



FOREVER WILD



Newsletter of Friends of Baxter State Park

Summer 2020

Vol. 19 No. 2

Executive Director's Column

by Aaron Megquier

I hope this summer newsletter issue finds you and your family safe and well. In a world that often feels divided and chaotic, it's a wonderful thing to focus our collective energy on something that unites and sustains us – the incredible wilderness of Baxter State Park. Spending time in the wilderness can replace stress and anxiety with joy and gratitude. Just knowing the Park is there – spectacular, wild, and bigger than any of us – is deeply grounding.

Like so many people and organizations, we've been forging ahead as best we can and trying to find the silver linings in 2020. One of our bright spots is our BYCC 2020 Conservation Fellows program, described in our cover story and on pages six and seven. This program is our answer to youth employment, economic development, and conservation in the age of COVID-19, and we're really proud of what we accomplished this summer.

Another bright spot is the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act on August 4, 2020. This landmark legislation has no direct bearing on Baxter State Park, but it underscores the critical importance of the outdoors for our national well-being and is great news for the growing mosaic of conservation lands that surround and buffer Baxter State Park.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, we've been seeking ways to help our members stay connected to the Park. We know that traveling to Baxter State Park this year is challenging for many, and impossible for some. If you weren't able to make it through the Togue Pond or Matagamon gates in person this summer, here are some other ways to connect:

- Enjoy spectacular images of the park throughout the year with the Baxter State Park calendar hanging on your wall (see page 3).

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Jake Kowalski, a recent graduate of Stearns High School in Millinocket, on the summit of Mount Coe during his 2020 Conservation Fellowship with Friends of Baxter State Park. – Photo © Jacob Kowalski

Baxter Youth Conservation Corps: 2020 Conservation Fellows

by Aaron Megquier

The Baxter Youth Conservation Corps (BYCC) is one of our flagship programs. Each summer, we hire high school students from the Katahdin region to work full-time on trail projects in Baxter State Park, as well as participate in a range of job training and mentoring experiences.

Since we launched the program in 2017, we have expanded it by 300% in response to overwhelming need and strong support from both Baxter State Park and local communities. Over the last three years, the program has completed more than 5,524 hours of trail work and provided nearly \$100,000 in payroll for the economy of the Katahdin Region. Many teens leave the program excited to pursue careers in the conservation or outdoor recreation fields. Some have already continued on to jobs in Baxter State Park or with other local outdoor organizations.

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded this spring, it became clear that we were not going to be able to offer the BYCC safely this summer without some significant changes. Many trail projects require working in very close proximity with others and are not conducive to social distancing. With so many programs for youth cancelled, we were eager to find a way for the program to happen safely this summer.

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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

Continued from pg.1

- Submit your photos for the calendar, and share the beauty you've enjoyed with others. The deadline is October 31, 2020. Please email me at director@friendsofbaxter.org for a submission form and a link to upload your photos.
- Submit a trip report on our website (www.friendsofbaxter.org/trip-reports/submit) and share your adventure – or misadventure – with other Baxter lovers.
- Subscribe to our monthly email newsletter (www.friendsofbaxter.org, then scroll down to the bottom of the page).
- Connect with us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/bspfriends) and Instagram (www.instagram.com/friendsbaxter)
- Participate in our 4th annual sign auction, scheduled to open on November 1.

As always, please get in touch anytime with questions, concerns, or to get more involved in our work. Thanks so much for your continued support.



In Memoriam:
Eric Stoddard Baxter
 1/3/1953 - 7/15/2020

Membership Matters

By Sarah Holland, Administrative Manager

Adaptation is the key to survival and sustaining a strong community. That is the case for us at Friends. We have quickly adopted new ways of working. Like many of you, I am working at home



and having meetings online. We have moved the sales inventory to my home office. Trips to the post office are less frequent and done with special attention to protecting ourselves and the community. Our gatherings and events have been cancelled and our programs have been modified. But there is still a lot of work to do to support the Park through these times and continue to bolster their efforts to upgrade infrastructure, maintain trails, educate the public, and plan for the future.

