stepped on her because she blended right in with the dirt and rocks. Out from under her, 8 chicks ran into the forest. It took a few minutes for them to reappear. I was amazed at how close I got to the female (next 4 pages).









Spruce grouse chicks.

While the trail was rocky for much of the hike to Mt Guyot, it was as flat as could be expected for the mountainous region. This made for relatively easy and quick hiking.



Approaching the junction with Mt Guyot and the Zealand Trail (left) and the beginning of the Bondcliff Trail (center right).





This page: There was this really cool, stretch of persistently low alpine vegetation at the trail junction.

Next page: We could also still see Owl's Head and the ever present Franconia Range to the west from this area, in addition to Galehead Mtn in the foreground. I was amazed how far away they seemed, yet we had just hiked them 24 hours or less ago.





Franconia Range

Galehead Mtn

Garfield



USFS

AMC

BONDCLIFF TRAIL

← GUYOT CAMPSITE 0.8
← LINCOLN WOODS TR 8.7



USFS

AMC

TWINWAY (AT)
← SOUTH TWIN 2.0
ZEACLIFF TRAIL 2.9 →

Mt Guyot was a super quick 0.2 mile jaunt from the Bondcliff Trail. It was 4580 feet but not that much higher than the surrounding terrain. Curiously, in researching the area, I found [the Appalachian Mountain Club doesn't consider Mount Guyot a "four-thousand footer"](#) because it stands less than 200 ft (61 m) above the col (the lowest point of a ridge between two peaks) separating it from South Twin Mountain. That statement strengthens my earlier comments about the relatively flat terrain between the two peaks even though they are 2.1-2.2 miles apart!





Bondcliff Trail

I was very excited to begin the Bondcliff Trail, since I completed this stretch of trail previously. But it had been a couple of decades before when I was in my early 20s. It is a beautiful area and has some of the most remote terrain on the east coast. It is about a 10 mile hike, coming from any direction, to reach the treeless stretch of the Bonds.



A cairn marking the ridge of the Bondcliff Trail as we traveled south to the Guyot Campsite area.



We originally planned to spend the second night at Guyot Campsite. However, because it was only early afternoon we decided to do the Bonds on this day. Curious to what the campsite looked like, we decided to take a “quick” detour. To my surprise it ended up being an incredibly steep decline and was more like 0.3 miles to the bottom of camp, making it a tiring 0.6 mile round trip loop.





The purpose of the tent platforms is to keep humans off the rocky ground to avoid eroding the area. One must have a decent camping pad to comfortably sleep on wood.



Most of the camping platforms were at a nearly 45 degree angle to the steep trail leading to the campsite (right). The caretaker's tent (above left) was at the beginning of the trail and was the most level but still was at a decent angle.



The inside of the structure looked similar to the lean-to at Garfield Ridge, which felt like we were there 2-3 days before, even though it was only the morning of this same day!



The newly constructed lean-to looked more like a cabin and was at the bottom of the steep trail to the camp area.

The cabin-like lean-to (this page) offered a nice view to the eastern section of the Pemigewasset Wilderness (next page, left). The trail to Guyot campsite was steep and rocky; pictures (next page, right) don't do that justice.





I had already eaten a peanut butter and fluff sandwich when we rested on South Twin Mtn a couple hours earlier, but while I waited for Steve to return from the campsite area I made another one at the junction with the Bondcliff Trail. To my surprise, 2 gray jays immediately landed near me and flew right to me when I extended my hand. They enjoyed some crust.







Shortly after the amazing experience with the gray jays – which Steve totally missed – we stashed our packs on the Bondcliff Trail and did the 0.5 mile out and back (1.0 mi total) trip to West Bond. The relatively easy hike offered a commanding view of the iconic Mt Bond and Bondcliff peaks (right; also see next 2 pages).





Mt Bond

Bondcliff



Franconia Range

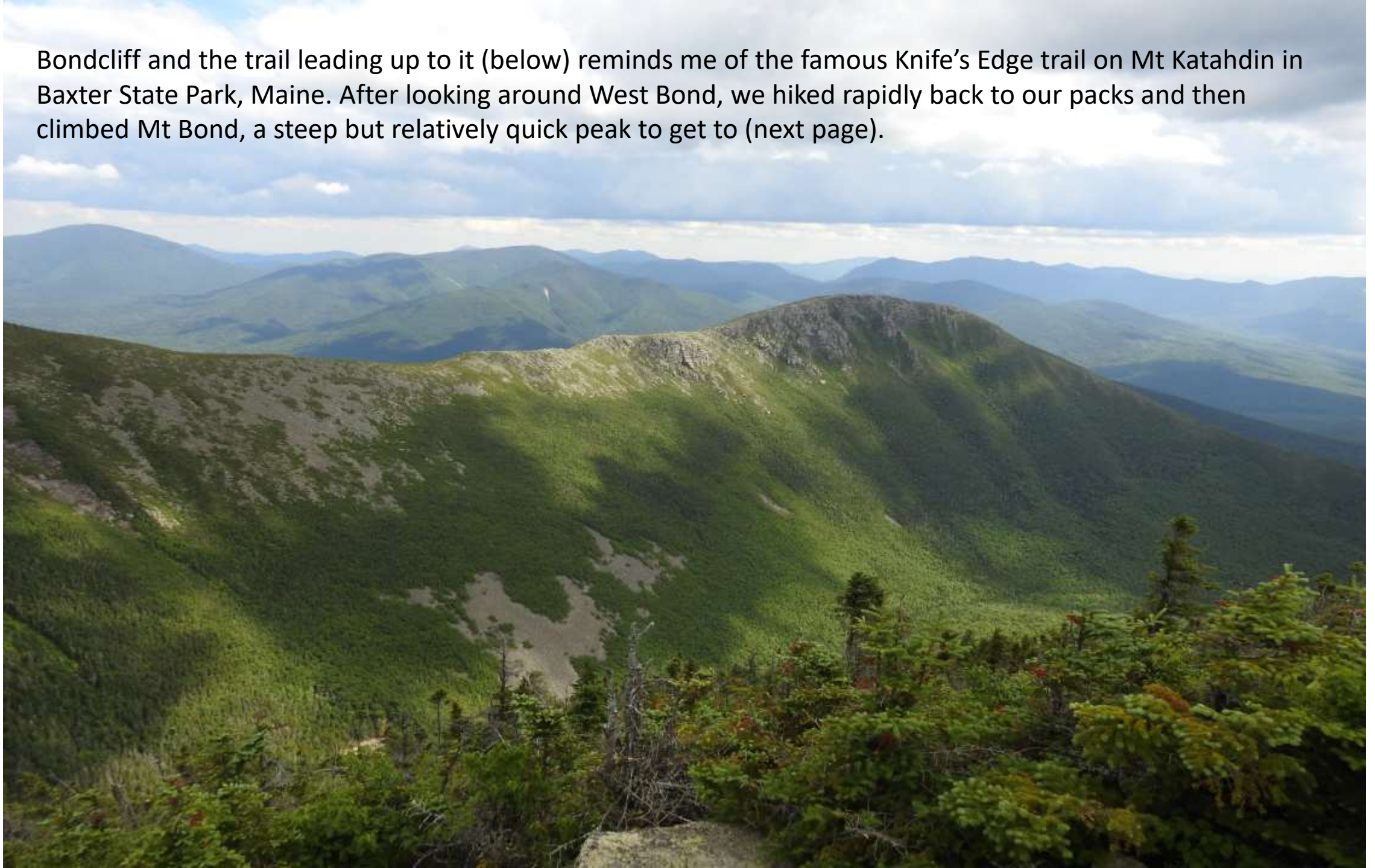
Garfield

South Twin

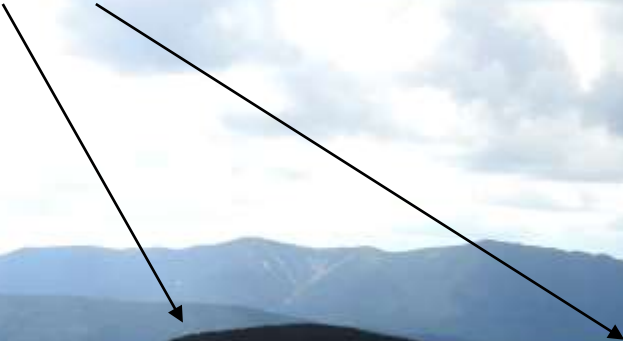
Part of West Bond

Owl's Head

Bondcliff and the trail leading up to it (below) reminds me of the famous Knife's Edge trail on Mt Katahdin in Baxter State Park, Maine. After looking around West Bond, we hiked rapidly back to our packs and then climbed Mt Bond, a steep but relatively quick peak to get to (next page).



West Bond (where we had just came from), as viewed from the hike up Mt Bond.



The Bondcliff trail leading to its namesake viewed from atop Mt Bond at 4698 feet. This was one of my fav stretches of the hike, partly because I remembered it so well and also because of its sheer beauty and remoteness.





Top: View to the south with Bondcliff (center left), West Bond (center right), the southeastern part of the Pemigewasset Range (rear left) and Franconia Range (rear right).

Left: West Bond and the Franconia Range behind it, from the peak of Mt Bond.

Next page: View of the Presidential Range well to the northeast of Mt Bond.



Mt Washington



Presidential Range and Mt Washington.

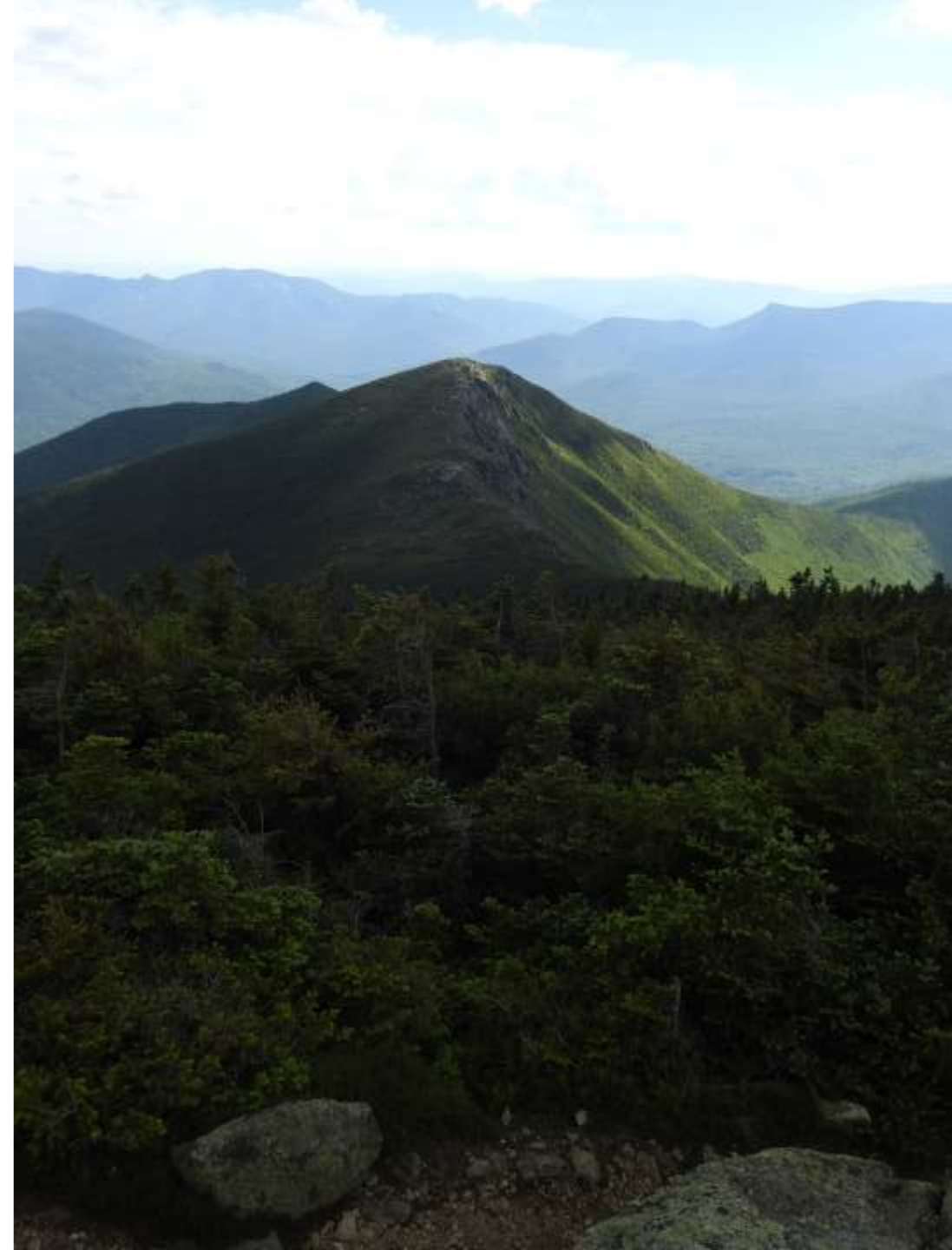


View to the east of
Mt Bond and the very
remote eastern part
of the Pemigewasset
Wilderness.





