

JKß – JOY KROEGER BECKNER – JKß

classical realism, from hounds to humans & and more!

JOURNEYS OF JOY! :: ALASKA :: PART THREE :: 2018

JASPER, ALBERTA, CANADA TO MUNCHO LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK, B.C., CA

Day Ten

JUNE 30, 2018, SATURDAY, 7:49AM

Today is comfortable and cloudy. Brian fetches coffee and a memorable bran muffin. He thinks the delicious flavor is thanks to sorghum.

I have barely any Internet. AT&T sent a notice June 28 that I had used all my high speed Internet, and that I would have slow Internet yesterday, but did not tell me I would have none today. Actually, I have not had Internet all day.

Brian, bless his heart, hauls our big bags down the two flights of the handsome wide wooden staircase.

9:24AM, 55 DEGREES: We head north from Jasper on a highway with no name. Wild pink roses grow here.

People walk near a huge elk close to the west side of the highway. Temp is up to 62 degrees. We cruise at 65 mph and leave Jasper National Park on HIGHWAY-16 and enter Yellowhead County. Does that refer to blonds??? Mountains are fairly far to our east.

10:09AM, 61 DEGREES F: Head west on ALBERTA-40. A sign announces, "You are in Bull Trout Country."

Here comes the rain. Evergreens are healthier here. Oops! We bounce across a frost heave!

The meadow is full of dandelions! Pollinators are, no doubt, happy.

Last night we saw a program about residents putting up bee houses to help the 300 species of bees. I will look into that when we get home. Pollinators need all the help we can give.

It's good to see a lot of new young evergreens, as if young ones were planted along the highway. Of course, some might be middle aged for all I know!

Brian recalls that three days ago, we were traveling north of Fort Benton and an antelope walked right in front us. We missed it! Yesterday, we very narrowly missed rear-ending a line of vehicles that were stopped on the other side of a hill. Folks were gawking at something. I'll never forget sliding so close - within inches - of that vehicle. We were very lucky!

A lone bicyclist rides toward us. Evergreens are shorter and wider here. We suspect the area is recovering from having been clear-cut.

A Wildlife Sanctuary extends 35 kilometers. A caribou crossing sign instructs, "No Hunting Close to Road."

Much forest has been clear-cut, but the good news is that clear-cut areas are regenerating.

11:15AM: A major frost heave jolts the GPS out of its holder!



Gee whiz! There is MAJOR road construction! Brian suspects a paper mill is nearby. The road must be for logging trucks. Hillsides are being taken down, I think for filling low areas to make the road more level.

11:51AM, 54 DEGREES F: In Grande Cache take ALBERTA 40 north. Gas - YES! A sign states, "No gasoline for 113 miles!" My ears pop going downhill.

We cross an old bridge with steel girders and a wooden floor. A new bridge is under construction to our right.

Grande Cache is a town of about 3500. A lady at a coffee shop shared that the main employers are a lumber mill, a coalmine and a prison.



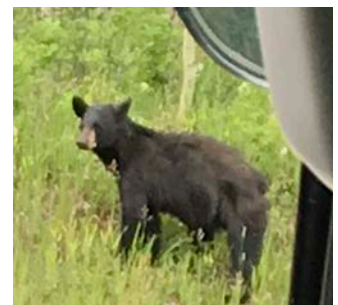
BEAR ALERT! One Bear is on tracks. That makes two bears and a cub, so far, on this trip.

Bear on left! I catch it between FJ parts! Now we have seen three bears and a cub.

A major coal mining operation is to the east of the road.

We cross Frost Heave hill. It's a long way down to the river.

Trash – AND - Recycling bins are on both sides of the road! YAY Canada!!!



White wildflowers remind me of Queen Anne's Lace but are shorter and stockier. Cattails grow here, too!

Hmmmm. The entrance sign to an oil operation says "Seven Generations." Are they trying to be eco friendly?

Our odometer currently says 40538. We have driven 3033 miles since starting this trip on Thursday, June 21.

1:37PM, 64 DEGREES F: Wow! It is so nice to see sunlight! Grande Prairie is in front of us.

We pass a logging operation where two rows of long logs are stacked as high as tall Aspens for at least the length of a football field, maybe two football fields! For a prairie there sure are a lot of trees.

