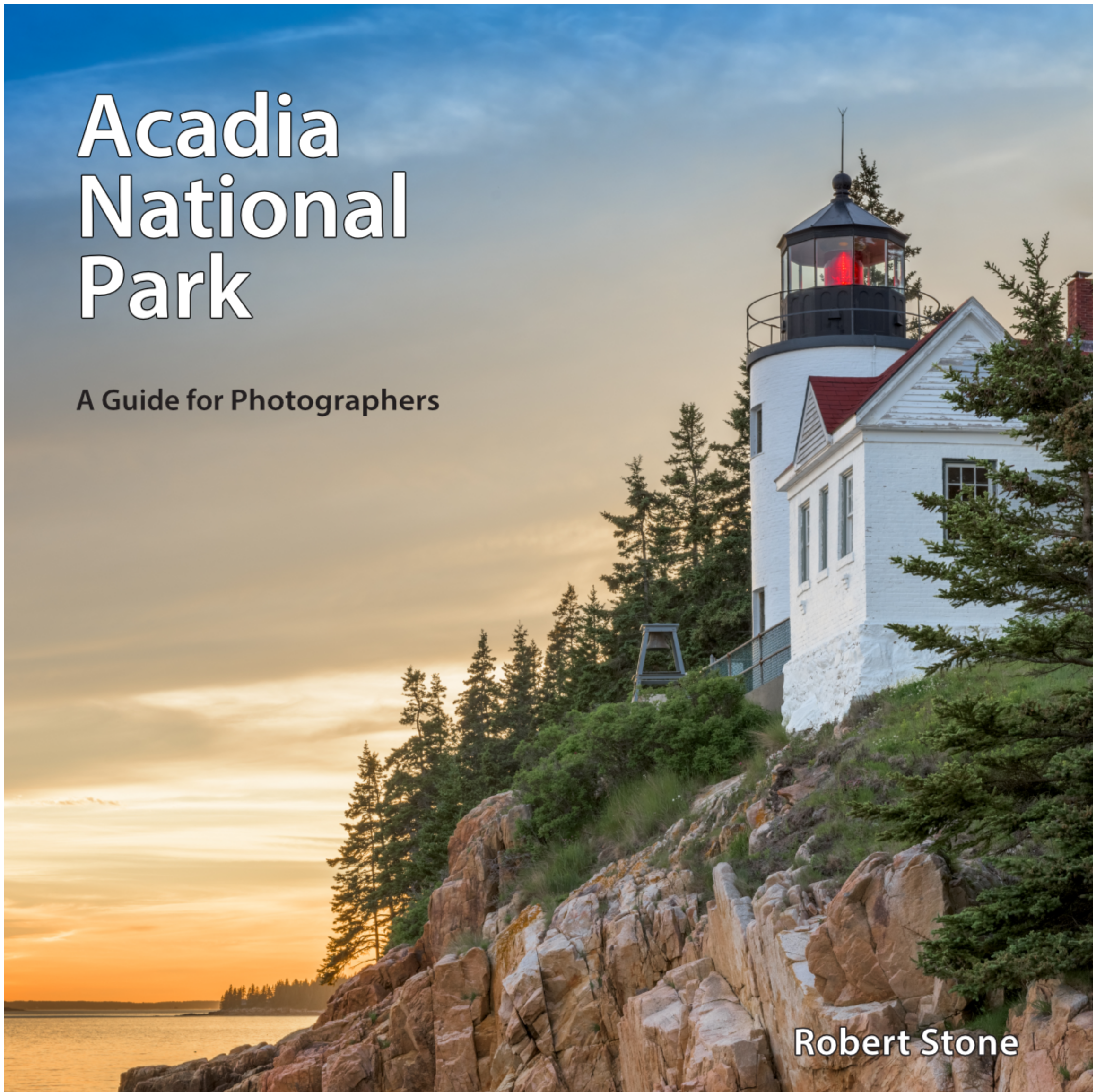


Acadia National Park

A Guide for Photographers

Robert Stone



Saved to future generations as it has been to us, in the wild primeval beauty of the nature it exhibits, of ancient rocks and still more ancient sea, with infinite detail of life and landscape interest between, the spirit and mind of man will surely find in it in the years and centuries to come an inspiration and a means of growth as essential to them ever and anon as are fresh air and sunshine to the body.

George B. Dorr, Father of Acadia National Park

Cover Image : Bass Harbor Light

The Bass Harbor Light became an official part of Acadia in 2020. While the National Park Service owned the surrounding land, the US Coast Guard maintained the light, and staff lived in the residence. Today, the USCG retains the right of access to maintain the light which is now fully automated and no longer staffed.

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A Brief Timeline of Acadia National Park

July 8, 1916

President Woodrow Wilson established Acadia's federal status as Sieur de Monts National Monument on July 8, 1916, administered by the National Park Service. It was the first national park created from donated private lands. The National Park Service celebrated the 100th anniversary of Acadia in 2016, based on this date.

February 26, 1919

Congress re-designated Sieur de Monts National Monument as Lafayette National Park on February 26, 1919. It was the first American national park east of the Mississippi River and the only one in the Northeastern United States. The park was named after the Marquis de Lafayette, an influential French participant in the American Revolution.