I was truly mesmerized by the view of the Bondcliff Trail below Mt Bond. I also remembered from my previous trips that the trail was rough and rocky and was going to be a steep and 'bumpy' downhill descent before climbing to the next peak (i.e., Bondcliff).

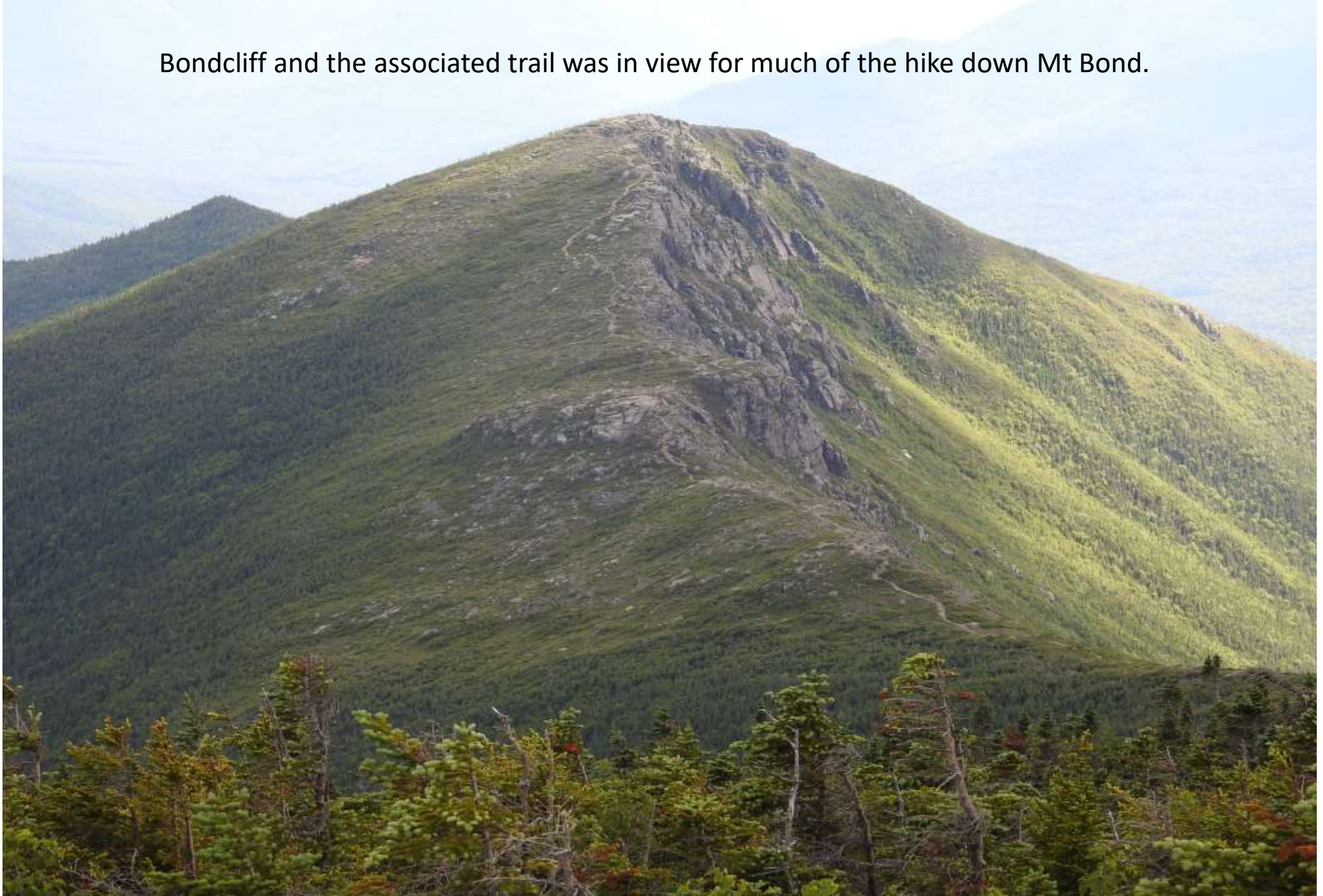




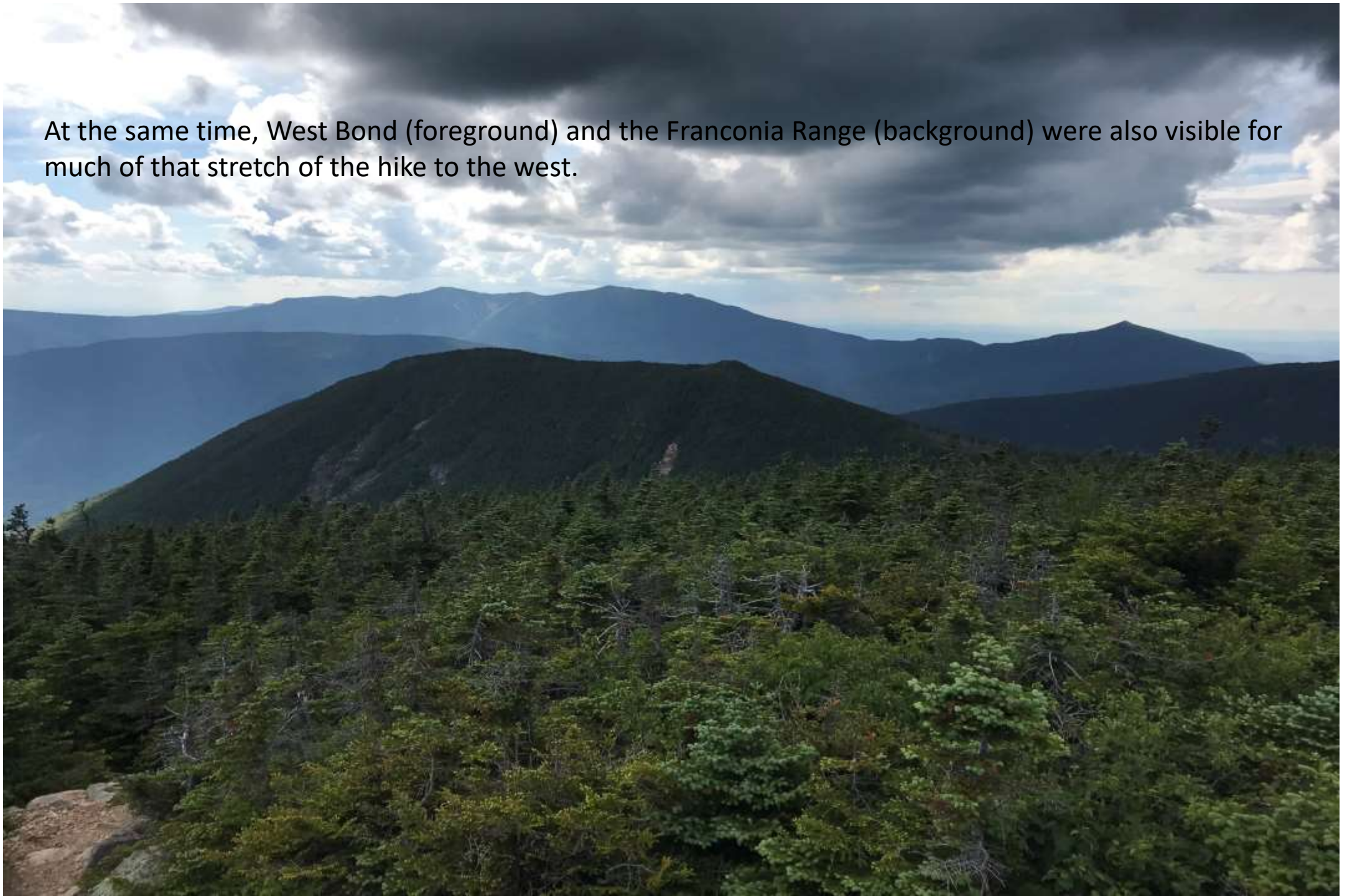
Bondcliff from different places on the trail.



Bondcliff and the associated trail was in view for much of the hike down Mt Bond.



At the same time, West Bond (foreground) and the Franconia Range (background) were also visible for much of that stretch of the hike to the west.





The trail became quite rocky (or more aptly, 'bouldery' given the large sizes of stone) and hazardous on the downhill portion. Recall that I started to lose the sole to my right boot in the middle of Day 1. At this point, I still had a tight crampon on that shoe to keep the sole in place. They are made to dig into ice and the small spikes slide off rock, which further challenged me during this stretch.



