

Trip Report: Steaks over a fire at the Lower Falls
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I set off a few minutes before 0700, Monday morning. I packed a 2l bottle of water, a 2l bottle of Mountain Dew, a half a pound of frozen raw hamburger, and two frozen, ~0.8 pound boneless steaks. The frozen meat I wrapped first in a plastic bag, and then in a large paper grocery bag foldered up around it. By past experience, should it get to 90 today, they would just about thaw completely in about 20 hours if left in the bottom of my pack. The meat would still remain cool for another half a dozen hours, and edible for perhaps a day beyond that, although deteriorating after that. The intent was to eat the burger raw in two buns I also brought. Yeah, yeah, it'll kill me, etc, I'll get worms, grow green tentacles, purple spots, etc. Oh well. It hasn't yet, and I LOVE the stuff! Besides, sugar and carbs and stuff are OK as...um....octane? Nitrous boost?--sort of fuel, but you need more than that to really keep up an extended effort. I feel drained and tired as hell if I don't eat enough meat. It feels like no matter how much you eat, you are slowly starving to death without it, and the more you eat, the worse it gets. I can get with like spaghetti that it's like an unsatisfiable sort of addiction that doesn't accomplish anything, demands ever more, and returns ever less for it. Supposedly, the veggie people say beans and nuts can satisfy this. Well....sorta.... No, I mean, they do work, but not QUITE the same. They do well as a dietary supplement stretch meat out, though. Not by any means a replacement. All 'meat' is not created equal in this respect, either. Spam doesn't work. Hot dogs don't work. Bologna doesn't work. It's gotta be real stuff. It's gotta have actual strings and tough things in it. Venison is good 'ol nasty tough stringy stuff like that. Wonderful stuff. :-)

Maybe "fibrous" is the word I want?

Anyway....I also took a medium sized onion with the intent of slicing it to put on the burger sandwiches.

I wasn't entirely sure where I was going yet, but I did know that I intended on doing some serious bog-slogging, so while I did take my sandals, just in case, I left them in my pack. I further was not sure if this was going to be an overnigher or not yet. I only carried a medium sized bookbag-type backpack, albeit in camo, but I figured I had enough to get by not too bad for a night out. Some cheap Kmart model. For the price, it seems indestructible, roomy, and useful. The only other thing in my pack aside from minor things like a flashlight, some bits of rope, and other things that are always in

there, was the salvaged floor panel, cut out of a 6-foot diameter hexagonal tent. (check the dumpsters in parks after busy weekends for such things; I've even seen brand new, once used tents in there because people couldn't be bothered to dry and fold a wet tent. :-)

If worried about germs, soak the thing in a five gallon pail of bleach water for hours, as I usually do. This could function somewhat like a blanket, or to cut down on the rain, if it rained, or simply to wrap myself in, while wearing a headnet to be able to sleep in the mosquitoes. It's not actually fully waterproof, but combined with curling up under a huge old hemlock or something, and it being warm out, it'd be OK.

On a sort of tool belt, I had a folding saw, my 18" Ontario SP-8 machete, and a sturdy 6" knife, along with two pouches, one holding firestarting materials and another full of a few random odd things like gloves and a bug headnet. I wasn't carrying a water filter as I figured I'd be around the Falls at some point, and the park has water, and also, I know some springs in the area I could use if I had to.

Oh...and of course one of my approximately 7 1/2 foot long black shiny staffs. :-)

The bugs were minimal upon setting out. Just a few sluggish mosquitoes. It was still too cool for them to be energetic enough to bother me much if I was simply walking along. The weather promised rain, but I wasn't terribly worried about that. it was warm, and doesn't get below 50 or so at night this time of year. The rain was supposed to be done by later today anyway, so I'd at least sleep dry. Around 0830 the bugs got bad enough that I rolled down my sleeves, donned the headnet, and put on the gloves. About this time it also rained for perhaps 40 minutes. Not hard, but enough to basically soak me through. I had half expected this, and so it wasn't really bothering me.

At some point, I get tired of holding out on a planned trip because of the weather, and it ends up being clear, and vice versa. Hell with it. I'll go anyway, and let the weather do what it will. I'll live.

