

ACADIA

The Friends of Acadia Journal WINTER/SPRING 2026

CASCADIA
SPRING WATERFALLS IN
ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

**THE BOLD AND THE
BEAUTIFUL**
LOON MONITORING PROJECT TRACKS
BREEDING AND NESTING SITES

**MOSSES OF
ACADIA**
RESILIENT YET SENSITIVE

PURCHASE YOUR **PARK PASS!**

Whether walking, bicycling, riding the Island Explorer, or driving through the park, we all must obtain a park pass. Eighty percent of all fees paid in Acadia National Park stay in Acadia, to be used for projects that directly benefit park visitors and resources.



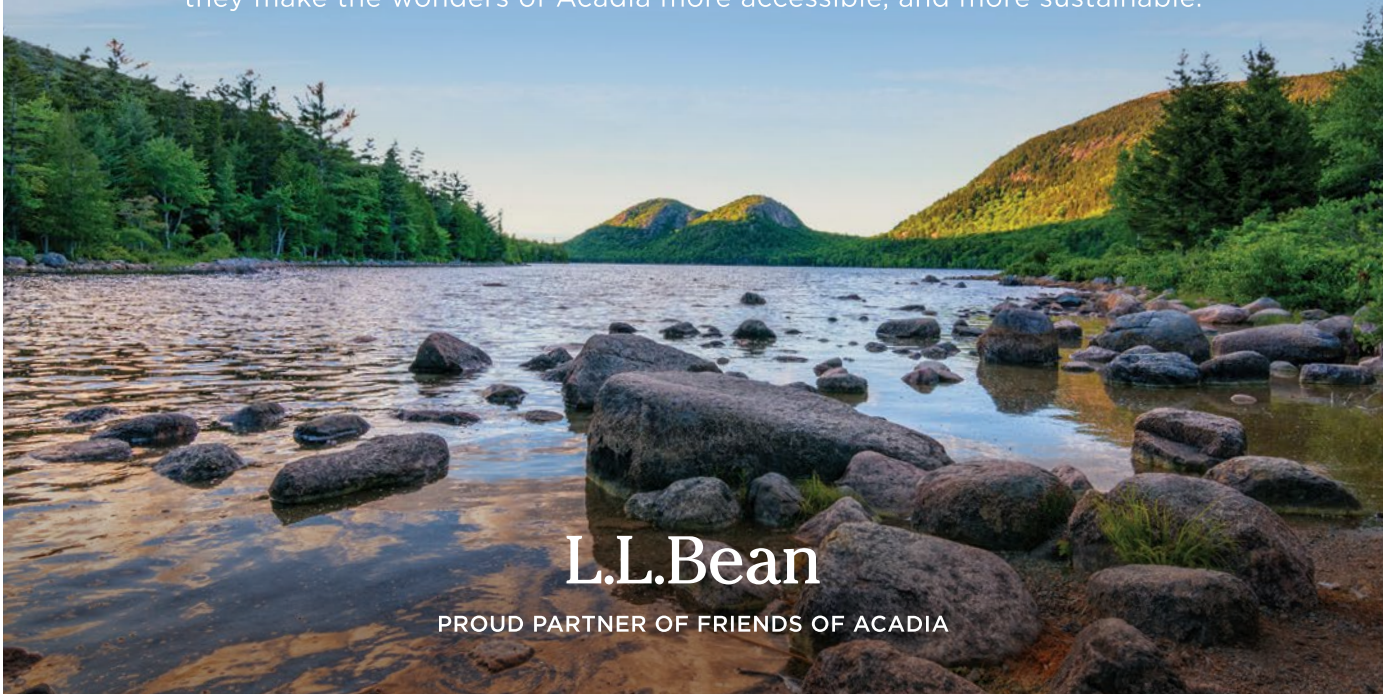
BUY A PASS ONLINE AND PRINT before you arrive at the park. This allows you to drive directly to a trailhead/parking area & display your pass from your vehicle.

Acadia National Park passes are available online:
www.recreation.gov/sitepass/74271

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ACADIA

The Friends of Acadia Journal

WINTER/SPRING 2026

Volume 31 No. 1

A Magazine About Acadia National Park
and Surrounding Communities

Friends of Acadia preserves, protects, and promotes stewardship of the outstanding natural beauty, ecological vitality, and distinctive cultural resources of Acadia National Park and surrounding communities for the inspiration and enjoyment of current and future generations.

Acadia is published three times a year. Submissions and letters are welcome.

Opinions expressed are the authors'.

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A slug and a boletus mushroom are found amongst the mosses that cover the forest floor alongside the Duck Harbor Trail on Isle au Haut.

SAM MALLON/FOA

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WHERE IN ACADIA?

LILY LAREGINA/FOA

“Though by name,
Towering charismatic megafauna rarely roam my land—
Only that grand title for rocks and sand.
Instead, the gull and eider cry
Above me where the seals slip by.
Step softly when the waters fall—
A rocky path reveals it all.
But linger past the turning tide,
And watch the sea reclaim its side.”

If you think you can identify the location of this scene, email us at editor@friendsofacadia.org and include a personal story or memory with your answer. We'll print our favorite responses in the next issue of Acadia and send a Friends of Acadia hat to a randomly selected correct respondent.

READERS RESPOND TO "WHERE IN ACADIA?"



WILL GREENE/FOA

Northeast Creek, also known as King's Creek.

Thanks to the readers who responded to our "Where in Acadia?" question in the fall magazine and correctly identified the image as an aerial view of Northeast Creek, also known as King's Creek. Located on the northern part of Mount Desert Island near Salsbury Cove, Northeast Creek is an estuarine wetland that is known for its cranberries and as a peaceful place to birdwatch and paddle. The creek is accessible from Route 3 and is partially inside Acadia National Park boundaries. Note: the drone that captured this image was not operated from NPS property.

Below are a few of the correct responses that we received from members!

"I'm quite sure the location of this photo is a section of Northeast Creek just north of the Stone Barn, which cannot be seen in this photo, though you can see the beginning section of Norway Drive with some of the Whitney Farm fields. Between the creek and the road obscured by trees is Crooked Road. Also obscured by trees, I can see where my home is in this photo. Growing up I'd go over to ice skate, pick cranberries, and there was a massive old spruce tree that was very friendly to climbing. This tree stood tall above all others around and offered amazing views far and wide across the creek. Sadly, this tree fell during the winter of 2023, but there are still some others that offer decent views."

- Josh Bloom, Bar Harbor, ME

"I must say, this was a HARD one to figure out because the line-up of mountains from that particular angle isn't quite as familiar to us. However, with the help of our trusted Acadia trails map and the clues in the poem, we think we have an educated guess! We're pretty sure the placid, serpentine stream is Northeast Creek."

- Charlotte Stetson, Hancock, ME

"Northeast Creek, where many years ago I was able to put my canoe in at the Route 3 bridge and paddle all the way to the old Stone Barn. Priceless!"

- Alan Chapman, Bar Harbor, ME

"We think the *Where in Acadia?* from the fall issue is Northeast Creek. We had a blast paddling there with our dogs, Goldie and Bruno, who have since passed away. Dave and I still enjoy our Acadia adventures with our new dogs, Sheena and Fox, but they are not as well-behaved in a boat! We loved seeing the cranberries out there. Goldie enjoyed being the figurehead on our boat, but one time she got a little too excited and fell in Northeast Creek. I had to fish her out using the handles on her life jacket, though she did try to self-rescue by jumping up and throwing her front legs across the bow! We have had so many fun adventures in Acadia over the years! Definitely my heart park!"

- Jenifer Nadeau, Andover, CT



COURTESY JENIFER NADEAU

"We think that is King's Creek. We had driven by there many times on Route 3 over the years but never paid it much heed. On our first fall trip many years ago, we spotted many photographers and stopped to see the attraction. It is a magnificent view of the creek, mountains, and spectacular foliage. Since then, we always enjoy this awesome spot. Mo has paddled there and picked cranberries, which became a delicious sauce."

- David & Mo Dowd, Needham, MA

Enhancing Safety and Accessibility on Cadillac's Summit

There are many remarkable places to watch the sunset in Acadia. Here, feldspar-flecked granite mountains rise directly from the Atlantic, and the twists and turns of the Maine coast offer sweeping western views over water—a rare sight in the eastern United States.

From the park's southern edge, the setting sun silhouettes offshore islands against the open ocean. From peaks on the Quiet Side, warm light glints across Blue Hill Bay. Evening settles over the wetlands of Great Meadow and along the steep shores of Somes Sound. Each setting offers its own stunning beauty.

Yet for many visitors, sunset (and sunrise) means one place: Cadillac Mountain. Each summer, thousands gather at the summit to gaze westward over Frenchman Bay as the surrounding granite shifts from rose to amber to deep purple. I have come here often with my family, grateful for the reservation system that helps manage vehicle capacity. It is a special experience, and one of the park's most beloved places to take in the views.

In 2021, Friends of Acadia funded a comprehensive accessibility study of 28 locations in the park in partnership with the National Park Service. On Cadillac Mountain, the study examined how visitors with varying mobility levels move through the summit area. It assessed parking, pathways, grades, and viewpoints. The findings showed that while individual accessible features existed, they were not seamlessly connected. Without a designated pedestrian route between the summit's two parking and visitor areas, people of all mobility levels had to move along the summit road itself—navigating moving vehicles, heavy traffic, and narrow shoulders, frequently in low light. The result was congestion and safety concerns in an already constrained space.

That's why I'm excited to announce that this spring, with funding from Friends of Acadia, the park is breaking ground on a new accessible East-West Connector Trail at the summit of Cadillac Mountain. The trail will create a wheelchair- and stroller-accessible path, allowing visitors to safely move between the larger East parking lot, with ocean views, restrooms, and amenities, and the smaller West lot, where thousands gather each year to mark the close of the day. Separated from the road by granite coping stones, the clearly defined pedestrian route will significantly improve safety for all visitors. It will also help protect Cadillac's fragile plant communities by reducing the informal footpaths that form when people create their own trails to avoid traffic.

Thanks to your support, this accessible connector trail will soon make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to experience the full grandeur of Acadia's highest peak.

This project is part of our broader partnership with the park to enhance accessibility throughout Acadia. With your support, this work includes ongoing improvements to Acadia's trails, carriage roads, and infrastructure, including the recently completed accessible viewing terrace at Bass Harbor Head Light Station (see page 6) and the beautiful new accessible boardwalk along the Hemlock Path at Great Meadow. I hope you will read more about that project, and the exciting wetland restoration work it supports, on page 12.

