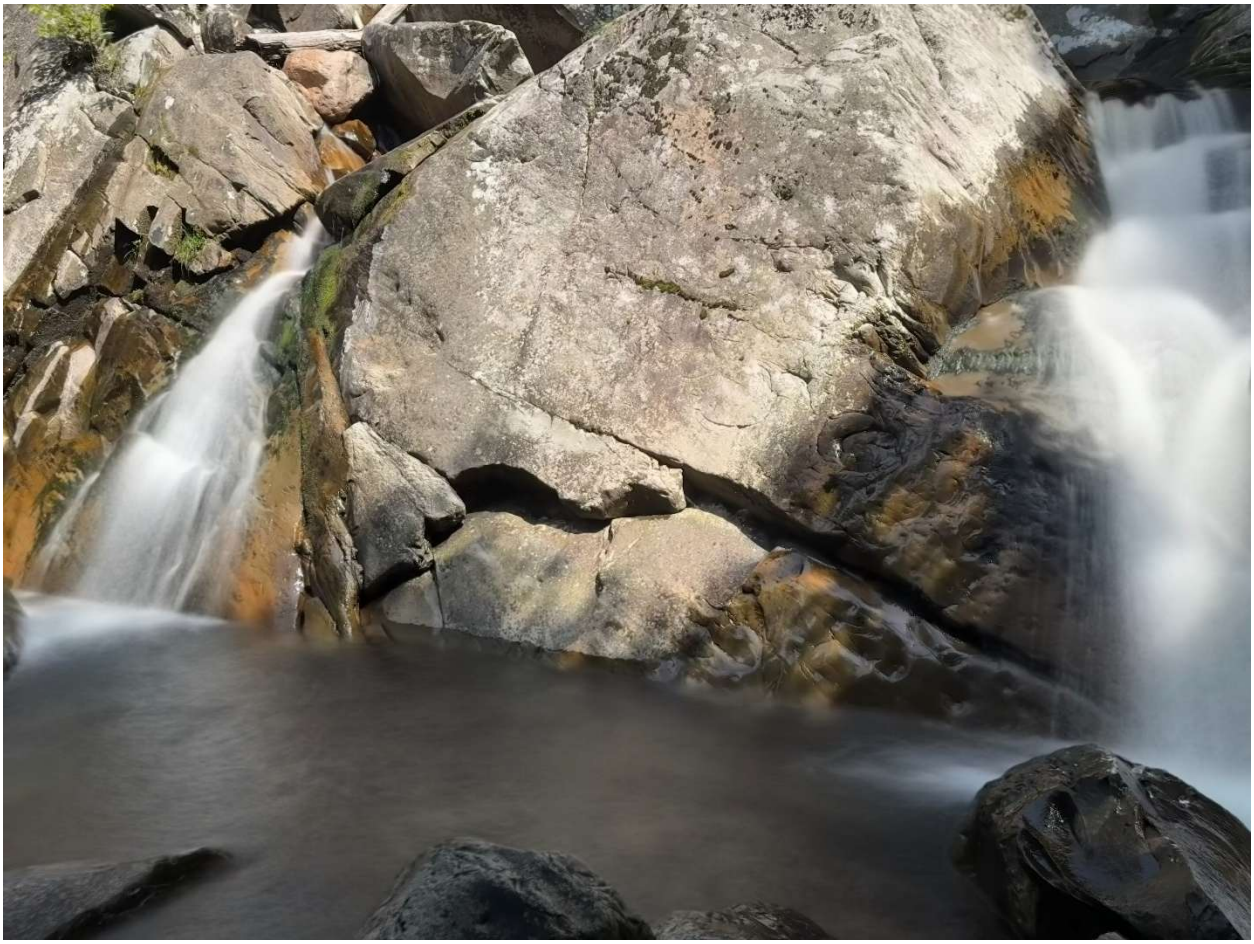
The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America
RICK'S ROADS
Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What

BLOG POST: 2026.08.11

Waterfall Hunting, Part 1: Vermont



From western Nebraska, all the way through New York State, I kept BluMaxx off the major highways. I got up-close-and-personal with the small towns and lesser-tier cities along 2,000 miles of the homeland.