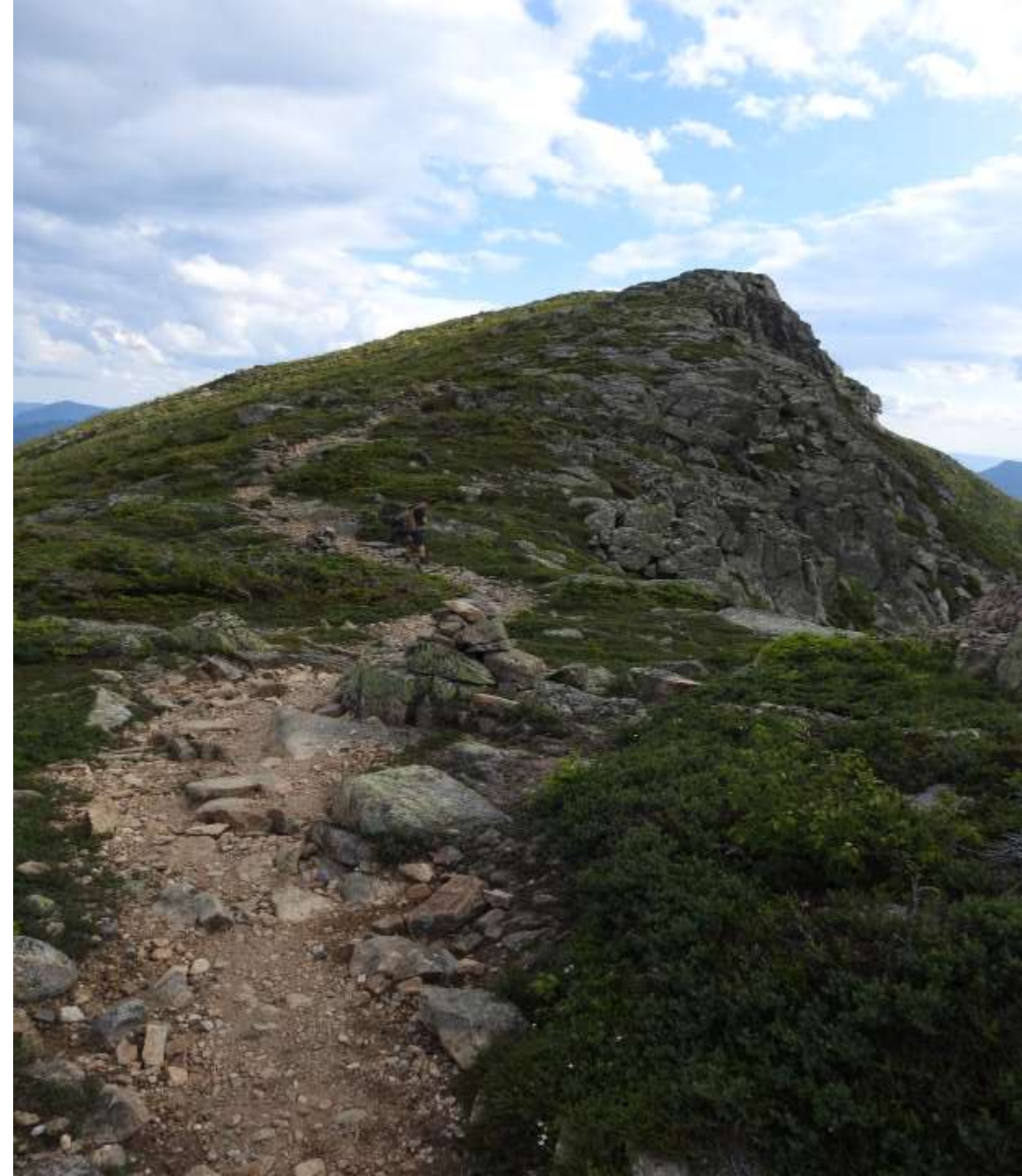
As we reached the dip in the trail between West Pond and Bondcliff (ahead), it became very windy. Strong 40-50 MPH gusts came from the SW right up the valley near Hellgate Brook on the map (right side of the pictures). I literally got knocked off the trail a couple of times.



Perspective of where the wind came up from the steep draw on the west side of Bondcliff. West Bond is in the background. I sought shelter along the trail next to short ~2 foot vegetation to block that strong SW wind (see previous and next page).



Climbing Bondcliff.





Once we continued up Bondcliff and reached the east side of the rocks ahead (next pages), the wind stopped and it then became uncomfortably warm in the sun when it appeared during the partly cloudy conditions. Quite a contrast, I thought, from a few minutes earlier.

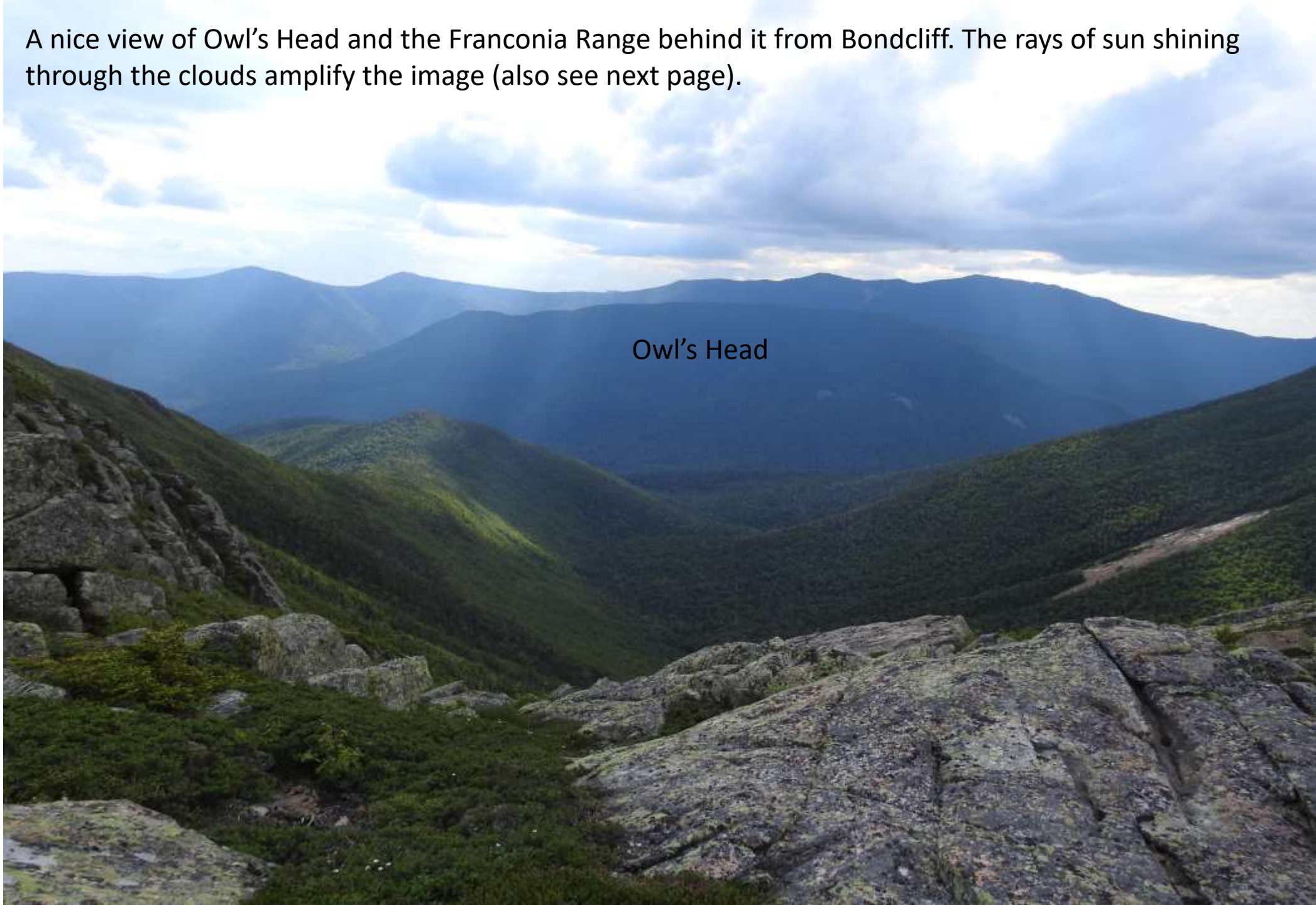


Final ascent up Bondcliff. Being on the east side of the mountain (left side in the pictures) caused the wind to stop and the heat to increase in the sun. It had been a very pleasant two days up to this point, with surprisingly low humidity. The temperatures were often in the 60°s with the dry conditions reminiscent of the western U.S. I occasionally even wore a long sleeve T shirt which is unusual for me during the summer.





A nice view of Owl's Head and the Franconia Range behind it from Bondcliff. The rays of sun shining through the clouds amplify the image (also see next page).



Owl's Head



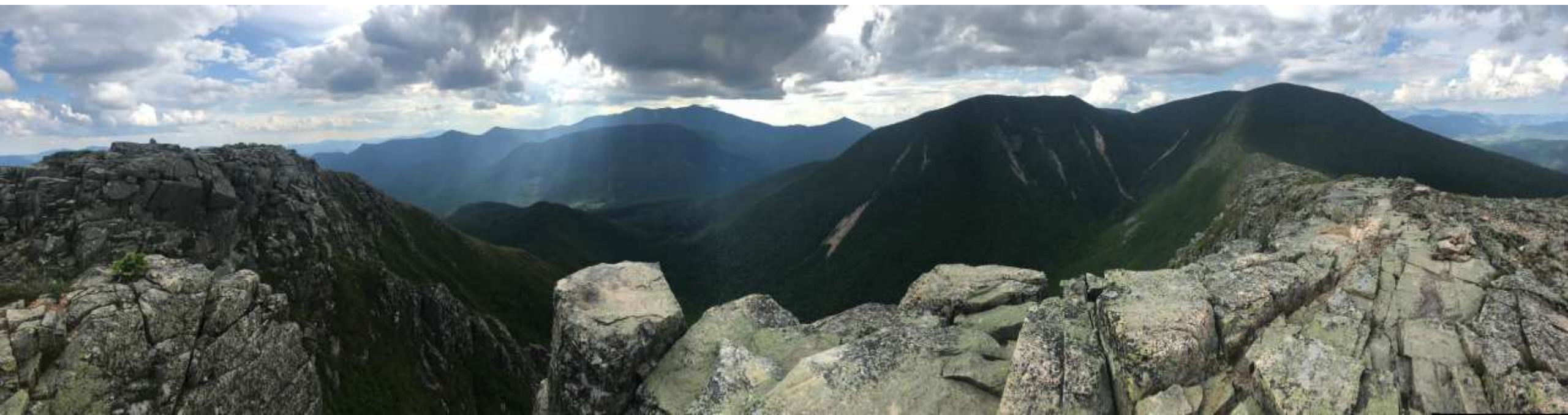


The overcast day made it very pleasant to hike in the dry (non-humid) conditions that we experienced, since it kept the full strength of the afternoon sun to a relative minimum. Even though it looks cloudy, the views were still great for the entire hike, except for some shadows that were created in the late afternoon (below right).





View to the east (top) and west (bottom) from atop Bondcliff.