We are mindful that the uncertainty and challenges of these times have affected many of our members. We have reached out to our members who have not yet renewed this year to let them know that if they have experienced financial hardship from the COVID-19 pandemic, they can let us know and we will extend their membership until they can afford to renew. That way they can continue to receive our newsletter and stay informed about the Park. We don't want to lose any of our members due to these hard times. However, if any of you have not renewed because it has slipped your mind, we would appreciate your renewal whenever you can get to it. For those of you who can afford to give at a higher level this year to get us through these difficult times, that would be very much appreciated.

While we missed seeing your faces at our Annual Meeting and regret we had to postpone our 20th Anniversary celebration to next year, we take pride in knowing that we have thrived and grown into a mature organization that offers youth programs, promotes science, encourages volunteerism, educates the public and advocates for the wilderness character of Percival Baxter's vision for the Park. All of that has been made possible by the sustained support of our members. Take care and stay well so we can keep going with this adventure together.

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On a clear day, views from the Traveler Loop encompass the South Branch Ponds, much of the Wassataquoik Valley, as well as Katahdin and nearby summits.

– Photo © Anne Shearer

Baxter Youth Conservation Corps *Continued from pg. 1*

With some creative thinking from our Board and staff, Friends was able to pivot quickly during the month of June and develop a modified, socially-distant version of the program: our BYCC 2020 Conservation Fellows. This program offers youth from the Katahdin region the opportunity to pursue paid leadership and conservation work during the COVID-19 pandemic. We offered fellowships to youth with exemplary leadership skills, motivation, and previous experience in the BYCC.

We hired eight incredible young people from the Katahdin region for this opportunity. Fellowships were full-time for six weeks, paid \$16 per hour, and were fully remote – no van shuttles, crew leaders, or shared tools. Our Conservation Fellows all worked from home and carefully followed all State of Maine and Baxter State Park guidelines related to COVID-19. This included maintaining physical distancing, practicing good hand hygiene, and wearing face masks when passing other hikers on the trail. Because of the degree of independence required, all participants were incoming seniors or this year's graduates.

Our Conservation Fellows started work on July 6 and spent the next six weeks immersing themselves in Baxter State Park. They read books, studied maps, pored over old photos and trail guides, and spent at least two days a week exploring in the Park. They documented their experiences with photo, video, and weekly writing assignments. Each Fellow also pursued an independent project related to Baxter State Park. Topics included fisheries biology, photography, videography, Native culture, trail work, mycology, and Park history. When the program finished in mid August, each Fellow offered a public presentation on their research and experiences in the program.



Clearance Sale

Our 2020 Baxter State Park calendar is still in stock and on sale for only \$10 - tax and shipping included! Brighten up the rest of 2020 with some spectacular Park photography on your wall. Calendar pages are also great for framing as prints. Order online at www.friendsofbaxter.org, mail a check to PO Box 322, Belfast, ME 04915, or call (207) 505-5779.



–Calendar cover photo © Ken Wadness

2021 Baxter State Park Calendars now available

Our 2021 Baxter State Park calendar is in stock and available for purchase! The cost is \$17 including tax and shipping. 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.



Emma McGraw hikes through a forested cathedral of pines on the Rum Pond Trail. Forests, and the massive amounts of carbon they store, are key to mitigating the impacts of global climate change.

— Photo © Emma McGraw

President's Column

by Ellen Baum

Twenty years ago, I began my decade-long professional relationship with Dr. James Hansen, then Director of NASA's Goddard Institute of Space Studies (GISS). Twelve years before, in 1988, Dr. Hansen had sent out a national and global alarm about climate change when he testified before the US Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee describing the conclusions from the NASA/GISS global temperature analysis: "Global warming has reached a level such that we can ascribe with a high degree of confidence a cause and effect relationship between the greenhouse effect and observed warming... It is already happening now."

