



# FOREVER WILD

Newsletter of Friends of Baxter State Park

Spring 2023

Vol. 22 No. 2

## Executive Director's Column

by Aaron Megquier

So much of our understanding of wilderness, and our experience of it, is wrapped up in the passage of time. Morning chill flows into noon-time warmth and then the cool of evening. We stop every ten minutes for snack breaks with young children, coaxing them down the trail with promises of chocolate. Then we blink and suddenly find that we can't keep up with them.

A day in the wilderness is a gift. A week is a revelation. Returning to the same wild places for thirty years, or a lifetime, is simply transformative.

Some things – but precious few – remain constant and familiar. It's hard to put the value of those things into words. One of the most eloquent attempts I've ever seen is carved into the Wassataquoik Lake island lean-to: "The Lake That Time Forgot." I found that graffiti after spending one of the best days of my life exploring the island with my eleven-year-old daughter. We spent a glowing October afternoon hopping rocks around the shoreline. We climbed trees, felt the warm sun on our faces, and leaped over the same rocks I had jumped when I was eleven. It was pure magic, and we both knew it – eternal and fleeting all at once. EB White's essay *Once More to the Lake* says it all better than I ever could.

Other elements of wilderness ebb and flow with the seasons or fade with the passing years. The traces of humanity tend to do the latter. The fields at New City, the moose painted on the rock at Russell Pond, and the remnants of Ralph Dolley's herb garden are rapidly becoming memories and stories that I tell my kids as we hike by.

To really learn to love and understand wilderness, we need to experience it over time. Our memories become part of the landscape. Our stories – both the ones we tell and the ones we hear from others – become part of the map.

*Continued on pg. 2*



Kevin Adam takes the helm as BSP Director after three years as a District Law Enforcement Ranger and 28 years in the Maine Warden Service. – Photo courtesy of Baxter State Park

## Baxter State Park Hires New Director

Courtesy of Baxter State Park Authority

The Baxter State Park Authority announced the appointment of Kevin Adam as Park Director. Adam graduated from Unity College with a Bachelor of Science in Conservation Law Enforcement. His career began with the Maine Warden Service, where he retired as a Lieutenant from Division D in Greenville, ME, after 28 years. With the Warden Service, he oversaw the Search and Rescue program for 11 years, the Maine Warden Service K-9 Team, and the Incident Management Team.

Kevin joined Baxter State Park in 2020 as a District Law Enforcement Ranger, where he has assisted in managing seven campgrounds and supervised three full-time enforcement rangers and 20 seasonal staff.

"Kevin's proven commitment to Governor Percival Baxter's vision will serve the Park well," said Maine Forest Service Director and Baxter State Park Authority Chair Patty Cormier. "Kevin has an exceptional understanding of the terms of the Baxter Trust and the Park's day-to-day workings. Kevin's experience, knowledge, leadership, and team-building skills will be advantageous as he works with BSP staff to bring the Park to a heightened level of excellence."

"It is a tremendous honor to be named Director of Baxter State Park. Honoring Percival Baxter's vision of a wilderness park comes with many challenges, especially in this modern age," said Kevin Adam. "I look forward to working with the Authority, the Park's dedicated and skilled employees, and with the Park's many

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PO Box 322

Belfast, ME 04915

[www.friendsofbaxter.org](http://www.friendsofbaxter.org)

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Friends of Baxter State Park strives to inspire passion for the Park's wild character in the spirit of Percival Baxter. We promote exemplary use, natural resource stewardship, and a healthy Katahdin region to ensure the Park forever remains a refuge.

## Director's Column Continued from pg.1

Exhilaration and adventure grow into a feeling of connection, then love, and finally responsibility as the wild places we care about become an inseparable part of who we are.

One of the most powerful things we can all do to keep Baxter State Park forever wild is to build our own personal relationships with the Park. I hope you are able to visit often, create memories, and trace your own web of stories over the landscape.

