



FOREVER WILD



Newsletter of Friends of Baxter State Park Summer 2019 Vol. 18 No. 3

Executive Director's Column

by Aaron Megquier

I spend a lot of time talking with people about Baxter State Park. I chat with campers and give rides to thru-hikers hitchhiking into town. I meet with Rangers and Park leadership staff. I help mentor thirty participants in our youth programs every summer. I get phone calls from Park visitors wanting to talk about their favorite places, or the best campgrounds for stargazing, or where to hike during their upcoming family reunion. People send me their treasured photographs from the 1930s and the stories that go with them. Every story is unique, but they are all threads of the same story. Our new President, Ellen Baum, shares some powerful ones in her column on page four.

Earlier this summer, I stood in the shadow of Katahdin and listened to a Penobscot elder praying and singing to the mountain in his own language. Someone recently told me during a phone call, without further explanation, that Baxter State Park had saved her life. A participant in our Baxter Youth Conservation Corps told me that after working in the Park this summer, she had decided to pursue a career in parks and outdoor recreation. Countless people told me, as they always do, that spending time in Baxter State Park helps them feel more centered and grounded in the modern world.

In listening to all these stories, from thousands of people every year, I have learned this: never underestimate the transformative power of wilderness.

People often struggle to describe what they've experienced in wilderness, and how exactly it changed them. When you've just summited Katahdin at sunrise, or come face to face with a bull moose, or hiked up through the clouds into brilliant sunshine with an undercast below you, words are rarely enough. How do you describe the feeling of waking up to birdsong instead of traffic? Something ancient and essential just clicks back into place – something that we didn't even realize was missing until it returns.

If a few days in the wilderness can restore our

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Peter Bissell (left) and Noah Bissell (right) are the founders of Bissell Brothers Brewing Company and sons of Jensen Bissell, the recently retired Director of Baxter State Park. Bissell Brothers Brewing recently announced that it would be sponsoring Friends through sales of its Preserve and Protect beer.
—Photo courtesy of Bissell Brothers Brewing

Bissell Brothers is helping to 'Preserve and Protect' Baxter State Park

by Aaron Megquier

Bissell Brothers Brewing is now donating a percentage of sales of its Preserve and Protect beer to support Baxter State Park. The Portland-based brewery has generously pledged to sponsor Friends with at least \$5,000 annually.

Preserve and Protect is an India pale ale featuring Simcoe, Citra, and Denali hops that was brewed as a tribute to Jensen Bissell, who served as director of Baxter State Park from 2006 – 2018. The can features a drawing of Jensen Bissell and Percival Baxter standing together in profile with Katahdin in the background. Jensen Bissell is the father of Peter and Noah Bissell, the founders of Bissell Brothers Brewing. He is actively involved in the operation of the brewery's Three Rivers location in Milo.

Thanks to his father, Noah Bissell made a connection with Baxter State Park at a young age. "The magic contained in the park was apparent to me even when my dad started to take me as a young boy. I think that same magic helped my wife say 'yes' when I proposed to her on Katahdin's Cathedral Trail."

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Friends of Baxter State Park is a 501(c)(3) organization working to preserve, support, and enhance the wilderness character of Baxter State Park in the spirit of its founder, Percival P. Baxter.

Executive Director's Column

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balance, and a few weeks in the wilderness can change the course of a life, what is the collective impact of Baxter State Park over the decades, and over so many human generations? Again, words simply fall short. I'm just grateful for the privilege of spending my days making sure that these experiences are there for generations to come.

Update: Baxter Youth Conservation Corps



The Baxter Youth Conservation Corps, now in its third year, recently completed another outstanding season of work in the Katahdin region. Friends expanded the program by 50% this year, to six weeks in total. Thanks to a new partnership with Friends of Katahdin Woods and Waters, one of those weeks was spent in Katahdin Woods & Waters National Monument, in addition to five weeks in Baxter State Park. Our twenty crew members – all local high school students – completed nearly 2,800 hours of trail work. They built about 250 feet of new bog bridging near Kidney Pond, completed 12 miles of corridor definition, installed 90 step stones, including 31 on the Hunt Trail, and demolished and rebuilt an entire wooden vehicle bridge. Please stay tuned for more details in the next newsletter issue.

– Photo (c) Aaron Megquier

???