Thank you for helping us make Acadia a welcoming place for all to enjoy.

—Eric Stiles

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



"I'm excited to announce that this spring, with funding from Friends of Acadia, the park is breaking ground on a new accessible East-West Connector Trail at the summit of Cadillac Mountain."



THE SUN SETS over the west side of Cadillac Mountain.

RHIANNON JOHNSTON/FOA

DONOR DOLLARS AT WORK

Improving the Views!

43 Carriage Road Vistas Restored

With support from Friends of Acadia's Carriage Road Endowment and hands-on effort from volunteers, park staff restored 43 historic vistas this past year, reclaiming beautiful views of Acadia's natural and historic landscapes.

Led by Acadia National Park's Emily Owens, Friends of Acadia stewardship volunteers took on 12 of the vistas, trimming branches and clearing brush to renew the views, which were designed in the 1920s and '30s in tandem with the carriage roads.

Over eight volunteer days, beautiful views were reclaimed at Bubble Pond, Chasm Brook Bridge, Around the Mountain Loop, Gilmore Meadow, and Breakneck Pond, among others. In keeping with each vista's original design, some unfold as sweeping views of the coastline and lakes, while others are intentionally subtle, offering quiet glimpses of features beyond the trees. There are 182 carriage road vistas, and more are planned for restoration this year!



After



Before

ABOVE: After and before photos of a restored vista on the Around the Mountain Carriage Road.

BELOW: Wintertime view of Bass Harbor Head Light Station from the new accessible viewing terrace.



Accessible Viewing Terrace at Bass Harbor Head Light Station

A new accessible viewing terrace is nearly complete at Bass Harbor Head Light Station. Through funds from Friends of Acadia, visitors can enjoy a stunning view of the lighthouse and ocean from the platform, which is just off the parking lot. The platform will be officially completed in early spring, and the mariner's bell from the overlook by the tower will be relocated to the viewing terrace as well.

This winter, crews selectively removed trees to open views to the light tower and removed obsolete oil tank foundations and overhead utilities (which were moved underground). They installed a new potable water well to serve the light keeper's house and solar-powered exhaust fans to the public restroom. The park also plans to re-vegetate areas disturbed by the construction and install interpretive signs.

COURTESY, JAC PUTNAM PHOTOGRAPHY

Restoring Carroll Homestead and Safeguarding a Rare Window Into Maine's Past

"What is the hidden gem of Acadia National Park?" That's one of the questions I am most often asked. Truth be told, I never quite know how to answer it.

Acadia National Park is filled with awe-inspiring places, but I think one of the most unique places in Acadia is an unassuming cabin tucked into the woods of Southwest Harbor.

The Carroll Homestead is a part of Acadia that has the ability to transport you back in time and provide a glimpse of life on Mount Desert Island 200 years ago. Built by the Carroll family in 1825, the homestead tells the story of hardworking settlers who farmed the land and raised families in this rugged coastal environment. Walking through the site, you'll see how people lived simply through hard work and how they made the most of what nature provided.

Whenever I visit the Carroll Homestead, I notice the dichotomy between the simple, stoic cabin and the lively sounds of children learning and playing on the front lawn. My mind goes back in time, too, and I can picture John and Rachel Carroll corralling their children into the house for dinner as dusk cascades over the trees. It's a beautiful reminder that people are at the heart of the cultural resources we work so hard to protect.

That idea is underscored when you talk to a ranger at the site about the Carrolls and learn about their grit, connection to the landscape, and commitment to community. In a lot of ways, the Carroll family is emblematic of so many attributes of Mainers today. It's a powerful experience to see pieces of you and your loved ones reflected in people from our collective past. When you are here, it's easy to see that so many pieces of the human experience really do transcend time.

Protecting the Carroll Homestead means keeping these stories alive for future generations. It's so much more than just an old house—it's a window into the past that helps us understand how settler communities grew and thrived here long before Acadia became a national park. By caring for this historic site, we preserve a piece of Maine and give visitors a chance to connect with some of the people who loved and cared for Acadia before us.

The wooden farmhouse needs careful structural stabilization, including repairs to the foundation, framing, roofing, and exterior siding to prevent further deterioration. Because of generous donations raised during the 2025 Paddle Raise at Friends of Acadia's Annual Benefit, we are able to do just that.

We recently began working with the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Training Center to better understand what needs to be done to restore the cabin. Starting this summer, skilled historic preservationists will come to the park with preservationists in training, providing them with a hands-on experience to better understand the craft of bringing cultural resources back to life.

This humble farmhouse reminds us that history lives in the details—and it's up to us to keep those details from fading away. Restoring Carroll Homestead will allow us to safeguard a rare window into Maine's past and keep these stories of resilience and community alive for generations to come.

—Kevin Schneider

SUPERINTENDENT'S VIEW



"By caring for this historic site, we preserve a piece of Maine and give visitors a chance to connect with some of the people who loved and cared for Acadia before us."



COMPOSITE IMAGE CREDIT: TONY PALUMBO

IMAGE COMPOSITE of the Carroll Homestead featuring a historic photo provided by the Southwest Harbor Public Library Digital Archive and images from field trips in 2025.



RHIANNON JOHNSTON/FOA

WELCOME TO THE ACADIA GATEWAY CENTER

The long-awaited regional transit hub in Trenton welcomes park visitors this spring.

Decades of planning and persistence came to fruition last September as the doors opened to visitors at the newly completed Acadia Gateway Center. It reopens for the season on May 20.

Located along Route 3 in Trenton, this facility welcomes visitors to Downeast Maine and Acadia National Park. As an intermodal transportation center, it's the perfect place to park your car, purchase your park pass, learn about places to visit, and hop on the Island Explorer bus.

At the center, visitors will find free day-use parking for 300 vehicles, including 18 EV charging spaces and 10 oversized vehicle spaces, a bus stop for Island Explorer and commercial tour buses, and an 11,000-square-foot information center with park and regional tourism information, retail space, restrooms, and a waiting area.

"We are so grateful for all of the partners who have worked so hard to bring the Gateway Center to life," said Amanda Pollock, deputy chief of interpretation at Acadia National Park. "After the success of the soft opening, I'm optimistic about the future and eager to dive back in this spring. I'm confident that the Gateway Center will help visitors connect to Acadia National Park, its surrounding communities, and Downeast Maine in meaningful ways."

The design of the visitor center and transit hub went through several revisions over the years to improve efficiency, lower construction costs, and incorporate new technologies. The project was funded primarily by the Federal Transit Administration with additional support from the National Park Service, Friends of Acadia, Efficiency Maine, and the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT).

This project is part of the park's long-term congestion management plan and has been a priority for Friends of Acadia since 2004, when the organization helped secure the location by

purchasing an option on 369 acres in Trenton—the future site of the Gateway Center—while MaineDOT completed an Environmental Assessment. Friends of Acadia then purchased the property in 2007 and sold the easternmost 152 acres bordering Route 3 to MaineDOT for the purpose of developing the Gateway Center and mitigating associated wetland losses. The remaining 217 acres were placed under conservation and donated to the Town of Trenton. Visitors can explore this forested area and unique bog habitat on the Trenton Community Trail.

The Island Explorer maintenance facility and Downeast Transportation offices have operated on the site since 2012.

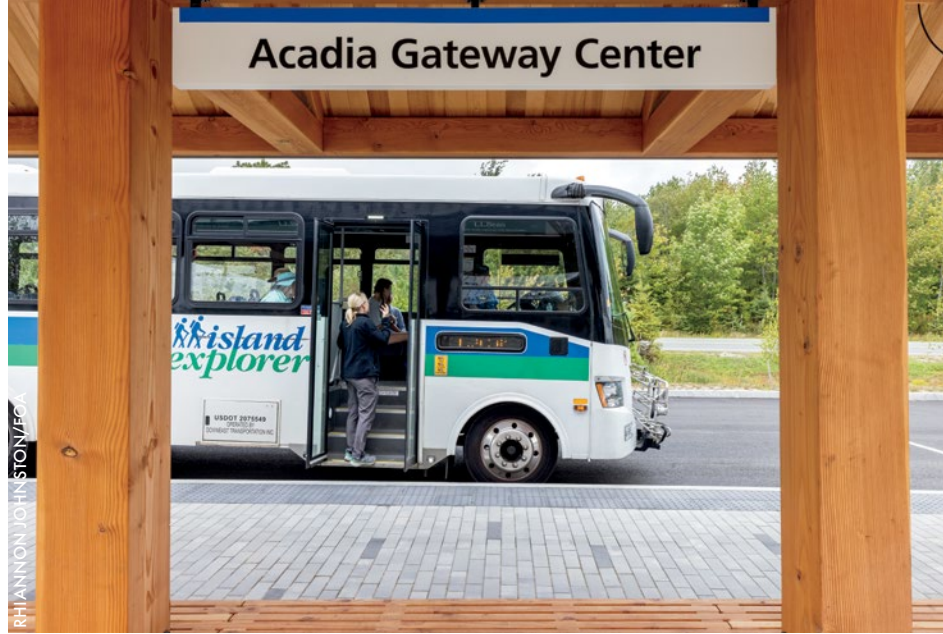
The Acadia Gateway Center is owned by the State of Maine and operated by MaineDOT in partnership with the Maine Office of Tourism, the National Park Service, and Downeast Transportation, Inc.

Friends of Acadia funded \$1 million of the costs, raised as part of the Acadia Second Century campaign, and also funded \$225,000 for solar panels on the building to reduce both environmental impact and long-term operational costs.

Many Friends of Acadia members helped make the Acadia Gateway Center possible—from those who supported the initial purchase of the land to those who helped the Island Explorer expand, as well as those who contributed to the Greening Acadia Fund at the 2021 Benefit Auction that helped with the purchase of solar panels.

It's truly time for a collective cheer as this long-planned project to improve visitor information and transit services comes to life! Hip, hip, hooray! ■

For more information, go to [nps.gov/places/acadia-gateway-center.htm](https://www.nps.gov/places/acadia-gateway-center.htm)



OPPOSITE PAGE: Visitors walk into the Acadia Gateway Center during its soft opening in September 2025.
 ABOVE: Park pass vending machines sit outside the Acadia Gateway Center.