Man, we grow a LOT of corn in this country! The fields were almost non-stop from one end of Nebraska to the other. On the small roads, it felt like I was driving between the rows of one enormous field. And when the terrain allowed for a long-range view, I could see that those fields stretched out north-to-south, horizon-to-horizon.

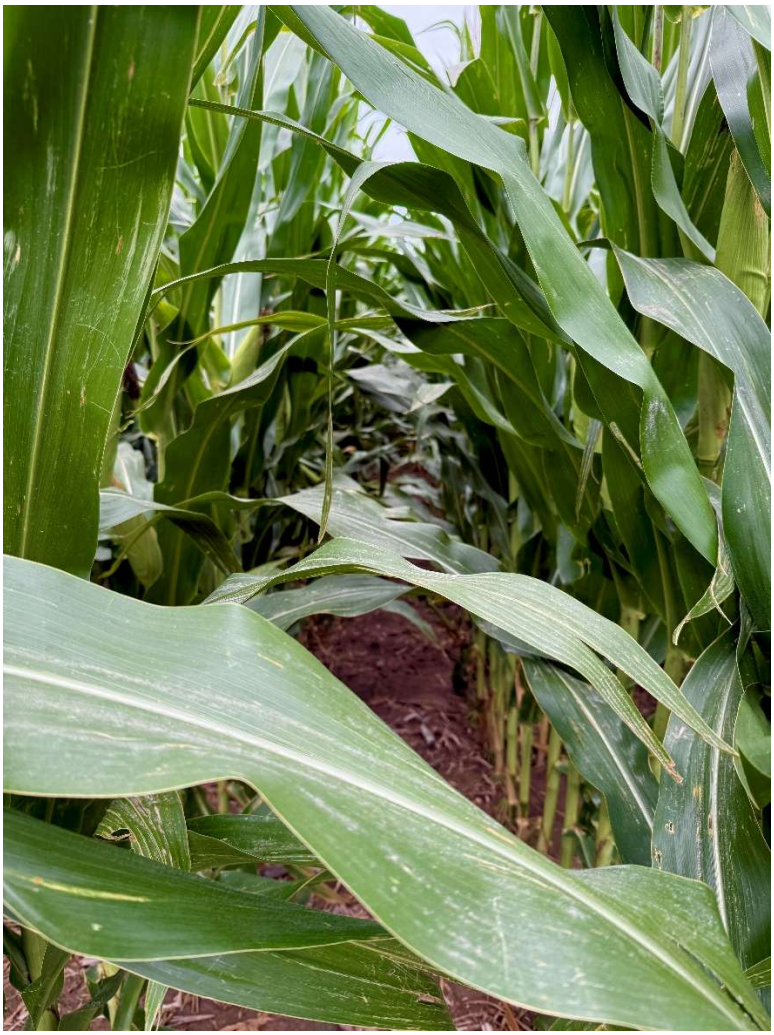
I kept asking myself, *How the hell can they possibly harvest all of this?* It was incomprehensible to me. So much so that I Googled it and watched a couple of videos on the topic. Most of the corn that I was seeing, I assume, was going to be used for

animal feed in a product called *sileage*. The harvesting did not require the intact preservation of individual ears of corn; huge combine harvesters simply chewed through the enormous fields, chowing many rows at time, chomping it into tiny bits – kernels, cobs, leaves and stalk – and spewing it backwards into the huge bin.

It was damn impressive to watch. Those machines are monsters. Very pretty monsters, but monsters just the same. Used combines can easily fetch a quarter-million dollars at auction. Brand new ones, loaded with bells and whistles (figuratively speaking) can go for the full mil.

And as much corn as I saw in Nebraska, Iowa was even more saturated. In fact, Iowa is the US' top producer or corn, and Nebraska is number two.

And it did not let up. You think Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio don't grow corn? It was as if, instead of toggling to "Avoid Highways", I had moved the switch to the "Show Me As Much Corn As You Can Find" mode.



But, you know what? It was beautiful. Rolling fields of tight and tidy rows of healthy crops, curving and rippling with the topography.

I had the camera ready and remained vigilant for the perfect shot, but persistent clouds and rain dampened many otherwise great scenes, or they were on me and gone before I had time to catch them. These narrow roads did not have breakdown lanes, nor did they have readily available roadside turnouts, so there was no second chance,

The corn even continued through Pennsylvania and western New York. It was intermittent by then, though, with occasional small fields interrupted by wooded areas and towns. But it was still a prominent feature of the landscape.