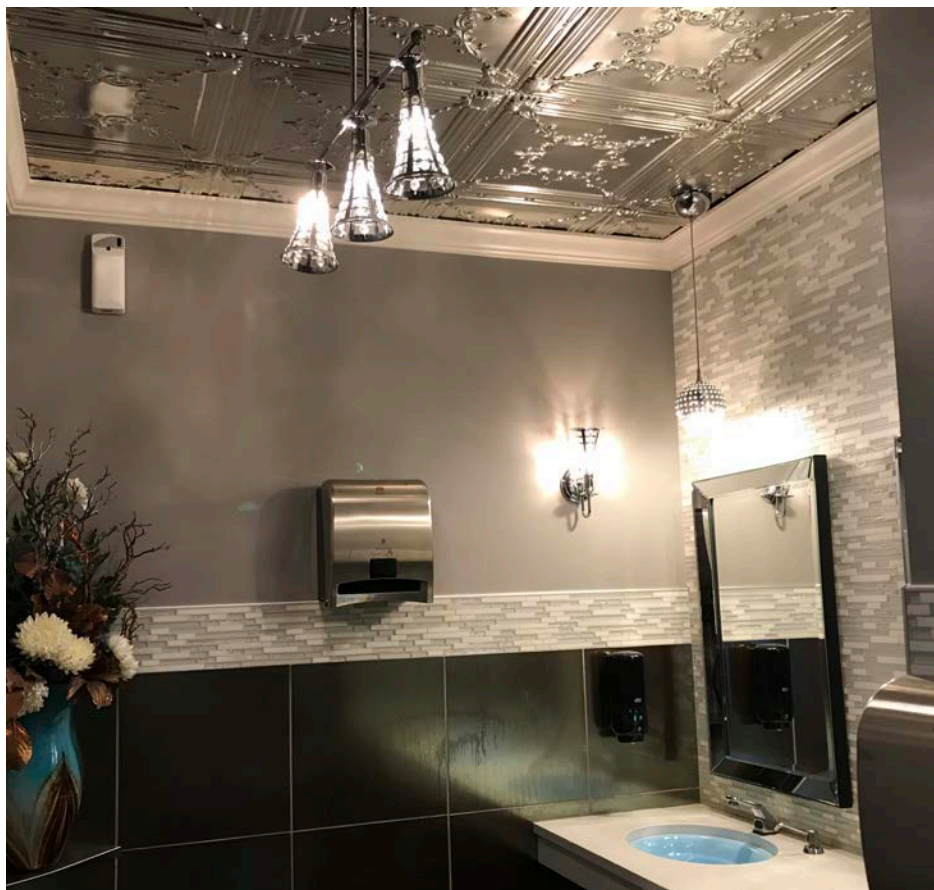
2:04PM, 68 DEGREES: Gusty winds blast us as we pass over the Wapiti River.



Grande Prairie, B.C., Canada has 66556 inhabitants and NO Walmart! But, we find an incredible little meat market and succumb to delicious beef jerky. The young clerk says it is usually "hotter" at this time of year.

Love is in the details!

Check the tin ceiling and crystal inside this ladies room in a Grande Prairie convenience store.



Across the way, at Wapiti Car Wash, we get a car wash.

2:58PM: **58 DEGREES F**: Not that long ago it was nearly 70 degrees. All trees in a local cemetery lean south.

Rock and roll! Frost heaves are abundant...

Looking north, we see the Grande Prairie. We have about 80 more miles to go.

3:25PM: Beaverlodge, Alberta sports a large namesake sculpture.

We are on ALBERTA-43 west.

3:42PM: In a forest, we pass a sign for Dawson Creek and Sexsmith!



3:54PM: MILE ZERO, the very beginning of the Alaska Highway



JULY 1, 2018, 9:44AM

A drive through downtown Dawson Creek yields a sign, the beginning of the Alaska Highway. Drive north on BC-97 from Dawson Creek. Thanks for the photo, Brian!

Officially, the Alaska Highway was known as the Alcan Project, but to the men who built it, the highway was known simply as "The Road". The story of its construction is one of sturdy men with courage and has become known as the "Saga of the North" -- a colossal achievement of men working under the most difficult conditions in all kinds of weather.