Building a working relationship with Jim Hansen hurled my career from power plant pollutants, where I had spent many years examining and fighting the ecological impacts of acid rain, into climate change, and source emissions that affect climate. I have been honored to co-host workshops with him; I worked with GISS on research projects. He brought me to the Mauna Loa Observatory Atmospheric Research Facility in Hawaii, which has been continuously monitoring and collecting CO₂ data since the 1950s (think the Keeling curve). And Jim Hansen and I were with a small group at Scripps Institute in La Jolla, CA at a climate meeting on September 11, 2001, where we shared being horrified and stranded.

For 20 years the pressure to take serious steps to curb global warming pollutants has been front and center in my career.

Twenty years ago was also the founding of Friends of Baxter State Park. Baxter had by that point long been a part of my life, though the creation of Friends was only in my peripheral vision. But I'm glad it was front and center in the eyes of the founders.

Fast-forwarding two decades, there is both much to celebrate and much on our plates. On the celebratory side: Three cheers for Friends and everyone who has put in so much time and energy to make it the vital organization that it is today. I cannot thank you all enough, and I

look forward to occasions where I get to do so.

With success, comes responsibility. Friends has illustrated over and over again what it means to be an organization that has at its heart Percival Baxter's mission while thoughtfully expanding its outreach to the communities and region around the Park. It has earned its place as a respected institution and voice.

This brings us to the question of climate change, Baxter State Park, and Friends. While Jim Hansen might have been in despair over 20 years ago, most people were not there yet; the sense that we need to act with urgency has flared up over the last decade with lightning speed. Many of us have begun wondering if our personal choices will make a difference and if so, how they are best exerted, what tradeoffs they require, and if they matter. There is a resounding howl to both do something and offer hope.

What can the Park and Friends group do? First, we can recognize our strengths: Baxter is one of the largest protected reserves in the Northeast US. This is a tremendous asset that is unmatched in the region. Considering the Park as a "laboratory," we can learn a lot about ecological

changes that have occurred and are occurring. Historical data has been collected in the Park for decades, much of it archived by Park staff. There is annual data collection, monitoring, and analysis. Independent, and together, this data can provide some of the best local information about the impacts that have occurred from a changing climate. Unlike other study areas, Baxter data is not confounded by other influences, like harvesting and development, which can make attribution easier. And something to be examined is whether the topography of the Park offers diverse ecosystems that potentially allow some areas to serve as a refuge for some species, even, or especially, as temperatures rise, the windows for seasons shift, and precipitation patterns change.

Cataloging and assessing change is not the same as halting it. As a Friends group, there is almost nothing we can do to exert control over the global emissions that affect rising carbon dioxide concentrations and the global temperatures that Jim Hansen warned Congress about in 1988. And exactly how the future could unfold remains fuzzy, because while we know that greenhouse gases will increase temperatures and change precipitation, there is also a lot that we don't know.

So, is there a message of hope? Recently I heard from my friend Dorothy, whom I worked with when she was at NASA/GISS. She is now at NOAA's National Weather Service and had been charged with offering a message of hope. She wondered what I had to suggest. I told her what gives me any hope is that we are getting closer to a portfolio of technologies that could open up pathways for deep and swift global energy system decarbonization. Some of these are familiar to many, but some while still in the development stage, are poised to replace fossil energy in the next few decades. That gives me hope, but I am not sure that it is adequate for the human spirit, which is compelled by the heart and compassion, and reluctant to trust technology to save us from rising greenhouse gases.

My message of hope then is that I am hopeful. Be curious. Be alert. Be kind. Be helpful. Be thankful. Be prepared to work hard.

Baxter's Nephew Recalls Critical Political Action

From a letter to the Friends from John (Jack) Baxter, Jr.

Enclosed is my membership check and a story you might find interesting.