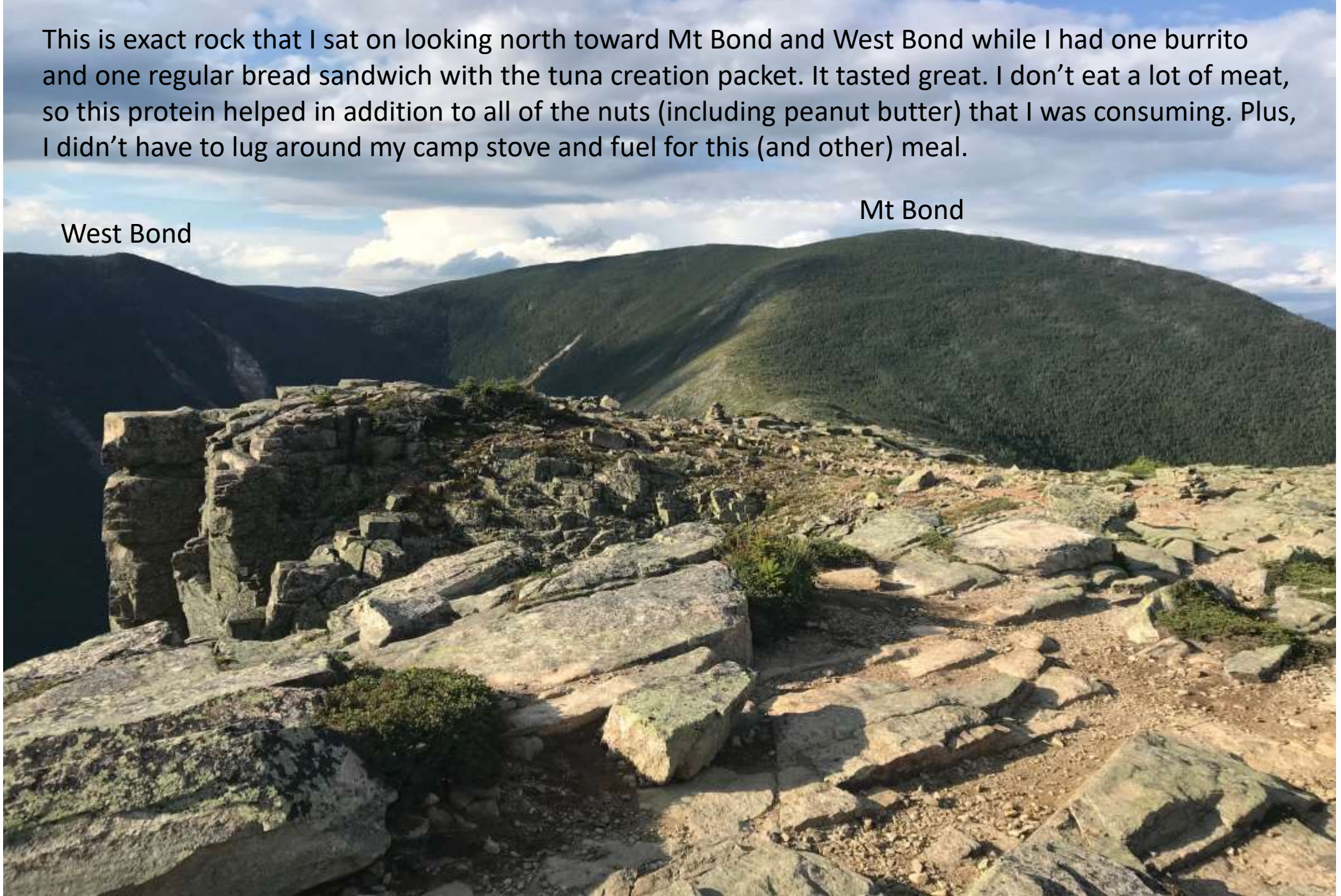
The peak of Bondcliff was a perfect spot to stop and have dinner, with a billion dollar view. It was also a bit bittersweet as this was the last of the 12 peaks (with 10 counting as 4,000 footers) that we would hike. The remaining 8.1 miles would be downhill and then on flat terrain. We would do about 2.5 of it on this day and the rest the following morning.



This is exact rock that I sat on looking north toward Mt Bond and West Bond while I had one burrito and one regular bread sandwich with the tuna creation packet. It tasted great. I don't eat a lot of meat, so this protein helped in addition to all of the nuts (including peanut butter) that I was consuming. Plus, I didn't have to lug around my camp stove and fuel for this (and other) meal.

West Bond

Mt Bond



As we were eating, Steve and I were feeling quite accomplished with what we had done in the past two days of hiking. We could literally look around us (below) and see most of the peaks that we had scaled on this backpacking trip, which we were already over 25 miles into. As we were finishing up our dinner, a group of 6 mid-50 year old fit men passed us. It turns out they were hiking our loop, minus the additional spur trails that we did, in one day. They stayed nearby in Lincoln, NH overnight and arrived to Lincoln Woods at 4 AM to start the hike. We were amazed to see them in good spirits despite the distance they had covered on this day. Granted, they had small day packs and didn't have to lug their houses on their backs like we did, but it was still quite impressive. I took a few pictures of the six of them with one of their cell phones and then they went on their way. One guy didn't even have a chance to finish his granola bar before the group leader set them back on course. As is the case with most hikers that we come across, no names or contact info was exchanged during our pleasant interaction. It was them against the Pemi and we were a mere distraction on their way. It turns out after that group, we ended up talking with a party of 4 (3 males and 1 female) on the mountain and then two younger [thru-hikers](#) in the woods who were all doing the 32 mile loop in one day. Quite a feat!





One last look at the Bonds before we began the hike down the trail heading back toward the car.





Left: The trail down the Bondcliff Trail was for the most part gradual. We rapidly left the tree-line behind us and began a solid 3 mile descent toward where Black Brook paralleled the trail.

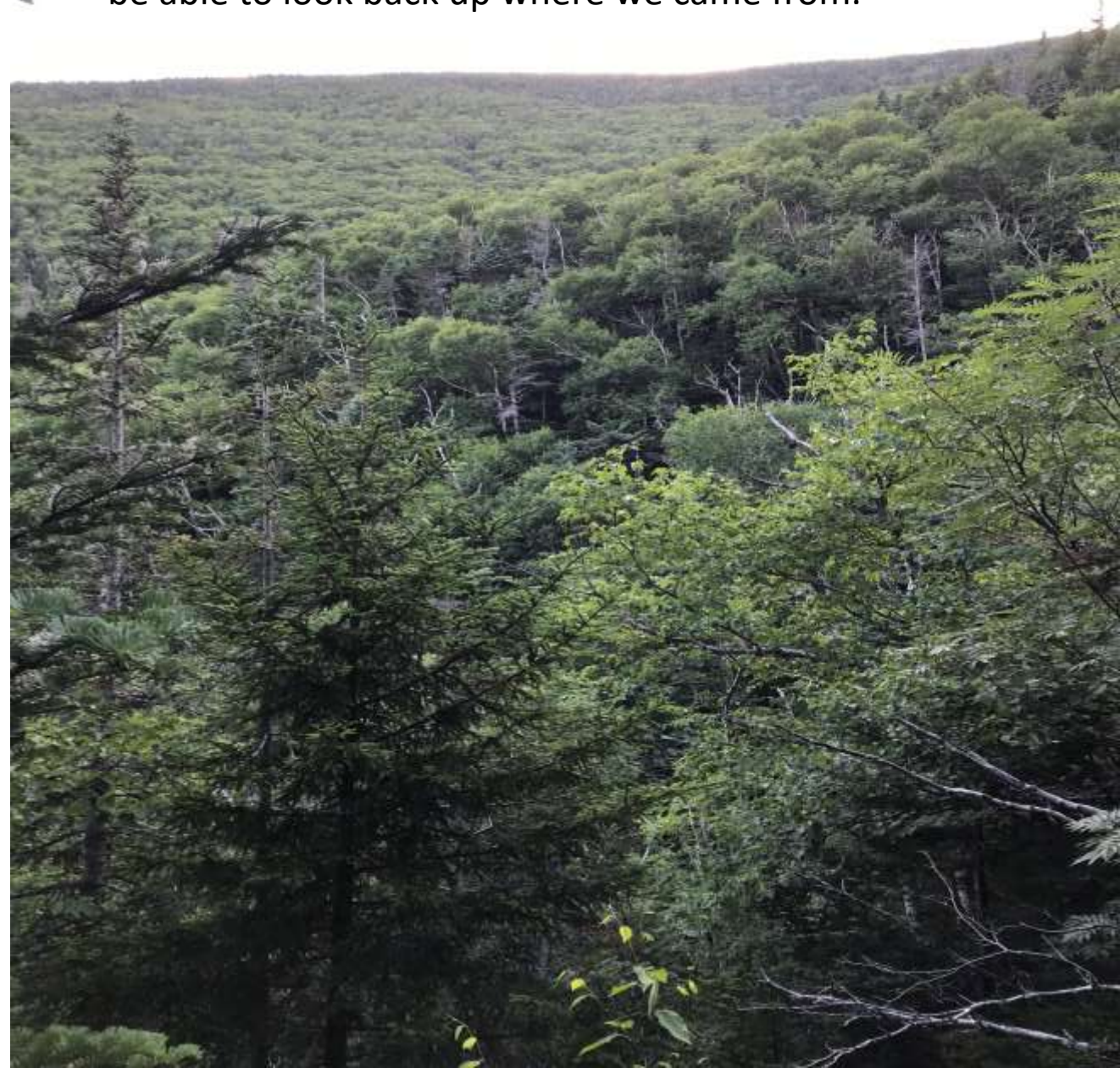
Next page: There was one extremely steep section, however, close to the peak of Bondcliff. I remember back in the day having to climb down it and take off my pack and then go back up this section two more times to individually carry down two rather large dogs that were with us. I pinned both against the boulders so they couldn't move to avoid them hurting themselves or me. I recall them both appearing gracious afterward for me lending them a hand to get down that difficult stretch.

On the first day of our hike, my hamstring was sore but the hiking seemed to strengthen it. Since I wasn't running, there didn't seem to be much of a chance of me injuring it again. On Day 1, my body was just generally sore, especially my legs. At the end of Day 2, the ligaments on my left ankle became very sore on the downhill section. My legs went from doing lots of tiring uphill climbing to stopping my body as I extended my legs on the downward portion. My sister predicted that would be the biggest test of stretching my hamstring out. I thought my thighs might feel it the most. So, it was interesting that it turned out to be my feet, especially my left one.





The trail down from Bondcliff was relatively gradual and in seemingly no time (30-45 minutes) we got low enough to be able to look back up where we came from.





Having taken pictures on all 12 peaks, I knew I had enough good images to make a book so I put my camera in my pack for the majority of the hike downhill. At this point in the hike, I was tired and wanted to get to our campsite before dark. I knew it would be a relatively easy ~3 miles but mentally it would seem to take forever. Indeed, it was a literal blur (left) at dusk as I passed by thousands of trees. I got ahead of Steve for a while and then waited for him when Black Brook crossed the Bondcliff Trail for the second time. About a half mile later we found a secure site off the trail to make home for the night.





We stowed our food up in a tree away from bears (left) and weren't overly concerned since we had already eaten supper 3 miles from there. We only brought water into the tent (below).



The sound of the nearby brook made for a pleasant night, which was the opposite to every noise being heard in the lean-to the previous night.



I summarized my notes next to Black Brook. It was cooler than the surrounding forest and kept some of the bugs, mainly mosquitos, off me. It was a great day and this scene was a nice culmination to cap it off!



Day 3: The Last Day, Already





It became pretty chilly overnight, dipping into the high 40's to 50°. I was surprised as I thought it would be mild in the lowlands, especially since it was warm in the evening. I felt the chill as the two lightweight blankets barely helped on the second night. I thought after the fact that I should have brought 4-5 safety pins to fasten the two together. I kept trying to connect them in the middle of the night and then had to put my rain jacket between the two to try and keep warm. It was quite aggravating to say the least. I actually slept with my winter hat on and hiked with that and my sweatshirt and wind pants for the first mile or so on the march back to the car. However, I felt re-energized since I was actually lying on my sleeping mat for nearly 9 hours. I am convinced that simply being off one's feet is as important as actual sleep when in the woods.

This page: We immediately crossed Black Brook, which was the third time that the trail crossed this water body since the previous evening.



Hiking Back to the Car Seemed to Take Forever

The dominant view of the hike on the lower (southern) section of the Bondcliff Trail was northern/transitional hardwoods mixed in with some spruce and hemlock trees. Most of the foliage in this picture were maples and birches, with many beech trees growing in under them. Beech is a common tree in an old growth forest in the Northeast. They need shade to grow so it can take over 100 years for them to become common in an ecological community. In another 100 years, the area may be represented pretty closely to what Native Americans experienced for thousands of years and what it looked like to Europeans before they cut most of them down.

Once we reached the southern part of the Bondcliff Trail it headed west and became flat and easy to walk on. Our pace was much faster than the previous two days and the crampon on my right boot was not nearly as uncomfortable when on dirt. However, the monotonous landscape made it mentally anguishing, as it seemed to take forever to get back despite the increased pace.



More hardwood trees, consisting mostly of birch and beech. The early morning sun gave the forest a fresh, vibrant look. Since we mostly hiked west/southwest that morning, I had to stop and turn around to take many of these pictures.