By around 1000 though, it had dried out and cleared off for the day, and become hot. I was able to take the headnet and other measures back off. I dried out too, as I walked. Well, at least the upper half of me. By now, about five miles out, I was to the first of the serious peat bog stretches on the snowmobile trail between Paradise and the Tahquamenon Falls (<http://www.exploringthenorth.com/tahqua/tahqua.html>). The last time I did this route was in early March, partly on snowshoes. Now was rather different. For the most

part, you can walk on it and merely sink in the moss and cottongrass mass that floats on the muck. There are small potholes where the snowmobiles have chewed through the snow, and then eaten down into this mat of vegetation, leaving soupy bubbling black mudpits. Despite being somewhat intimidating, I have yet to find one over waist deep, and they seem always to have a hard bottom. This underlying hard pan is why the swamp is there in the first place--the water cannot get into the ground. The staff is good to prod into them to decide if you want to walk through them or not, or to perhaps act as extra support for tricky balancing and footwork for mincing across questionable areas.

You'd think out in this swamp, the bugs would be terrible, but there is actually very little to no actual open water, for one thing. It's all a big sponge of moss and grass. For another, it is halfway open, so the wind keeps them down. For anyone noting distances and times, I wasn't making impressive time today for two reasons: One, the terrain, and Two, I wasn't worried about it. I intended on a very good long walk, so was taking it somewhat easy for the purpose of being able to go a long time. I also was not hesitating to stop at anything of interest and wander off to investigate. A handful of early blueberries here, an odd dried-up seasonal pond bottom there, and the like.

Another odd thing about the peat swamps is that the moss cleans stuff. Most of the summer, my toenails are stained black from mud. It won't wash or scrub out in any form that I've ever found. Trudge a mile through a moss bog though, and they look almost white and decent again. Of course, then I go off through some more black stuff later and restain them, but it's just interesting that the moss can do this when I'm not aware of anything else that can.

There were a few biting flies, but with the full sunlight, decent northwest breeze, and heat, the skeeters went away. The few deerflies, horseflies, and such left were able to be tolerated. I got bitten up somewhat, but mostly I could just swat the ones that dared land on me. All in all very pleasant weather.

The remaining distance to the lower falls is a pretty good mix of high sand ridges and bog that repeats itself irregularly. Basically about every time my pants dried back down the ankles, I'd go in for another wade again. In some places, the sun made the mud warm, which felt good on the feet. In other places it was cool, and this was good too. Mostly it's just shallow mud.

I think there are only about a half a dozen places that require some

care to get across, where the swamp is wet enough to ALMOST qualify as a stream running across the trail. It is a pretty spot though, complete with yellow and white water lillies that were in bloom, some within reach of the floating shore. In this part, there is a mess of ancient logs floating around in the mud and water, and you have to sort of jump between some of them and run across others faster than they sink under you. I don't know how deep it is should I fall in. It's at least six feet, as far as I can tell. It would be inconvenient, mostly. I could grab an armful of the half-rotten logs on the way down and eventually crawl back out. This isn't anywhere I'd want to try to get through with a full pack on, though. The staff was again indispensable here and similar places.

I could pick a dry route to get between Paradise and the Falls ,but it would require cutting due south a few miles down a road (Preacher Lake Road) toward the south to pick up the North Country Trail that comes from the Rivermouth, which after all that work going south would only meander lazily back northwest again to get to the falls. It's a lot of extra distance. I've never bothered to try it.

Besides, I find junk on the trails, crap the snowmobilers drop or lose, and is lost in the snow. As far as I know, I'm the only one (nuts enough) who goes through these places in the summer. Four-wheel ATV's cover some of the dryer sections of the snowmobile trail, but they can't do the swamps. Some of the areas, as I've described, are marginal on foot, even. :-) Some way along, I found a full, unopened pint bottle of alcohol gas line antifreeze. The weather indicated rain was possible still today, so figuring it might be handy for starting a fire later, I tossed it in my pack.

I got to the lower falls about 1300, and there bought a small bag of Doritos and a pop to drink from the store there, and wandered back across the road again and ate them with one of my burgers, which was pretty much thawed by now. I also checked out a tiny shallow lake that sits just off the road behind some of the houses and stuff where the trail meets the road at the lower Falls. I don't suppose it has fish . I walked into the edge of it a bit, checking out the bottom, and I think if I wanted to go in to my neck, I could walk across it. It is shallow enough to have lily pads all over it at least.