### Member Musings

*CLARITY (n): Clearness or lucidity as to perception or understanding; freedom from indistinctness or ambiguity. The state or quality of being clear or transparent to the eye.*

### Clarity

by Dave White

The clarity of Percival Baxter's vision for the "land" he would eventually acquire with the Katahdin massif becomes obvious to any visitor to the region who lets their senses be their guide and leaves their ego and other erroneous baggage behind. My use above of the word "land" is an oversimplification of what Baxter acquired. His gift holds several healthy ecosystems; a plethora of plants, animals, and insects, geological diversity, and, perhaps best of all, spiritual energy and mystery. All held "forever wild."

With nearly six decades of adventures in BSP, I consider myself fortunate and privileged to have so many recollections so firmly, so clearly, etched in my mind. Launch a canoe on Wassataquoik Lake and look over the gunwale into the water so clear you think it's a depth of perhaps a meter when it's well over a fathom. Greene Falls and Howe Brook are so cold and clear they are liquid ice— Greene, as it passes tiny sundews across the small gravelly delta before finding Wassataquoik; Howe Brook with its salamanders clinging to the rhyolite walls of the swimming holes before spilling into Upper South Branch.

Emerging from our lean-to at Russell Pond after an early summer thunderstorm, my family and I saw four deer wend their way through bright pink rhodora blossoms en route to the southeast corner of the pond. What could have been more beautiful? The rainbow that magically



Wassataquoik Stream - the wild places we care about become an inseparable part of who we are.

– Photo © Emad Rokni

bloomed and painted color over the little herd.

Other examples of clarity experienced in BSP: On the hike into Center Pond a few years ago, the pawprint of a large bear in black mud, all five toes and claw marks sharply defined. I half expected to look up and see a rump. The next morning I woke just before dawn, and in the light of a full moon low on the horizon, I saw the stark silhouette of a moose browsing just beyond the fire pit. On Matagamon, a loon rose from the depths so close to my kayak I could see his blood red eyes. The still afternoon air of Boody Brook site was redolent with the scent of fallen pine needles.

Look into the pellucid water of the first Sandy Stream Pond outlet and watch trout feeding, their shadows closely following across the sandy bottom. Elevation gain is not a prerequisite for a view, for clarity of vision.



Nature Rocks – a painting by Scott Rhoades.

*Member Musings is an edited collection of artwork, essays, poems, sketches and other miscellany submitted by our members, based on a prompt given in a previous edition of Forever Wild. The prompt for our fall edition is TRADITIONS. Please send submissions to us at [rachel@friendsofbaxter.org](mailto:rachel@friendsofbaxter.org) or PO Box 322, Belfast, ME 04915. Submissions for the fall edition should be received no later than September 1, 2023. Space is limited so it may not be possible to publish all submissions.*

## How to Contact Us:

Friends of Baxter State Park | PO Box 322 | Belfast, ME 04915  
 (207) 331-4164

Aaron Megquier,  
 Executive Director  
[director@friendsofbaxter.org](mailto:director@friendsofbaxter.org)

Rachel Spatz Bidstrup,  
 Membership Coordinator  
[rachel@friendsofbaxter.org](mailto:rachel@friendsofbaxter.org)

Mary Weitzman,  
 Deputy Director  
[mary@friendsofbaxter.org](mailto:mary@friendsofbaxter.org)

Cathy Brown,  
 Communications & Outreach  
[cathy@friendsofbaxter.org](mailto:cathy@friendsofbaxter.org)



## Baxter State Park Hires New Director Continued from pg.1

supporters to ensure the Park forever honors Baxter's vision and the Deeds of Trust."

The Baxter State Park Director is responsible for directing all activities of the Park consistent with the Deeds of Trust and the direction of the BSP Authority. Responsibilities include developing and implementing short- and long-range plans for park development, operations, and administration.

The Baxter State Park Authority is a three-person authority consisting of Maine Attorney General Aaron Frey, Maine Forest Service Director Patty Cormier, and Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Commissioner Judy Camuso.

**Editor's note:** *BSP Director Kevin Adam joined the Friends Board of Directors at its recent meeting on May 8, 2023 to answer questions and speak about his plans, priorities, and commitment to Baxter's forever wild vision.*

### Answer: Trivia Question in Winter Newsletter

In our last newsletter, we asked "What is the shortest route, by trail, from a roadside trailhead to a named summit in Baxter State Park?" For those who interpreted the question to mean a summit of Katahdin, the correct answer is the Abol Trail. For those who interpreted the question to mean any summit, the correct answer is the Trout Brook Mountain Trail. Congratulations to James Bustillo for answering correctly!