RIGHT TOP: The Gateway Center provides visitor services, accessible Island Explorer bus stops, and expanded parking.
 RIGHT: Natural light flows through the vaulted wood-beam ceiling.
 BELOW: Aerial view of the Acadia Gateway Center and parking lot off Route 3 in Trenton.



RHIANNON JOHNSTON/FOA



CASCADIA

Spring waterfalls in Acadia National Park

WORDS AND PHOTOS
BY CHARLIE JACOBI

When I think of Acadian Delights, it's not usually waterfalls that come first. But what Acadia's waterfalls lack in scale, they make up for in charm.

With small watersheds, thin soils, and a lot of bare granite, we have what the ologists call "flashy streams." They come up fast and go down fast. In a flash, so to speak. Having poked around this place for 40 years, and despite my brain occasionally feeling as flashy as the brooks, even I have accumulated some amount of local knowledge. As in, where to go when brooks are flashing post *diluvium* (meaning "flood, inundation") or even better, *inter veris diluvium* (in the middle of the flood or rain).

With a few inches of rain and during spring runoff, every little rill is filled. Acadia becomes "Cascadia."

Some cascades show up at familiar haunts with perhaps unfamiliar flows. Others show up as fleeting freshets that one may never see exactly that way again. And there are multitudes, if you are willing to look. Even the smallest ones can be infinitely interesting photo subjects. Ever-changing, you will never see the same falls I saw; with each view, you'll discover your own.

If you want to see 'em, carpe diem! And if at first you don't succeed, dry and try again.

Canon Brook Cascade

After gathering several feeder streams, Canon Brook spills off the south and east sides of Cadillac Mountain, delivering an array of smaller cascades and water slides, each with its own architecture and personality. Canon Brook Trail here is sometimes better described as Canon Trail Brook.

Chasm Brook Falls

For a relatively small watershed, Chasm Brook offers a lovely 25-foot drop right from the eponymous carriage road bridge (pictured on opposite page), as well as other cascades. Get there *inter veris diluvium*—or soon thereafter!

Hadlock Falls

Hadlock Falls can be viewed by carriage road from Waterfall Bridge or from the Hadlock Brook Trail below the bridge, framed by the bridge's historic stone arch.

Kurt Diederich's Falls

Kurt Diederich's Falls, as I have come to call it, is exceptionally beautiful in high water, and you don't have to go far up Kurt Diederich's Climb for it. The extent of it can be seen from Route 3 as water pours down the rockface over The Tarn. It may well be the highest continuous cascading drop in the park.

Little No-Name Cascade

Along the Amphitheater Trail between the carriage road bridges, Little Harbor Brook bursts through this granite constriction.

Amphitheater Cascade

The Amphitheater Bridge frames the Amphitheater Cascade (my moniker), also on Little Harbor Brook. ■

CHARLIE JACOBI retired from Acadia National Park in 2017 as a Natural Resource Specialist and has spent 40 years chasing waterfalls and scoping out other Acadian Delights.

OPPOSITE: Chasm Brook Falls



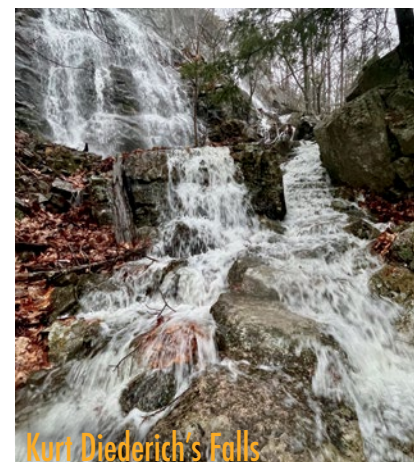
Canon Brook Cascade



A Chasm Brook Cascade



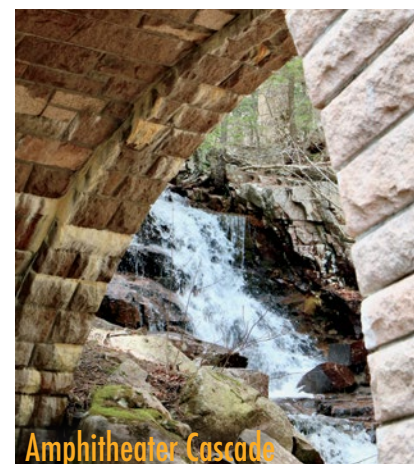
Hadlock Falls



Kurt Diederich's Falls



Little No-Name Cascade



Amphitheater Cascade

Waterfall-Spotting Pointers

Dress to stay dry and warm and prepare to get wet. Trails can be icy and slippery in the early spring, especially near waterfalls. Wear shoes with proper traction, such as microspikes, and take care.

Be sure to Leave No Trace by staying on durable surfaces.

Be mindful of carriage road closures in the early spring: Chasm Brook Falls can only be accessed via carriage road. Please help protect the carriage roads and visit them after mud season. Check Acadia National Park's "Current Conditions" webpage for the latest information on trail and carriage road openings.

Great Strides in the Great Meadow Wetland

A reimagined Hemlock Path and a new culvert coming this year are big steps forward for this complex rehabilitation project.

BY CLAIRE KEELEY

Adjacent to Sieur de Monts Spring lies the 100-acre Great Meadow Wetland, a glacially carved U-shaped valley cradled by the granite rock faces of Kebo, Champlain, and Dorr Mountains. Here rainfall and snowmelt collect from hundreds of trickling streams, flowing north toward Frenchman Bay as part of a larger network of wetlands, tributaries, and ponds in the Cromwell Brook watershed.

The largest freshwater wetland in Acadia, Great Meadow supports several different interconnected wetland ecosystems. Birch trees shade the Hemlock Path, putting on spectacular displays of autumn colors. Ferns emerge from water-saturated soils beneath the Jesup Path, and sedges, rushes, and tall grasses flourish on the marshy banks of the meandering waterways. These habitats provide food, shelter, and hunting grounds for hundreds of insects, birds, and mammals, including wood warblers, herons, owls, hares, meadow voles, and beaver.

In the late 19th century, this landscape attracted George B. Dorr, one of the area's leading early preservationists. Around 1900, Dorr, a summer resident turned year-rounder, began purchasing land around Great Meadow, including Sieur de Monts Spring.

Recognizing the importance of protecting Mount Desert Island's beauty and diversity from encroaching development, he donated the natural spring and additional parcels of land to the National Park Service, helping to establish Sieur de Monts National Monument in 1916. The monument soon reached National Park status and was renamed Lafayette National Park in 1919 before being renamed again as Acadia National Park in 1929. Dorr served as the park's first superintendent, holding the position until his death in 1944 at age 90.

During his tenure, Dorr focused much of his time on Great Meadow and greatly modified it, adding greenhouses, trails, and roads to improve public access. These changes inadvertently altered the wetland's natural water flow, and now, a century later, the impacts of those modifications are evident.

"George Dorr was really fascinated and amazed by the beauty of Acadia, especially the area around Sieur de Monts and the Great Meadow, and he wanted to share it with others," explained Lauren Gibson, Friends of Acadia's Wild Acadia coordinator. "To make it accessible and bring people there meant building roads and a trail system through the wetland into Sieur de Monts; some of that infrastructure still exists today, impeding the natural hydrology and the health of the wetland environment."

Long before George Dorr, Great Meadow was part of the ancestral homeland of the Wabanaki people, who had deep, enduring relationships with this landscape since time immemorial. As the historic infrastructure fractures the meadow now, the creation of federally managed lands limited Indigenous access to traditional territories, fracturing their relationship with the land and interrupting the transmission of place-based knowledge and cultural practices. Today, Acadia National Park and Wabanaki partners are working together to restore and strengthen these relationships through a growing model of co-stewardship. By integrating Indigenous knowledge with Western science, these partnerships are reshaping how Great Meadow is understood, studied, and stewarded.

It's been an all-hands-on-deck endeavor in recent years to address the deteriorating health of Great Meadow. Park staff, Wabanaki communities, and partner organizations—including Friends of

THE NEW HEMLOCK PATH: A dedicated group of volunteers, including Francis Hopcroft, Mark Munsell, Gary Stellpflug, Terese Miller, and Bill Shaw, worked this summer to construct a new 500-foot-long raised boardwalk along the Hemlock Path. The new design allows water to flow freely beneath the path, improving the hydrology of the wetland.

"The boardwalk enhances the visitor experience on multiple levels," said Dianna Sproul, Acadia National Park's volunteer coordinator. "We are so grateful for all the tremendous volunteers who support and help make Acadia such a special place."



COURTESY JK PUTNAM PHOTOGRAPHY

Acadia and Schoodic Institute—collaborate closely to address issues ranging from invasive plant management and disruptions in water flow to identifying solutions to undersized culverts and wetland-dividing roads and ditches.

The bisecting trails and abandoned roads that remain on the landscape inhibit the wetland's natural water flow, resulting in drought-like conditions during dry periods and flooding events during periods of heavy snow or rain that can impact adjacent habitats and submerge park infrastructure. In addition, an undersized culvert has long been a culprit for the wetland's poor hydrology; it struggles to keep up during heavy rain events and is frequently clogged by fallen tree branches, leaves, and other organic debris. Compounding these issues are a multitude of environmental stressors, including more frequent and intense storms and heavy rains in winter instead of snow.

Great Meadow is Acadia's largest freshwater wetland complex, but it isn't currently functioning like a healthy wetland. With the soil at times hidden under floodwater and at other times dry and cracked, it doesn't look like one, either.

"It's one of the most complex rehabilitation projects in Acadia National Park," Gibson said.

Hydrology-Friendly Hemlock Path

Acadia's well-traveled Hemlock Path was initially built as a road by Dorr to improve access to the area. Leading from Sieur de Monts Spring and through the Great Meadow, the raised gravel road was eventually abandoned in 1939 in favor of the circular drive that exists today. This road-turned-trail barricaded the natural flow of water as it bisected the wetland. "The trail was elevated," Gibson explained, "and so it served to separate the wetland into two parts."

With the goal of improving the natural hydrology, or flow of water, of the meadow, Acadia National Park's trail crew, led by Trail Crew Supervisor Chris Barter, worked throughout last summer to revamp Hemlock Path in water-friendly ways.

Assisted by a dedicated group of community volunteers who spent hundreds of hours on the project, the trail crew reimagined Hemlock Path as a raised boardwalk, similar to the nearby Jesup Path, with numerous channels running underneath, known as "purges."