January 19, 1929

In 1929, lands on Schoodic Peninsula were offered to the park by John Godfrey Moore's daughters Ruth and Faith, and second wife Louise. John was born and lived in Steuben, Maine. After high school, he moved to New York City to work for his uncle. He became a well known wealthy investor in the New York, Philadelphia and Washington DC area. He is best known for his 1893 lawsuit against the federal government which delayed the federal income tax for 20 years. Later in life, he built a large home on Grindstone Neck near Winter Harbor. He named this property 'Far From the Wolf', no doubt a comment on the cultural differences between The Big City vs Down East Maine. His plan for creating a resort for the wealthy to compete with Bar Harbor was never fulfilled.

Taxes became a burden on his family after his death. Donating the land would be a way to memorialize John, but his heirs did not want to have their land become part of park named after a Frenchman. At George Dorr's suggestion, the name of the park was changed to Acadia on January 19, 1929, ensuring the expansion.

Etymology

'Acadia' is variously attributed to Giovanni da Verrazzano applying the ancient Greek name "Arcadia", or 'idyllic place', to the Atlantic coast north of Virginia on his 16th-century map, or to the Canadian Mi'kmaq language term 'akadie' (fertile land) which historically included Nova Scotia and parts Maine, rendered as l'Acadie by French explorers, and translated into English as Acadia.

Navigating the Park

Acadia has everything a landscape photographer would want: grand views, waterfalls, lakes, rocky shores, woodlands, meadows, wildflowers, mammals and birds. I particularly love the intimate scenes: the colors and textures of rocks, lichens and the wrack line. Most of the national park is on Mount Desert Island, roughly a circle with 10 mile diameter. As a photographer chasing the light and weather, moving to another location is fairly fast. But in summer, Acadia gets very crowded. The purpose of this book is to highlight some of the best locations, and how to deal with the crowds.

Passes and Maps

Your first order of business is to purchase your **Park Entrance Pass**. I strongly recommend creating an account and buying your entrance pass at the [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) website before leaving home. While you can obtain an entrance pass when you arrive at either the Hulls Cove Visitor Center or the Sand Beach Entrance Station, both can have are long lines at peak times. The Entrance Pass must be printed and displayed on your vehicle's dash. But do stop at the Visitots Center and pick up a copy of the free visitors map. There are no lines for that and they have a nice gift shop and park information! If you are planning to hike, ask about trail closings; a few are closed seasonally to protect nesting Peregrine falcons.

Cadillac Mountain's summit requires a second pass; there are actually two. The **Cadillac Summit Sunrise Pass** is limited to one per week! The **Cadillac Summit Daytime Pass** is based on entrance times somewhat after sunrise, at 15 minute intervals. Both of these summit passes are only available through your [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) account! If you want to visit the Cadillac Mountain summit, and you really do, you must set up this account.

Happily, [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) is both a web site and the name of a smart phone app. The app connects to your account and will display both passes for scanning at the Cadillac Mountain Entrance Station. With the app on your smart phone, you can get a daytime summit pass at almost any time. This is astonishingly convenient! While these passes have a defined entrance time, you can stay as long as you like!

My favorite detailed, commercial map is the "Acadia National Park Hiking & Biking Trail Map" from Map Adventures at <https://www.mapadventures.com>. This map has detailed street names for Bar Harbor village.

Getting Around

All the park roads in Acadia are two lanes wide. Some are both lanes in the same direction (most of the loop), others carry two-way traffic. How to tell? If the center line is a solid, yellow line, it is two-way and you have to drive on the right. The whole western segment from the Hulls Cove Visitor Center, past Cadillac Mountain and the Jordan Pond House, to the Stanley Brook Entrance at Seal Cove is two-way.

If the center line of the road is a dashed, white line, it is two lanes in the same direction. Where signs allow, you can park in the right hand lane. The loop segment along Ocean Drive allows right lane parking.

On these one-way sections you may be committed to that road for some long stretches. There are several ways to enter and leave the loop. From Bar Harbor village, Kebo Street and Great Meadow Drive will quickly get you to the loop near Sieur de Monts / Wild Gardens of Acadia and a connection to Rte. 3. Schooner Head Road will quickly get you to the Sand Beach Entrance Station, as well as the Schooner Head Overlook and the Great Head trail parking area.



The Park Loop

The Loop has both one-way and two-way sections. Note the arrows on the map above. A white, dashed centerline indicates one-way traffic; solid yellow centerline indicates two-way traffic. The 'Hiking and Biking' map from Map Adventures has better detail for village streets.

Fragments of the free Acadia Park Map

The free map has all the locations mentioned in this document. The Map Adventures map has better details on carriage roads and hiking trails.



Parking Areas - Sand Beach to Otter Point

Some have signs; others do not. If you pass the one you want, there's no turning around! For Boulder Beach, note the unmarked one south of Gorham Mountain.