Maine's newest Game Wardens train in Baxter State Park.

– Photo © Maine Warden Service

## Maine Game Wardens Search and Rescue Training Group Summits Katahdin

Courtesy of Maine Warden Service

The 14-week Advanced Warden School provides new Maine Game Wardens with hands-on training in many disciplines including conservation law enforcement techniques, recreational vehicles, watercraft, and search and rescue.

The class recently completed a 3-day search and rescue training focused on remote wilderness area rescues involving mountainous terrain and cold weather. Topics included treatment and evacuation of hypothermia patients, cold weather gear, high angle rope rescue,

and technical rescue management.

On the last day of the training, the class completed a winter ascent of Mount Katahdin, giving them the opportunity to practice skills discussed in the training. On their way to the summit they encountered deep snow, drifts, steep icy rock slopes, and 50 mph winds.

The experience and skills acquired through this training will equip Maine's newest Game Wardens to safely and successfully respond to search and rescue incidents across the state.



## President's Column

by Josie Quintrell



Josie Quintrell (seen here) and Ellen Baum represented the Friends of Baxter State Park board in the annual BSP spring roadside litter patrol on a lovely April 29 morning. Their half-mile near the Togue Pond Gate enabled them to enjoy a few minutes right outside the entrance, along the Pond. – Photo © Ellen Baum

*Then it was spring; and in spring anything may happen. Absolutely anything. ~ E. E. Cummings*

This spring, we welcome Kevin Adam as the new Director of the Park. You'll read more about Kevin elsewhere in the newsletter. We look forward to working with him, as we have done with previous Park Directors, to understand the issues facing the Park and to seek effective solutions. Congratulations, Kevin!

A word of thanks to the Park's leadership team – Kevin, Nava Tabak, and Lori Morrison – and all the staff who kept the Park running smoothly and efficiently while the director search was underway. They took our reservations and answered questions, maintained trails and campsites, cleared winter blowdowns, protected Park ecosystems, made plans for renovations at Daicey Pond, participated in search and rescue training, and so much more. Many of us only see a small number of the staff who keep the Park running and all the work to protect the wildlife and our safety and enjoyment.

Over the last few years, Friends' Executive Director, Aaron Megquier and several Board members participated in the First Light Learning Journey. First Light brings together conservation organizations with Wabanaki representatives to strengthen conservation by including indigenous perspective and expertise. The Park is located on the ancestral homeland of the Penobscot Nation and remains important to Wabanaki people today. Maria Girouard's essay in our spring and summer 2021 newsletter is-

sues (which are easily found on the newly updated Friends website) provides an in-depth look at ancestral and current Wabanaki relationships with Katahdin. Friends is committed to continuing listening and learning, and this will be a focus of our work in the coming years.

Friends conducted a membership survey earlier this year to better understand the interests and opinions of our members. The results are still being compiled, but one response stood out: when asked why you joined Friends, the number one reason was your passion for the Park. It is a passion I share and one that grows with each visit, and why I am honored to serve as President of the Friends Board of Directors.

As I write this, I wonder if you are making plans to visit the Park this summer – to return to a favorite spot, explore new trails, or come for the first time. I certainly hope so.

**Editor's Note:** *Josie Quintrell was elected President of our Board of Directors on April 4, 2023. She is the seventh President in our 23-year history. Josie has a BA in Biology and a Master's in environmental planning. Her work experience has focused on coastal and ocean issues, first with the Maine Coastal Program and then as the Director of the Integrated Ocean Observing System Association (IOOS). She's been involved in the Harpswell Land Trust, Conservation Commission, and the Holbrook Community Foundation. While her professional life has focused on the coast, she is passionate about the Maine woods and preserving Governor Baxter's legacy. She has lived in Cundy's Harbor for over 30 years.*





## Update from Baxter State Park

**Editor's Note:** *The material in this article was drawn from an update written by BSP Natural Resources Director Nava Tabak, and presented to the Baxter State Park Authority at its recent meeting on March 24, 2023. It has been lightly edited for use in the newsletter.*

### Park Conditions and Visitation

Park rangers reported high visitation during February and March, with high occupancy of cabins and lean-tos, as well as commercial use (guided trips) and day use facilitated by snowmobiling to southern Katahdin trailheads. Stream crossings only froze intermittently, if at all, this winter. Ice on standing water bodies is about 1.5 to 2 ft deep currently, with shoreline ice beginning to destabilize. As of 3/17, total snow recorded at Chimney Pond for the season was 115.5".