But, anyway, the six days of that leg of the journey were devoid of highways ***and*** devoid of *stops*. There was not one place that I paused to check out, and I snapped exactly **one** photo. One! In six days! (The masterpiece on the previous page.)

So, by the time I reached Albany, I was ready for some classic, hilly New England scenery. The dramatic Maine coast was too far east to be part of the plan – and was done a couple of years ago -- but the Green (VT) and White (NH) Mountains boast numerous waterfalls, and I wanted to check some out.

Google gave me a few names and Google Maps gave me a few routes, and off I went.

Falls of Lana, Salisbury VT



There MUST be an easier way to get the full view of this waterfall. The photo above is half of the split falls at the very bottom of a multi-level, 140-foot-tall cascade. It looks good in a still shot, but the slow, top-to-bottom pan video is outstanding. [Click the green-bracket link on the home page.]



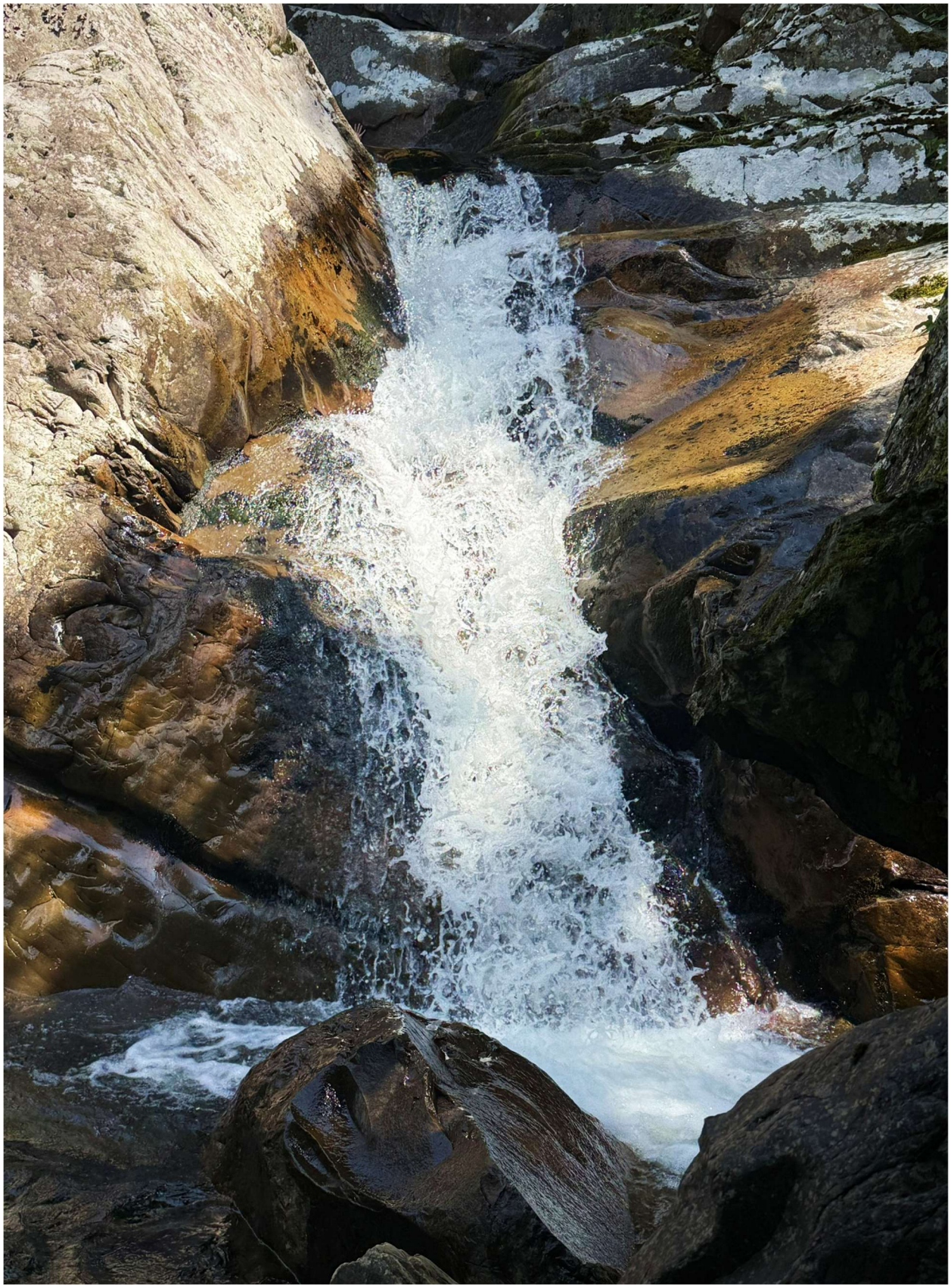
The big drop of Falls of Lana



A closer view of the upper section



The Jet



The left split



The “trail” I had to climb down to get these shots (and back up)