To avoid the crowded Ocean Drive segment, Otter Cliffs Road leads from Rte. 3 to the loop near Boulder Beach. If Boulder Beach is your destination, you can park at the Fabbri Picnic area, or turn right for Otter Cliffs parking. This is also the fastest way to Little Hunters Beach during crowded hours.

Dealing with Crowds

Acadia has become very popular with over four million yearly visitors. Summer crowds peak according to school calendars. Crowds increase during peak Autumn foliage, when commercial photo tours and leaf peepers arrive, roughly the first three weeks of October. The busiest locations are Sand Beach and the Ocean Path, Jordan Pond, Sieur de Monts and the Great Meadow.

However, the park has a certain daily rhythm that you can work with: even on vacation, most people still follow their normal work or school hours. *You will always find easy access and parking by getting to your destination early!* Popular hikes up Gorham Mountain, the Beehive, the Bubbles and along the Ocean Path are wonderful early in the morning; with no problems finding parking!

But there is far more to do at Acadia than visit these busy locations. Trail heads and carriage road access points are available across the island. My favorite photography excursion is the one mile carriage road walk from the Parkman Mountain parking area to the Waterfall Bridge and Hadlock Falls. This is also an excellent access point for Penobscot and Sargent Mountains from the west. These can be good, mid-day scouting trips.

Tips for Photographers

For sunrise, get to your photography locations as early as possible! The larger parking areas at Sand Beach, Jordan Pond and Sieur de Monts will be virtually empty this early in the morning. For the Bold Coast, I *always* arrive at least an hour before sunrise. Some of the most astonishing color displays occur at this time as sunlight reflects off mid to low-level clouds and may last only a few moments.

If this is your first visit to Acadia, spend a few hours scouting along Ocean Drive. From Sand Beach, you can explore the views of Great Head and Beehive from the water's edge. Past Sand Beach, any of the parking areas can serve as a starting location for scouting the Bold Coast. There are numerous side trails along the Ocean Path, many leading to unrestricted views. It's less than a mile from Newport Cove to Boulder Beach, so only a few hours to scout the whole segment. (Note: poison ivy occurs along many of these side paths. Be watchful!)

Later, when you return for sunrise photography, choose the parking area closest to your scouted location. There are signs for the larger parking areas at Thunder Hole, Gorham Mountain and Otter Cliffs. Several smaller and easily missed parking areas also occur. Just past the Gorham parking area is a small, unmarked parking area perfect for Boulder Beach and a view to Otter Cliffs.

Between Boulder Beach and Otter Cliffs, the Ocean Path passes through woodlands. You can scout this section working from either end. There are two side trails that lead to locations atop Otter Cliffs. One descends steeply; the other is a small side trail. Both have exceptional views. South of Otter Cliffs, the Ocean Path drops down to near sea level. Many photographers will prefer to scout this lower section working back from the Otter Point parking area.

Sunset and astrophotographers will find ample parking almost everywhere well before sunset.

Sand Beach and the Fabbri Picnic Area have rest rooms!

A few words on Acadia NP for photographers ...

I've been photographing in Acadia for ten years. Other visitors always seem very accommodating to my needs, staying out of the field of view, at least momentarily. Park rangers have 'checked up' on me several times late at night, triggered no doubt by my car being the only one in the lot, and worry about my safety. Even during times of low COVID prevalence, non-masked persons observed the 6' rule along the trails and in the village.

Don't set up your tripod where it obstructs another photographer's image. Introduce yourself and find a way to share the location. This has worked well for me, and I'm usually the first on-scene.

Many popular trails, Beehive in particular, have iron rung sections that require both hands free to climb. Strap that tripod to your backpack. Along narrow cliff edge sections you will be obstructing hikers if you try to set up a tripod. And by-the-way, the Beehive trail is one-way up! Happily, there are great photo opportunities at the top and on the backside trail. The backside trails are also a great route up if you want to avoid the scary side.

In October 2020, my trip happened to coincide with the Out-of-Acadia photography tour. Approaching the Boulder Beach parking area for my Sunday pre-dawn scouting I was met with several cars coming straight toward me, going the wrong way on the Park Loop ... my dark-adapted eyes blinded by their high beams. After parking, I headed to Boulder Beach only to find about 20 photographers lined up waiting for sunrise. They were nicely spaced, side-by-side, respectful of others field of view. But this was not the scene I wanted to photograph; I abandoned Plan A and returned to my car to head to my Plan B destination, Little Hunters Beach. I took a moment to check the cars for proper park entrance passes, only half had one on display!

First, going the wrong way on the loop is exceptionally dangerous! Acadia has training locations used by cyclists; the steep Cadillac Mountain climb and sprints along the loop road. These competition bikes do not have headlights and at dawn would be invisible to cars turning the wrong way onto the loop road. I was later told by the tour sponsor, Out-of-Chicago, that these folks were simply following GPS directions. The cyclists are not blame-free, but certainly the most endangered in this encounter!

Second, if Acadia attracted you for its fantastic photography, perhaps adding another national park to your life list, buying a park entrance pass is literally the least monetary support you should provide! If you shelled out thousands for the conference, and more for lodging and transportation, be just as generous with your support! Yes, it's possible to slip onto Ocean Drive before sunrise for free because the Sand Beach Entrance Station is not open. (Perhaps a more likely reason why the GPS crowd chose the wrong way.) But avoiding the park entrance pass should not be a source of pride.