This page: Black Brook meandered through the trees along the southern portion of Bondcliff Trail.



Next page: The Bondcliff Trail with hardwoods and some spruce trees mixed in.





Once we reached the junction of the Bondcliff and Lincoln Woods Trails, we only had ~3 miles left to reach the car.

Right: The trail became especially flat here and primarily followed an old railroad bed.

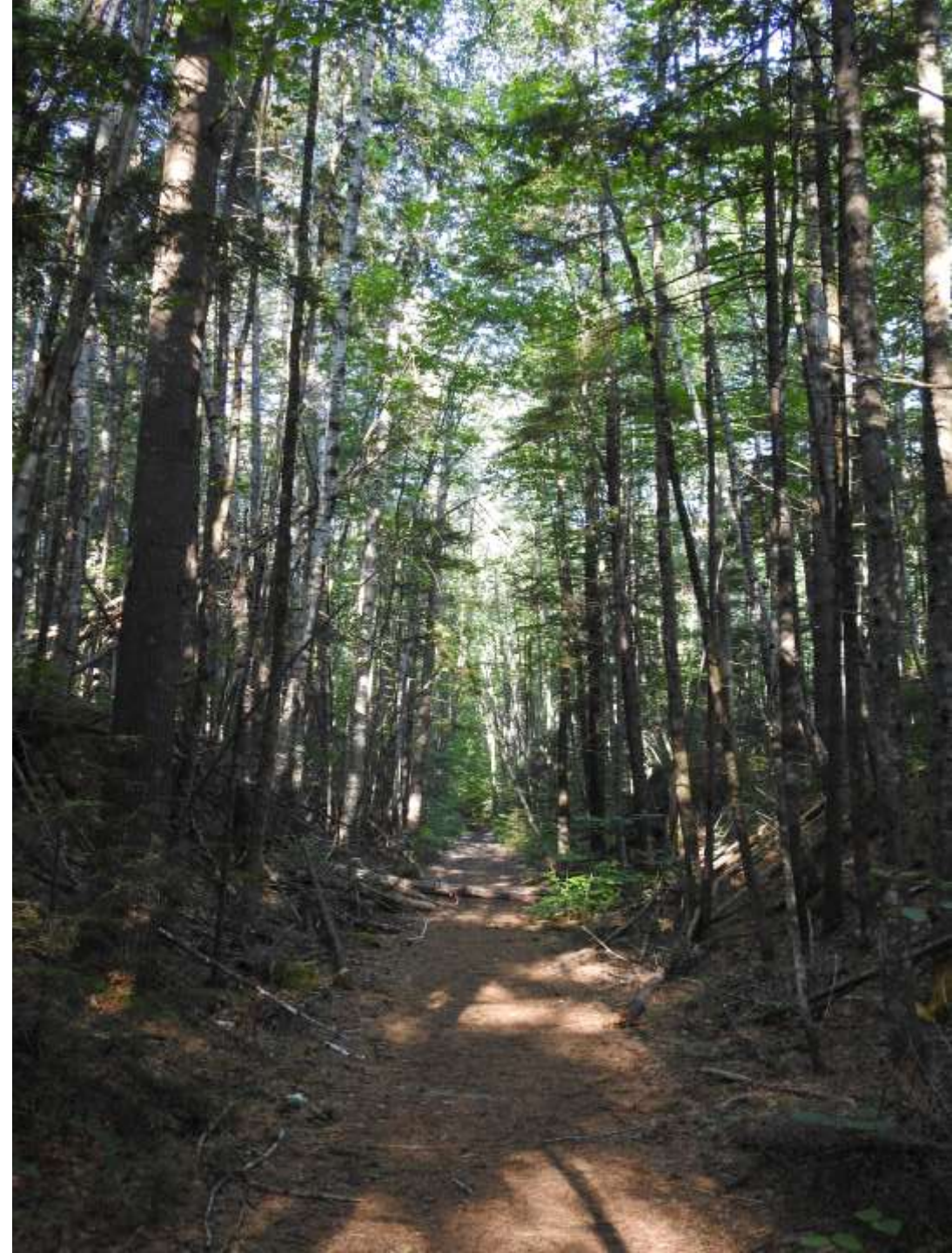




[Transitional northern hardwood forests](#), like these commonly observed scenes during this part of the hike, are between the southern deciduous forests, which are more common in southern New England southward, and the boreal forest which begins in this area and covers much of the northern areas, including most of Canada.



While hardwood species (maple, birch, beech) were most common here, there were also places where the majestic and pleasantly aromatic white pine (right) was also found.



More transitional northern hardwood scenes including a fallen birch tree (left) and the straight, flat trail (right).





In between the thousands of trees that we hiked past, there were some small streams that bisected the trail (right) as they drained into the East Branch of the Pemigewasset River.



This area is officially where the Pemigewasset Wilderness begins to the east and north of there. In other words, I hadn't obtained a picture of this sign yet, and we were now leaving the wilderness area at this juncture.



The trail junction with the Franconia Brook Trail. Heading north on this path would lead one into the wilderness around Owl's Head, which we hiked around. Recall the boggy areas off the Garfield Ridge Trail – that is where this area leads to in 7.6 miles.



Views north (left) and south (right) of Franconia Brook. The area to the south is the confluence (back of picture) with the Pemigewasset River.



A beautiful panorama of Franconia Brook (above). The old cement wall/structure was where the original railroad bridge used to be back in the day (below left).

Franconia Falls Detour



While Steve continued on with the hike back to the car with a sore foot, I decided to take the 0.8 mile roundtrip detour to see Franconia Falls. Next page: The trail began in an area of towering evergreen species including hemlock, spruces, and white pine.





Here is a very rocky stretch of Franconia Brook. The east side of the short Franconia Falls Trail had intermittent good views of the river system, including small waterfalls draining into a little basin (see next 3 pages).





This and next page: Comparing cell phone pictures (here and next page) to my Nikon P900 camera (starting in two pages). With close-up scenes they are pretty comparable.





This page: Nikon P900 camera. I am always amazed at what good pictures cell phones take (previous two pages) when comparing similar quality images to relatively expensive, specialized cameras.

Next 2 pages: This cool trail led to a large living room sized pool of water and swimming area underneath a large boulder overhanging over the river. Notice the trees, and their associated exposed roots, growing on top of the big rock.









Franconia Falls wasn't the most impressive sight (also see previous page, bottom right picture), but the entire area was pretty cool overall, especially the large boulder over the river just downstream from the falls (below and previous 2 pages).







Above: The Franconia Falls Trail was quite pretty but the actual falls wasn't the most spectacular and distinguishing, so this sign was helpful since there was a 'social' (unmarked and not on the map) trail that continued north on the west side of Franconia Brook.

Below: There was no mistaking the flat, wide Lincoln Woods Trail. Here the area is checkered with spruce trees in addition to the hardwoods that I have previously discussed. Within a half mile after the previous (left) picture, I was back on this trail for the remainder of the hike.

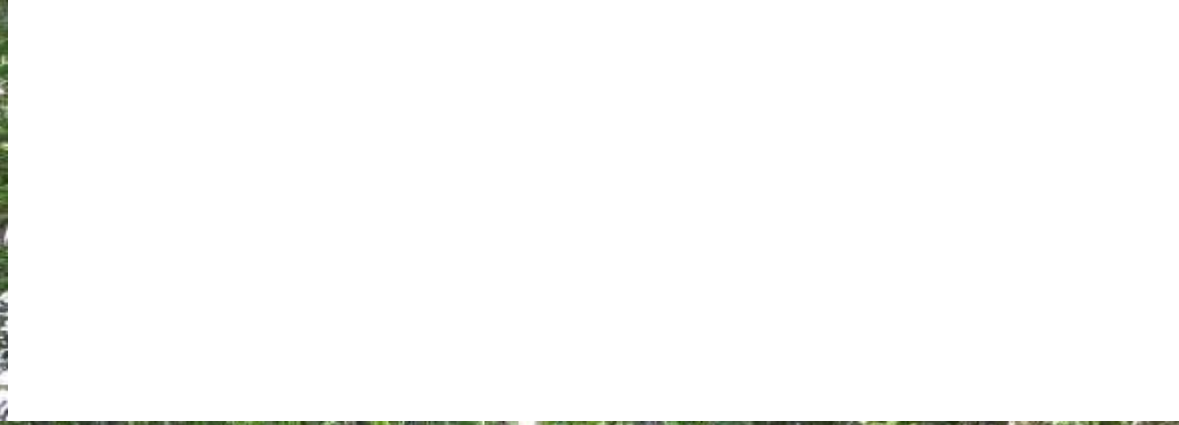




As is clearly illustrated in this picture, the trail was easy compared to earlier in the backpacking trip. However, my legs, especially my feet, were still throbbing due to the weight of the pack and the miles traveled. Whenever I took it off and stashed it for short hikes – like the Franconia Brook Trail – the pain immediately lessened.

So, despite the flat terrain of this stretch of the hike, I was still sore due to the cumulative effects of the past 30+ miles. This is common for most backpackers as there really is no other way to train for the grueling hike with the added pack weight. That is also why it ‘seemed to take forever to get back to the car’ despite the good time that I made on this stretch.

I never did catch up to Steve. He had a big head start as I did the nearly mile roundtrip hike and he went straight back to the car with sore feet of his own. I kept looking ahead, and even picked up my pace to see if I would catch him, but he was well ahead. My thought “there he is” repeatedly turned out to be the wrong person – who were often female and heading in the opposite direction! I was starting to think that I might be hallucinating after the past 3 days of excursion.



Section of the Lincoln Woods Trail oddly blocked to human hiking. Staff must have been working on this bridge as it looked fine to me. The low water level on this small stream made for an easy detour on the rocks, even with my 'cramponed' right boot.



These are the last two pictures I took with my cell phone. They accurately depict what most of the last 4-5 miles of the hike looked like.





The morning light made for nice pictures. Contrasts of the sun in some areas, and the darker forest canopy shading it out in others, added to some of the scenes.



The main branch of the [Pemigewasset River](#) runs north to south, paralleling Route 93 through the western part of the White Mountains. It originates at Profile Lake in Franconia Notch State Park (west of the mountain range that we hiked on Day 1). The [East Branch of the 'Pemi'](#) is actually a larger river than the Pemigewasset River as it runs along all of the Lincoln Woods Trail and the first 1.8 miles of the Bondcliff Trail. However, most just call this stretch of water 'the Pemi', not separating it from its parent water body to the west.