There MUST be an easier way in. This posted “map” was useless. Granted, this is a crop of a map that covered the entire Lake Dunmore area (which is pretty large).

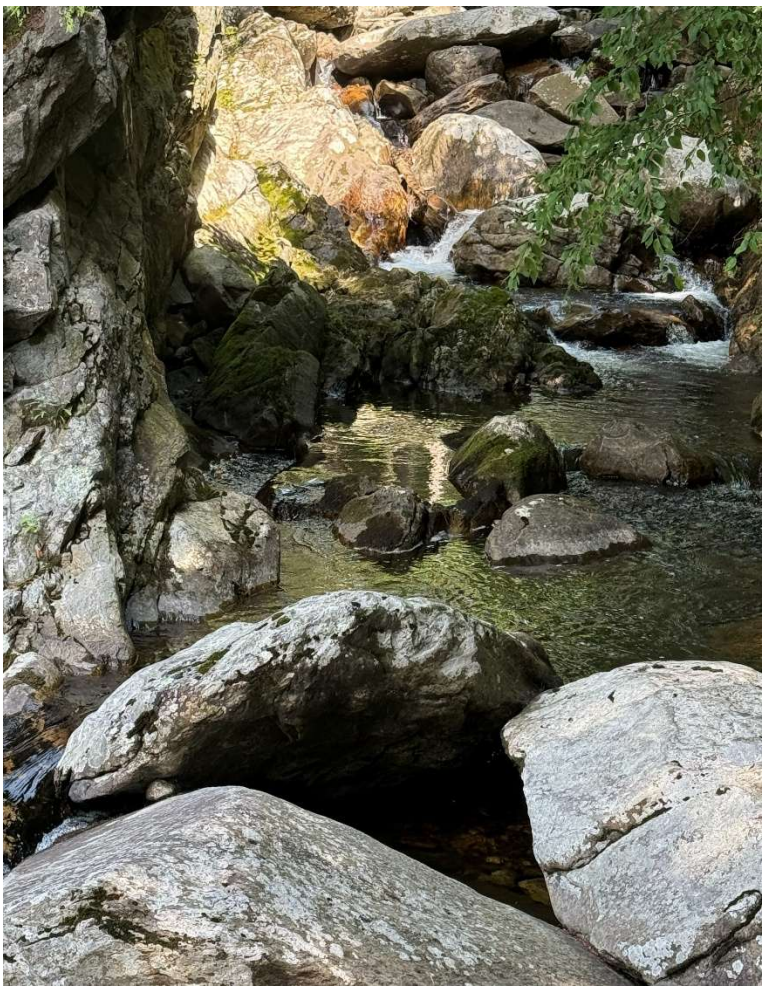


Sucker Brook is the blue line that includes the Falls of Lana. And it looks like the trail is right beside it. And a picnic area as well. Splendid.

But, alas, it would not be so simple.

From the parking lot – which holds about 30 cars (and was full) – the trail was wide, through thick forest, and immediately uphill. Early on, there was a sign for the Falls, but after that it became guesswork. I had climbed quite a ways when I found a spot where I could go off-trail and see Sucker Brook up close.

It was in intriguing teaser of a view, with the brook snaking between rocks into a flat pool, and then off left out of sight. It seemed to be heading to a drop-off, but, clamber as I might, I could find no way to work downwards to any lower vantage point.



So, I continued on up for a while, past a signpost with no sign, following the path of Sucker Brook, until I came to a small bridge across the brook. The map showed the crossing as being way past the falls. Bah.