The finished road is a tribute to the United States Army Corps of Engineers and hundreds of American and Canadian civilians from every corner of the continent. They smashed through a back door to Alaska for the protection and defence of the Western Hemisphere. They achieved their goal in only eight months!

Even-tempered and philosophical, the aboriginal people of the north could not grasp what all the hustle was about. They understood that a road was being built, but, "Why was everyone in such a hurry?" When told about Hitler's plans for world conquest, one of them said --- "What's he want all that land for? He will surely die someday like everyone else".



4:29PM: British Columbia is gorgeous!

6:10PM: We are settled into a brand new Best Western Plus Chateau in Fort St. John, British Columbia, Canada. Population 21,623. The hotel is Good... 5 stars! Guests are greeted with a water bottle and snacks, glass enclosed shower, safe and a kitchenette! It's nice, and, all for about \$100US!

Day Eleven ... July 1, It's Canada Day!

JULY 1, 2018, SUNDAY, 8:50AM

Mr. Raven tells everyone it is cloudy and raining. After driving in a circle to set the compass, Brian makes a beeline for Starbucks. We head west on BC-97 to Fort Nelson. This is "The Alaska Highway."

Aspens are illuminated with sidelight. They appear and then disappear behind us. The light is gorgeous!

Low leafy bushes appear to have invaded the mostly deciduous forest. I hope they are not the invasive Japanese honeysuckles that we have in St. Louis.



Wow! A big electric sign is here in the middle of nowhere. Trucks carry oil related products. The road is good and shoulders are wide. It looks like they are slowly taking a bit more from the forest next to the highway. Or, maybe they dump chips to deter the puffy bushes from growing next to the forest. Graders recently worked to even the surfaces of the shoulders. Operators are very brave to run that machinery at almost a 35 - 40 degree angle adjacent to the highway.

Logging and oil appear to be the main industries here. Both are barely noticeable behind the trees along the highway. RVs are abundant. Brian comments that the oil business has certainly changed the landscape since he was here about 10 years ago. The highway is much nicer with shoulders that are at least 10 - 20 feet wider than before. There are "turn outs" and NO LITTER! What a pleasant surprise!

9:52AM, 51 DEGREES: Hello doe!

10:35AM: Pink Mountain Campground is to our left. The men who built this road, The Alaska Highway, in the early 40s, would be surprised to see how nice it is now.

We pass a wild horse crossing sign and the rain keeps the bugs off our windshield!

A young, regenerating forest grows to our right after the area was clear cut a number of years ago.

There are more Moose signs than we see moose or bears.

Surprise, surprise! We pull off and see a sign for a GAS company. Natural gas!

I find it interesting that the highway department has created a ditch right next to the tree line and every so often a trench allows water to run downhill into the ditch beside the highway. Perhaps this keeps the highway ditch from becoming too deeply eroded.

Rain and more heavy rain splat as we cross the Buckinghorse River.

A bunny rabbit is to our left; Brian speculates that it is a snowshoe hare. Unfortunately we do not hear many birds.

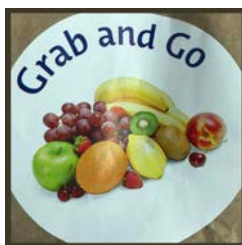
11:22AM: We are glad to not be on a motorcycle today.

11:31AM, 51 RAINY DEGREES: We think we are getting away from the oil and gas areas because there are fewer side roads.





11:56AM: Aaaah, a little sunshine



We get into our Grab and Go bags from the Best Western. They each have a bottle of water, a Nature Valley chewy trail mix bar. One has an Apple and the other an Otis Spunkmeyer Chocolate, Chocolate Chip muffin. What a deal!!!

12:19PM: A forest fire captured the live beauty of this stretch. It's a long way to the distant hills.

We search for a place to stay in Muncho Lake. The Northern Rockies Lodge looks like the ticket. Can we afford it??

Here, telephone poles are stained green and blend with the forest. There is very little traffic. "Better him than me," comments Brian about a bicyclist.



12:56PM: We cross the Muskwa River into Fort Nelson, B.C.: population 6147.

I call Northern Rockies Lodge in Muncho Lake, B.C. for a reservation for tonight. A nice gal gets us right in on the second floor. We have a queen bed and a twin, a good place to store big suitcases.