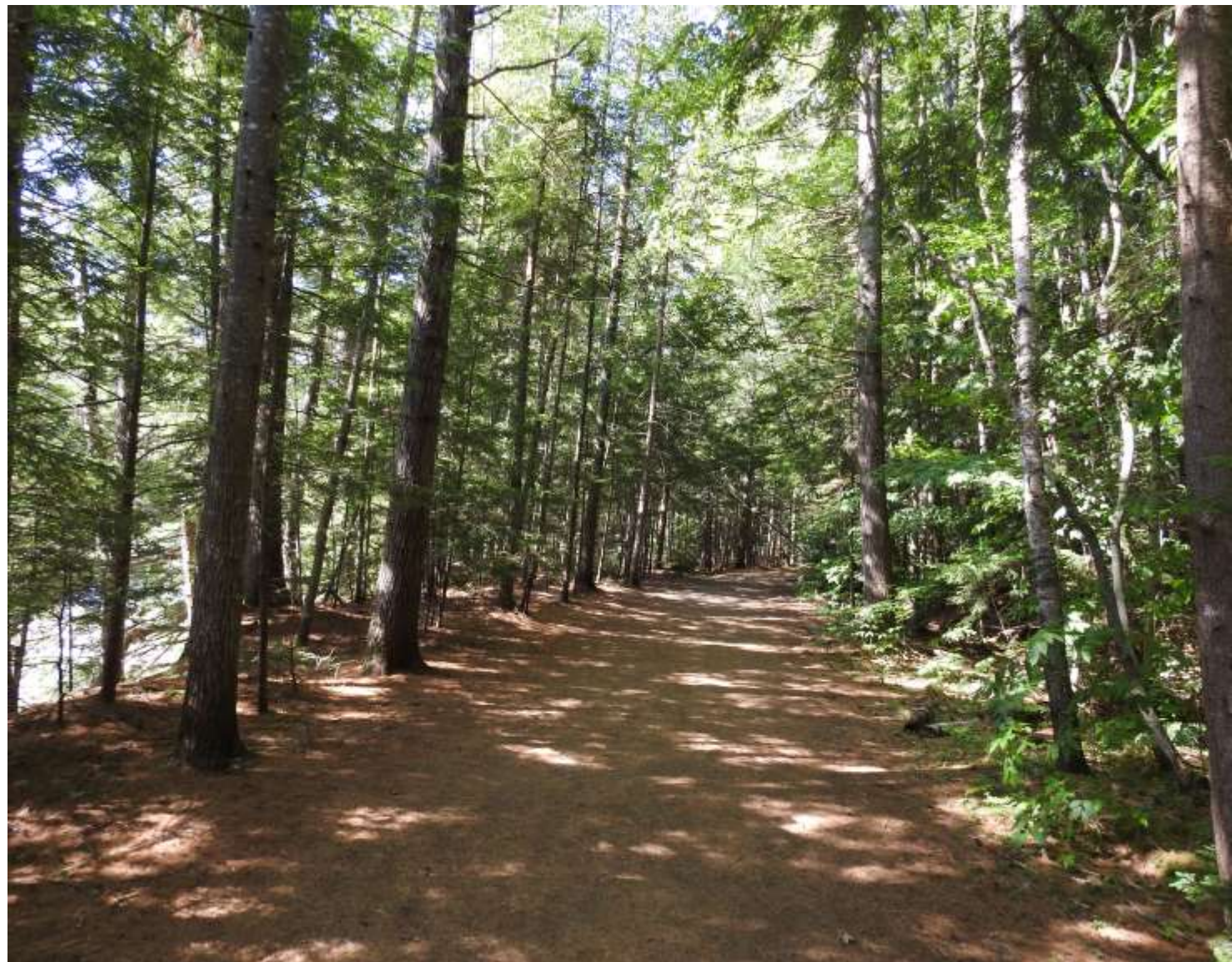
Familiar ground! Once I reached this trail, I knew there was only 1.4 miles left of the hike. This is where we went northwest just 2 days before when we started the climb to the Franconia Range via the Osseo Trail. I couldn't believe how sore my ankles were despite the easy stretch of the hiking loop.

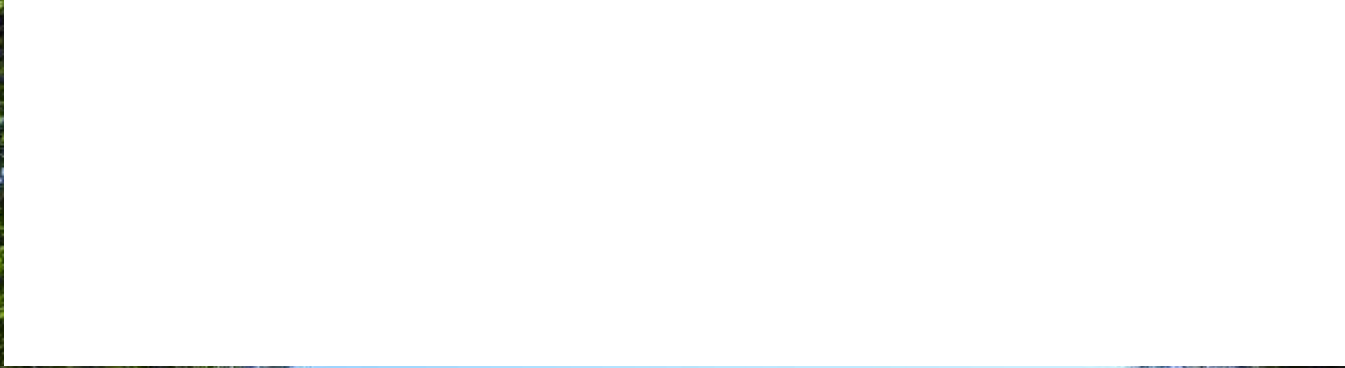


The monotonous stretch of trail (left) was occasionally broken up when the Pemi River (right and next page) came right next to the trail. Normally it was close but just out of sight about 100-200 meters away.



This pretty evergreen stand was a nice way to finish up the hike.





This and next page: The familiar suspension bridge over the Pemi was a welcomed sight.





Kancamagus Highway, as viewed from the suspension bridge (above). Close to the bridge is a kiosk (right) near the Lincoln Woods Visitor Center (next page) which explains the area in a few graphics. It was cool to marvel over what we had just accomplished in the previous 50 hours.

The Pemigewasset Wilderness

A wilderness reclaimed

Looking at this forest, it may be hard to believe that the Pemigewasset Wilderness was heavily logged only a century ago.

Many of the hiking trails in the Pemigewasset follow the paths of old railroad beds and logging roads.

Today the Forest Service continues to manage the Wilderness area, helping the forest return to nearly natural conditions.

In 1984,
Congress proclaimed the Pemigewasset a designated Wilderness:

"...an area retaining primordial characteristics without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed to preserve its natural conditions."

Leave no trace

It's up to each of us to help with the 100-year-old forest. Taking care now will help to preserve the wilderness for the future.

- Don't build a fire
- Don't cut any trees
- Don't dig
- Don't use soap
- Don't use sunscreen
- Don't use insect repellent
- Don't use any other chemicals
- Don't use any other products

Please carry out what you bring in, including all food remains.

Bury human waste in a hole 6 inches deep, and 4-6 feet away from water. Sprinkle with dry ground cover and other natural, non-toxic materials. Bury and mark it well.

Use a campsite where there is already a campsite. What you do is important to other visitors who will find and enjoy it.

Wear sneakers or other lightweight shoes on the rocky ground that can be slippery when wet.

Plan your trip and report it to someone. Tell us how it went.

Purify drinking water. Don't drink untreated water. You can use a portable purifier that filters out the germs.



Lincoln Woods Ranger/Visitor Center and the parking lot.



I could not believe how full the parking lot was at 9:45 AM, when I returned back to the car and happily took off my pack (right, left pack). Granted, July 9 was a Saturday morning, so it made sense that more people would be there. Plus, I had observed quite a few day hikers and backpackers that morning. The overnight campers clearly wanted to get an early start to hike up the Bonds at a decent time. I suspected some of those hikers were doing our loop in reverse (i.e., counterclockwise).





It was an amazing 3 days, but technically just about 50 hours from start to finish. After completing the hike, there was just one more thing to do: check my trail-cameras that were in the general area.

Checking My Trail-Cameras

In order to document wildlife activity, I have had one or two trail cameras in the general vicinity of this hike for a few years. It initially started out as a wildlife presence/absence project to supplement my ecological knowledge of the area. But as I traveled the area, I realized [the Northeast needs more national parks](#) like the many places out west. These pictures ended up becoming very important in helping [me create a book](#) displaying the animals and beautiful scenery found in this and other spectacular areas of New England. The free e-book makes the case for the [creation of 3 new national park units](#).





To access the cameras, I had to hike about 3 miles including crossing streams (previous page) and beaver dams (this page). It served as a nice 'cool down' from the Pemi loop on an 80+ degree day.

Next page: The area also has some beautiful, big white pines, among other common tree species.







This page: Moose tracks. Sadly, moose have greatly decreased in central New Hampshire in the 25 years that I have been going there. Winter ticks have reeked havoc on the large ungulates to the point where I have not had a calf on either of my trailcams – only older cows and bulls that can better survive the parasites.



The trails in the lowlands in the White Mountains are often in or near wetlands and require bog bridges to hike on to stay dry.





A very cool bog-like habitat with black spruces growing in the relatively 'dry' wetlands.





While one of my cameras was in this bog habitat (above and previous page), the other was in a forested area (left). In prior years, I have captured just about [every living species that inhabits the area on film](#). Since I last checked the cameras in mid-April 2022, I had just under 3 months of pictures to comb through. Unfortunately, I used a newly refurbished Moultrie camera at the forested site and it only captured 12 images (in 4 sets of 3 pictures taken every 15 seconds) of me setting up the camera and then 6 (2 sets of 3) of a young buck deer a month later on May 19th. Considering the time and expense to get to that area, it would be an understatement to say that I was irate and frustrated by this low capture rate. Clearly something was wrong with the camera, likely the SD card, causing it to not function properly.



The forest camera (left, black arrow) with me inspecting it on April 18 and then the camera capturing the young buck white-tailed deer on May 19 (next page). It did not obtain any other pictures, including of me approaching the site on July 9th, so obviously something caused it to malfunction given the battery level was good. All of these pictures were viewed on my computer at the lakehouse on July 9 and in the morning of July 10th. But for consistency of this story, I share the images here since this is when I swapped out the SD memory cards for new ones.



That is just my cell phone camera on the ground.





Fortunately, my bog camera had much better success than the forest site, especially on the day I checked it (next page). Just over 2 hours before I arrived there, a black bear walked by (bottom right) and then a white-tailed deer buck (left, zoomed in) just 11 minutes after the bruin!

59°F 07/09/2022 09:06AM JON WAY



Moultrie 58°F 07/09/2022 08:55AM JON WAY

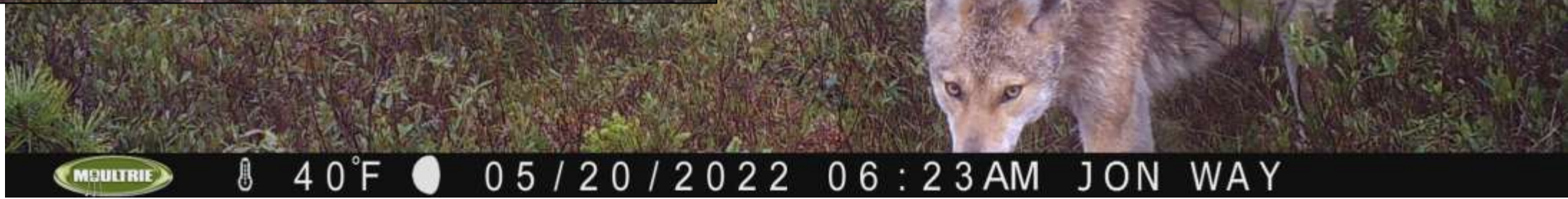
After reviewing both cameras – with one having good images and the other a paucity – I thought to myself, ‘Thank goodness I have two out there for times like that!’



Me checking the camera (above, see timestamp) less than 2.5 hours after a black bear and white-tailed deer were also there (see previous page).

This [eastern coyote, also called coywolf](#), is an animal I have studied in Massachusetts for years. Here is a cool scene of an individual at the site one morning (also see next 2 pages where all pictures were taken on the same day).