I doubled back and tried that off-trail area again, to no avail. In fact, the faint footpath that I was following just led me back out to the main trail, just as it overlapped with a dirt road coming in from the power lines. The hillside fell off steeply from that road.

Peering way down through the trees, I could see the bright-

colored shirt of a person moving about. Already vexed by the lack of signage, I shifted into Fukkit Mode and began climbing down the hillside. It was steep, with no designated foothold or handholds. The earth and rocks frequently gave way under my bodyweight. I was grasping at thin trees or branches every chance I could.

I got to a narrow level spot that seemed like it might have been a trail. I looked left and saw a sheer rock face 50 feet high. I ventured right and all traces of trail quickly vanished. But I could hear the falls, and I could see glimpses of glints through the woods, so I knew I was heading in the right direction.

With a shrug, I continued my downward blunder, plunging with large steps toward any perceived foothold. Some were fine, some were not. I was most of the way down, when there was a ledge. It wasn't crazy high, so jumping down was possible, but the landing area was a sloped field of small boulders. Broken Ankle City.

So, I took the only option left and went to the sheer cliff. As luck would have it, the very bottom of it had a kind of gutter that was formed by centuries of rain/snow runoff. It was barely wide enough between boulders to slip through.

The trick was the footing: thousands of flat rocks, chips about the size of my foot that had flaked off the cliff face and lined the gutter. The slope was steep and those flakes were like mini-skateboards ready to skid downwards. Every step created a small rockslide.

My last step was a leap to the first large flat rock that I saw. From there, I stepped around the final boulder and saw the full height of the Falls of Lana. Two people were already there. I had passed them earlier in the hike: a couple in their low 30's, one a kinda heavy dude with long black hair and glasses – and barefoot! – and the other a slim, ordinary-looking woman in a tiny bikini (she had doffed the bright shirt).

I quietly announced myself, saying that I did not wish to intrude on them, but I wanted pics and vids of the falls. They were all "no problem" and started walking from the rock they had been seated on towards the pool in the middle level of the falls.

How the hell that dude walked across those rocks – and down that hill! – barefoot is beyond me. He must have feet of stone.

I snapped pics of the other sections of the falls, and eventually gave up and took a down-pan video that included them lounging in the pool.

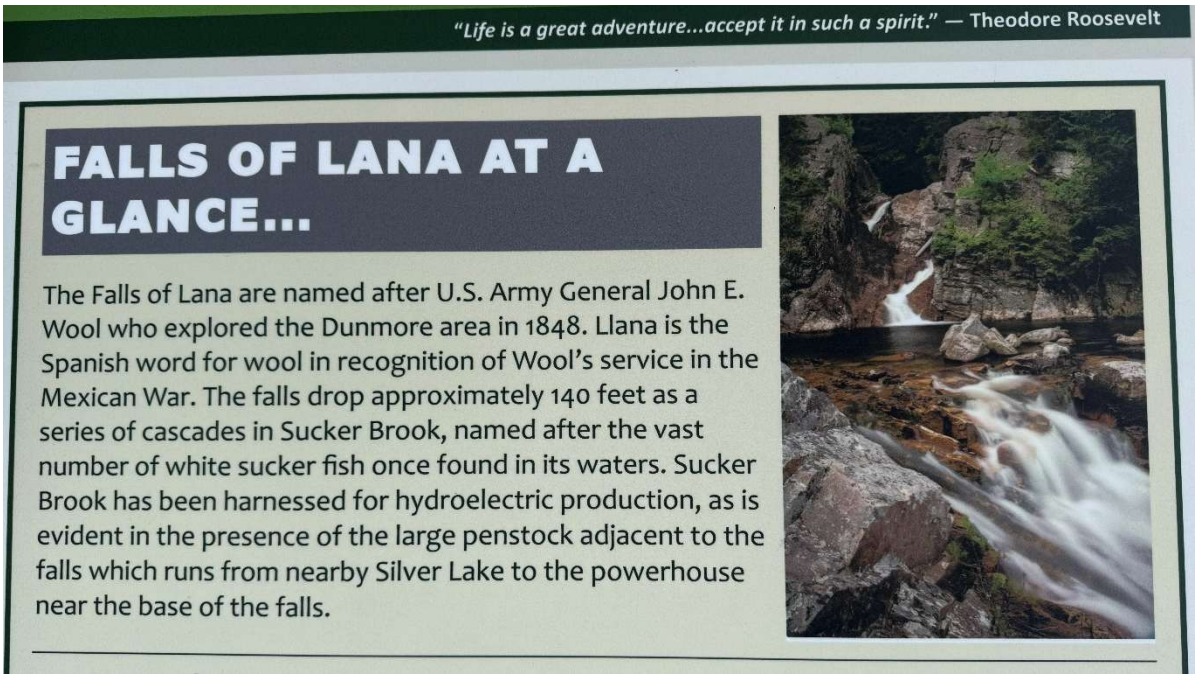
I zoned out to the water for a little while and was about to depart when they came out of the pool and back out of shot. I immediately turned the camera back on and retook the down-pan.