Baxter State Park Trivia

What year was the Maine Wilderness Leadership Program first offered? (Bonus question: how many alumni have completed the program since its inception?) Please send trivia answers to Sarah Holland at admin@friendsofbaxter.org

Membership Matters

by Sarah Holland, Administrative Manager

At just past the half-way point in the year, we are pleased to report that we are on track to meet our annual membership goals. We hope we can count on continued renewals throughout the year and welcome new members to support our full slate of programs.



Once in a while we like to take stock of who our members are, where they are from, and how long they have been members. We are always impressed by the geographical spread, the continued dedication, and the generosity of our membership. From Student Members, to Family Members who form our bread and butter, to higher levels all the way up to Katahdin, we appreciate everyone's contributions and participation.

Business membership is another great way to join. Your business will get mentioned in this newsletter and you can tell your customers that your business supports an organization dedicated to preserving the wilderness of Baxter State Park.

As of this writing we have 1,140 active members.

BY LOCATION:

From Maine: 746

From other New England States: 206

USA outside of New England: 194 (includes 1 from Puerto Rico)

International: 6 (Canada: 2, Germany: 2, Italy: 1, Ireland: 1)

BY YEARS:

New members in 2019: 168

Members for less than 5 years: 407

Members for 5 to 10 years: 249

Members for 10 to 19 years: 283

Founding members (19 years or more): 48

AGE RANGE:

Youngest member: 3 years old

Oldest members: Over 90

Thank you for your continued membership and support - we can't do it without you!

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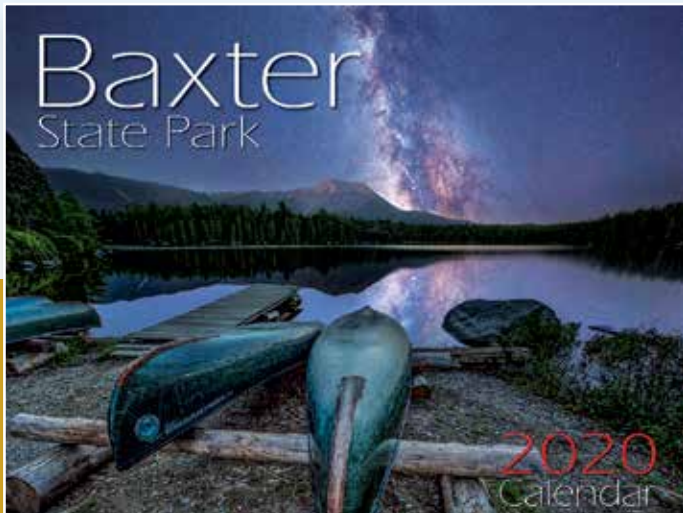


Brewed in honor of Jensen Bissell's retirement, Preserve and Protect is now helping to do just that for Baxter State Park.

– Photo courtesy of Bissell Brothers Brewing

For Peter Bissell, helping to steward the park is just the right thing to do: "Baxter State Park has existed on a foundation of generosity and love of Maine's natural resources from the beginning, starting with Percival Proctor Baxter's gift, and on down through the stewards tasked with keeping that gift going in perpetuity, our father having recently completed his life's work in this role. It is because of these things that we must do our part to ensure Baxter State Park's continued success as a natural sanctuary and gem of the state of Maine."

Please join us at the brewery from 5:00 - 7:00pm on Friday, September 27 to celebrate the next release of Preserve and Protect. Bissell Brothers Brewing Company is located at 4 Thompsons Point, Suite 108 in Portland, Maine.



– Calendar cover photo © Rupesh Kurvankattil

2020 Baxter State Park Calendars for sale

Our 2020 Baxter State Park calendar is hot off the presses and available for purchase! The cost is now \$17 including tax and shipping (our shipping costs have gone up substantially). You can order online at www.friendsofbaxter.org, mail a check to PO Box 322, Belfast, ME 04915, or call (207) 505-5779. All proceeds benefit Friends of Baxter State Park.