On Feb. 16, 1961, when I was Majority Leader of the Maine House of Representatives, at about 6 a.m. in my room at the Senator Hotel I got a call from Gov. John Reed.

The Governor said, "I have just received a call from your uncle saying that he is worried about the Legislature not supporting the Park adequately from the General Fund, and wishes to give the Park a dedicated fund of \$500,000 (note these are '61 \$). I reminded him that to give the state money required a statute, which would take many days, and anyway we had already voted cloture after which no new bills can be introduced. He said, 'You tell my nephew what I want and he will get it done. I will be leaving for the State House in half an hour.' So, if you can get it to me I'll sign it forthwith."

So I had my marching orders. I went to Senate President Earl Hillman, Speaker of the House Vinal Good, Clerk of the House Harvey Pease (a strict disciplinarian, particularly about cloture), and House Minority Leader Irving Fogg. I also contacted Sam Schlossberg, who did all the writing, engrossing, and routing of bills; my assistant Gil Williams; and finally to my friend Dick Berry, who often did my dirty work for me.

A new bill could only be introduced in the House after cloture under unanimous consent of the 150 members, because if we let one bill in we would be inundated with bills and never get to adjourn. Somebody had to object, and that was I as House leader.

So I had to stand before the assembled members and ask consent to "introduce a bill by unanimous



Funding the Park. In this 1961 photo, State Treasurer Frank Carpenter accepts a check for \$500,000 from Park Donor Percival P. Baxter in the Governor's office after a hectic day of political maneuvering in the State Legislature. From left are Speaker of the House Vinal Good, State Treasurer Carpenter, Gov. John Reed, "Uncle Percy" Baxter, House Majority Leader Jack Baxter, and Senate President Earl Hillman.

consent, notwithstanding the cloture rule."

By then, there was general knowledge as to what this was all about, and so after a few catcalls the bill was introduced. The rules of the House and Senate were suspended at the proper time and the bill moved back and forth across the Statehouse, arriving back in the House for final enactment about 4 p.m.

All this time, my "Uncle Percy" was sitting in the Governor's office. The Governor was coming to the House for the final enactment vote and asked

Uncle Percy to accompany him to sit on the dias with the assembled dignitaries. In what was the most touching and perhaps ironic part of the whole "saga of the Bill," was my uncle's answer to the invitation: "No, I'd better not; I might unduly influence the vote."

So the bill was enacted without him, and subsequently we gathered in the Governor's office while PPB handed the State Treasurer a check for \$500,000. The names of the participants are listed on the back of the enclosed picture.

Reprint of newsletter page from our archives

In honor of our 20th anniversary this year, we're reprinting some pages from the *Forever Wild* archives. This story told by John (Jack) Baxter comes from our Winter 2004 newsletter and provides an amazing first-person account of "Uncle Percy's" determination and political savvy. It gives us a glimpse of how Governor Baxter was respected by his political peers, as well as his generosity and commitment to the Park. This \$500,000 gift was the beginning of an endowment for Baxter State Park that has grown to nearly \$90 million. About two-thirds of the Park's annual budget is funded by the endowment, with the remainder coming from user fees and timber sales from the SFMA.

Baxter Youth Conservation Corps: Meet our 2020 Conservation Fellows

As many of you may have heard, the traditional Baxter Youth Conservation Corps (BYCC) trail crew had to be called off this year due to COVID-19. To continue with the program, Friends of Baxter State Park has created a remote alternative: the BYCC Conservation Fellows program. We BYCC Fellows are thrilled to have this opportunity for summer employment despite all the craziness surrounding this year! As part of the program, we are each individually working on a project concerning some aspect of Baxter State Park in areas such as photography, fishing, mycology, native American culture, and more. In addition, we are also reading about and trekking around the Park in order to widen our general knowledge of its history, ecology, and geography.