Climbing back up was a little bit easier. Up is always less treacherous than down. If you slip and fall going up, it's an "Ooops." If you slip and fall going down, it's an "AYYYYYYYYY!!"

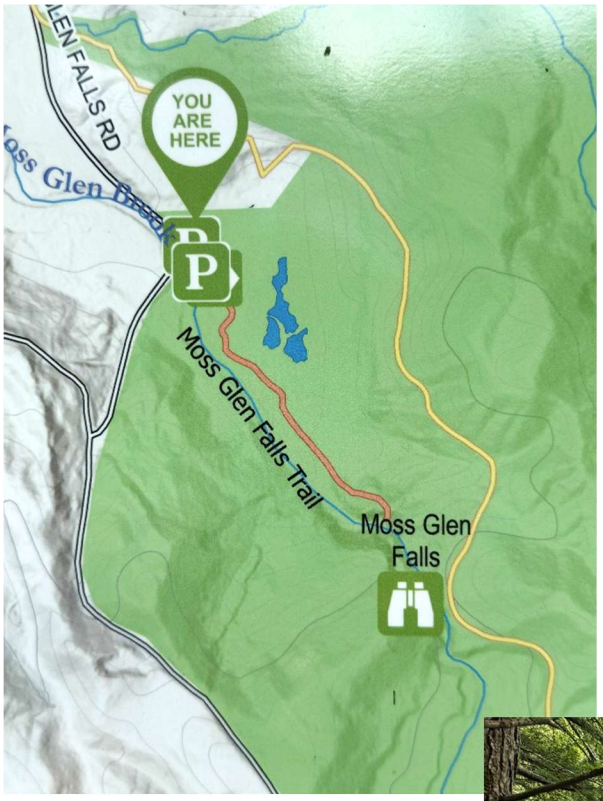
Halfway up, there was a quartet of Gen-Z hikers, complete with dual hiking poles. They were walking across the face of the hill. I have no idea where they came in from. They stopped at the same flat place I had seen earlier and were discussing which was "the way up." There was audible mention of a perceived (and non-existant) switchback.

I caught up to them, paused very briefly, rolled my eyes, then went into Spiderman mode. I blurted out, "Excuse me," and just took off past them and straight up the slope, using arms every bit as much as legs, moving across the steep ground like a huge quadraped insect. I reached the road, stood up, and walked casually off, giving them a glance back and a wink. They had not moved.

Now, before I wrote this, I did a Google search for trails to this waterfall. *All Trails* showed a map where several paths and trails all intertwined at about my descent point, but none went to the base of the falls. Another source, GPT-6 Luna (whatever that is), cleverly opined, *"Watch your footing near the falls, and stick to marked paths—the rocks and gorge can be hazardous."* No shit, Sherlock. Maybe if there were marked paths, I might have chosen some.



So, Falls of Lana – named after a guy named "Wool," you say? OK -- was a success, photographically at least. My next quest was a two-hour ride away.