The purges allow water to readily pass below—and wildlife as well—removing the hydrological obstacles that arose in the path's initial state. The new boardwalk design simultaneously improves visitor access, keeping the trail dry and navigable after large rainfall events, and improving accessibility for a wider number of park visitors.

"The Hemlock Path boardwalk is an astounding accomplishment by our incredibly skilled Trails Volunteers," said Dianna Sproul, Acadia National Park's volunteer coordinator. "It is well built,

creating an accessible trail surface that protects the resources around it, but it also is a beautiful piece of artwork in and of itself."

"The formation of the park relied on individuals within the community coming together and making a difference," Barter added, as his staff and volunteer crew worked hard on the Hemlock Path in the heat of last summer. "The same can be said about the teams and our work in the Great Meadow."

Tempering an Invasive-Plant Takeover

While the trail crew was hard at work on Hemlock Path, a specialized crew worked nearby to remove invasive plants.

The work is interconnected. The dramatic swings between flooding events and dry spells favor disturbance-tolerant plants, many of which are non-native invasives. "The dynamic hydrology is a problem," Gibson explained. "It's stressing out a lot of the native vegetation. Our goal is to improve the hydrology by facilitating fewer extreme drought or flood conditions, which we're hoping will improve the health of the meadow and increase diversity of both plants and wildlife, like birds."

Part of a years-long effort to address invasive plants in Acadia, Great Meadow is a focus area for a collaborative Invasive Plant Management Team comprised of staff from Acadia National Park and Schoodic Institute, with support from Friends of Acadia.

Schoodic Institute restoration technicians, alongside Acadia's

Vegetation Program Manager Jesse Wheeler, work to remove invasive plant species that are altering the function of the Great Meadow.

One plant of particular interest is glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*). Glossy buckthorn can take hold quickly in an area—and stress native plants. It tolerates a wide range of conditions and keeps its leaves on longer into the season, often "shading out" lower-growing native plants and creating inhospitable conditions for them to thrive.

Giving glossy buckthorn a new kind of treatment, the team established a series of experimental vegetation plots and is testing how some specific native plants that also keep their leaves longer might compete with glossy buckthorn and, ultimately, help keep it from taking over.

Last year, the team continued to monitor and identify resilient plants that may be instrumental in maintaining habitats. The team also looked to the past, uncovering the meadow's vegetative history well below ground.

Last summer, in collaboration with Wabanaki partners, University of Maine palynologist Andrea Nurse collected

"The formation of the park relied on individuals within the community coming together and making a difference. The same can be said about the teams and our work in the Great Meadow."



LILY LAREGINA/FOA

MIST HANGS OVER THE GREAT MEADOW WETLAND, viewed from the Emery Path on Dorr Mountain.

soil cores to explore how the landscape has evolved over time. By studying pollen, macrofossils, environmental DNA, and radiocarbon samples, scientists will reconstruct what the Great Meadow looked like thousands of years ago. This data will allow the team to understand which native plants—and culturally significant plants, traditionally used for food or medicine—thrive here in the past, informing conversations about restoration work and Indigenous food sovereignty into the future.

While the research is one small piece of the puzzle, this collaborative work is instrumental in restoring the health of Great Meadow.

Room To Flow

Another critical piece to restoring the natural water flow in Great Meadow is scheduled to take place this year: replacing the undersized culvert.

Considered relatively small, the three-foot corrugated metal tube will be replaced with a wider, 12-foot concrete culvert that gives broader berth to both water and wildlife. In times of heavy rain, there will be room to accommodate an immediate influx of moving water. And where wildlife like beavers, porcupines, and foxes are currently compelled to walk across the road above to reach the other side of the wetland, they'll have room to waddle and scamper through the new passage. The culvert's corrugated metal bottom will be replaced with a streambed-like design that improves conditions for fish and amphibians to pass through as well.

“This replacement will make a huge difference in helping to moderate water in the wetland,” Gibson said. “We’re hoping that the culvert replacement, in addition to the other restoration work, will eliminate those really high-water highs and those really low lows and reduce the flashiness of the system.”

Expanding the Restoration

Building on this progress, a \$308,000 grant from the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program, awarded to Friends of Acadia this winter, will expand restoration efforts to watershed areas above and below Great Meadow. Above the wetland, the Abbe Stream is currently confined to a maze of human-made underground channels. It will be returned to a more natural streambed and reconnected with Cromwell Brook. This work will improve hydrology, enhance habitat for plants and wildlife, and restore connectivity for fish and other aquatic organisms.

Below the wetland, this new funding will extend the restoration work downstream of the culvert to the park boundary, helping restore Cromwell Brook's floodplain and native vegetation.

“It's extraordinarily exciting to see how much progress is being made,” Gibson said. “In the last 100 years, we've learned so much more about how important wetlands are to wildlife, to water quality, and in mitigating flooding. Each one of these projects is helping us restore Great Meadow to a more natural, healthy state.” ■

CLAIRE KEELEY is a former Digital Content Creator at Friends of Acadia.



The BOLD and the Beautiful

COURTESY RAY YEAGER

An icon of Maine's lakes, the life of a common loon is chock-full of challenges. The Mount Desert Island Loon Monitoring Project tracks the island's breeding territories and loon nesting sites—including a few that float.

BY JAZMINE DEBEAUCHAMP

There's a soap opera of sorts playing out on Echo Lake. At the center of our story: Lily and Herman, a pair of common loons. Named after characters from 1960s sitcom "The Munsters," Lily and Herman were the likely territory holders on the south end of Echo Lake for years before being banded by researchers in July of 2019. Banding means the placement of unique color combinations of plastic bands along with an aluminum band with imprinted numbers and letters on the loon's legs. The ability of researchers to identify individual birds over long periods of time yields lots of information about their lives. The dapper-looking duo met up each spring to reacquire the territory, mate, and hopefully, raise chicks together. But some of their years together were tough.

During the summer of 2017, dropping lake water levels due to drought forced Lily and Herman to move their nest site more than once. Keeping their nests at the water's edge isn't simply a preference for loons, it's critical.

"Loons cannot walk, and that's because of their anatomy," said Billy Helprin, director of the Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary, an MDI non-profit conservation and education organization. "They are specialized for chasing fish underwater, not for moving well on land. Their legs are way at the back of their bodies, so their center mass is way forward."

Helprin spoke about loons during one of Friends of Acadia's Pints for a Purpose talks last summer. Loons, he noted, are heavy birds, and they lack hollow bones, unlike most other birds. These attributes

help them dive easily, but on land, they have to push themselves on their bellies and chest with their legs or pull with their wings.

"If a lake's water level starts to decline, as it typically does as the summer progresses, and a loon pair started with a nest in one spot in May, and now the edge of the water is farther away in June, they're really vulnerable, trying to get back and forth," said Helprin. "That's a chance for an eagle or some other predator to pin down an adult or make it harder for the adults to stay on the nest and defend the eggs."

On the other hand, close proximity to the shoreline can lead to nests getting flooded by sudden big rain events. Large boat wakes can wash over nests and knock eggs into the water. Once they are in the water, there is no way for the loons to get them back into the nest. Loons will often try to re-nest after such an event if it happens early in the nesting period, but they may also give up for the year.

Despite the multiple nest relocations during the 2017 season, a mink ultimately got to Lily and Herman's two eggs. It was easier for the mink to attack from different angles with more dry land around the nest, flush the incubating adult, and get to the eggs.

Not long after, Somes-Meynell and Acadia National Park biology staff launched a floating nest raft at the south end of Echo Lake. Nest rafts are human-made structures set away from shore to provide improved nesting conditions for common loons.

"Floating nest rafts can help deal with fluctuating water levels," said Helprin. They're able to rise or fall with droughts or flooding events, and because they're separated from land, they offer more protection from many predators. Placement of a raft has to be done carefully, with many variables to consider, and there is no guarantee that a loon pair will choose to nest on it.

However, Lily and Herman took to their floating nest raft straight away.

"Herman, the male, especially loves that raft," said Helprin. "Most years, he will jump on it even as I'm paddling it out and getting it into position in the spring. He starts fixing the vegetation on board to his liking, and he makes soft cooing sounds, trying to get the female interested."

For the next three years, Lily and Herman hatched and fledged two chicks each season—very good success. All seemed to be going swimmingly for the pair.

That is, until a newcomer arrived.

"I was down by Echo Lake Beach in a kayak in the evening. Herman was there, and there were two other birds," said Helprin. Those two other birds were Lily and an unbanded female rival.

"I heard some splashing behind me and then a long chase ensued," he said. "Two of the loons were 'wing rowing,' using their wings to pull themselves across the water, like a swimmer's butterfly stroke. They went from Echo Lake Beach, zigzagging all the way up to Ikes Point, almost three-quarters of a mile away. Then the unbanded female came back, and Lily came back, and they did it all again!"

Herman, meanwhile, waited it out. Much like the fickle-hearted characters on a daytime soap opera, loon attachments don't last for life.

"Loons show fidelity to the territory more than to the other bird, although some pairs stay together for a long time," said Helprin. "Herman was like, 'You two figure it out, I'll be hanging out down here.'"

The newly arrived female eventually won out—that time anyway. That summer, she and Herman produced two eggs, tending to them on the floating nest raft. Now and then, Helprin said, Lily made an appearance.

"I saw Lily on those eggs on the raft when no one else was around," Helprin said. "I wondered if she'd poke holes in the eggs or kick the eggs off."

OPPOSITE: A loon takes flight on Somes Pond.

BELOW: A common loon sits on its nest on a raft at Echo Lake. Many nest rafts have screens along the sides and overhead to provide additional protection.



ASHLEY L. CONTI/FOA

“The target is to have about a 50% survival rate for a sustaining population, so an average of one chick fledging every other year across all territorial pairs would be a good outcome. In the past 10 years, we have had 65 chicks fledge out of 98 eggs hatched from our typical 11 or 12 territories, and 65 surviving chicks per 115 ‘territory seasons.’ That’s really good.”

She never did. Even still, those eggs didn’t stay on the nest long, although what exactly happened to them isn’t known.

And then another plot twist: “Lily fought her way back in and displaced the unbanded female,” said Helprin. She and Herman eventually had two eggs, but it was late in the season. “They were sitting on them into August, but their eggs weren’t viable.”

Over the past few years, the unbanded female and Herman have continued to pair up, although they’ve not been as successful as Herman and Lily had been.