Your modest purchase *will* leave Acadia better than you found it!

If you want to support Acadia or other National Parks, use these URLs:

The Friends of Acadia	https://friendsofacadia.org/
The National Park Foundation	https://www.nationalparks.org/

The Bold Coast



The Beehive

My annual visits to Acadia always start with a generalized sense of disorientation; so many locations to visit, each with a different mood at different times of day. My remedy is making the Beehive my first sunrise image on my first morning in Acadia. With my first image composed and captured, I start to relax, then head to the Ocean Path for some bold coast scouting.

The Beehive trail starts at Sand Beach and is a wonderful morning climb. It has several iron rung and narrow cliff-edge sections, so not tripod 'friendly'. Shoot handheld; boost ISO if necessary. I've watched climbers scale Beehive hours before sunrise with only a moving headlamp showing their location. This trail is one-way up! The trail on the back side is an easy descent, and is best for persons wanting an alternative to the climb on the scary side!



Sand Beach

Low tide reveals a broad, beautiful beach. The bright water where the photographer is standing is actually fresh water seeping out from Sand Beach Pond behind him. Easy to see the level of the water table here!

The previous image was made at the far end of this beach, looking over the pond toward Beehive. Early morning parking at Sand Beach is easy. If you want to stay off the loop, it is an easy walk to Sand Beach along a service road from the Great Head trail parking area.



Newport Cove

Views along the Bold Coast start just past Sand Beach with this view across Newport Cove. I've seen sea otters here many times! Grab a modest telephoto and scan the rocky edges for these playful critters. Newport Cove derived its name from Newport Mountain, today called Champlain Mountain.

Scouting the Bold Coast is best done in two segments. The segment from Newport Cove to Boulder Beach is just a mile, and you can start from any of the parking areas. Thunder Hole is midway, and makes a great central location. Here's a secret: the 'thunder' only happens during big storms typical of winter or the rare hurricane that strays this far north. Otherwise, not particularly interesting.



Scouting along the Shore Path

This view point is located north of Thunder Hole along one of three side paths leading to open views. Herein lies the value of scouting! Take one morning or afternoon, when lighting conditions are 'normal', and follow all the side paths from Newport Cove to Boulder Beach!

This image made before sunrise with color provided by a layer of bright pink clouds. This color only lasted 10 minutes! Thunder Hole in the mid-distance, Otter Cliffs at the far horizon. Happily, none of Thunder Hole's stone work or guard rails are visible. Well planned!



Monument Cove at Sunrise.

This overlook is along a side path about half way between the Thunder Hole and Gorham Mountain parking areas. The 'monument' is the free standing granite tower at right. There is no easy route to this beach, though some photographers have found a herd path that will provide access through the cleft in the middle distance. Otter Cliffs on the horizon.



Monument Cove Overlook

The overlook path extends beyond the monument to open rock. The soft morning light emphasize the various shades of pink and orange granite.



Boulder Beach and Otter Cliffs

This is perhaps the most iconic location in Acadia. There are endless moods of color and light here depending on weather, season, time-of-day and cloud conditions. The photographer at lower left hints at the size and grandeur of the cliffs .



Boulder Beach and Otter Cliffs

Before sunrise, morning dew brings out the color and texture of the rocks. The green algae covered rocks are extremely slippery and the boulders are not firmly set in place! I always use two hiking poles here for that extra third and fourth point of stability.



Otter Cliffs

Sunrise on a stormy morning, the cliffs are illuminated by a fast moving layer of dusky brown clouds. This view is just two steps off the Ocean Path opposite the Boulder Beach parking area. Unfortunately, this sunrise perspective is now only rarely free of visitors. Since the park began issuing Cadillac Mountain Sunrise Passes in limited numbers, this has become a very popular sunrise location. Frankly, close to the sights, smells and sounds of the ocean, this really is a terrific sunrise location!



Boulder Beach and Otter Cliffs

Another colorful, blue hour mood of Boulder Beach. This viewpoint from an easily accessed rocky outcrop just left of the path down to Boulder Beach. Scouting a location an hour before sunrise often yields rich rewards! My sunrise images only rarely include the sun. Sunrise is not about the sun, but what the sun's light falls upon.



Sunrise Looking North from Boulder Beach

This view is from the rocky outcropping at Boulder Beach. Great Head on the horizon.



Sunrise Looking North from atop Otter Cliffs

Beehive on the right, Gorham Mountain near the middle. Both make excellent morning hikes by themselves, but numerous trails allow for several loops starting from Sand Beach or Gorham.

Otter Cliffs has its own parking area and it is worth stopping there for some extended scouting time. The Ocean Path is across the road; follow the stairway down and head north through the woodland. First, look for a small side path on the right. It leads to some great views! Farther along the Ocean Path you will find a side trail leading steeply down to this location atop Otter Cliffs. This is an exceptional sunrise location! (Later in the day, you may find some technical climbers here, roping up and down the cliff face!)