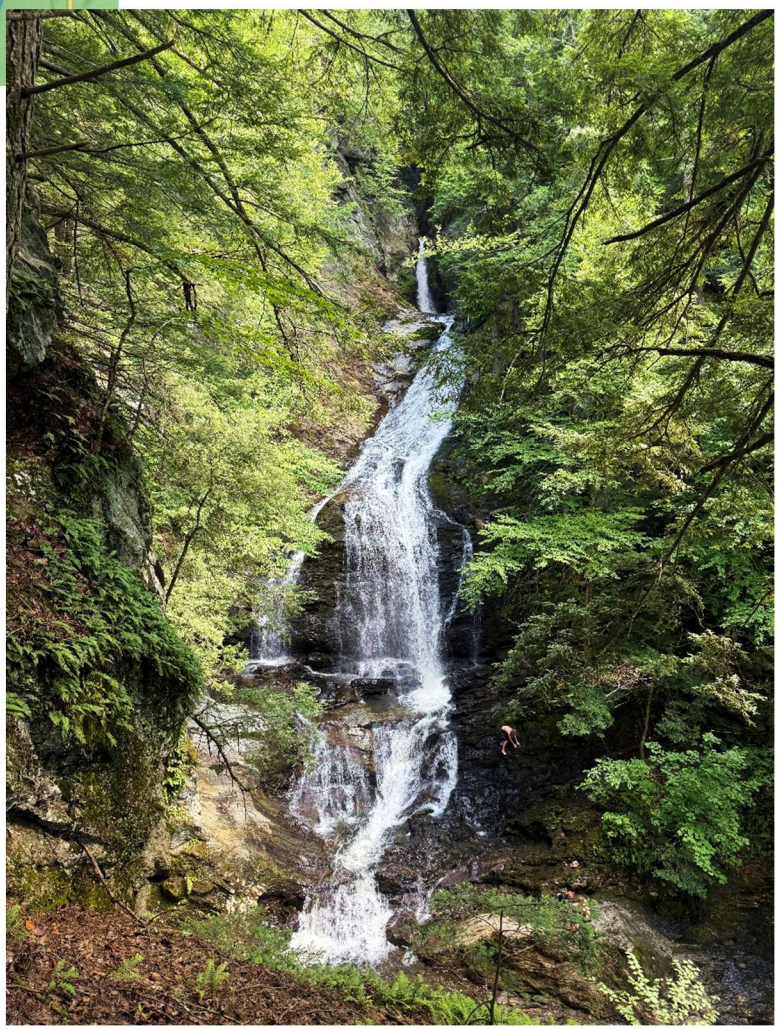
Moss Glen Falls, Stowe, VT



The Falls of Lana trail was one of my most difficult ever. The Moss Glen Falls trail was one of the easiest. In fact, the only thing easier would've been a roadside turnout and observation deck.

The trail to the base of the falls was flat. The terrain was a level (though serpentine) *wooden boardwalk*. The whole way. And it was all of a quarter-mile long.

From there, though, there was a choice of challenges. The prominent one was to climb a steep, 125-foot-high, stone stairway to an overlook platform. I did that one first.