The snow buildup on the tablelands has been notable this year. For comparison, total

of his itinerary. The helicopter identified his tracks off-trail, and BSP Rangers located him and escorted him out of the Park. Park Rangers have also assisted with stranded vehicles and a snowmobile in locations just outside of the Park.

For the second year, the Park hosted training for the Advanced Warden School on March 1-3. Search and Rescue teams and BSP staff demonstrated various rescue and first aid techniques. Wardens learned to use mountaineering equipment during a climb to summit Katahdin. (See article on page 3).

### Trails

A storm with high winds in late December caused widespread blowdowns in the southwestern part of the Park. Staff worked intensively to re-open access to the Tote Road and winter trails to Kidney Pond, Daicey Pond, and Nesowadnehunk campgrounds.

Staff have been preparing for the trail work season by hauling materials to project sites, including the Freezeout and Katahdin Lake Trails. This work is ongoing, with additional plans to deliver materials to the Chimney Pond Trail. Staff have crafted a notable

number of replacements for trail signs over the winter.

Trail Supervisor Brennan Turner has formed a collaboration with professors with the University of Maine Civil Engineering Department. We hope that students will be visiting the Park this year to begin creating bridge designs for a replacement bridge over Nesowadnehunk Stream near the Daicey Pond trailhead. Students

would submit final designs to the Park in spring 2024, and staff anticipate following up with professional contractors for a final design and construction.

### Appalachian Trail (AT)

Regional managers and landowners of the Appalachian Trail met recently at Park headquarters to plan for the upcoming season. The Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) reported that they have so far been unable to secure funding for the Golden Road Ridgerunner position in 2023. In past years,

the Park and other partners collaborated closely with these ridgerunners, and the ridgerunner covered the Park during the Park AT Ranger's days off. Their work has made noticeable differences in hiker preparedness for their time in the Park, and in reducing rescue needs and generally improving conditions in the 100-Mile Wilderness. With partners (including Baxter Park, Maine Forest Service, and Maine Warden Service) emphasizing the importance of this ridgerunner position, MATC will continue to explore avenues for funding.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy provides an optional registration for thru-hikers, and reports that the number of registrants is currently lower than last year. However, locally, two businesses are offering new supported hiking services and trips (e.g., 100-Mile Wilderness slack-pack trips), and they note that such trips are in high demand. Taken together, we currently estimate AT thru-hiker numbers to be similar to last year's (around 2,900), and staff will monitor the number of AT thru-hikers in the Park throughout the season.

### Research

The Research Committee met on 3/3/2023 and reviewed and approved one new application for research in the Park. The Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife will include multiple locations in the Park in a statewide wildlife camera study that will inform wildlife population management (with a focus on fisher and marten). This project is an implementation of previous research, also including the Park, which provided valuable information specific to the Park.

Two previously-approved research projects—one on glacial geology and one on forest regeneration in the SFMA tornado area—will continue to collect data in the Park this year. This winter three staff completed priority surveys for the Maine Winter Bird Atlas (which is in its final of 5 years of surveys), and IF&W staff have been completing creel surveys on waterbodies at the north end of the Park.

### SFMA

The contracted crew has completed cutting for the winter harvest in the north end of the SFMA. Loading of logs and trucking to yards and mills is ongoing (and recently transitioned to night hauling due to warm daytime temperatures). Primary products in this winter harvest are spruce and pine sawlogs, fir studwood, hardwood pulp, and both hardwood and softwood firewood for use in the Park. There is currently a strong market for wood products. Staff are planning for a summer harvest in the south end of the SFMA.