Continuing north through woodland, you will find a wide break in the forest with an open view to the north.



Otter Cliffs Dawn



Cadillac Mountain (Left) and Dorr Mountain (Right)

Frederic Church's 1850 '*Otter Creek*' painted from sketches made at a similar location.



Bass Harbor Light

Bass Harbor Light, in the far south-west corner of Mount Desert Island, is an exceptionally popular sunset location. Get there early to find space to set up your tripod. Follow the stairway down to a rocky viewpoint. The building is mostly obscured by trees here; a better view can be had by scrambling farther out on the rocks. Moving closer to the lighthouse, you can drop down to near sea level (tides permitting) with the possibility of reflections in tide pools.

This is an occulting light: 5 seconds On, 1 second Off. If you use multiple exposures, typical of HDR photography, I recommend making images with a manual shutter release so each frame can be captured when the light is on. If you plan to stay much after sunset, you will need a headlamp or flashlight to get back to the stairway safely.

Inland Landscapes



Beaver Dam Pond

Beaver Dam Pond is located along the park loop. There is only limited road-side parking here. A left side pull-off is located ahead, just past the trail head for the Champlain North Ridge Trail ... only a short walk back.



The Great Meadow

This is the boardwalk section of the Jessup Path through the Great Meadow. The boardwalk starts at The Wild Gardens of Acadia and ends at the southwest end of The Hemlock Road. The Wild Gardens of Acadia has good parking off hours and is easily accessible from both Rte. 3 and the Park Loop.



The Great Meadow

There are few restrictions on where you can go in the park. Environmental restoration areas are well marked and should be respected. Otherwise, feel free to explore off the boardwalk! But note that the Great Meadow has many wet areas where water may be knee deep or deeper.



The Cobblestone Bridge

This is the first of Acadia's famous carriage road bridges, and my favorite! Built in 1917 by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., it is constructed entirely out of cobbles and granite blocks found on Mount Desert Island. It's even cobbled underneath! From behind the Jordan Pond House follow the Jordan Stream Path down stream, or a nearly parallel service road, to this bridge. (Turn right when the service road meets a carriage road.) Technically, this bridge is not in the park.

Duck Brook Bridge

This is the tallest, most ornate and expensive of the carriage road bridges. Access is easy from the end of Duck Brook Road. A narrow stairway on the left leads down to Duck Brook as you approach from this side. You can also cross the bridge to find several herd paths down to stream level.



Jordan Pond

The south shore of Jordan Pond offers many views of The Bubbles. From the Jordan Pond House north parking area, walk down the boat launch road to the water's edge. About 99% of Jordan Pond images I find on-line are made at or near the boat launch. Certainly make a few images there, then follow the path to the right for more excellent and unique locations.



Jordan Pond

Cadillac and Pemetic Mountains block the rising sun until about 10:00 am in June, so this location offers some nice mid-morning lighting. I tend to use a normal zoom here as wide views often minimize the size of the Bubbles.



Jordan Pond

The trail ends at a stone causeway leading to the East side of the Jordan Pond Loop trail. This loop follows the shoreline, passing beneath the Bubbles, then back to the boat launch on the West side.



Wonderland

Giant tree burls discovered along the Wonderland Trail.



The Hemlock Road

The Hemlock Road is actually lined with Silver Birch.



The Maple Spring Trail

This image made in late May, 2019. Ice still lurks in hidden areas. The major flooding of June 9, 2021 totally destroyed this masterful stonework.



Hadlock Falls

The waterfall at the Waterfall Bridge.



Intimate Landscapes

Color and Texture

Ravens Nest

Ravens Nest is located on the Schoodic Peninsula, about a one hour drive from Mount Desert Island. Watch for signs as you travel north on Rte. 1 from Ellsworth. You will not find Ravens Nest on most printed maps, but Google Maps will get you close. The Schoodic Loop is two-way from the Rte. 186 park entrance near Winter Harbor, past the Schoodic Woods Campground, ending at the Frazer Point Park and Picnic Area. It is one-way after. You will find the same center line colors and markings as the Acadia Park Loop! Solid yellow center line is two-way; white dashed center line is one-way.

Be warned! There is *no* on-road parking here! With room for only two cars at Ravens Nest, park police will ticket cars with wheels still on the highway! If two cars beat you to it, there is an ample pull-off only a ½ mile farther along the road. The loop back to Raven's Nest is over 10 miles with no guarantee that a space will be open by the time your get back.



Acadia, the Volcano

The granite peaks of Acadia are a reminder of the volcanic origin of Mount Desert Island. About 400 million years ago, plate tectonics caused several large slices of land to collide with North America forming a chain of island volcanoes. Mount Desert Island is the caldera of a large volcano! It erupted many times until about one million years ago, and was 10,000 feet higher than today. Eons of erosion and several ice ages removed much of this material. Where glaciers met the sea the land beneath was undercut and rocks of various sizes and compositions deposited as ice calved off the front. These are 'polished' by the natural action of sea waves.