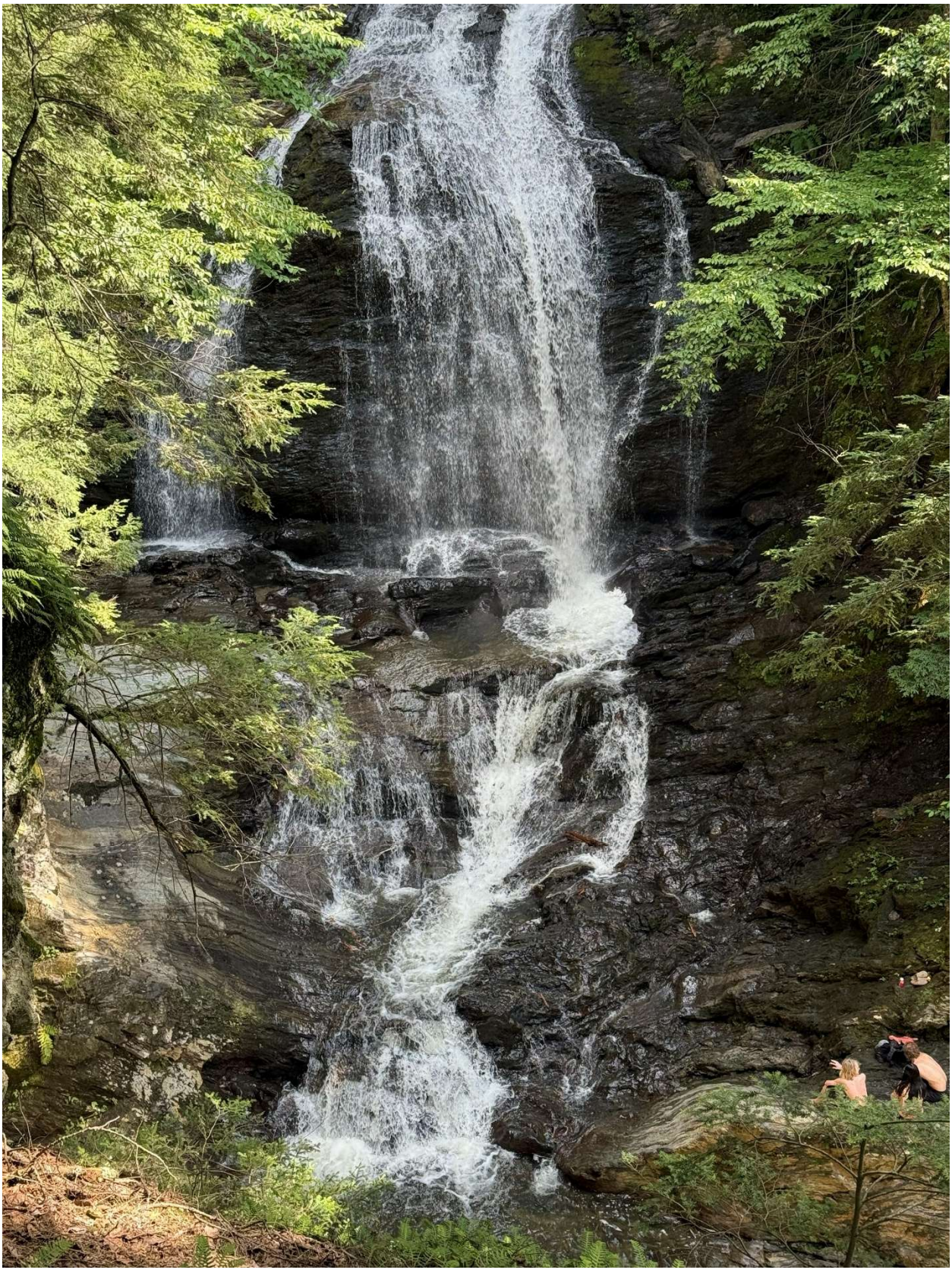
The platform was small and the falls was far away. The full height of it was visible across the valley that it poured into.

I thought the trail might continue on to get a good view of the upper falls, but there were official signs discouraging hiking further. I walked a little ways up, but quickly saw the folly of it and abandoned the quest.

With a "so I guess that was that" shrug, I descended back to level ground. Not far to my left, a dozen or so people -- some adults, some kids – were hanging out on the riverbank.



Upper Moss Glen Falls, zoomed from the overlook platform



Lower Moss Glen Falls, zoomed from the overlook platform

I decided to go have a look. From the vista, I had seen three teens clambering around on the big rocks next to the lower falls. I wondered if this was how they got to that much more interesting vantage point. I could not see the falls from here, but, sure enough, I saw the teenoes sitting right there, and that got me into my clambering mindset.

There were several big rocks to step on to get to the other bank, but I was going to have to go knee-deep for a couple of steps to get to those rocks, so, I figured, once my feet were already drenched, I might as well just stroll up the middle of the river. It was cold and refreshing and it never got more than thigh deep. And I got a few cool shots from there. The kids owned the rock, so I just stood in the river, snapping away.





That would've been a great place to fly Little Bird. There would have been a real risk of drowning him if I stumbled and tumbled into the water on my walk out here, but a slow ascent upwards, drifting closer in, then a view from above would have been epic.

But I had not brought either of my birds with me. LB Junior would've gotten the gig; he is the, ahem, "expendable" drone, the one I fly when when risks are high. I did seriously consider walking back to Maxx to fetch him, but I guess I just didn't want it enough.

When I did finally get back to my worthy steed, it crossed my mind to fly LBJ from the parking lot. The cascade was only a quarter-mile away and I've sent him to far more remote spots than that.

But the area was heavy on birds. Real birds. And we UAS (Unmanned Aircraft System) pilots are supposed to respect their presence. So, I tabled the motion.

I'm kicking myself about it now, though. Should've flown him.

Next time..