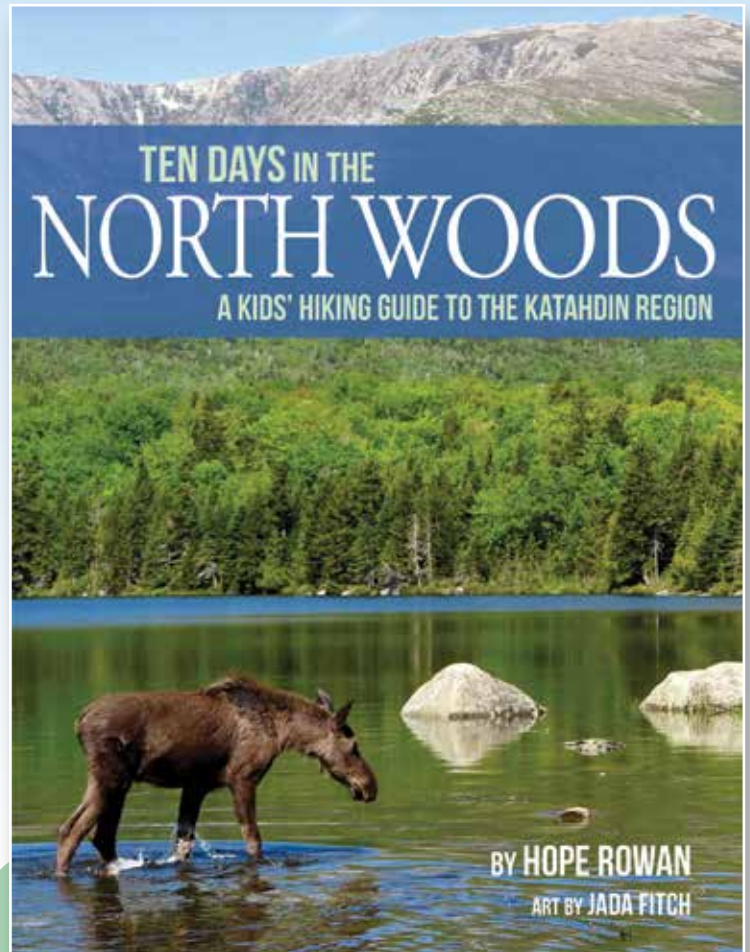
Book Review

Ten Days in the North Woods: A Kids Hiking Guide to the Katahdin Region

Book by Hope Rowan

Review by Aaron Megquier

There's a wonderful new book available for those who are trying to encourage the next generation to spend time outside in Baxter State Park. Recently published by Islandport Press, *Ten Days in the North Woods: A Kids Hiking Guide to the Katahdin Region* was written by mapmaker and author Hope Rowan of Southwest Harbor, Maine. Written from the perspective of a fictional thirteen year-old girl named Hattie, this is a hiking guide structured as a journal: one hike per day over the course of a ten-day trip for Hattie and her family. Six of those ten hikes are in Baxter State Park, and the remainder are in the Debsconeag Lakes Wilderness Area and Katahdin Woods & Waters National Monument. The guide features excellent and kid-friendly trail maps, photographs, field notes on plants and wildlife, and lovely drawings by Jada Fitch. It's all very engaging and well done. Friends is proud to offer *Ten Days in the North Woods* for sale to our members at www.friendsofbaxter.org/store.



– Cover image courtesy of Islandport Press

Answer: Trivia Question in Spring Newsletter

In our spring newsletter, we asked "Which well-known Maine nature photographer first published the annual Baxter State Park calendar that is now published by Friends?" The answer is Bill Silliker. Congratulations to Jym St. Pierre, who answered correctly.



– Photo © Jym St. Pierre

President's Column

by Ellen Baum

Everyone connected with Friends has great stories about their roots in Baxter State Park. They are stories of challenges, adventures, camaraderie, spiritual moments; they are heartbreakingly poignant, blister-makingly painful, bone-chillingly wet and cold, achingly joyous, breathtakingly beautiful. They are quiet; they are roaring, buzzing, slapping, snoring, slipping, sweating, swearing, freezing. I love them all.

In the more than 40 years that the Park has been part of my life, I have built up a large cache of my own stories and experiences, so stepping into the Presidency of Friends of Baxter State Park almost seemed like a smooth progression.

In 1986, I began coming to the Park on a winter cross country trip with a wonderful group of women. Last February, 33 years later, having hardly missed a year (although not always in Baxter), many of the original group spent four nights on the west side of the Park. We're not as young and strong – more joints need tending – but we are as curious. We follow animal trails, explore both familiar and new terrains, watch the moon and sun rise – preferably over Katahdin, but we're not that fussy. We love this trip and this time together.

In winter 2008, we went to Katahdin Lake in what would be the last trip for Kay, one of our original organizers. Already weakened from her cancer and treatments, Kay was resolute, and so were those of us who joined her. First, we slowly skied with her. Later in the day, some of us broke ahead to arrange for what turned out to be an unnecessary snowmobile finish: Kay skied into the camps, just as a rose-colored sunset was sifting through lightly falling snow. She was ecstatic – and exhausted. When she got home a few days later, she declined fast and didn't make it through the year. She chose Baxter – and Katahdin Lake – for her last nature moment. It was an unforgettable gift for all of us who shared that time with her; I think about it and her often.