“This year (2025) they produced two eggs, one hatched, and that chick survived,” said Helprin. “So that’s good.”

As for Lily in 2025, she was spotted in different places, sometimes on Echo Lake or out in Somes Harbor or the south end of Long Pond.

“Maybe, sometime, she’ll come back and take back over.”

MDI Loon Monitoring Project

Since 2002, the Mount Desert Island Loon Monitoring Project has gathered data on the reproduction and population of nesting loons on Mount Desert Island (MDI). The project is a collaboration led by Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary with the BioDiversity Research Institute (BRI), based in Gorham, Maine, and Acadia National Park’s biology team.

“We study all the loons that nest on all the lakes of Mount Desert Island,” said Helprin, who has coordinated the project for a decade. “Working as a bigger, interconnected network is important because it provides multiple layers of awareness and protection for anything of value, in this case, our loon population.”

Nearly every day from spring through fall, volunteers, partner organizations, and staff record information on loon behavior, nesting success, and chick survival on the island’s lakes and ponds. This long-standing monitoring effort helps highlight the annual triumphs and challenges of loons in response to environmental changes and disturbances.

The lakes of MDI and Acadia National Park are highly sought after by loons eager to find a suitable place to build a nest and raise their chicks.

Park visitors can usually spot these large diving birds on Acadia’s lakes in spring and summer, during their breeding season, though their emotive calls often lead to them being heard before they’re seen. Common loons molt to their recognizable black-and-white breeding plumage in early spring and move towards freshwater once the lake and pond ice melts in late March or April to try to claim a nesting spot.

When breeding season arrives, there are more eligible loons ready to mate than there are available nesting sites, which leads to annual territorial drama.

“A loon’s breeding plumage comes in during their third summer, but younger birds in particular are not very likely to get a territory because they have to fight their way in and displace somebody else,” said Helprin. It is estimated to take about six or seven years to become dominant enough to get a territory, and there are not enough for everyone who wants one.”

They’re very territorial birds and will battle violently to defend their existing nesting area or to usurp the current residents, with the victor ultimately claiming at least part of the lake or pond as their own. In fact, many of the sounds we associate with common loons are used during aggressive, territorial encounters. MDI-area loons that don’t win a territory or a partner—the “non-breeders”—have the option of being on the nearby ocean. Many will repeatedly return to the lakes to challenge resident territory holders throughout the summer.





ASHLEY L. CONTI/FOA

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: A family of loons swim across Echo Lake. **ABOVE:** A common loon feeds its young in Echo Lake near Echo Beach.

A nest's location is critical to the loons' success, and it can often determine whether or not the pairs' eggs hatch.

Although completely avoiding predators is impossible, a good nest location offers some protection from potential threats. Mammalian predator presence, like that of raccoons, foxes, otters, and mink, encourages loons to choose nest sites with the best protection available. Shrubby vegetation above and around a nest can help block eagles and owls from swooping down and flushing out an incubating loon. Small islands, just like rafts, provide a moat to make predation of eggs less likely, but are no guarantee of protection. Sometimes, loons just have to go with the best available site despite its drawbacks.

Getting airborne tends to be a bit challenging for these birds as well.

"They are heavy birds with relatively small wings, and that means that they have to run on the water and flap simultaneously for quite a distance to take off," Helprin said. "Both modes of locomotion are necessary to get enough momentum to get airborne. It's just like a plane at the airport: the bigger the aircraft, the longer the runway needs to be."

This means that they should only land on lakes big enough to take off from; otherwise, they will be stuck.

"It's not just the area of the lake, but the shape, coves, peninsulas, and islands that are important features of territory potential," said Helprin. Identifying a truly good nesting site isn't as simple as finding an unoccupied body of water.

Most years, loon pairs nest on Somes Pond, Long Pond, Seal Cove Pond, Upper Hadlock Pond, Little Long Pond, Jordan Pond, and Eagle Lake. "Eagle Lake, as big as it is, 436 acres—that's one territory," said Helprin.

There are typically two pairs on Echo Lake—one on the south end and one on the north—and three pairs on 900-acre Long Pond. Somes Pond is a one-territory water body of 104 acres. Witch Hole Pond, a relatively small 28 acres, is a newer territory where loons are nesting; Round Pond used to host loons, but it's been about a decade since any loons have nested there.

Each year, if they are able, the most dominant male pairs up with the most dominant female in their freshly acquired or reacquired territory, and they begin the next part of their journey: incubating eggs for about 28 days. If they are lucky and the eggs hatch, then they start the arduous 12-week (or so) journey towards fledging. Although, as Lily and Herman, and others experience, competition can arrive at any moment.

"A lot of recon happens by "floaters" or unwelcome visitors all summer on certain lakes," said Helprin. "It's common to see groups of five, six, or seven loons out in the middle of Echo Lake. When there's a skirmish, the non-residents are scoping things out to see 'how strong is this opponent? Can I overcome him or her?'" Males displace males and females displace females, but they all may be involved in above-and-below-water fights.

Once their eggs are laid, both parents share responsibility, Helprin said. "Both the male and female do everything (except lay eggs). ...They both incubate. They both feed the chicks. They both have them on their backs early on for protection. Don't assume that a loon with a chick on its back is a mommy and her little one."

If all goes to plan, one to two chicks will hatch about a month after they are laid. Once hatched, the parents will provide protection for the 12 weeks it takes for their chicks to be able to fly away from their natal lake. They do all of this while capturing fish and aquatic invertebrates like crayfish to feed themselves and their offspring.

Last summer, a total of eight chicks hatched from Little Long Pond, Somes Pond, Upper Hadlock Pond, and Echo Lake. Of those, five successfully fledged.

“So that’s five out of eight chicks for survival to fledging time. But it’s 5 out of 12 territorial pairs of potential parents,” said Helprin. “That’s the population metric that’s usually used by loon biologists. The target is to have about a 50% survival rate for a sustaining population so one chick every other year across all territorial pairs would be a good outcome. A higher percent survival rate would indicate a building population, and less than that is a decline.”

“In the past 10 years, we have had 65 chicks fledged out of 98 eggs hatched, and 65 chicks for 115 ‘territory seasons,’” said Helprin. “That’s really good.” In many other parts of the state and across the northern part of the continent where loons breed, they are not doing as well.

A Tough Loon Life

“The oldest common loons we know of spend their summers at the Seney National Wildlife Refuge in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. The male, banded as a chick and known as ABJ, was 38 in 2025 and the female “Fe,” banded as an adult, was at least 39. They have produced 32 chicks together and 29 fledged, but they split up in 2022 and have had other mates since.”

“They can live a long time, but a lot of them do not,” said Helprin. “It can be a very tough life for loons, as it is for most animals.”

Predation is a significant threat for both eggs and hatched chicks.

“Oftentimes one or both parents leave chicks by themselves to defend the territory or forage in other lakes or on the ocean if they have a relatively small pond as their territory,” Helprin said. “And there may be eagles watching who take advantage of parents being away.”

Human disturbances and rival loons are other dangers.

On the north end of Echo Lake last year, observers noticed a problem for the banded territorial pair loons. The male’s left leg was entangled in fishing line, affecting his mobility and hunting success. It was hard to tell how the line was attached and exactly where, but he often held his left leg out of the water, dragging it behind him or pulled up by his wing. Despite the male’s encumbrance, the pair managed to hatch one chick.

“He was really handicapped,” said Helprin. “He was able to dive in shallow water, catch crayfish and small fish to feed himself, but he wasn’t able to feed the chick.”

Sanctuary staff and a BRI biologist boated out to try and capture him and remove the line, but he dove out of sight every time they approached. “There was just no way we could get close to him. We just had to wait.”

An intruding male loon took advantage of the original male’s vulnerability, Helprin said. “Another male came in and displaced him and killed the chick. That’s not uncommon, to disrupt the bond of the existing pair.”

The original male loon, unable to take off in his condition, was forced to live in hiding on Echo Lake.

“He had to hide out on the edges and up in the very north cove in the shallows,” Helprin said.

That banded male eventually disappeared from Echo Lake. He was observed making test runs on the water in mid-August and was not seen after days of thorough searching. It’s most likely that he was able to fly off and is spending the winter along the coast—hopefully without the fishing line still attached.

“It will be interesting to see what happens this spring, whether he will return and try to take back the territory,” Helprin said.

Winter Weathering

As the breeding season comes to an end, loons begin to leave their lakes and head to the ocean for the winter—typically one parent goes first, while the other remains to tend to the chick(s) until they’re ready to go. Sometimes parents leave before the chicks and sometimes the youngsters depart first.

While extremely territorial during the breeding season, loons will often congregate on lakes in large groups in the late summer and fall. No longer needing to defend their territories or their chicks, they raft up and socialize before eventually migrating to coastal waters for the winter.

Compared to midwestern loons, who migrate thousands of miles from the interior of the continent to the Gulf of Mexico, Acadia’s loons have a very short migration if they stay along MDI shores.

“These birds are half marine and half aquatic, the ones that are breeding,” said Helprin. “Here (in coastal Maine) we have ocean and lakes right next to each other. That gives us an opportunity to see things that most people observing inland loons wouldn’t see. That includes being able to follow fledged Somes Pond juveniles over to Somes Harbor and Somes Sound where, in multiple years, different young birds have hung out with and been fed by the Somes Pond male (his or her father) for many weeks after leaving its natal lake. Two different Somes Pond resident males have done this!”

Winter loons may be unrecognizable to the summer visitor. Loon plumage changes from fall to winter to a subdued gray and white. Their red eyes become less vivid, and their bills tend to lighten to gray shades.

When spring comes again, they return to the lakes to defend their territories, mate, and hopefully raise another generation.

Their striking appearance and haunting calls make common loons one of Acadia’s most recognizable birds, but their resilience defines their importance to the park.

Thanks to dedicated monitoring, greater understanding, and mindful lake visitors, these iconic birds have a better chance of thriving in Acadia National Park. ■

JAZMINE DEBEAUCHAMP is a freelance writer and former Raptor Intern at Acadia National Park.

How You Can Help Protect Loons

Small actions can make a meaningful difference in protecting loons on MDI—and everywhere.