1:30PM, 62 DEGREES: Bees make a lot of bug goo. Our wiper fluid is nearly used up. The sun is shining. Dark chocolate covered almonds top off our lunch of last night's salad with the addition of Ukrainian sausage slices from sweet little "Europa" meats in Grande Prairie, Alberta. I wish I could import that shop to Chesterfield, MO!

Across from the overlook, a bear climbs over the concrete road barrier, crosses the road and eats. When it sees us it scurries to safety in the woods. I wish I had a photo.

A sign offers "Hot Buttery Cinnamon Buns, 2 kilometer." Maybe this campground has washer fluid, too! They have no washer fluid, but there are pretty purple flowers. Brian points out two vehicles held together by creative campers: one has duct tape near the driver side mirror and the other's hood is held tight with a bungee cord! We continue our quest for washer fluid.

Brian sees a sign: Riparian Zone. Although we have "No Service," I am impressed that Webster confirms riparian has to do with living on or near a watercourse such as a river. Riparian is from Latin. First use: 1810.

2:59PM: Stone Mountain Provincial Park comes complete with a cell tower, but "No Service" on my iPhone.



4:00PM: Muncho Lake Provincial Park



Moose of the Day!

4:16PM, 53 DEGREES



4:31PM: 54 CHILLY, WINDY DEGREES: Brian stops to replace batteries in his camera and, I find at least five wild flowers beside the road, including a tiny pink rose bush and a beautiful blue spruce nestled next to a birch.



Lake Muncho is the prettiest green. Imagine it with sun shining!



4:48PM: Lilacs greet us as we arrive at The Northern Rockies Lodge.

I nearly panic when cannot find my credit card! Then, I remember I'd put it in my bra!

The buffet includes a perfectly cooked to order New York strip. I indulge in a ball of vanilla ice cream and cover it with semi-sweet chocolate sauce. ;-))

July 1, Canada Day, is as big as our Fourth of July!!



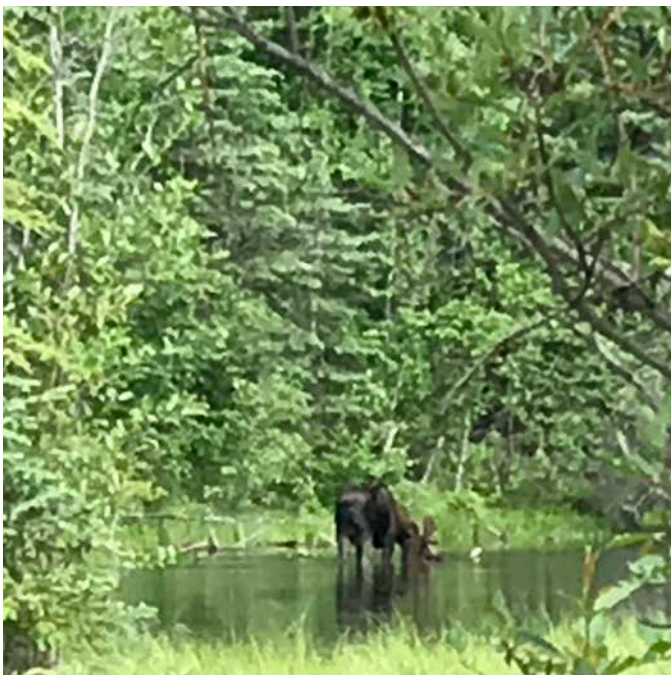


The Northern Rockies Lodge is Gorgeous! Englemann Spruce & Pine rule!!



Day Twelve

JULY 2, 2018, MONDAY, 8:59AM, LAKE MUNCHO, B.C.



The sun awakens here at 4:15AM after setting at 10:49PM.

The Northern Rockies Lodge is incredible! Our room in the main lodge is pretty basic, but the huge pine logs and details of the woodwork certainly increase my respect for this beautiful wood and those who built the lodge in 1995. Urs, the Swiss owner, will drive the sightseeing bus today. Employees are happy!

We see no trees as large as the ones in the lodge. Brian speculates that it was prefabricated and installed on site. ??? Brian discovered Northern Rockies Lodge in the "1917 MILEPOST, A TRAVEL GUIDE TO ALASKA".

Sunlight! Sweet sunlight! My first photo is just north of the lodge. Brian sees a big Moose in a lake. We walk through tall pink clover for the photograph.