Comparison of snow conditions on Baxter Peak (top) and the Tableland (bottom) between the winters of 2022 and 2023. The photos on the left were taken on March 5, 2022, and the photos on the right were taken on March 11, 2023.

— Photos © Baylee Brodeur, BSP Staff

snow measured at Chimney Pond was 111" this day last year. These photos from early March illustrate how the difference in snow retention on the tablelands between this year and last year far exceeds the 4.5" difference in total snowfall on this date (and the ca. 15" difference in snow depth measured at Chimney Pond in early March of each year).

### Search and Rescue

In mid-February, staff collaborated with a Maine Forest Service helicopter to locate a solo hiker who had not arrived at the des-

# Warm Winter Weekend 2023

by Richard Klain

This year we finally were able to complete and re-establish Warm Winter Weekend (WWW). For many years prior to Covid this was one of Friends' most enjoyable events. Our numbers were smaller this year than years past but it was a spirited and amicable group.

Our activities were limited to snowshoeing and skiing this year. The weather did cooperate for both of those sports. However because of the weather earlier in the week the road to Abol Bridge was too rough for anything but a four-wheel drive, high clearance vehicle. As my Tesla truck has not yet been delivered ( ;- ) and no one wanted to test their vehicle in such adverse conditions, none of us made it into the Park this year. We skied the ever-expanding trails of the New England Outdoor Center (soon to be called Ktaadn Resorts) and some of us made the journey to the Penobscot Trails in Grindstone. The view across Katahdin Lake from NEOC was wonderful throughout our stay. Several of us skied on the lake, enjoying that magnificent view of Katahdin.

The food which saw contributions from everyone was terrific. Homemade seafood chowder, vegetarian chili, and a vegetarian casserole rounded out Thursday evening's offerings with too many hors d'oeuvres, salads, and desserts to count. Friday evening featured Anne Huntington's famous turkey pot pies with all the fixings and a vegetarian lentil dish. Saturday morning Roger Zimmerman made his famous silver dollar sourdough pancakes for everyone. He got this sourdough starter in the last century. It's just improved with age. That night we returned to the River Drivers Restaurant to order off the menu, where there were just too many choices.

Thursday night Dick Klain and Roger "Zimo" Zimmerman shared comments and a slide program about Lynne and Zimo's last winter trip to Yellowstone as guides for an AMC group. That was their 30th trip in the winter. Our Baxter State Park speakers this year were Nava Tabak on Friday night and Keith Wehmeyer on Saturday night. Nava is the Natural Resources Director of all things to do with nature in the Park. Keith is the Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor. Two very different perspectives of great significance to the mission of BSP. Both talks were highly informative and very entertaining. We certainly have a great staff in the Park.

Jill Ippoliti led a trip back into Millinocket to explore the historical society museum. It was great to have our own Cathy Brown as one of the volunteers. Everyone who went really enjoyed their time in the "Magic City."

Though our numbers were small this year compared to pre-Covid years, we more than made up for it in enthusiasm and spirit. We were all glad to make new friends and re-establish relationships after the long three-year drought. Planning has already begun for next year! We look forward to more people joining us in March of 2024!



## Baxter State Park Trivia

What is a tarn? Name five that exist in Baxter State Park.  
Please send trivia answers to Rachel Spatz Bidstrup at [rachel@friendsofbaxter.org](mailto:rachel@friendsofbaxter.org).

Participants in Warm Winter Weekend 2023 enjoyed gathering for great food, company, and adventures after a three-year hiatus due to Covid. They also enjoyed a visit to the Millinocket Historical Society.

– Photos © Richard Klain and Millinocket Historical Society



## Meet Our Newest Board Member!



– Photo courtesy of Liz Burroughs

Friends would like to extend a very warm welcome to Liz Burroughs, who was elected to our Board of Directors on April 4, 2023. Liz grew up in Bowdoinham and has been exploring Baxter State Park since she was small. Her first career was in forestland conservation at the Forest Society of Maine in Bangor. She spent ten years monitoring conservation easements on large tracts of working forestland, mostly in Maine's North Woods. After getting math and science teaching certifications from the University of Maine in 2012, she spent several years teaching in Maine public high schools. Her current work at the Chewonki Foundation combines her interests in conservation, forest ecology, and teaching. She has taught math to high school students at Chewonki's Maine Coast Semester since 2016. Her role also includes advising and leading backcountry hiking and canoeing expeditions. In addition to being passionate about the outdoors, she is an obsessive knitter.