One of the first issues on my watch as your President was a bill this legislative session to allow seaplanes to land on Katahdin Lake. I had a front row seat and just watched – in awe and pride – as FBSP

mobilized to oppose the bill and to save Katahdin Lake, again. Like a well-oiled machine, the full worth of this Friends organization unfolded. No base was left untended. Founders and other current and past board members brought a deep institutional memory of what was and was not in the original Katahdin Lake deal, sometimes dragging out their own notes from 13 years ago and nudging each other to remember details and locate supporting evidence. The Friends Policy committee considered the best message for our so capable director, Aaron Megquier, to craft and deliver to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, highlighted by: “the Legislature was instrumental in accepting the gift of Baxter State Park, but it has no role in Park management. That responsibility rests solely with the Baxter State Park Authority.” Friends members responded to an alert by contacting Legislators, submitting comment, and testifying. Many, including Aaron, waited for more than nine hours to deliver testimony. And so importantly, every member of the committee received Howard Whitcomb's *Governor Baxter's Magnificent Obsession* – the third time that copies have been distributed to the entire Committee membership.

A week after the hearing, during the work session, with no discussion, debate or questions asked, the committee voted unanimously, “Ought Not to Pass.” It was a well-orchestrated victory. Recognizing the institutional memory role that Friends carries and how that memory likely contributed to this success, together with other parties, we are collecting the testimony and submissions that went into opposing seaplanes and are archiving them for future use.

As for me, there will be many times as your President that I will be playing a very active role. What a luxury, though, to also be a bystander and absorb just how deep and committed Friends are, how well they know the Park, why it's here, and what's at stake. I am looking forward to my time with all of you and continuing to keep filling my Baxter cache.



Summer took a slow start – no one we’ve talked to remembers the snow holding on as long as it did. Last year I watched from the West Branch of the Penobscot as the July 4th heat melted the last patch of southeast facing snow from the mountain – this year that patch persisted well into mid-July. Of course the delay also caused a pile up of unhatched black flies and mosquitos – as the reddened topography on the faces of many of our June visitors will attest. No one here can remember a more intense bug season either.

Something that contributed to the later opening of some trails was the appropriately vigilant resource protection ethic of trails maven, Liz Thibault. Liz is taking the lead on bringing a level of professionalism and expertise to the trails department, and her vision is strong and farsighted. Look for more durable footpaths that allow access but don’t allow as much rutting, erosion, and material loss as the fall-line trails we’ve struggled to maintain since before the Park was the Park. Her efforts will be supported by the generosity of Frank Trautmann and the contributions of the Baxter Park Wilderness Fund to the Trautmann Trail Initiative, which seeks to relocate fall line trails on better lines to protect the fragile soils of these great mountains.

Speaking of great mountains, the Park contains what the Wabanaki call Ktaadn, or “greatest mountain.” Why do we say “Mount Katahdin”? When we do we are effectively saying, “mount greatest mountain,” as Christopher O’Neill recently pointed out in his Portland Press Herald op-ed (7/1). Not only is this unnecessarily redundant, it demonstrates an ignorance and implicit lack of respect for the people who first lived near and revered this greatest mountain. I encourage you all to change your own lexicon to reflect this respect and help others to understand this error as well.

On this greatest of mountains, the late spring did not delay search and rescue ac-



Maine’s greatest mountain illuminated by the setting sun.

– Photo © Donna Lawson



Liz Thibault, BSP Trail Supervisor, planned and oversaw the replacement of this bog bridge carried out by members of the 2019 Baxter Youth Conservation Corps.

– Photo © Aaron Megquier

tivity. On the first weekend of nice weather, two folks lost their way below the knife edge and a middle aged gentleman had a fall which caused him to spend the next few nights above treeline. Both parties were safely assisted off the mountain, the latter by way of helicopter short-haul to Caribou Pit. This serves as an early reminder of the dangers of overestimating your abilities, underestimating the ruggedness of the Katahdin massif, and just generally being prepared enough to self-rescue in large, remote wilderness,

where your challenges and the consequences of failing to meet them are your own.

I hope to see you out there, with your ample water, your headlamp, your protection from the elements should things turn, and your sense of challenge and personal responsibility in this wilderness Park. Our “greatest mountain” deserves our greatest respect, in name and deed.