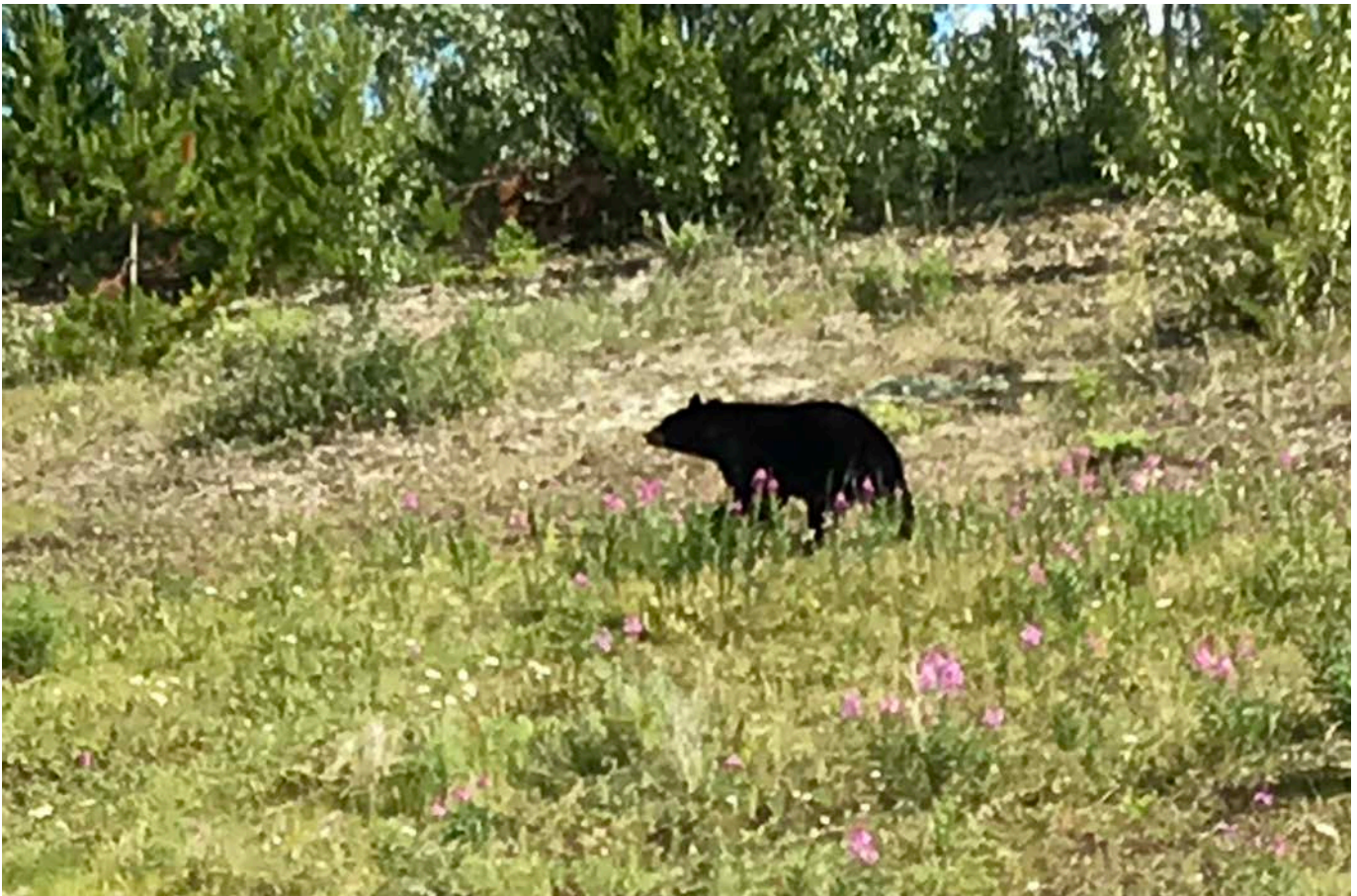
Back in the vehicle, almost immediately, we stop as a buffalo herd crosses the highway! There are many babies. Big bulls roll in the dirt.



9:51AM: The Liard River is the largest river we have seen since leaving home.