One of the great things about the BYCC Fellowship this year is all the time we have to get out and explore the park! I know a lot of us are excited about the less-visited places we are getting to see in this program. We're trying to put out lots of pictures and information (especially on social media) so that people who can't make it to the park this year can experience it from home. We are also hard at work on each of our individual projects and we can't wait to share them with you!

~ Anne Shearer



Brady

My name is Brady Kaelin, and I have lived in the Mt. Chase area for most of my life. Just this year I graduated from Katahdin High School. This is my second year with the Baxter Youth Conservation Corps. Being completely different from last year's trail crew, this summer I've been working on a short

Brady Kaelin

field guide for Baxter State Park's many species of mushrooms and fungi. For four to five days a week, I hike trails in Baxter and photograph mushrooms. When I'm at home, I identify the mushrooms and write descriptions for each. With the changes that came from COVID, this year's program has been entirely different than the previous years. Since we cannot be in a van together, there is no crew. Each of us are independent workers. We are also required to wear masks when passing other hikers and sanitize after handling public use objects. I chose to apply for this Conservation Fellowship because of my interest in an environment-related career. I am going to college for Conservation Biology, and this program will give me valuable experience toward my goals. I'm so glad to have been chosen for this fellowship!



Anne

Hello! My name is Anne Shearer, and I'm from Millinocket, Maine. I recently graduated from high school (I was homeschooled) and will be attending Gordon College in Massachusetts this fall. Last summer I worked with the northern BYCC trail crew, so this is my second year working for

Anne Shearer

BYCC. I am putting together a project on Katahdin Lake that will provide information on the history, wildlife, scenery, and hiking/camping access in and around the lake. I'm hoping it will be a useful source of information on the area and will encourage people to visit it more!

One thing I miss from the traditional BYCC trail crew is the camaraderie that develops after working alongside other people day after day. However, this year I am enjoying the opportunities to explore different parts of the park, rather than working in the same spot for weeks at a time! I chose to be a Conservation Fellow because it is a wonderful summer employment opportunity that allows me to get involved in my community and learn more about Baxter State Park.



Emma

Hey there! My name is Emma McGraw and I'm from Sherman, Maine. I attend Katahdin Middle High School in Stacyville where I will be a senior this fall. This is my second year working for Friends. I chose to focus my time in Baxter through photography. It's always been a hobby of mine

Emma McGraw

and I've wanted to learn more about it for a long time, and in what better place to strengthen my skills?

Last year's program had been undoubtedly the best job I had ever had in my life. Our crew created an amazing bond, learning teamwork skills side by side to get our job done well. I have to say this program is more than I ever could have expected. Just in the first week, I learned so much, not only about the Park and photography but about myself as well. Just spending time out in nature gives you time to meditate and appreciate a different side to our typically hectic, technology-filled lives. This program pushes me to keep discovering, to keep exploring. I'm immersing myself in a magnificent obsession. It's an honor to be a Conservation Fellow, to keep on blazing the path for other youth who will pick up the obsession when we're long gone. I'm so glad to have been chosen for this fellowship!



Jake

My name is Jake Kowalski, I'm a recent graduate of Stearns High School located in Millinocket, the shadow of Katahdin. I started working for the BYCC when I was a Sophomore, so this is currently my third year in the program. I have enjoyed working in the Park and giving back in the form

Jake Kowalski

of trail work, but this year it is a little different due to COVID-19. This year with the Conservation Fellow program I still get to spend time in the Park but doing a different type of work. I'm taking on the task of hiking all the mountains in the Park while documenting them via photos, videos, and journaling.

This process is definitely different than any other years that I have worked for this program in many different ways. Spending time reading maps, planning hiking routes, and looking for a photo location is way different than constructing bog bridges or cleaning corridor with shears. I chose to be a Conservation Fellow because I love to be in the Park whether that be fishing in Russell Pond or helping the Park with trail work. To me there is nothing like spending a day in Baxter State Park as it has so much to offer, it is truly a special sacred place.