### Annual Meeting held on April 4

Friends of Baxter State Park held its 2023 Annual Meeting on Tuesday, April 4 via Zoom. Retiring President Ellen Baum called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Minutes of the last meeting were approved. Our incoming President, Josie Quintrell, spoke about Ellen's commitment to Friends and her love of the Park. She expressed gratitude that Ellen will remain a board member going forward. Ellen was presented with a framed photograph of Katahdin by Jym St. Pierre and a gift certificate to New England Outdoor Center.

Select committee reports were provided by Nate Tefft, Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee, Ryan Linehan, Youth Programs Chair, and Jerry Bley on behalf of the Policy Committee. Josie Quintrell, Vice President and Nominating Chair, provided the Nominating Committee report and presided over the election of directors. Votes were conducted via live polling during the meeting. Park updates were presented by Nava Tabak, Natural Resources Director of Baxter State Park, followed by a lively question and answer session with members.

### 120 Years Since Baxter's First Visit to Katahdin

by Cathy Brown

Percival Baxter's first trip to the Katahdin region was a 1903 fishing expedition with his father, six-time Portland mayor James Phinney Baxter. He was 27 years old and immediately taken with the remote wilderness. They journeyed from Portland to Millinocket, a boom town only three years old, built up around the new Great Northern Paper Company's mill and woodlands operations. They went far into the woods beyond remote Millinocket to fish the waters near Katahdin.

Katahdin never left Percival Baxter's thoughts. Later, as a forty-something Maine legislator, Baxter again visited, this time hiking to the summit. He "stood spellbound upon the top of Mount Katahdin and looked across the great forest areas of northeastern Maine." The view looks much the same today.

Katahdin remains unchanged, a wild but safe place for the many species of animals, birds, insects, and plant life that call it home, thanks to his efforts. It is a respite for visitors from the busy cities and towns they inhabit. Baxter later commented, "Standing there all alone, I was carried away by the prospect before me. To me, Maine seemed to be nothing but forests."

Baxter's professional life would change drastically four months after this second visit. He was the recently elected president of the Maine state senate when Maine Governor Frederick Hale Parkhurst died just a few weeks into his term as governor, and Baxter became the Maine Governor.

In a speech that year, Baxter said:

"Maine is famous for its twenty-five hundred miles of seacoast, with its countless islands; for its myriad lakes and ponds; and for its forests and rivers. But Mount Katahdin Park will be the state's crowning glory, a worthy memorial to commemorate the end of the first and the beginning of the second century of Maine's statehood. This park will prove a blessing to those who follow us, and they will see that we built for them more wisely than our forefathers did for us."

He spent decades of his life purchasing land that he would later gift to the people of Maine. After the stock market crash in 1920, Baxter purchased 6,000 acres from the Great Northern Paper Company for \$25,000. He later deeded the land to the State of Maine with the stipulation that it "shall forever be used for public park and recreational purposes, shall be forever left in the natural wild state, shall forever be kept as a sanctuary for wild beasts and birds, that no road or ways for motor vehicles shall hereafter ever be constructed thereon or therein."

"There is no doubt in my mind that the 1920 climb was one of the most important moments in his life," says John Neff, author of the definitive history of the region, *Katahdin: An Historic Journey*. Neff, also the first President of Friends of Baxter State Park, stated, "It set the course for his lifelong and persistent commitment to preserving not only the mountain but also the land around it. His crossing of the Knife Edge touched him deeply that day and also those who were with him." The editor of the Lewiston Journal, who was documenting the trip, wrote that some of the men needed handholding as they crossed Katahdin's famously narrow ridge. "Others were on their hands and knees," he went on, "a strange picture that I will never forget."

We can identify. Crossing the Knife Edge today is the same due to the vision, generosity, and hard work of Percival Baxter.



1910 photo courtesy of the Millinocket Historical Society. 7



**Friends of Baxter State Park**

**PO Box 322**

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*Thank you!*

**Happy Spring!**