Sadly, evergreens appear to have been attacked by pine bark beetles. Aspens are very tall. A widespread forest fire

consumed many trees. The forest is regenerating. We see a robin, and, I think I see blackberry leaves. Imagine being here, in WWII, building this road in subzero temperatures! Hills had to be cut away and gulches filled. We are so spoiled to be able to benefit from all that hard work. I wonder how many times the Alaska Highway has been improved.



II:19AM, 62 DEGREES: Hawkeye Brian spies a bear eating. We back up to get this shot.

Animals have rubbed their antlers on tree trunks along the highway. The old Alaska Highway is to our right.

II:28AM: Welcome to the Yukon. Pines intermingle with spruce, Aspens, and more. All look healthy.

II:45AM: A big bull buffalo eats beside the road shortly before we cross the Hyland River.

II:52AM: To our left, another buffalo snacks beside the road. Small wild rose bushes bloom to our right.

12:52PM, 67 DEGREES: After eating a sandwich in an extremely utilitarian “grocery/laundromat” gas station we get two freshly baked peanut butter cookies.

A bucket in the women’s room wisely and generously offers free condoms. Brian reports none are offered in the men’s room. We leave Watson Lake, Yukon, and drive towards Skagway, Alaska.

A logging operation is to the right, just beyond Watson Lake.



Longer-needled, wider-bodied pines are predominant over tall skinny spruces, Aspens and other deciduous trees. Red violet wildflowers line the road. After a brief shower, the temperature drops to 57 degrees. A small sign advertises The Continental Divide Lodge.

The side of a semi-trailer reads: "Egg McMuffin? Not without Canadian Farmers" ;-))

2:27PM: With coffee in hand, we proceed and see a marmot scurry on the shoulder. Be safe, little marmot!

We have yet to see a sign for the Continental Divide.

Although the road has a center and side stripes, it is pretty desolate. Oops! We pass another area that must have burned quite a while ago. Or, since side branches remain, are these trees dead from disease?

A big raven hops beside the road. Rain falls and wipers wipe. Animals must be hunkered in.

We are back in the Yukon Territory from British Columbia.

3:18PM: We pass a bunny on the shoulder. Be safe, little bunny.

Brian's GPS states we are 60 degrees north of the equator. The sun comes up at 4:30AM and goes down at 11:25PM. I will use my eye pillow tonight.

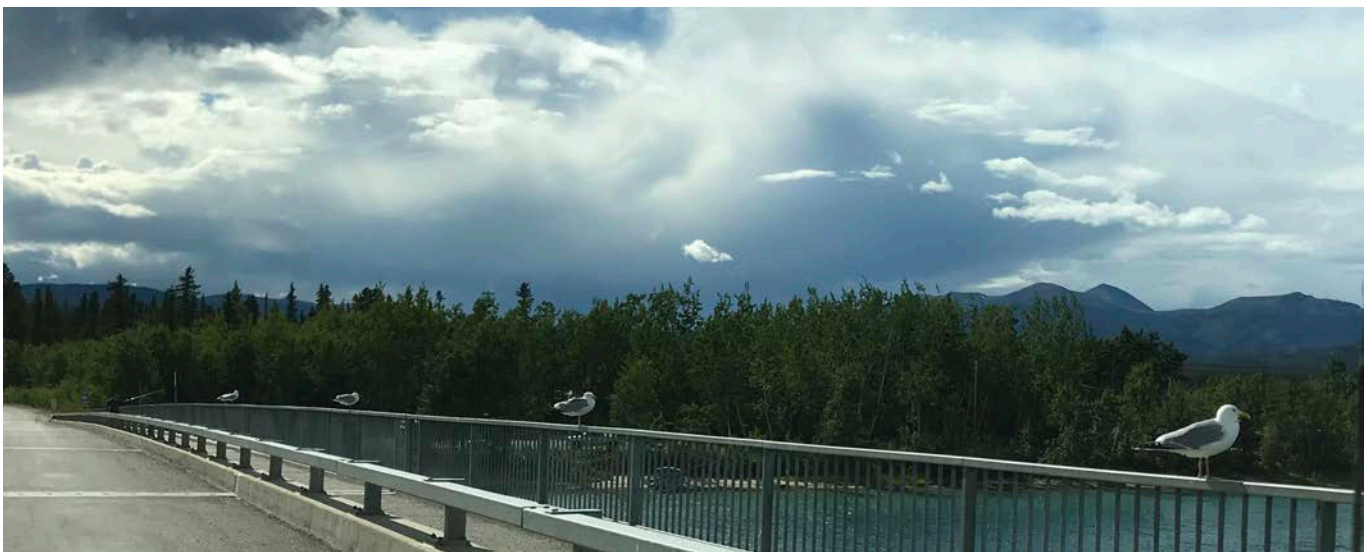
We cross the tiny little Strawberry Creek. Rain has stopped here.