Concentric Ring Lichen - *Arctoparmelia centrifuga*,

The rocks of Cadillac Mountain are covered with a vast array of colorful lichens. This particular lichen is noted by its radial growth with interior die-back and regrowth. The orange areas are exposed granite. There are several other gray, black and green lichens in this image. Lichens are a symbiotic relationship between a fungus and an algae.

For intimate landscapes like these, I find that my normal zoom (24-70 mm) provides enormously better composition flexibility than my fixed focal length (105 mm) macro lens.



Reindeer Lichen - *Cladonia arbuscula*



The Wrack Line

Tides deposit kelp, sea grass, driftwood and other debris along the high tide line of rocky and sandy beaches. 'Wrack' is a common name for seaweed, in this case a *Fucus* or brown seaweed. Feathers as found, not placed.



Bristly Haircap - *Polytrichum piliferum*

This moss found near the vernal pools of the Blue Hill Overlook on Cadillac Mountain. This patch includes both new and old growth.



Creeping Juniper - *Juniperus horizontalis*

This image made before dawn near the summit of Cadillac Mountain. It is difficult to determine if this is a native shrub, or one of the common cultivars, one of which is known as 'Bar Harbor'. The blue hour light surprisingly causes the berries to glow.

My first impression: A globular clusters of blue giant stars, e.g. NGC 2031 or M3.



The Shatter Zone

Colorful collection of small stones in a tide pool at Hunters Beach. Hunters Beach and Little Hunters Beach are part of the island's 'shatter zone', a region of rock violently shattered as one volcanic eruption explosively intrudes through an earlier one. These rocks encompass a variety of quartz, granite, basalts with various colored feldspars, creating a wide range of colors. Wet rocks, boulders and stones are best revealed using a polarizer. As the filter is rotated reflections appear to move to different locations allowing the photographer to reveal the most color.



The Heart of Acadia

This heart is an unusual effect of erosion and intrusion layering on conglomerate rocks. It's about 6 inches across. Found on Hunters Beach, the heart is often hidden as rocks are jostled by winter storms..



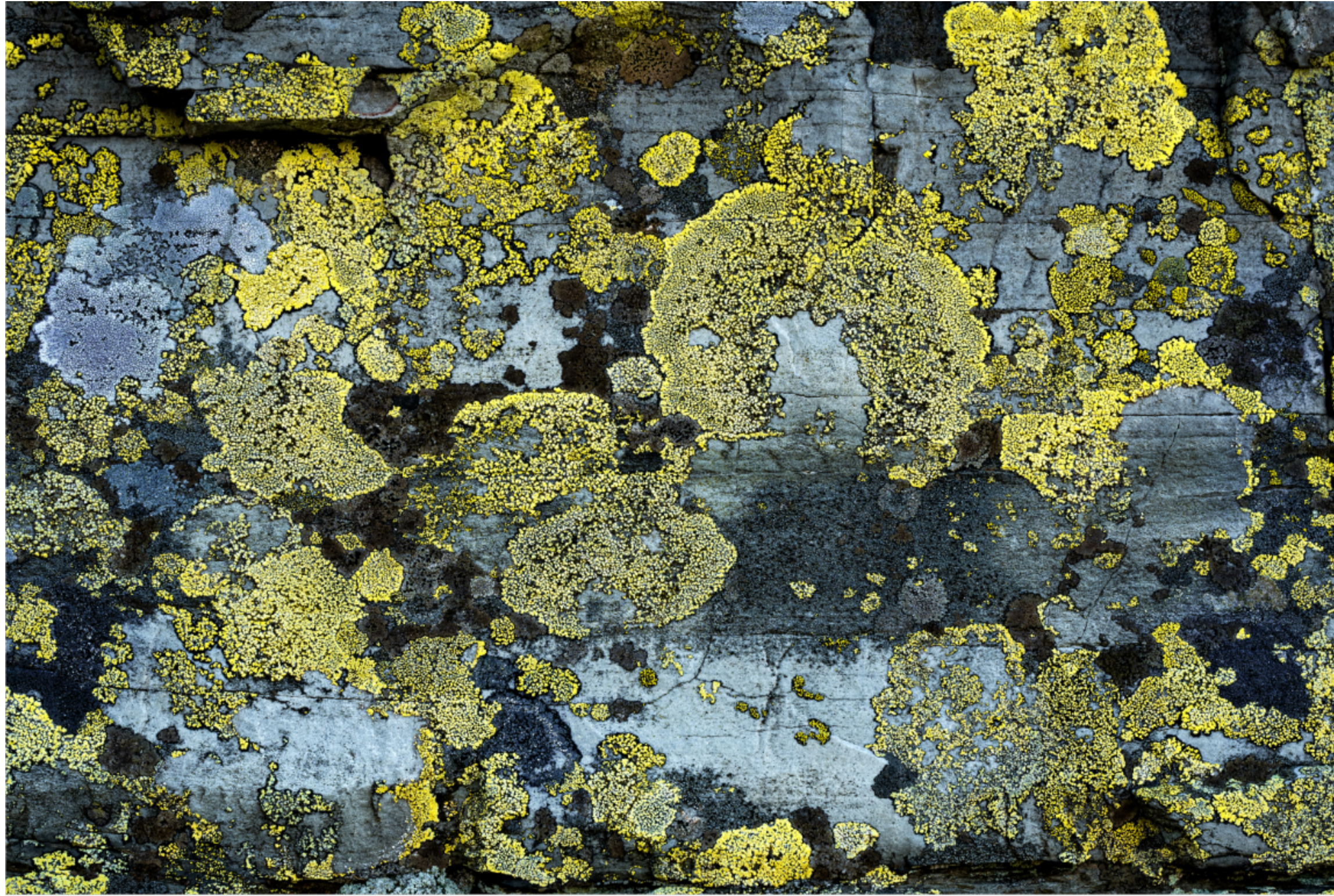
Hunters Beach

Sunlight ripples on rocks under the Hunters Brook outflow stream.