I then went across the road and noticed that as soon as I got across the road, here still a long ways from the campground, I could clearly smell people. After all day of carefully noting the smells of trees, sunbaked leaves, cooking swamps, and so on, this really struck me. The particular things I could pick out were bug repellent, laundry soap, tobacco smoke, and various mingled perfumes. All very obvious,

and all very out of place. As the wind shifted, this huge blended cloud moved through the woods in a surprisingly large area, and you'd note moving in and out of various 'streams' of smells. As I walked down the trail to the Lower Falls proper, I was noticing I could literally smell people before I saw them in most cases, and stand off to the side of the trail watching them pass. Wow. No wonder animals always know you are there! In all fairness, I should note that it had been hot all day, and being I was intending to go swamping, I hadn't bothered with bathing in the last 12 or 24 hours or whatever, so maybe the tourists didn't think much of my aroma, either. (well, what's the point if you half intend to end the day covered in mud?)

Being somewhat familiar with the rock bottom of the river here from years past, I immediately picked the best crossing point proceeded to head right over across the river to the island. I blew about 2 and a half hours here, walking around the island about half a dozen times, clambering up and down the various falls, walking out into the middle of the river to sit momentarily on rocks or huge trees hung up on the bottom. This place is practically MADE to sit around and watch the river. The sandstone/limestone ledges invite you to take a seat everywhere, or even just sit on the top of one of the 6-8 foot falls and watch the water go over the edge. Fascinating unique vegetation grows under the cascades, apparently due to the eternally misted conditions there. Special ferns and mosses, mostly, that I don't see much anywhere else. Again, the staff is a lifesaver here. Well, a toe-saver anyway, in that you can feel around on the bottom before your stumble into a hole and stub all your toes miserably. Of course it is also fantastic for bracing yourself against the current in the swifter spots, too. If you encounter a chest-high ledge you want to get on top of, you simply vault up to it. From the top of the same ledge, simply use the staff as a sort of short freestanding firepole to slide down for a controlled easy descent. Many uses.

I almost considered crossing to the south side of the river and messing around over there, but for not much reason decided to walk the river trail to the Upper Falls (about 4 miles or maybe a bit more) and cross above them and check out the other side up there.

GRIN I think I scare the tourists. I'm not sure. Maybe people aren't that talkative. Personally, if I see someone that looks interesting, as shy as I am in some ways, I tend to want to bombard them with questions, cursed as I am with curiosity. This is doubly true if I cannot quite figure out the reasons for what they seem to be doing. This isn't all bad, I guess. I'm not here for social purposes. It's kind of nice that I can wander all over amidst the light crowds and basically be ignored. I feel like part of the

scenery somehow. Three or four people out of the probably hundreds I saw did say the ever-predictable line about line something along the lines of "now THERE is a walking stick!". Usually the people saying this had their own version of some sort, though they were thudding along with it in the conventional manner.

Mine isn't actually much good for trail use, and just mostly gets carried along in one hand or balanced over a shoulder with one arm slung over the end as a counterweight. Children seem a bit more fascinated, apt to stare, and ask what it's for. Probably they just lack "politeness" though. Bless 'em. Being polite is as often as not just another form of spineless deception anyway, as far as I can tell. Along the trail to the upper falls, there are places where it saves you some clambering, though, where the trail jumps up or down several feet at a time. I can vault up or slide down these spots without breaking stride. In some places, the trail runs alongside a hill, with a dropoff on one side, and chest high ledge on the uphill side. When I'd meet people here I'd just use the staff to bounce up off the trail to the high side, walk past them and hop back down again without stopping. At one point, there is a bridge that has three steps at each end, first up, and then back down. I reached this just after passing a father and daughter. Just as I stepped past them, I heard "daddy, what's he doin' with the stick?". I was not exactly paying attention, but then was amused to behind my back hear the girl go "ohh...COOL!" as I went up one side of the bridge, skipping all the steps, and a step later went back down the other side with a half turn of the pole and without touching any of the steps. Hearing her comment behind me made me chuckle despite myself.

About 1600 I stopped along the trail and made the other burger, and ate it as I walked along. Now 'awakened' in a way, I was paying a bit more attention, and seeing how often I could smell people before I saw them. About half the time. Almost always if a group of 3, and downwind. The mass miasma of artificial odors again would have told me I was approaching the (crowded) upper falls, did I know know the trail well enough to know this anyway. I got to the upper falls about 1715 I think. It was before 1800 anyway. The tourists were thick and heavy here. Damn they all walk slow, and in such disorganized, 20-foot-wide-paved-trail clots that you can't get around them, forcing you to stand around behind them pretending to be fascinated by the leaves above or something, until they get far enough ahead to let you take two steps without feeling like you are going to step on their heels. It's all I can do to keep from yelling at the to "WAKE UP AND GET THE *##@ outta my way!". Heh. It's only an eighth of a mile, perhaps. I try breathing deep and practice some grim determination. It probably does _not_ help matters that I am

perpetually reminded of carrying a bale of hay through the barnyard and trying to get the cows out of my way as a child. Only, if you kick people in the ribs to get their attention, I suppose it would be frowned upon! Cows are just as apt to kick back if you don't take care, and it's not like you can actually do much more to a cow than make it finally, maybe, know you are there, as big as they are.