4:36PM: Coyote number two trots on a narrow ridge beside the road.

When an RV tows a car, is mileage added to the car's odometer?

Quite a few wild roses bloom along the gravel road to Tagish. Vegetation on the gravel banks beside the road looks like sedum or, maybe moss. Small plants grow through the asphalt shoulder. They get plenty daylight; the sun sets here at 11:25PM!

The source of the Yukon River is a series of lakes 3000-4000 feet above Skagway, Alaska.



Seagulls perch on the Tagish Lake Bridge railing. We turn left on Hwy. 2 toward Skagway, Alaska.



BOVE ISLAND

Schwatka's Legacy

In 1883, American Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka was privately funded by his superior officer, Brigadier General Nelson Miles, to explore a travel route over the Chilkoot Pass and down the Yukon River.

The Chilkoot Pass was opened to explorers and prospectors three years before when the American military promised coastal Chilkat Tlingit chiefs that the newcomers would not infringe on the exclusive trading rights of their people.



Schwatka's "Perrier Pass" is now called the Chilkoot Pass.
Frederick Schwatka, A Summer in Alaska 1908, page 85.)

Schwatka and his party built a raft at Lindeman Lake and travelled down this chain of lakes and the Yukon River to arrive at the Bering Sea in less than two months.

Charles W. Homan was travelling with Schwatka and he mapped the route by sketch traverses and latitude observation. This was the first survey of the route into the Yukon and the stampede found Homan's map very useful fifteen years later during the Klondike Gold Rush.

Schwatka ignored the local place names given by First Nations, miners and traders and labelled geographical features along the route with the names of people he admired. Many of these names remain on our maps today.



Frederick Schwatka,
West Point class of 1871.
(Roland Harris, Schwatka's Last Search 1996, page 2.)

Schwatka's expedition raft had a difficult time on Tagish Lake.

"The new lake I called after Lieutenant Bove... The next day again we had the same fight with a battling wind from half past six in the morning until after nine at night, nearly seventeen hours, but we managed to make twelve miles, and better than all, regain our old course pointing northward." (Frederick Schwatka, A Summer in Alaska 1908, page 201.)

KLONDIKE
HIGHWAY



Yuko



6:14PM: Near the sign for Bove Island (above) are wild roses, gargantuan dandelions, buttercups and berry leaves. It is 64 windy chilly degrees. Imagine being here in winter!



6:22PM: Back in British Columbia from Yukon Territory, free washer fluid is falling. It is amazing how quickly the temperature changes; it is now pouring rain and 55 degrees at 6:37.

At 2849 feet, we are nearly above the tree line.

6:51PM: When we cross into Alaska, we'll gain an hour. The topography is gorgeous! At 3000 feet, a boulder field leads to a big glacier. We cross Summit Creek. In Colorado we must be well above mile high Denver to find glaciers.



7PM: I can't help myself. One place is prettier than the next!



The summit at the Alaska sign is about 3100 feet, and we are descending to Skagway, which is at sea level. A new bridge is being built over the William Moore Creek.

Wild white Astilbes grow along the descent into Skagway! Gorgeous!



The abundant garden greets us at Sgt. Preston's Lodge.



8:15PM: A small pavilion is posted with interesting historical signs.



8:34PM: I adore the doves and the many flowers on our walk back to our motel, Sgt. Preston's Lodge.



8:59PM: We arrive back at Sgt. Preston's Lodge after a much needed walk to and from Skagway Fish Company where I enjoyed fresh halibut with a lemon sauce, fresh sautéed veggies and excellent quinoa. Brian had linguini with scallops and mussels in a delicious smoky tomato sauce. Yum! Good food and Good walk, here in Skagway, Alaska.



The quilt on our bed, while machine made, is beautiful! Thank you, Sgt. Preston's Lodge!

Please continue on our journey in

Part Four!

Joy

www.joybeckner.com

JKß