The Wrack Line

After a big storm, ocean detritus accumulates along the high tide line. The purple/magenta fragments are Dulse, a Red Algae. The large piece is from Kelp, a Brown Algae. There are also pieces of Knotted Wrack, also a Brown Algae though dark green, which gives the wrack line its name.



Lichens on Cadillac Mountain

Probably the Yellow Map lichen - *Rhizocarpum geographicum*



Lichens on Cadillac Mountain

There is actually a bit of a 'war zone' between various lichens as they compete for a favorable location. In some cases, there is a well defined border between them. In other, they intertwine.

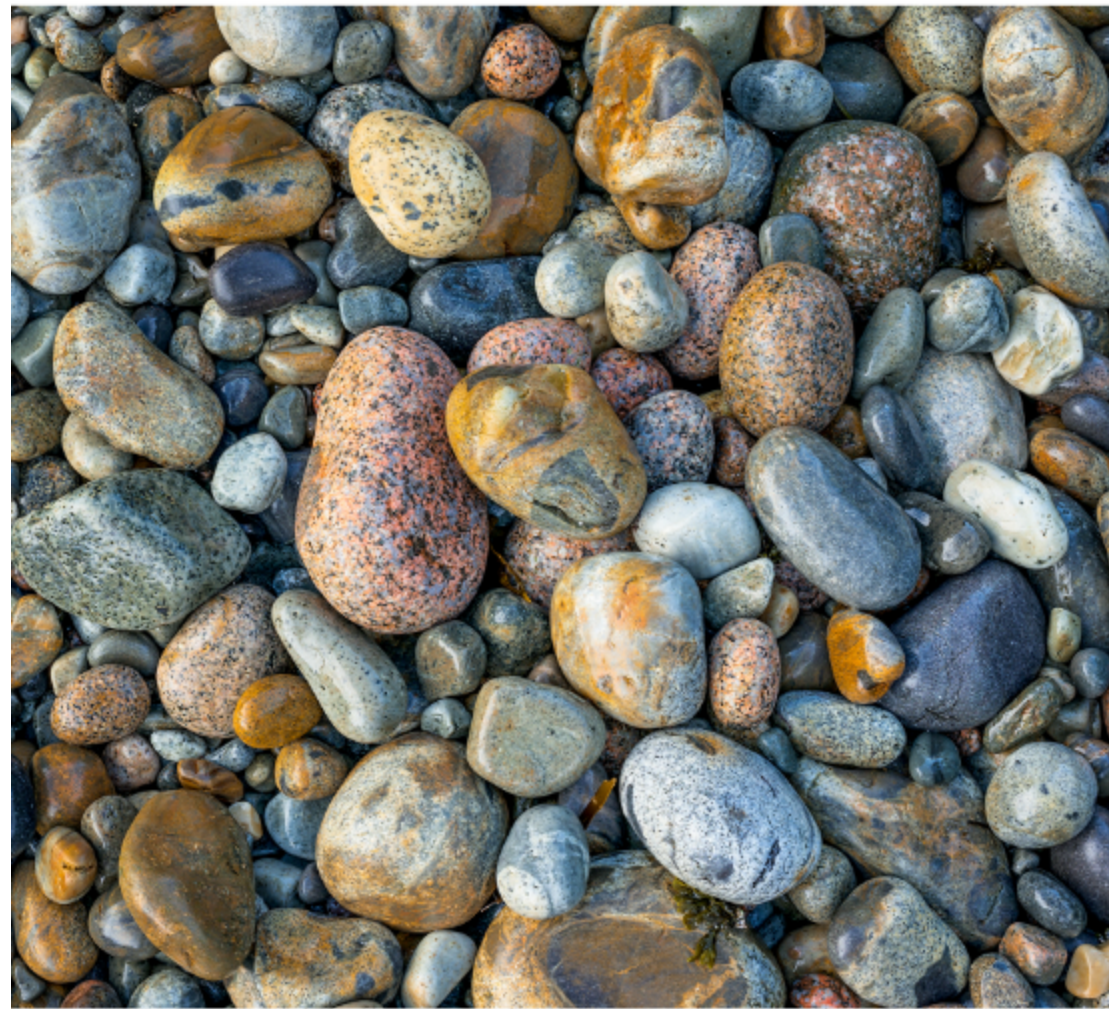


Cadillac Mountain Summit Lichens



American Twinflower - *Linnaea borealis* subsp. *americana*

First described by Carl Linnaeus in 1753. This circumboreal flower originally classified as *Linnaea americana*; now *Linnaea borealis* with three subspecies. This patch adjacent to the Thunder Hole Parking area at roadside. Tripod actually positioned on the loop road, just after sunrise, with no threatening traffic! This is from a 25 frame depth-of-field stack.