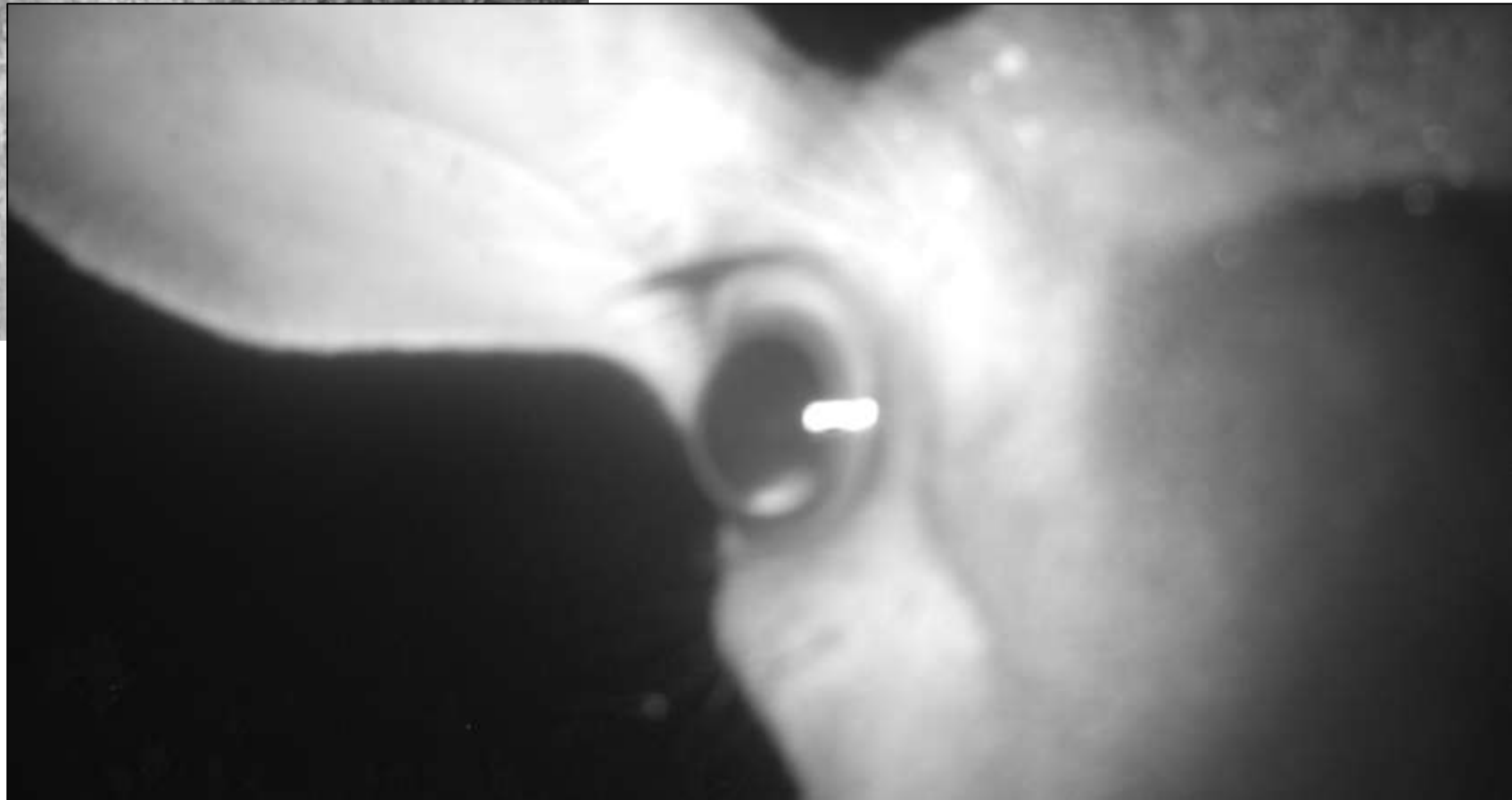








Over the previous few years, white-tailed deer (this page) have been a common but somewhat sporadic visitor to the cameras. During this trip, I obtained many pictures and video sequences which makes sense as deer eat lots of low lying, newly growing vegetation that is characteristic of spring and early summer in a bog.



Based on the picture here and on the next 3 pages, it appeared that all of the images were of the same or possible two does, along with the buck shown previously.



54°F



06/24/2022

02:06AM

JON WAY

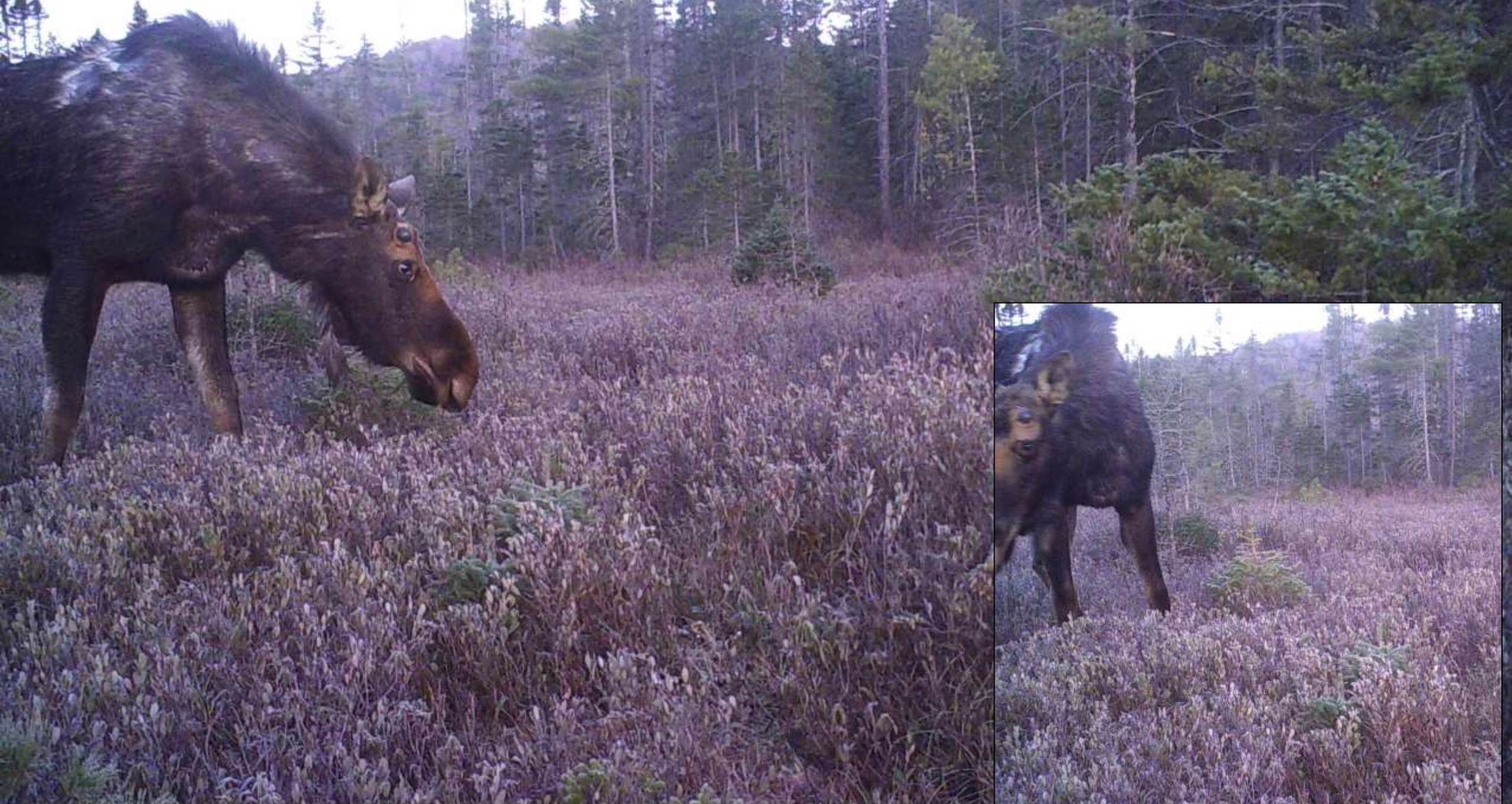




Next page: I only obtained one sequence of two pictures and a video of a bull moose. Sadly, over the past few years I have obtained less and less images of moose. I used to see them regularly in the area; now, I see less both in person and via trail-camera. There is little doubt that climate change is having a major effect on them, allowing parasites like winter ticks to better survive less harsh winters which directly endangers individual moose with high tick loads (notice the fur off this one's shoulder).

This page: While I was able to obtain some good images of bear, deer, eastern coyote, and moose, the most common image was of the wind blowing. I went through hundreds of sequences of the bog plants and trees blowing due to strong winds. This became quite mundane to catalogue.





14°F



05/01/2022

05:41AM

SUN WA I

An Amazing but Scary Wildlife Encounter

What follows is one of my all time wildlife encounters...

I have always thought of a 'goshawk' to be a mysterious predator of the north. It is the largest hawk in the *Accipiter* genus, which consists of mostly forest raptors. In layman's language it is like a robust, chunkier version of a red-tailed hawk. Red-tails are open field, soaring, big hawks so anything that size that navigates through the forest is a badass.

On my way back from checking my 2 trail-cameras, I was nearing completion of the ~3 mile hike about a quarter of a mile from my car when I heard this loud calling bird in the white pine stretch of the forest discussed earlier this chapter in the trail-camera section. Not recognizing the call, I thought it might be a pileated woodpecker, so I looked up and scanned the 100+ foot tall trees. Despite searching, I couldn't see it even though it clearly sounded close.

After about 2 minutes, the bird finally flew to a different white pine high up in the canopy. There I made out a hawk-like looking bird and took some fuzzy images of it. I could tell its call was different than the familiar cry of a red-tail. In ~5 minutes it went to 4 different trees where I finally ID'd it for sure as a hawk. I immediately thought it might be a goshawk; the two images at the end of this section are my last ones taken when I obtained the best view of it. Once I captured the good camera shots, I said to myself that is enough, I'll leave the bird alone now and confirm identification via a field guide at home.

Well, the bird had different ideas and started dive-bombing me. It took the open corridor of the trail route to gain speed through the pine forest. It was literally like a bad movie with a hawk - talons and all - extended as it came full speed at my face. They, like owls, are silent birds so you don't hear them flying. Normally, that is. This one dove down at high velocity 3 different times and literally was no more than a foot above my head. I heard it each time "woosh" by as it flew barely over me. I was a bit worried because it could kill me if it went into my neck with its talons, and I knew nothing about [this behavior with goshawks](#). Finally, after the third dive I was a good 100 meters from the start location and the trees got smaller and closer together so it couldn't dive-bomb me quite as easily. It went back to its original location and called again, leaving me alone.

I have been near large animals most of my life, and besides being [treed by a bull bison in Wind Cave National Park](#) (we were on the same trail and came across a sharp bend face-to-face), this scene was one of the most terrifying of all encounters for a couple of minutes not knowing if the 'aerial mini-grizzly bear' would actually make contact. Due to it coming directly at me, I have no pictures of it dive-bombing and greatly regret not trying to get a National Geographic image of it in action.



Before coming near the goshawk, my hike included walks past streams and beaver dams (previously shown), as well red pines (left) and ponds (next page). I was thinking that I was just walking through a nice, peaceful forested setting (below) until “it” appeared.







This page: It was initially difficult for me to tell what this creature was. I could tell it was big and not a pileated woodpecker, but it took the bird going to a third and then fourth different tree (next page) to get a better assessment of it.





Top: My first decent image of the goshawk as it was loudly and repeatedly crying out its call. The last tree it perched on (right and next page) was the best view I obtained of the raptor – that is, before it came dive-bombing at me!