This time spent half-standing, half walking, does at least give me some time to think about what to do as I get to the actual upper falls. On one hand, I'm not sure one is supposed to nonchalantly walk across the top of the falls to get to the other side. Then again, screw it. The park hasn't built a bridge for me, have they? At times past, I have sneaked around through the woods upriver to avoid being seen doing this, but in retrospect, that was maybe silly. Besides, I'd like to see park staff try to follow me across the river :-D In the end, I simply wait S L O W L Y for the damn cattl---er.. tourists, to laboriously walk down the 89 or so steps to the falls. Sheesh. I've been walking, without shoes, through all kinds of energy draining terrain for the past 10 hours and I'm still ready to take these steps two a a time all the way down. These people have surely only walked from their cars a quarter mile away, and the ones in front of me don't look beyond 35.

In any case, I finally reach the observation deck below, and without ceremony or looking back, nor even a pause to look at the falls, I climb up the fence, hop off the other side, and go splashing up the river. FREE! Oh, it's nice not to have to wait behind slow people!

There are odd shallow ledges in the river bottom above the falls, visible as white lines of foam across the river. About the third one up is a good crossing point, giving you maybe nearly a hundred yards of leeway between you and the actual drop, too. These ledges have swifter current, but are shallower and have more predictable bottoms. Nevertheless, I take this probably with overmuch caution, probing the bottom wherever I cannot see, and planting the staff on the bottom with every step, whether I think I need it or not. At most it gets to about 10" deep right now with the river low for summer. On the other side, I walk back down river to the observation deck on the south side of the falls, for use by the Toonerville Trolley and Tom Sawyer Riverboat customers, and hop that railing and head up the stairs into the woods on the other side.

Someone had dropped a pamphlet from the Toonerville Trolley on the path at the top. It mostly describes 11 kinds of trees the visitors are likely to see. Of especial interest, I note that White Cedar was called Arborvitae by the early French, which means "Tree of Life". It

said that tea made from the bark or foliage is high in vitamin C, and so prevented scurvy. That was always my biggest wonder about trying to live off the land in the woods around here: "Where the hell would you ever get enough vitamin C?" Fascinating. My second biggest, still unanswered, is where would you find salt? I seriously think that might be a big enough concern over extended lengths of time to be possibly serious, if not as bad as the scurvy thing.

I have long known that there is a two-track road on the south side of the Upper Falls, and have looked at it on a map, but have wanted to check it out somewhat. Maps rarely show the same thing as the actual roads; they are just meant to be a very vague indication of whether there is or has at some point ever been a road in the area. Sometimes the roads on the map are gone, but new ones have come up in the vicinity that go sort of the same place, sometimes. I struck off to the southeast-ish just checking out the woods. The south side of the river in the upper Tahquamenon falls area for some reason is markedly different in vegetation than the north side. I've even seen small *elm* trees over there, which I could barely believe when I first saw them. The bark and leaves are pretty unmistakable though.

I didn't do much of particular note over there. Sometimes wandered the roads and sometimes tramped over hills, tracing how the swamp at the top of a hill became a spring halfway down the far side of the same hill, and just looking at the woods. Around 2100 the skeeters were coming back, so the headnet went back on. By about 2230 I had worked my way back to the river. I was still debating on spending the night out or not. After a half hour or so of mostly sitting around, resting, thinking, listening, I decided to at least cook my steaks. I chopped out a hole in the forest rootmass with the machete and made myself a little firepit, and went about collecting wood to fill it. I found a bunch of sticky White Pine cones, which make good tinder, then some of the fine wire-like, dead spruce and balsam branches that make such great early fire material, and on up. Usually, you can easily find some 6 foot tall, standing dead pine without needles, and it contains everything you need for a fire. Fine branches, bigger branches farther down, and various sizes of trunk to build the fire up. Even nicer, you can even just rip the things out of the ground and carry them off with one hand and leaving no ugly chopped off stump. I don't like to leave traces of having been there. After the fire got going, I basically tried to smother it by covering it with 3-4" diameter chunks of other dead stuff I had chopped up into lengths. This temporarily starves it of air somewhat and promotes coals, which is necessary to help when burning dead dry 'gopher wood' like this, as it practically wants to just flash into ash. This is also by design though, because it burns out quickly and is gone.