- View loons from a good distance (at least 100 feet) with binoculars and long camera lenses to reduce stress and the risk of nest abandonment. If a loon (or any animal) changes its behavior, moves away, or vocalizes in your presence, you are likely too close.
- Keep dogs on leash and away from areas where loons might be nesting—loons view dogs, even tiny ones, as predators.
- Minimize boat wakes near shorelines and nesting areas to prevent nest disruptions. Maine law requires boaters to operate at “headway speed” within 200 feet of any shoreline, including islands. “Headway speed” means the slowest speed at which it is still possible to maintain steering and control of the watercraft.
- Use alternatives to lead fishing lures and weights. Lead poisoning from ingested tackle is a leading cause of death for adult common loons and use of small-sized lead gear is prohibited by Maine law. Learn more at maineaudubon.org/projects/loons/fish-lead-free/ and fishleadfree.org/me/.

- Remove broken or stray fishing line and hooks from the water and shorelines. Dispose of them in the garbage or recycle in dedicated containers. Line entanglement is a significant cause of harm and death for loons and other animals that inhabit lakes.
- Report MDI observations and share photos of banded loons, predation events, or loons in distress to Billy Helprin at the Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary (email somesmeynell@gmail.com or call 207-244-4027). More observers contributing information helps us all know more about how our loons are doing. Join loon-watching walks in the summer to learn more.

Browse Loon Count Data

Curious about statewide loon counts over the decades? Check out Maine Audubon’s interactive Annual Loon Count Results, where you can view data from 1983-2025. Last year’s loon count showed a healthy population in Maine. Search Acadia’s lakes and a host of sites around Maine. Find it on maineaudubon.org or via the QR code.

For more information on MDI’s loon population, visit the Sanctuary’s website: www.somesmeynell.org/mount-desert-island-loon-monitoring-project.



BELOW: Billy Helprin breaks up ice to rescue a stranded loon on Echo Lake.



TAKE IT OUTSIDE

Outdoor Classroom grants help teachers create outdoor learning spaces where students benefit from time spent in nature and curriculum that builds connections to Acadia National Park.

BY SHANNON BRYAN



“SUPPORTING COMMUNITY IS A HUGE PART OF THE PROGRAM,” said Paige Steele, Acadia for All director at Friends of Acadia. “For many Maine towns, school is the heart of the community—where their children learn and attend after-school, where they hold bean suppers and elections, and so on. These grants help buoy these important Maine communities and send the message, ‘Friends of Acadia sees you, we want the best learning environment for your students, and we want you to feel a strong connection to Acadia National Park.’”

Anature trail winds its mellow way through a red maple swamp between Deer Isle-Stonington's middle and high schools.

Less than a half mile long, the raised boardwalk path curves around stands of maples and crowds of cinnamon ferns. Colorful letters, in alphabetical order, mark the trail's sections.

"The first grade has a six-week phenology unit every spring, where they come out with their clipboards and their handheld microscopes and binoculars and their nature journals," said Mickie Flores, a former math and science teacher at Deer Isle-Stonington Elementary School. Now retired, Flores remains a dedicated advocate for the schools' outdoor learning spaces.

Students crouch in their designated sections—indicated by those alphabetical letters—and look: what's going on? What do they see now that they didn't see last week? In their journals they track changes, those hints of green peeking through the soil, stems reaching upward, leaves unfurling, buds opening.

The meandering nature trail continues on to wide sections—open decks with railings and benches or stools made from tree stumps. Teachers bring students to these outdoor classrooms to learn under the tree canopy. And that goes for teachers of all subjects.

"These are places to teach," said Flores. "They're for English or art or math or social studies. The drama teacher brings people out to practice their lines."

The school counselor brings students out, too.

The trail also loops around a yellow birch, which has become a popular spot.

"The yellow birch spur became an outdoor classroom," said environmental educator Martha Bell, who works alongside teachers at Deer Isle-Stonington. "Students sit on the edge, because it's kind of a circle. And the teachers just gravitate to that place."

Deer Isle-Stonington's nature trail and outdoor classrooms are nine years in the making, said Flores. The project is a collaborative community effort. The school has a tight partnership with Island Heritage Institute. Volunteers have helped design and build trail. Artists from nearby Haystack Mountain School of Crafts work with students to create art that decorates the trail, including the trail sign.

Over the last five years, funding from Friends of Acadia's Outdoor Classroom grants helped build two of the outdoor classrooms as well as an in-the-works switchback where the trail ends near the middle school. Currently there's a set of stairs to enter or exit the trail; the switchback will improve accessibility.

Last year's grant was one of 12 Outdoor Classroom grants awarded by Friends of Acadia to Maine schools. These grants support the creation of outdoor learning spaces and activities on school campuses so that students benefit from time spent in nature and curriculum that builds connections to Acadia National Park. The grants enable teachers to create outdoor opportunities that best suit their students, be that building a trail, tapping maple trees, or solving math equations to the fluttering sounds of chickadees.

"Being outside opens the gateway to curiosity," said Bell. "If you tell students to look for birds and write them down, that's not nearly as effective as them making their own discoveries." Outdoors, they have space to explore.

"They come out with hand lenses, and they get right up on the bark of a tree. They love scientific tools. They're out here being scientists," Bell added. The things they find, she said, feel like revelations. "They're wondering and thinking that they maybe just found a new species."

And research supports the positive impact of outdoor learning. A 2017 Stanford University review of 119 peer-reviewed studies found that environmental education for K-12 students improved academic performance and critical thinking skills and helped



"Some of the kids who have a hard time inside a classroom thrive outside. They can decompress. Fifteen or twenty minutes outside and they're so different when they get back to the classroom."

– Martha Bell,
environmental educator
with Island Heritage Trust



ABOVE LEFT: Deer Isle-Stonington Elementary School students explore the beach on Isle au Haut. **ABOVE RIGHT:** First graders at Ellsworth Elementary-Middle School harvest watermelon radishes from the school garden last fall. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** A group of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders from Ellsworth Elementary-Middle School stop for a photo during their bike trip to Acadia in 2023.

students develop confidence, autonomy, and leadership. It improved their motivation to learn and their interest in school.

“Our Outdoor Classroom grants are helping to support the culture of Maine’s public schools to become more nature-based,” said Paige Steele, Friends of Acadia’s Acadia for All director, who oversees the grant program. “Most folks don’t realize what a wonderful and massive change this is, because for 50-plus years it was mostly students from private or wealthy public-school districts who had access to outdoor learning. Most schools surrounding Acadia are in small, rural towns with modest school budgets.”

Through outdoor classrooms, students connect with the outdoors in ways they might not otherwise have an opportunity to do, building their appreciation for and stewardship of outdoor spaces.

For Deer Isle-Stonington, the Outdoor Classroom grants, combined with a Yellow Bus Fund grant from Friends of Acadia to assist with transportation costs, is also connecting students to Isle au Haut, a remote portion of Acadia National Park about six miles off the coast of Stonington.

Every year now, students take the 45-minute ferry ride to the island for a ranger-led program. Many of those students have never to been to Isle au Haut (so close and yet so far from their own backyards).

The culture at Deer Isle-Stonington has shifted to one that embraces the outdoors in all seasons. Many classrooms are out on the nature trail every week, feeding the birds, conducting experiments, scouting for wildlife. And students continue to benefit.

“Some of the kids who have a hard time inside a classroom thrive outside,” said Bell. “They can decompress. Fifteen or twenty minutes outside and they’re so different when they get back to the classroom.”

This outdoor space is a place for students to learn, but they’re integral to its existence, too.

They moved soil and removed invasive plants. High school students designed and built a railing. They planted a witch hazel shrub that was donated by a neighboring land trust. Kindergarteners fill the bird feeders.

“All of these kids made it,” said Flores. “This place belongs to them.”

Growing Connections to Maine’s Outdoors

Students walking by art teacher Martha Baldwin’s classroom at Ellsworth Elementary-Middle School often pause to whisper to plants.

“Hi, babies,” they might softly say, as they hover curiously over the seedling table, eyeing how much those seedlings have grown since yesterday or last week.

In addition to art instruction, nature is at the root of Baldwin’s approach to teaching. In 2022, she participated in the Acadia Teacher Collaborative program, where educators learn how to cultivate outdoor classrooms at their home schools. Baldwin’s students garden, press apples, and tap maple trees that grow on the school’s property.

She wants them to learn about food sustainability and all the splendid things that grow in Maine soil. She also wants to connect them with the outdoors—be that through planting kale or making syrup.

Those hands-on opportunities are critical, she said. “They often remember the sensory experience because they are more engaged, and I hope this will imprint for lifelong memories and inspiration in their own lives.”

To help students get outside and get their hands dirty, Baldwin applied for an Outdoor Classroom grant from Friends of Acadia to purchase an apple press, gardening tools and gloves, wheelbarrows, and trail tools.

To keep the growing going during the cold months of the school year, grant funds also helped Baldwin purchase an indoor hydroponic garden. Stationed near the doorway of her classroom, its bright growing lights are like a beacon in the hallway, luring students over to peer at the vertical rows of sprouting basil, kale, and lettuce—and sometimes whisper their encouragement.

In addition to the hands-on experiences of growing things (and tasting them, of course), produce from those indoor and outdoor gardens will be part of the school salad bars, Harvest of the Month, and eighth grade garden group tastings as well.

The trail tools come in handy as students work to build up a trail system on school grounds, too. Last year, Friends of Acadia’s

Stewardship Manager Nikki Burtis helped seventh and eighth graders revitalize an older riverside trail on the school property. Burtis also worked with students to build a bridge over a culvert that had made the trail challenging to traverse.

“When we take second graders out to tap maple trees in March, we used to go through the parking lot,” said Baldwin. “It’s magical for them to go on a trail.”

Let’s Go for a Ride

“Nature has a calming effect on all of us,” said David Norwood, P.E. teacher at Ellsworth Elementary-Middle School. One of his favorite ways to get outside is on a bicycle.

“I’ve always thought of the freedom of riding a bike,” he said. “The world is just more accessible to you—the distance that you can go in the time you’re allocated.”

As a physical education teacher, he’s dedicated to getting students active and moving. Getting them moving outside is even better.

“It’s been 32 years of teaching, and I’ve watched the steady progression of the dominance of screen time in kids’ lives,” said Norwood. While he can’t stop the advancement of hand-held technology, he can take them for a bike ride.

Norwood sees the positive influence getting outdoors has on students—the shifts in mood, their attentiveness.

“The effects we’re talking about are acute,” he said. “They take place in the moment. We can see it. We can feel it when we go outside with them. But they’re also long-term.”

