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Elk at Grand Canyon National Park

The first photo is of baby having to figure out what a rope is and how to negotiate it. The



rest are just of baby and mother. I swear the place was full of these little tikes. I was riding my bike when a little one crossed the main road and then headed across the trail I was coming down. I stopped a ways back to let it go by and was waiting for mother to join it. Then there were 2 cows so I backed up and waited. The cows crossing the road stopped all the park traffic. The cows were in no hurry and weren't at all considerate of hurrying humans.

Meanwhile, I had to keep backing up, because the cow elk were coming right for me. I doubted they would charge me but didn't want to find out. A bunch of bicyclists on the hill rode down to me to chat with me, and I told them we were all



in the path of those cow elk and that maybe we all should back up. Right then a ranger on a bike rode up and yelled at us for being "too close to the

elk". I told her it wasn't MY fault! I was trying to get away from the blasted things but they just kept coming in my direction. She yelled at me again that they might charge and then rode off.



By then, there were more bicyclists coming from the other direction. I went ahead and just left, because the cows seemed pretty unconcerned about the baby, but the baby was concerned that mother and auntie hadn't joined it.

Then there was a ruckus on the highway with a lot of honking and such.

A tourist had stopped right in the middle of the road to watch the elk even though there were huge flashing signs all over saying "do NOT stop in roadway to watch wildlife". A park bus was barreling down on the tourist car and I was sure it would slam the tourist car but it somehow got stopped. Amazingly enough, the tourist STILL hadn't even noticed the bus!!

Then baby on the hill without mother and auntie was doing the typical elk dolphin impersonation (if you haven't heard them, just listen to what dolphins sound like) and was getting upset that it was by itself. I just decided it would get it all figured out on its own, so I left.

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I went to work with Peter one day as he collected data about plants.

Lockett "Lake" was about a mile and half north of the plot, so I hiked up to it. Peter gave me a topographical map to follow, though much of the area was pretty flat, not much to follow on that kind of map.

When we were traveling through the park on the way to the plot, we spotted a few cars pulled off the side, no doubt people gawking at an elk. We were in separate cars (the



general public, me, can't ride in a govt truck so I drove our car) so I slowed way down so that I could gawk on the fly. I noticed that the gawkers for once were staying a very respectable distance from the subject of the gawking and when I saw what they saw, I could see why. I think it had to have been one of the biggest bull elk I have ever seen. It was comfortably lying on the ground, legs tucked under and head up and was chewing its cud. Atop that massive head was a massive rack not fully formed and covered in velvet. It ignored the gawkers like all the park elk do. Anyway, I was really impressed.

So back to hiking up to Lockett "Lake", I jumped a herd of elk with 2 large bulls. We were outside the park on National Forest land and these elk, only a couple miles away from a completely imaginary line (the park boundary) were very different animals. They were extremely wary and did not want to be seen. But of course it is hard not to see them because they

are everywhere in profusion.

I felt kind of bad chasing elk all over the place. A couple of times for once, they didn't see me first, and I saw a mosaic of rich chestnut and dark-chocolate elk bodies, amid tree trunks. They are hunted during hunting season outside the park but not inside the park, thus the different behaviors and massive sizes of unhunted elk.

Had I been doubtful of finding the lake, the doubts dissipated after about a mile because I came across a very hammered game trail. It was going north where the "lake" was so I knew it had to be going to the "lake". Game trails in this country go water hole to water hole and are pretty darned reliable if you need water though I sure wouldn't want to drink it.

The heat was oppressive all day long (I tried to hike shade pool to shade pool under the pine trees) and when we got back to the motel, I was wrung out. We rested a bit and then got on our bikes.

The bike trail that goes from Tusayan up into and all over the park is now paved. It used to be kind of deep gravel for a couple of miles before hitting the park and wasn't a lot of fun to ride. But boy did that change! What a glorious ride it is now!

It had rained during the day so there was a spot on the trail that accumulated a few puddles of water. An abundance of small birds were drinking from the puddles.

We passed a young bull elk and what I believe was his mother on our bike trip. They weren't too far off the trail and barely even turned an eye toward us as we passed. Ah, to be on THIS side of that imaginary park boundary!