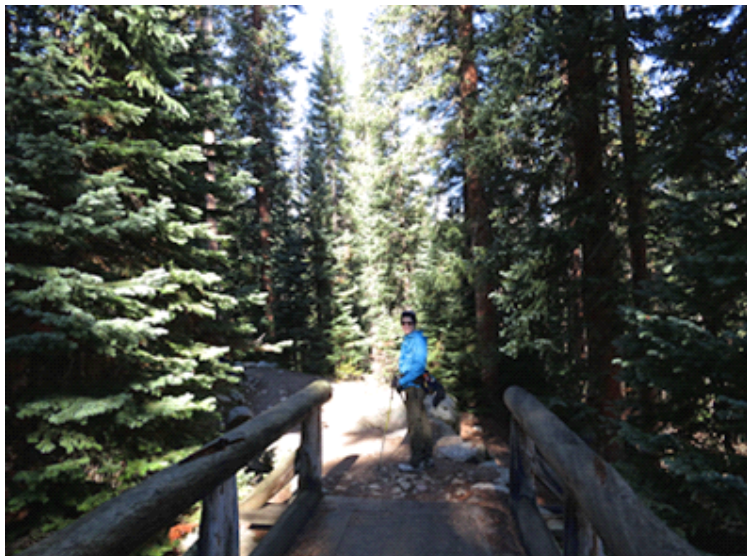


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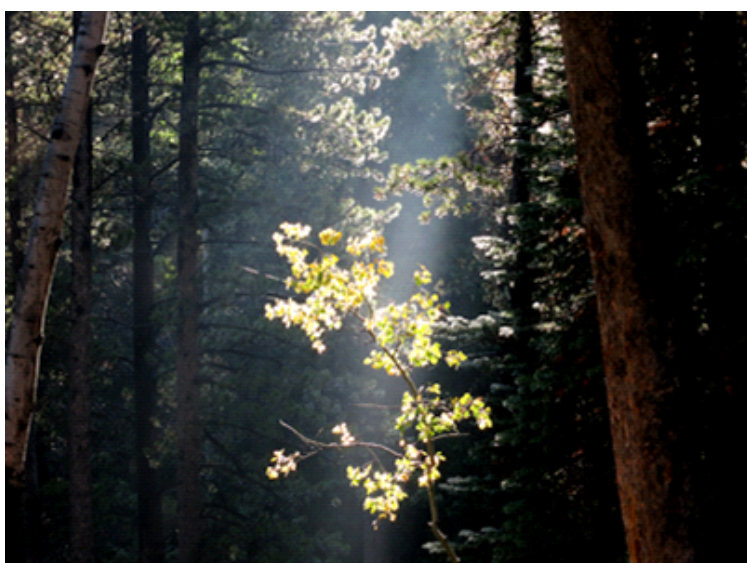
It may have been possible to pick a more beautiful hike on a more beautiful morning. But we don't know how. The morning was crisp (35°) and clear and the sun was peeking over the horizon as we began our trip up to Ouzel Falls from Wild Basin Trailhead.



The trail followed the St. Vrain River, rushing and bubbling over rocks and logs and misting into the cool air. We could hardly hear each other talk but we weren't saying much.



Horizontal sunlight filtered through the trees, casting long shadows, juniper and ponderosa pine at the start and later a generous number of aspen.



We were alone on the trail except for the birds and squirrels. The squirrels scolded us from tree branches as we passed.





This guy had fought a Pleasing Fungus Beetle for his mushroom and won.



Along the way there were rapids, cascades and falls. We bypassed Copeland Falls but stopped at Calypso Cascades.



As we gained altitude we gained new vistas including this one of Long's Peak.



Our target of the morning: Ouzel Falls. Ah, solitude. To this point we had passed no one, in either direction.



At the falls we ate two bags each of Sheila and Dale's Excellent Trail Mix, washed it down with Fierce Grape Gatorade and took our trophy picture..





A few folks passed by. A few more passed by. We began our descent.

"Hello. Hello. Hi. Good Morning. How are you?" Holy Criminy Batman, where did all these people come from? We stepped aside on the narrow parts of the trail as etiquette instructs the downs to do for the ups. We stepped aside a lot. "Good Morning, Hello" continued and we began hearing the famous question that ups ask of downs: "How far is it?" "About a half mile"... "Almost a mile"... "About a mile and a quarter"... "Actually you have a long way yet"... How many times did they pop the question? Didn't count. But did count the traffic – we passed 145 of 'em on the way down. Some with packs, some without, some with water, some without, some with smiles, some without. There was a troop of senior citizens, uniformly name-tagged, looking for a sunny spot to rest in. By now it was in the 50's but it was damp and breezy and they were thinly protected. Wonder what sadist brought them up there.

Near the bottom we had our second chance at Copeland Falls so we took the side trail. Very pretty. Could have been a nice picture except for Rocky Mountain Buddha, who was sitting motionless in the viewing lane with his eyes closed. He may or may not have been breathing. We moved on.



On the road tomorrow.

D&S