Riding a bike is simply fun, Norwood said. But it’s also a learned skill. Over the years, he’s learned that not every student has a bike at home. Some never learned how to ride.

“Not all of them have the space or the money or the time to or the family structure to go learn how to ride a bike,” he said.

A few months ago, Norwood received a \$7,500 Outdoor Classroom Grant from Friends of Acadia to purchase bikes that help fill an important gap in the school’s bike fleet.

The school system already had mountain bikes for the high school program. During Covid, they received funds for balance bikes—pedal-free bicycles for younger kids that help them learn the basics of balance and steering.

But there was a gap for second through fifth graders, particularly those who never learned to ride a bike and were too big now for the small balance bikes. That’s where the Outdoor Classroom Grant comes in.

“That grant is a huge deal,” Norwood said. “We’re now going to

have cycling from pre-K to high school. Every grade has access to bikes in school and the P.E. program.”

Norwood said, to his knowledge, that’s a rare feat for any school in the state.

“We have way more freedom to give them experiences they might not otherwise have,” he said. “This spring, they’ll be able to start riding.”

The school board approved funds to build a storage shed for the bikes, and Norwood hopes to develop a program for students to help maintain them, ensuring the equipment stays in good shape well into the future.

Learning to ride a bike is a skill the students will keep their whole lives, too.

In addition to riding during school hours, the Ellsworth Elementary-Middle School bike program has also ventured to one of the area’s dandiest car-free places to ride: Acadia National Park’s carriage roads.

In 2023, Norwood and another P.E. teacher took seventh and eighth graders to Acadia on a weekend, transporting students and bikes in a van. They rode the splendid and scenic Eagle Lake loop. Some of those students, Norwood said, had never been on the carriage roads.

School experiences like this open doorways for students, welcoming them to places they might not otherwise find themselves. For Norwood, the cycling program is also a way to give back to a community that supported him.

Several years ago, Norwood was in a bike accident. Hospitalized for four days, it took time for him to recover. It was a tough blow, he said, but one softened by the support of his students, their families, and the school. The community organized a kids’ bike ride to express their appreciation for him and their well-wishes for his recovery.

Out of that inaugural ride came the annual Bike Rodeo, a one-day event held at Ellsworth Elementary-Middle School, where students and parents come to spend the day riding bikes and learning safe riding skills and rules of the road. Local organizations and businesses are on-site to repair kids’ bikes for free and offer refurbished bikes to kids who need them. There’s ice cream, too.

Growing the bike program—helping students learn to ride and enjoy the freedom and fun of riding outside—is his way of supporting the community back.

“I hope this is a legacy I can leave behind,” he said. ■

SHANNON BRYAN is Friends of Acadia’s Content and Website Manager.



A photograph of a winter forest. The ground is covered in a thick layer of snow. In the foreground, a stream bed is visible, composed of numerous dark, rounded rocks partially covered in snow. The trees are mostly bare, with some evergreens in the background. The sky is overcast and grey.

SNOW BENEATH THE TREES

Historically a given in Acadia, winter snowfall anecdotally feels less reliable in recent years. A study is underway to address the need for a coordinated network of monitoring stations in the region.



ASHLEY L. CONTI/FOA

BY CATHERINE SCHMITT

On the morning after a fall of cold, crystal snow, Acadia is made anew.

Snow collects on stone, highlighting the shape and contours of mountainsides and shorelines. In the forest, the weight of the snow pushes down evergreen branches, outlining the curves of cedar, spires of spruce, and symmetry of fir while coating needles in sugary frosting.

Bright and white, snow maintains the cool conditions needed for its own persistence by reflecting instead of absorbing sunlight, yet it also protects tree roots and seedlings from exposure to freezing air. This protective function is palpable. The woods are quiet and seem to sigh with contentment.

As the sun rises higher, snow at the top of the canopy begins to melt and slip, falling to the next branch, knocking loose a shower of sparkling powder that vanishes in a beam of light. Above, the wind stirs, sending another drift of glittering dust down from branches of towering hemlocks.

SEASONAL RHYTHMS OF SNOW

Throughout history, snow has been part of the seasonal rhythm of Acadia National Park. Reports of park rangers and naturalists from the 20th century describe the east face of Dorr Mountain as “whitened by a heavy blanket of snow and ice” and Cadillac Mountain as an “inhospitable zone” of ice and snow.

Snow data from Acadia are incomplete. There’s a set of records that covers the period 1950-1975 when at least four inches of snow covered the ground for an average of 37 days each winter. The National Park Service pronounced Acadia “the biggest snowmobile park in the East” in 1977.

But now the rhythms are shifting. Snow has become both elusive and more eventful. This shift happened quickly, within my own lifetime.

In 2005, I was working as a research assistant at the University of Maine, helping with water-related studies. Researchers in Acadia were attempting to learn how acid rain, smog, and other air pollution affected lakes, streams, and the surrounding forests.

Sarah Nelson, a Ph.D. student at the time, had noted a spike in mercury during the spring thaw, and wondered whether snow was a factor. But few people had studied snow in the forest or how it affected pollution patterns. To find out, she—we—had to sample it.

At 12 monitoring sites, Nelson set up tubes and bags to collect the “throughfall” of snow filtered by the trees and photographed the overhanging canopy with a fisheye lens. And then waited for snow.

The atlas of snow conditions from the Northeast Regional Climate Center estimated that snow cover of four inches in Acadia in March was more likely than not. That winter would prove to be one of the snowiest in recent record. The snow piled up. As fresh snow accumulated with each larger storm, the underlying snow was melting and refreezing into itself in the season-long collection tubes.

At the end of the season, I helped retrieve one of the snow samples. We were a team of four, including Nelson, and we hiked up the trail wearing snowshoes and empty backpacks, dismantled the sampling equipment, and put the gear in our packs and the giant core of frozen snow on a sled. We took turns towing the sled, taking breaks to admire the views.

We were all studying climate change in one way or another. We knew the predictions: warming temperatures, shorter winters, more rain, less snow. But all of that was still in the future, we thought. We didn't know how quickly things were changing, that within 20 years, snow in Acadia would no longer be reliably present, let alone deep enough to measure.

MODELING SNOW FUTURES

This region is getting warmer fast, and most of the warming is occurring in winter. Along the coast of Maine, the average coldest temperature in winter (December through February) is 7.4 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than it was 130 years ago, according to Maine State Climatologist Sean Birkel. More precipitation now falls as rain than snow, and models predict a continued decrease in the number of days with snow on the ground. The historical trend is more difficult to discern locally, in part because of the incomplete data.

While people who like to cross-country ski in Acadia remain eagerly attuned to real-time snow conditions and can anecdotally speak to fluctuating trends, comprehensive and ongoing scientific monitoring would provide important information for everyone who lives or visits here, helping us understand how our winters are changing and how we might prepare. Bringing automated snow monitoring to the northeast would likewise be valuable to those who reside next to rivers, operate hydroelectric dams, use water for manufacturing, manage drinking water supplies, or forecast river flooding.

College of the Atlantic has been contributing to the Maine Cooperative Snow Survey since 2014, and their measurements show fairly consistent year-over-year snow cover in February, and high variability in March.

But everything changed in the winter of 2023-2024: the winter without snow. Some fell in December but quickly disappeared. It made for an eerie and uneasy season, especially for skiers.

"Several of the past couple of years have been lackluster for sure," said Friends of Acadia Stewardship Manager Nikki Burtis, who collaborates with the Acadia Winter Trails Association volunteer groomers who prepare the carriage roads for cross-country and skate skiing. "We've had to really define the parameters due to the freeze/thaw cycle that has been happening to ensure the carriage roads don't sustain any damage from the equipment," said Burtis. Grooming occurs only when (and if) the carriage roadbed is adequately frozen and there's a base of at least six inches of snow.

In 2025 and 2026 winter returned, and groomers stayed busy. Cold temperatures preserved the snowpack, which was periodically replenished with a few inches of new, light snow. Still, last year the thaw came earlier than it did historically. By late March the snow had melted from all but the highest elevations, water running off the mountain slopes, pouring over cliffs, replenishing streams and lakes.

In the upper reaches of Hadlock Brook, stubborn pockets of snow persisted beneath the trees. Scientists call these "refugia"—places that for various reasons are relatively buffered from climatic shifts. With mountains that create shade and block wind and ocean currents that moderate temperature, Acadia has great potential for refugia. For those who study our changing world, refugia offer a glimmer of hope in what can otherwise be a sad and disheartening profession.

Dr. Sarah Nelson, now director of research for Appalachian Mountain Club,

is still studying snow.

She recently published a study on snow refugia that includes analysis of data from her work in Acadia. The site at Hadlock Brook, where I helped collect snow samples way back when, was one location with medium forest canopy cover, where snow persisted longer. Evergreen trees intercept and hold on to more snow (creating that magical feeling) but also shelter the snow that does accumulate, keeping it on the ground. In contrast, the bare branches of deciduous

"Now the rhythms are shifting. Snow has become both elusive and more eventful. This shift happened quickly, within my own short lifetime."



GLEASON PHOTO COLLECTION

HEAVY SNOW BLANKETS THE TREES west of Oldfarm in this archival photo captured by photographer Herbert W. Gleason (1855 –1937).

trees allow more snow to fall to the ground but also permit more sunlight that can melt and evaporate snow. The sweet spot for snow is somewhere in between—a canopy open enough to allow snow to accumulate, but not so open that the wind blows it away or the sun beats down on it.

Knowing more about snow refugia and other interactions between snow, forests, and rivers will help reduce uncertainty in computer models that rely on accurate snow data to predict flooding or water availability.

The Appalachian Mountain Club and Schoodic Institute are both part of the Northeast Snow Survey Feasibility Study led by University of New Hampshire, which is addressing the need for a coordinated network of automated, real-time snow monitoring stations in the region.

“The Maine Cooperative Snow Survey data is a great example of why we need automation,” said Chris Nadeau of Schoodic Institute. “It is hard to show trends because snow is measured only a few times each year and the collection times are not consistent.” Across

the region, most weather stations are at low elevations in populated areas, preventing a full understanding of the changing magnitude and timing of snowfall and runoff, especially in mountainous, forested terrain like Acadia.

So, I’ve been thinking a lot about snow, noticing how it falls, where it collects, when it lingers.