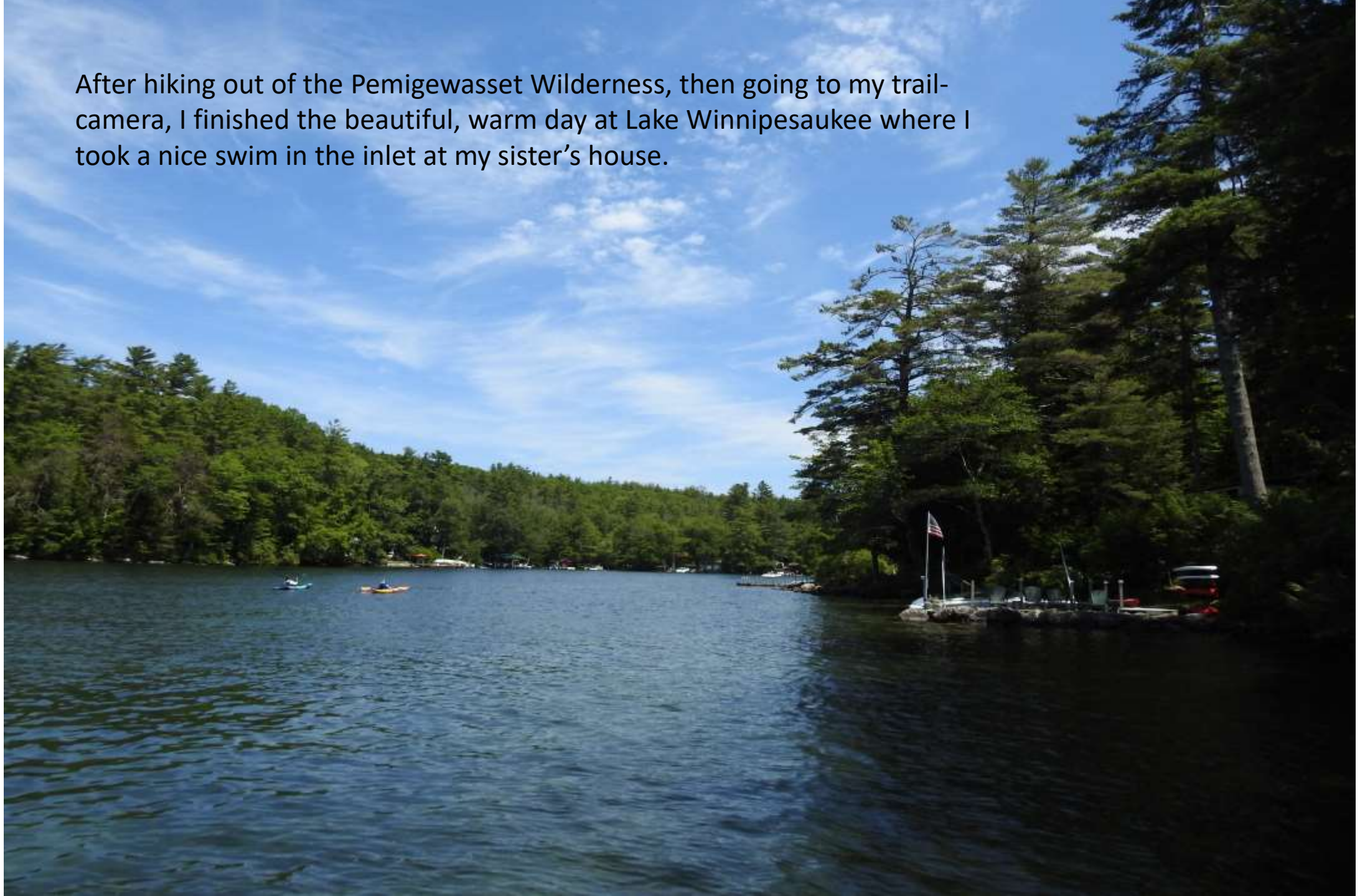


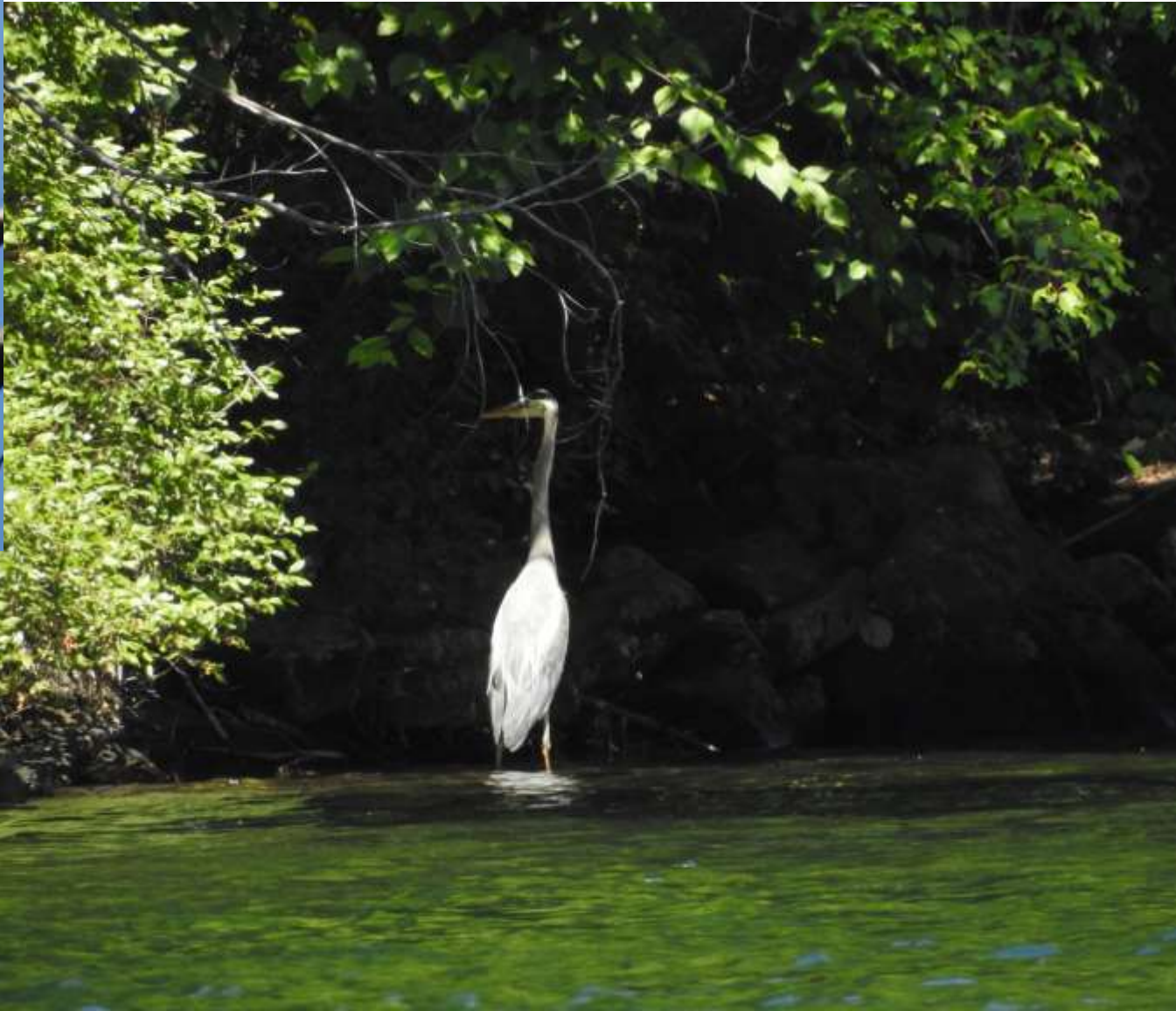
I didn't get a picture of my makeshift crampon shoe design until after the trip, mainly because I didn't want to mess up and ruin it. I wore the crampon on the right boot for most of the hike (top left). You couldn't even really tell it was on until I took it off (bottom left), where it was obvious how bad the sole was (bottom right).

When I arrived home, I bought 'Liquid Nails' and inserted the cartridge into my caulk gun to fix/bond a few things around the house, including my passenger's side mirror that got clipped off by a tree in the driveway at Lake Winnepesaukee. While the whitish-yellow bond was visible at the top of the sole it initially did a great job molding it together and, I thought, salvaged the boot. Unfortunately, that did not last long as the boot fell apart on my first hike. I ended up scrapping them and buying a new pair.



After hiking out of the Pemigewasset Wilderness, then going to my trail-camera, I finished the beautiful, warm day at Lake Winnepesaukee where I took a nice swim in the inlet at my sister's house.





And I also watched a great-blue heron in the water (right), then in a tree (above), and lastly, flying away (next page)



Sunset on Lake Winnepesaukee. A perfect ending to a great trip!



Postscript: Create Kancamagus National Park

In the week after I returned from this expedition, I slept a lot. I normally wake up early around dawn to run my dog, so that meant I took at least one nap a day to make up for lost sleep. My leg gradually got better. By the end of the week after returning, I was three weeks post hamstring injury. I stretch at least once a day, which generally is a great way to prevent injuries. It was painful to try and touch my left foot until the end of that third week when I had a major breakthrough and touched both toes with my knees not bent. I had no doubt that the hike strengthened my leg and greatly aided in the recovery of my hamstring. It just took a few days of rest for my legs to stop throbbing, which was actually a good feeling knowing how hard I worked them on the backpacking trip.

The Monday after, I actually played half court '3 on 3' and '4 on 4' basketball with my friends who I have played with for years (shout out to Mike Santos and the boys). I was admittedly nervous going there worried that I might tweak – or worse – pull my hammy again, but it held up so I decided to play in our summer league basketball game two days later and exactly 4 weeks after the injury. I was quite winded but amazingly, my legs felt pretty good afterward. I believe I owe it all to the magic and the power of healing that the mountains gave me.

This backpacking experience got me to continue to think that part of the White Mountains absolutely needs to be set aside as a national park. It is important to note their importance. The [National Park Service's mission](#) of preserving 'unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations' is a model that the rest of the world has replicated. It has been extremely effective in protecting core wildlife populations and ecosystems as well as being an important boost to local economies as people vacation in these areas.

National park status for an area means something to many people. It is the best of the best. I was so inspired with this message and the wildlife within parks that I have visited, especially [Yellowstone](#), that I wrote a book pleading to create more of them in the Northeast United States where there currently aren't many. [Northeastern U.S. National Parks: What is and What Could Be](#) is an Open Access, free e-book that anyone in the world can download.

[Northeastern U.S. National Parks](#) (NP) is over 310 pages, with 600 pictures, and makes the case to expand the NP System in the Northeast, beyond just having Acadia National Park as its only large “natural” park, by adding 3 units: Cape Cod NP in MA, Kancamagus NP in NH, and Maine Woods NP and Preserve. These three areas are already existing federal land and could immediately be added to the NP Service by an Act of Congress. Giving national park status to these areas would provide an important, higher level of protection to better safeguard these areas, and its resources, especially during politically volatile times. I strongly believe that NPs are “[America’s Best Idea](#)”, as Ken Burns eloquently noted, and creating these parks in the urbanized Northeast is important.

If you enjoyed this e-book, *Backpacking the Iconic Pemigewasset Wilderness*, I urge readers to peruse [Northeastern U.S. National Parks](#) and contact the legislators and other decision-makers listed on the last page of the read to make that dream a reality in the Northeastern United States.

Northeastern U.S. National Parks: What is and What Could Be

By Jonathan G. Way

www.EasternCoyoteResearch.com & www.MyYellowstoneExperience.org



Moose in proposed ‘Kancamagus National Park’