On the Island (but not in the park)

The most beautiful of the rocky beaches of Acadia is Little Hunters Beach. Before the morning dew lifts, or after a light rain, the rocks are transformed into glowing, translucent gems. Use a polarizer to control reflections.



Southwest Harbor Blue Hour



Northeast Harbor at Twilight



Colorful floating dock seating at Stewman's Lobster Pound.



Moose on the Roof at Geddy's.



Mountain Views

Sea Arch at Star Point





Cadillac Mountain Summit Sunrise

Sunrise at the top of Cadillac Mountain is very popular. Couples arrive with warm blankets, fresh, hot coffee and a picnic basket for a romantic morning. Many believe they are seeing the first sunlight to touch the United States, but sadly this is only true from October 7 through March 6. Somehow, this does not seem to affect their mood.



Sunset from the Blue Hill Overlook

This overlook is part of the parking area on the left just before reaching the summit of Cadillac Mountain. Recently, this location has been renamed to indicate supplemental summit parking. This is a great sunset location! Only a summit daytime pass is required; get one for mid to late afternoon and stay until sunset! Blue Hill visible left of the sun.



View from the Summit of the North Bubble

Both North and South Bubble have excellent views across Jordan Pond. They share the same trail head. The South Bubble is the most popular because Bubble Rock is located there. Take the time to climb both! The Jordan Pond House visible at the far end of the pond.



Somes Sound from Flying Mountain

Somes Sound separates Mount Desert Island into two distinct halves. This body of water is sometimes identified as a fjord. A more accurate term is fijard. Both are formed glacially, but a fijard is shallower and lacks the steep enclosing mountain sides. A fijard often has a muddy bottom with grassy areas where sunlight still is available for photosynthesis.

This side of the island, also known as the Quiet Side, has numerous trails and mountains to hike. Beech Mountain has a fire tower. The Beech Mountain Loop is fairly flat and has views to the East.

Awe Inspiring Acadia

My first experience with 'Awe' in nature was seeing the Atlantic Ocean for the first time at 6 years old, I knew the ocean was big, but the actual experience was, of course, awesome. I've had a few more since then...a total solar eclipse, my first sight of the Rocky Mountains, the birth of children.

The ocean, the mountains and the eclipse impress by their enormity; things so big that the work of a human life is almost trivial. The enormity of childbirth is different. It demands meaningful participation in all that follows, large and small, minute by minute, day-by-day, year by year.

Now, as a mature man, a curmudgeon some say, with decades of education and experience, I find awe in all things, big and small. Images from the Hubble and James Webb telescopes communicate a universe of immense size and complexity. Deep in the cell nucleus, what was once called junk DNA is now known to have essential regulatory and functional purpose.

I'm not sure what the opposite of awe is...indifference, apathy, greed, mendacity? All repress any sense of awe; all seemingly purposely deployed by people on others.

I think this is why experiences in nature have such a calming effect. Nature has its raw side, but operates by natural laws, not hidden agendas. The new concept of 'forest bathing' is about finding calm by immersing yourself in nature, not water. This is not a new idea. Many cities have a 'Central Park' that offers a form of escape to nature.

Water features have the greatest impact on my own forest bathing. Listening to the trickle of a woodland stream, a waterfall or a crashing ocean wave brings me a sense of the eternal. With enough time, even a small stream will eventually carve a deep channel in the landscape. The water, predominantly from rain and snow, will end up in an ocean, only to evaporate and fall elsewhere. In my mind I try to follow a drop of water from a mountain spring, through streams, lakes, reservoirs and rivers as it travels to the sea. The water cycle, so random yet so important, creates new, pure water. The immense passage of time, the effects of wind, water and several ice ages, has changed a 10,000' volcano into a photographer's landscape paradise. I think some of our own 'random acts' may have eternal importance, even if unrecognized at the time.

Visiting Acadia each year is like meeting an old friend; catching up on the year's changes, and finding new compositions in familiar locations. Major winter storms physically alter the shape of the rocky beaches markedly altering their 'angle of repose'. The June 9, 2021 storm damaged many carriage road surfaces and flooded the Great Meadow, but also contributed to some really nice flow at the Cobblestone Bridge. My 2022 visit revealed a massive wrack line at Little Hunters Beach, which became the subject of several of my images. I've come to realize that such changes are not damaging to pristine landscapes, but part of the normal succession of events that all wild places experience.

These are a few favorite locations for forest bathing at Acadia: the overlook near Boulder Beach, the Waterfall Bridge / Hadlock Falls, and two locations at Little Hunters Beach: first, the beach itself; second, the stream-side path that leads north from the parking area. Close your eyes, listen to the water, birds and ocean, enjoy the scent of air and soil ... feel the eternal.



Portrait of the photographer as an old man, now a mere shadow of himself.