Sleuthing about Baxter – Anniversaries

By Howard R. Whitcomb, FBSP Historian

June 12, 2019, marked the 50th anniversary of Governor Percival P. Baxter's death in 1969. Two upcoming anniversaries associated with Baxter's "magnificent obsession" to create a park at Katahdin will provide additional opportunities to honor Baxter's generosity. Future issues of *Forever Wild* will feature accounts of Baxter's August 1920 trek to Katahdin's summit, as well as his legislative proposal the following January, for a Mount Katahdin State Park to commemorate the centennial of Maine's 1820 Statehood.

Although it wouldn't be until March of 1931, that Baxter gifted the first parcel of land consisting of 5,960 acres to the State, these two upcoming anniversaries provide opportunities to celebrate this twentieth-century visionary's earliest efforts to establish a wilderness park at Katahdin.

Birds of Baxter

By Jill Ippoliti

Bob Duchesne has been birding in Baxter State Park for over 30 years and guiding other birders for 15. In June, clients from New Mexico, Florida, Arkansas and Massachusetts were successful in adding sought after boreal species to their life lists. Four of the big five – Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, Spruce Grouse and Canada Jay – were all there to be heard and seen! The fifth and rarest, the American Three-toed Woodpecker, did not appear on this particular trip.

People who avidly fish may be evasive about revealing exactly where they caught that trout. In contrast, birders are usually generous or even effusive in sharing their sightings. In his book *Maine Birding Trail* (Down East Press, 2009), Bob describes in detail the habitat and species found along the Park Tote Road and in the campgrounds. The four miles north of Nesowadnehunk Field Campground are most likely to yield boreal species. Likely places for individual species of warblers, vireos, flycatchers and crossbills are provided as well as the species likely to be heard or seen as one gains elevation and enters alpine habitat. Bicknell's Thrush and American Pipit breed on Katahdin. The American Pipit is on Maine's Endangered Species List. Bicknell's Thrush is listed as a Species of Special Concern in Maine.

The Baxter State Park Bird List can be downloaded from the Park's website. This list was most recently revised in 2004 and includes over 180 bird species. The Maine Bird Atlas, a statewide citizen science project begun in 2018 and continuing through 2022, is likely to be the basis for the next Baxter list update. Adrienne Leppold, Ph.D. with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is the Project Director. Glenn Mittelhauser, lead author of *The Plants of Baxter State Park* (University of Maine Press, 2016) is the Project Coordinator. First year results and information on participation in the Maine Bird Atlas can be found at:

<https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/maine-bird-atlas/index.html>.

Bob Duchesne expects all the species on the 2004 list still occur in Baxter though numbers will vary. With the exception of the Scientific Forest Management Area, timber harvesting does not occur in the Park. Natural events, such as the fire of 1977 and the tornado of 2013, will continue to provide openings and habitat for species preferring younger forests and open areas. Bob observes that the numbers of Evening Grosbeaks and Cape May and Tennessee Warblers have declined since the peak of the last major spruce budworm outbreak. One change of note along the Downeast coast is the infrequent sightings of Boreal Chickadees in Lubec and Stonington. Fortunately this boreal species is still a regular in Baxter State Park.



A brown cap, cinnamon-colored flanks, and a small white cheek patch help to distinguish the Boreal Chickadee from its southern relatives.

– Photo courtesy of Bob Duchesne



A male spruce grouse showing off breeding coloration in his natural habitat.

– Photo courtesy of Bob Duchesne



The Canada Jay is famously bold around humans who spend time in its northern forest habitat. Officially known as the Gray Jay until 2018, this boreal species was often called a "gorby" or "gorby-bird" by old-time Maine woodsmen.

– Photo courtesy of Bob Duchesne

Looking Back

By John Neff, Author of *Katahdin: An Historic Journey*

A Beach in Baxter Park?

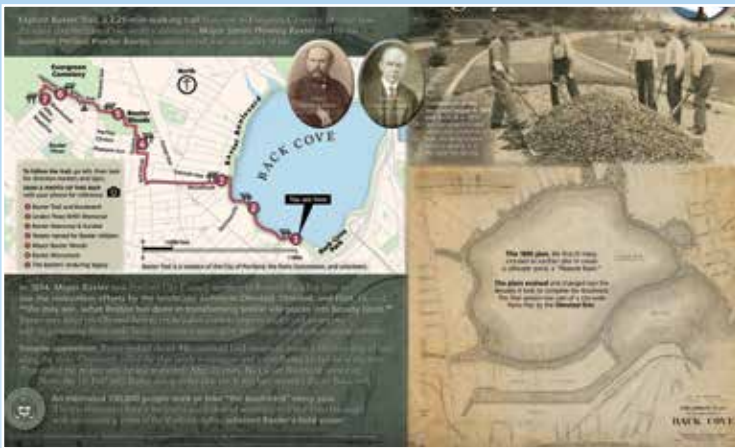
Recently, a frequent and enthusiastic visitor to Baxter State Park posed a question that caused me to reach deep into my memory bank for a satisfactory answer. “Are there any sandy beaches for good swimming in the park?” my friend asked. “HmMMM, I responded,” as I earnestly searched my mental storehouse.