Also, for what I was doing, I only need a fire slightly bigger than I could theoretically hold in my two hands, if I had asbestos gloves.

When it was starting to die back down, It was now nearing midnight and the skeeters had slacked off significantly. Annoying, but tolerable. I decided I could probably take a bath in the river without risking losing my sanity or a quart of blood, and it gave me something to do while waiting on the fire. While back standing around drying at the fire, I carved out a meat fork from a green stick, and then cooked supper, and ate the steaks and drank a beer I brought with me for the occasion. 60F degrees beer, but Miller isn't too bad of stuff. The cheaper beer is, the colder it has to be to stand it. Good stuff can be room temp, even. After the meat was done, I realized I also still had most of an onion in my pack, so I spitted it on a stick and roasted it over the remains of the fire. Yummy. Sometimes I carry a plate of some sort, and kind of wished I had not, to sit the meat on while the onion cooked. Hmm...a stiff bit of bark laying around, covered with a layer of maple leaves worked well enough.

After dinner, I heard some deer panic very close by in the dark, snorting, whistling, and stamping. They only seem to do that when you surprise them or they get rather closer to you than they like before realizing it. That's another think I like about the remote side of the falls. The animals don't expect anyone to be over here, and they sometimes practically trip over you if you are not very noisy or obtrusive. One time in the past I had a deer bounce merrily out of the brush, stand frozen staring at me for a moment, before it turned and dived back the way it came, hooves pounding. Apparently, it was surprised. They obviously take much more care in areas that they expect to be populated, as far as I've been able to tell.

I hung around by the fire, enjoying it and the stars and all, until about 1am, when the fire was nearly entirely dead. I tentatively decided to walk back tonight. I went and got a double handful of nearby black swamp soup and dumped it in the mostly ashes in the firepit, and stirred it up with my fingers to drown all the coals. When done, I had a cold pudding that I'd had my fingers all through, knowing there wasn't so much as a warm spot in it. I put the sand back, stuck the dirt plug back on top, even still correctly oriented north/south, plants still upright, lastly brushing the forest litter back over. The only sign I'd been there was some flattened ferns. If I go back in a week, or a month, assuming I can even find the spot (I might not be able to) the grass on top will still be growing.

The moon was not out yet, but after a freak cloud went over that sprinkled lightly for all of five minutes, the stars shone in the

clear sky, enabling me to see to walk back to the upper falls. I crossed those about 2am, using the staff and a flashlight. The flashlight was not strictly necessary, but it's convenient. Also, when shining it around, I noticed a bounty of coins in the river near the observation deck. heh. Damn! Pollution! Litter! Surely all that metal in the water must be bad for the fish! I'd better clean some of them up. Lessee....quarters are bigger than the other coins, so they must be worse. Better get those first. I only spent maybe all of a minute at this, so I only got about 2 bucks' worth. I probably could have made about ten times that in extended effort, if I'd wanted to take about a half an hour.

If it doesn't get picked up by someone, it gets washed over the edge at the next rain and increased water flow, and there it lies at the bottom of the falls presumably forever. The point is, if it had rained much recently, there wouldn't be much at all. There's getting to be some competition for picking it up, though: I have it on good authority that the teenage park workers are going back after hours for it. That's funny. Actually, there's a knack to grabbing a lot of it. It sits on the rock bottom uneasily. If you don't go for it just right, you every-so-subtly change the water flow dynamics as your hand gets within a few inches, and something changes and the current grabs the coin and... ZOOM! Away it goes like a startled fish, faster than you can see almost, and it's gone, over the edge. Sometimes you feel being in the water can cause this disruption for a range of a couple feet, even.

I also crawled around in the ankle-deep water on hands and knees with a flashlight, looking for the tiny fish, maybe 2 1/2" long max, that I've seen before many times, that swim a few feet in place above the lip of the falls. I don't know why they expend so much effort to sit there, like that. Must be a lot of food comes by as it goes over the edge? I've tried to catch them before, wondering what they are, but I've not had any luck. They're FAST little things, and wary. I didn't see any of the little fish this time.

