

Date: 9/12/2012 8:05:18 PM

Subject: Postcard

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It rained all night. In the morning the clouds were scraping the mountains across from our room and leaving little pockets of mist behind.

Our plans for the day were washed out and there was no backup strategy. Bummer. Languidly we made a second pot of coffee and looked at the weather report – overcast with a good chance of rain. Appeared it would be a gift shop and slink around the town day. Bummer. We'd buy some taffy, look at t-shirts, and eat breakfast for lunch at Big Horn Restaurant. Hopefully we would see an elk in town because we had seen precious few in the park. Well, there *was* some elk poop on the sidewalk. Bummer.



Our omelets were good. In the next booth, a lady picked her own omelet up in her fingers and ate it like a taco. We say lady but that's primarily for gender identification.

As we walked to the car (that would be Murray, who has been strangely low key on this trip) a red tail hawk shot past us at head level and cruised to a stop on a power pole.



We were making up the day's plan as we went along. We decided to take a short loop through the park to kill time and give housekeeping an opportunity to do our room.

We drove into the park just as the clouds were rolling down off the mountains and into the fields. Pictures of fog. Oh boy.



We stood on the shoulder of the road and watched the mist funnel in. Things got murky. Some elk were bugling in the fog and to us, in our eerie surroundings, it could have been banshees. It was unsettling.



As we approached Beaver Meadows, cars were slowing to a crawl and stopping. We saw a bull and his harem, along with a few outlying young males resting in the grass, the elk only becoming apparent in the haze when we got close.



We took a left toward Hidden Valley and passed a few more unattached young males.





Then, just past the alluvial fan, cars ahead of us began to slow and we came upon another harem. The fog hadn't dropped on them yet and they were moving around doing some serious munching.



A large male stepped out of the trees. It pawed the ground and stared at us. We nervously backed away and got behind Murray (he owes us) while the bull continued to paw. When he had it pawed just right he laid down on it. We knew he was going to do that.





A doe wandered toward the road. The bull jumped up and chased her back into the herd. A different doe made a few tentative steps away from the group and got the same treatment. These bull elk are serious control freaks.



We tried to head back to our room. But on the way, someone was standing in the road stopping traffic. (You don't need to look for wildlife in Rocky Mountain National Park, you need to look for brake lights.) About 30 bighorn sheep were crossing. Or, more descriptively, littlehorn sheep.





They went up the hill, came down the hill, went back up the hill, and were gone.

Before they left we took note that one of the sheep was a unicorn. Or a unihorn.



Back to our room. Bummer.

D&S