Kidney Pond? No. Marginal, except for that spot off Colt Point.
Daicey Pond? None that I know of – mostly muddy there.
Sandy Stream Pond? Good moose habitat but no real beach.
Chimney Pond? Nice beach and sand but no swimming allowed.
Wassataquoik Stream? A few scattered spots but none easily accessible?
South Branch Pond? Sort of, but soon pebbly beyond the shore.
Upper Togue Pond? Yes, very nice but doesn’t extend very far from shore, and it might not count because it is located short of the park’s southern entry gate.
Katahdin Lake? Tolerable, but quite gravelly even at Church Beach.

Further research revealed that Baxter State Park maps – and there are many – don’t even mention beaches or swimming locations. All very interesting.

Suddenly, this concentrated musing gave way to a clear and sacred personal memory of one small beach at one of the most inaccessible yet beautiful locations in this beloved park. At the tip of the one island in Wassataquoik Lake, after a narrow strip of land stretches to just short of the middle of the lake, there is a small area of clear sand beach, just enough from the water’s edge to allow one or two hearty bathers to spread beach towels and catch some sun. If the sun is warm on the skin that day one might even consider a swim. In that case, a few steps are very slowly taken into the sparkling, crystal clear water to adjust, of course, to the cold water even in late summer. If one is further emboldened to swim, no other effort than a dive straight into the water is needed because the sandbar drops off suddenly, plunging downward out of sight. Here one finds it all: a pristine sand beach, pure clear water for a swim, and a knockout view of one of nature’s most beautiful lakes, surrounded by mountains on all sides. True enough, the water temperature may reach 32.5F degrees even in the summer, but one must not be greedy for warm waters in such a wild location.

So there you have it. There is a beach in Mr. Baxter’s park after all, and it’s a doozy. So what if the nearest automobile trailhead is at least nine miles away. You can always stay overnight in the island lean-to if you are lucky enough to get one of the coveted reservations. Enjoy.



News Flash... The “Baxter Trail” in Portland, Maine

By David Little

The new, proposed “Baxter Trail” is a 3.25-mile walking trail that starts at Back Cove (the northwest corner of the parking lot across from Hannaford) and goes all the way up into Evergreen Cemetery to the Brentwood gates (see map). Its purpose is to honor the Baxter family, especially visionaries James Phinney Baxter and his youngest son Percival Proctor Baxter, for their many gifts and generosity to Portland. The City of Portland, the Portland Parks Commission, and numerous volunteers (including myself) have teamed up with Montgomery Design to develop educational signage (7 signs) that will be placed along the route. The projected date of completion – fall of 2019.

Baxter State Park Hires New Chief Ranger

The Baxter State Park Authority has announced the appointment of Daniel Rinard as the Park’s new chief ranger. Rinard was previously employed by the Appalachian Mountain Club’s Maine Woods Initiative, where he handled facilities management and operations at Maine lodges for seven years, and most recently served as director.

Rinard is a graduate of Acadia University in Nova Scotia and holds a degree in recreation management. According to a press release, Rinard’s experience with team-building, facilitation, and search and rescue will be assets he will use in his new role. Rinard’s responsibilities will include managing the Park’s operations and maintenance department. He will also be a member of the Park’s leadership team.

Welcome to Baxter State Park, Dan!





Friends of Baxter State Park

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Dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

Send to:

Friends of Baxter State Park
PO Box 322
Belfast, ME 04915

Thank you!

Call for Photos – 2021 Baxter State Park Calendar

Friends of Baxter State Park is currently accepting photograph submissions for the 2021 Baxter State Park calendar! This is a great way to support Baxter State Park with your photography and have your images professionally published. We are looking for landscapes, people, wildlife, plants, park features, and more.

The deadline for submitting photos is October 31, 2019. It's quick and easy to submit your photos via Dropbox or through the mail. For detailed submission guidelines and an entry form, please download an information packet at www.friendsofbaxter.org/calendar