



Mule Deer, Waterton



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A Deer Encounter!

—brother Robert

OUR SEPTEMBER VISIT TO WATERTON NATIONAL PARK in Alberta, Canada surpassed all of our enthusiastic expectations. Many persons we spoke to insisted that this is the most beautiful of all the National Parks and the best park to visit. One reason it is so attractive may be that it has not been developed commercially. The people at Waterton have been working for years to keep it that way, with great success. It is a small village not much larger than Weston.

One of the most attractive elements at Waterton is the presence of deer. They are not there in herds or cages but mostly as individuals or occasionally there is a doe and two fawns. They roam freely throughout the small village a bit like the neighborhood dogs did in our town before leash laws were enacted. There are printed signs posted throughout the village asking visitors not to feed the deer or try to approach them. One reason for these signs is to keep the deer from becoming too familiar or even aggressive. They feel safe in this area where predators are not likely. As I tried to visualize an aggressive deer the term appeared to me to be an oxymoron until I happened to read a recent article in the NY Times. Apparently there is a large park in London where deer also are allowed to

run free. According to this article, there was a family having a picnic there when suddenly a large deer came out of the underbrush and charged at a man, goring him. Although this may have been a rare incident, I learned from this that deer can be aggressive.

After many days of hiking or driving to the most scenic areas and sometimes traveling by boat on the many lakes in Waterton Park, I finally had an urge to take a relaxing day by myself. Every day each brother made his own sandwiches in the morning for lunch so that we could be free for most of the day to try different trails. It was another beautiful sunny day as I walked leisurely into the town of Waterton. While I did a few errands, I hardly noticed one deer grazing on a lawn in the center of the village.

When I was ready for lunch, I found a nice bench right on the waterfront where an excursion boat was taking on passengers for a cruise. I sat down alone on the bench with Waterton village at my back, the towering almost perpendicular Rocky Mountains all around me, the beautiful lake in front of me, and opened my lunch bag. As I was finishing my sandwich, suddenly, without making a sound, a large brown head came from behind me and over my left shoulder and reached for my lunch. Startled, I jumped up, and of course the deer moved away looking for a more receptive visitor. It seems there are some visitors who don't read the signs, or if they do, they don't pay attention to them. I was not alarmed but rather thrilled to have this personal visitation, but not thrilled enough to give the deer my sandwich. ■