Silvia Hartt

Silvia

My name is Silvia Hartt and I live in Mount Chase with my mom and Fort Kent with my dad. I am a senior at Katahdin High School, and working my second year for the Baxter Youth Conservation Corps. For this year's BYCC, I am going fishing at the various bodies of water in Baxter. I've also done a lot of swimming and hiking. This year the program is different in many ways. First off, we're not working on a crew, which was the funnest part. Secondly, we're not doing trail work. Instead, we're each choosing subjects to study or things to do in the Park. I chose to sign up for this program because I adore the outdoors. It's what resets me, and soothes my soul. Plus, working hard and getting your hands dirty makes you feel like you've accomplished so much at the end of the day. This program is perfect for me.



Payton Spearin

Payton

I am Payton Spearin, of East Millinocket. I am a Junior Maine Guide, a three-year veteran of the Baxter Youth Conservation Corps and a graduate of Schenck High School's class of 2020. Due to COVID-19, instead of the traditional three-week trail crew, for six weeks this summer I am working on an amateur "field guide" for the different bug hatches that take place in the waters of Baxter State Park. I am a conservation fellow because of my love for the outdoors and gaining new knowledge and the message that Friends of Baxter State Park stands for.



Zachary Tracy

Zachary

My name is Zachary Tracy. I live in Millinocket Maine and I go to Stearns High School. I am now a senior. This is my second year working with Friends of Baxter. This year is quite a bit different from last year as we are not out doing physical work each day.

I really enjoyed getting together with everyone last year. But I am thankful that Friends of Baxter State Park is allowing us to work on a project this year. I chose to learn about Native Culture. I love learning about our Park and its history.



Michael Clark

Michael

Hi, my name is Michael Clark, I'm a senior at Stearns High School in Millinocket, Maine. I am currently a three-year veteran of the BYCC program for Friends of Baxter State Park. I'm a hiking enthusiast with a passion for breathtaking views from atop some of Maine's highest mountains. I have hiked 17 mountains in the park as well as countless trails to ponds and lakes throughout the park. Being a Millinocket native I know the Park like it's my backyard. I am only a small number of trails away from completing all of its world-class hiking trails. I have been very blessed to live so close and be able to visit the Park every week. Most of my free time I spend outdoors and trying to go places that no one else goes. When this job came about it was a no brainer for me. I am really looking forward to all that this summer job brings and I know I'll have fun.



Baxter State Park Trivia

- Puzzle Master Al Howlett

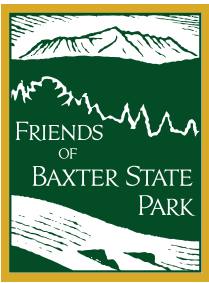
What is the geological term for a sharp, steep-sided ridge formed from the headward erosion of two alpine glaciers, such as the Knife Edge and Hamlin Ridge?

Please send trivia answers to Sarah Holland at sarah@friendsofbaxter.org.

Answer:

Trivia Question in Spring Newsletter

In our spring newsletter, we asked "When was the current height of Baxter Peak ascertained, and by whom?" Answer: In 1927, by Floyd Neary on behalf of the United States Geological Survey. Congratulations to Mark Rogers for answering correctly.



Friends of Baxter State Park

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Please make checks payable to Friends of Baxter State Park, or join online. Dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

Send to:

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Thank you!

2020 Sign Auction

ABOL TRAIL

ABOL SLIDE
THOREAU SPRING

1.3M.
2.8

Have you ever wanted to own a piece of Baxter State Park history? In partnership with Baxter State Park, Friends will be holding our fourth annual sign auction to make historic Park signs and other special items available to the public. A total of 20 signs will be available in this year's auction, as well as some other very special items. Friends will donate 50% of the proceeds directly to Baxter State Park, and 50% will support our programs. Bidding will open at 9:00 am on November 1 and close at 10:00 pm on December 4. All auction items will be available for preview by late October on the auction webpage: www.32auctions.com/fbsp2020.