Using some of my newfound wealth on the Pepsi machine on the deck in front of the Tahquamenon Falls Brewery and Pub (<http://www.exploringthenorth.com/tahqbrew/brewpub.html>), I poured some sugar in my fuel tank, put my sandals on for the first time today, and started walking the highway back toward Paradise. The swamps would be a sort of a hassle in the dark, and anyway, at 0300, the road would be all mine anyway. And it was. The sandals were good though. Something about pavement just eats the soles of your feet off like nothing else, I've found. Not even walking on bare rock will do that as bad.

I got back to within about five miles of Paradise, past all the swamps, and was able to get off the road before the first car came through about 0600 or so. Suddenly, about this point, everything just started sending in pain signals. The bottoms of my feet felt as if they must be bleeding raw, and my hips felt as if they were being dislocated with every step, and my knees were queuing up right behind them. My shoulders were feeling left out, and joined the mob, complaining about the pack straps for the last 24 hours. This is actually better than usual. I seem to usually hit this sort of limit around 18 hours or somewhere around 23 miles, regardless of whether I have a pack or not. I certainly never could have made it this far with shoes. I'd have had bleeding blisters by now. For all that my feet were sore, they did not actually have any injuries, aside from some days-old scratches and gouges from a particularly nasty swamp crossing earlier in the week. I was just simply footsore. I would have been in shoes, too. Worse, actually, even disregarding the aforementioned blisters I would have had with shoes.

It appears that I rather underestimated simple muscle fatigue, too. When I got back home around 1000, I collapsed gratefully on the ground and apparently fell asleep for about 2 hours. I woke up to find everything had stiffened and seized up. I pulled my watch off my belt to look at it, noting it was nearing noon, and also that I couldn't even seem to move enough to roll over. Bah. Pathetic. Laying there with nothing to but stare at my watch while working up the will to get moving, I watched about 10 minutes go by, fading in and out of sleep still, before I could manage to fully roll over. Then another five or so to get to my hands and knees. Then almost that again just to stand up, whereupon I was able to barely hobble off to the shower, and thence to sleep.

You know, I don't know what the hell is wrong with me, because, in a way, all I can think of is: "Now THAT was FUN!" I seem to be slightly sore yet, but it works out within minutes. Basically, given 24 hours, I could have done it again. Any remaining stiffness would have worked back out a half a mile into the walk. As it is, taking it easy, it kind of lasts longer, as it keeps setting up again slightly every time I stop moving. I'm not longer anything like debilitated, though. That went away in about 14 hours, during which I slept anyway. I was momentarily unable to walk again upon waking, but it effectively worked out within a hundred steps or so. Heck, it didn't even bother me to walk in the gravel driveway without shoes, so they've also recovered amazingly, considering what they felt like earlier. It's all good. It just makes the next trip easier. I /think/ I have a decent handle on what's going to actually injure me. Maybe when I'm 50 or 60 (I'm 30 now) I'm going to hate myself?

Someone else noted in IM that since I've gotten back, I've damn near been cheerful. Yeah....I know. I've definitely felt it too. Even though for a short time I saw people at the parks, I was mostly ignoring them, and other than that didn't have to deal with anyone. It's recharging. Hmm...how annoying. The only thing that makes life really enjoyable is something I can't do very often.

I should have maybe stayed out overnight, but the clincher was that I couldn't think of anything much to do the next day in the area, besides walk back, which I could do better at night anyway. I maybe ride a bicycle back, carry it across the falls, and ride it around the road on the other side. I can cover many multiples the distance on the bike versus on foot. If I rode the highway out there around 2am, I could be unbothered by cars. I'd get there about the first hints of daylight, and could then have all day to bike the road on the other side of the falls.

Also in the area, I think I've found an old road on the maps to Betsy lake, It most likely isn't drivable anymore, but it should be most easily walkable. That's only 4-5 miles hiking from the upper falls.

All in all, I'd estimate I covered 35-38 miles. This is only a rough guess. I could conservatively estimate less, maybe as little as 30 but then I can't walk anywhere in straight lines by following paths and trails and so on. I could maybe almost say near 40 and possibly not be off either, by the time I account for aimless sidetrack wandering here and there. 35 is my best guess by the time I weigh all the fudge factors back and forth. Not exactly good time for somewhat over 24 hours, but I wasn't by any means walking the whole time, nor precisely worried about getting anywhere. I was at times also working on trying to be somewhat quiet. Distance and stealth are pretty much exclusive. You can work like hell and get some of both, but at least for me, the return on effort is limited. When seriously trying for stealth, I seem to do under 2 mph anyway. Extreme stealth, like for hunting in the actual proximity of game, is probably sometimes less than even a mile per hour.