When it snows, as it is right now while I write this at the end of January, I feel a sense of relief that all is not lost, and that beauty and wonder can still be found in winter, there beneath the trees. ■

Learn more about the Northeast Snow Survey Feasibility Study (NESS) at sites.usnh.edu/ness/

CATHERINE SCHMITT is a Science Communication Specialist at Schoodic Institute.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

KEY EVENTS THROUGH THE SUMMER

APRIL

15

Park Loop Road opens to vehicles for the season

25

Earth Day Roadside Cleanup

Learn more at friendsofacadia.org/earthday



MAY

1

Carroll Homestead opens for the season

16

Jordan Pond House opens for the season



21

Pints for a Purpose, 5:30 p.m. Thursdays through Oct. 15, Terramor Outdoor Resort

Join us for informative talks and camaraderie that'll deepen your connection to Mount Desert Island and Acadia National Park. This free series happens

every Thursday at 5:30 p.m. into October at Terramor Outdoor Resort. All are welcome to attend and \$1 of every beer purchased benefits Friends of Acadia!



July 30: Steven Kemp shares his latest book "An Exaltation of Parks: John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s Crusade to Save America's Wonderlands"

August 20: Dr. John Anderson and the "Further Adventures of Wandering Gulls"

Check out the full list of speakers at friendsofacadia.org/p4p

25

Free Entrance Day in Acadia (Memorial Day)



SPRING CLOSURES TO KEEP IN MIND

Carriage Road Closures

During spring thaw each year (a.k.a. mud season), warmer weather and wet conditions soften the carriage roads and make them susceptible to damage. To protect them, park managers temporarily close the carriage roads each spring.

For the most recent information regarding openings, closures, and activities at Acadia, see the park's website: [NPS.GOV/ACAD](https://www.nps.gov/acad). For Friends of Acadia events, see [FRIENDSOFACADIA.ORG](https://www.friendsofacadia.org).

JUNE

2

First day of the Drop-in Stewardship Volunteer Program

6

Backyard Stewards Plant Identification Workshop

8

Save our Summits Registration Opens

Carry soil to Acadia's summits and help vegetation restoration efforts! Hikes run Wednesdays and Fridays beginning June 24. Learn more at [friendsofacadia.org/saveoursummits](https://www.friendsofacadia.org/saveoursummits)



13

Wild Gardens of Acadia Plant Sale

14

Free Entrance Day in Acadia (Flag Day/the president's birthday)

JULY

3-5

Free Entrance Day in Acadia (Independence Day weekend)

8

Friends of Acadia's Annual Meeting & 40th Anniversary Celebration, Bar Harbor Club



27

Annual George B. Dorr Society Luncheon

George B. Dorr honors those who include Friends of Acadia in their estate plans, celebrating a shared legacy of stewardship and love for the park Dorr envisioned.



AUGUST

8

Friends of Acadia's Annual Benefit & Auction, Gate House Farm, Northeast Harbor



20

Backyard Stewards Community Invasive Plant Removal Workshop

25

Free Entrance Day in Acadia (110th birthday of the National Park Service)

Trail Closures to Protect Peregrines

To provide peregrine falcons adequate space for nesting, park managers at Acadia closed specific trails on March 1, including Penobscot East Trail, Jordan Cliffs Trail, Precipice Trail, and Valley Cove Trail. These annual closures protect the peregrine falcons from inadvertent human disturbance or harassment during the nesting period.

For current conditions on trail or carriage road closures, check the Acadia National Park website: [nps.gov/acad/planyourvisit/conditions.html](https://www.nps.gov/acad/planyourvisit/conditions.html)



The **MOSSES** of **ACADIA**

Take a closer look at these resilient yet sensitive tiny wonders.

BY MATTIE VANDIVER

In the depths of winter, it can be difficult to catch sight of green leaves in the blanketed, snowy world. But look a little closer and you'll see tiny ecosystems peeking out of the frozen ground, hiding within rock crevices and growing on tree trunks: mosses.

According to the 2016 “Mosses, Liverworts, and Hornworts” field guide by Ralph H. Pope, mosses have existed for more than 400 million years, beginning when they diverged from algae and made their way onto land. Mosses are non-vascular, meaning they do not have roots that allow for water conduction, so they are reliant on access to water to grow, thrive, and reproduce. They can, however, survive long periods of being dried—they have a “desiccation tolerance”—and once they find water again, they revive.

There are more than 12,000 identified moss species in the world, found on every continent, including Antarctica, according to the National Park Service. Though they are resilient to temperature and environmental changes, they are sensitive to pollutants and can be used as indicator species for environmental toxicity, including air pollution, heavy metals, pH levels, salt levels, and changes in climate. Mosses are an important water-absorbing component of wetland habitats in Acadia. That moisture is then slowly released into the ecosystem. They also help stabilize soil, reducing erosion in areas where they grow. Small animals find shelter amid mosses, and some, like slugs and snails, like to eat it.

But mosses are also fragile and can be harmed when stepped on, making it important to watch where you are walking.


In Acadia, an important moss genera, or taxonomic category, is *Sphagnum*. Dead, partially decomposed *Sphagnum* is also known as peat moss. *Sphagnum* mosses are extremely important in a larger context as, according to a 2024 paper by Tolunay et al., 30-45% of the world's carbon is sequestered by peatlands, even though peatlands only cover about 3% of the Earth's surface.

Although almost indistinguishable from each other without the use of a microscope, around 40 species of *Sphagnum* are found throughout the woods and bog ecosystems of Acadia. Hikers are sure to see it from nearly any forest trail, as well as places like the Schoodic Forest on the Schoodic Peninsula and the bog at Wild Gardens of Acadia. In the Great Meadow Wetland, efforts to improve the hydrology there will support the growth of *Sphagnum*.

Other moss species are more easily identifiable. The first thing to look for is whether the moss is an acrocarp or a pleurocarp, meaning is it single stemmed (acrocarp) or branching (pleurocarp).

A single-stemmed acrocarp moss will have one stalk from the soil to its top, usually with a star-like shape at its crown. A branching pleurocarp moss will have a main stem with additional stems shooting off from the central stalk, like those of tree branches. Acrocarps grow more vertically and upright while pleurocarps grow more horizontally, against a surface. A hand lens is helpful when identifying

SAM MALLON/FOA



Throughout the woods and bog ecosystems of Acadia are around 40 species of *Sphagnum* moss, although they're difficult to differentiate without the use of a microscope.

MATTIE VANDIVER PHOTO



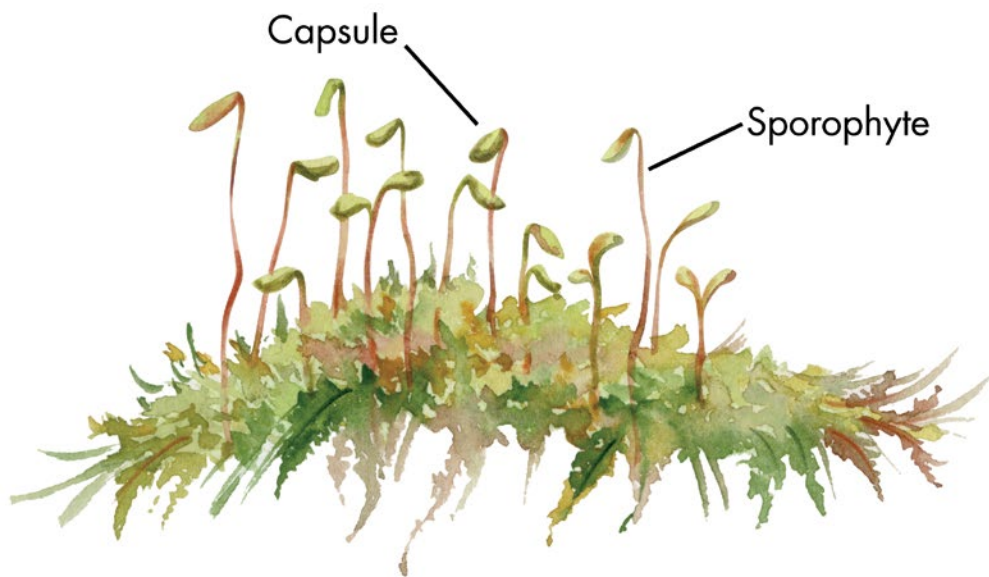
Pleurocarp
(Brocade moss)

MATTIE VANDIVER PHOTO



Acrocarp
(Haircap moss)

MATTIE VANDIVER PHOTO



mosses to see features such as the midrib (a line of thickened cells running down the center of the leaf, resembling a midrib in vascular plant leaves) and how much of the leaf it occupies, as well as individual leaf edges, which could be wavy, smooth, toothed, sickle-tipped, or other variations.

Another key feature that can help with identification is the sporophyte. The sporophyte is the stalk that rises out of the moss tufts, holding a capsule on its end. This capsule contains spores that are dispersed by wind once the hood (the calyptra) falls off and the lid (the operculum) of the capsule opens. Spores help mosses reproduce by traveling to new places and growing into new moss plants when conditions are right. The shape of this capsule can be an important distinguisher in identifying the species. Distinguishing factors include its width and length, if it has flattened, geometric sides and how many, and what it looks like both with its calyptra and when uncovered.

When hiking in Acadia, there are many mosses that can be identified with the naked

eye. One is pincushion moss (*Leucobryum glaucum*), named for the stalks that grow in dense clumps, giving them a round cushion shape, hence the “pincushion” common name. This moss can appear a light mint green color when dry.

Another common species is tree moss (*Climacium dendroides*), a distinctive, erect, tree-like moss. Feathery clumps shoot off at the top of each stalk, giving it a similar appearance to the tuft of a palm tree. Its color can range from dark green to yellow.

A species that is identifiable based on the habitat it grows on is *Hedwigia ciliata*, or medusa moss, a drought-tolerant, mat-forming moss found on dry, sun-exposed, nutrient-poor rocks, boulders, and sometimes roofs. It has distinguishable white tips at the ends of its thin branches.

This season, keep your eye out for these bryophyte friends as the winter snow fades.

MATTIE VANDIVER is a freelance writer and former Wild Gardens of Acadia Intern.



Pincushion moss



Tree moss

GROW YOUR MOSS KNOWLEDGE WITH THESE FIELD GUIDES:

“Mosses, Liverworts, and Hornworts” by Ralph Pope

Princeton Field Guides, “Common Mosses of the Northeast and Appalachians” by McKnight et al.

“Mosses of the Northern Forest: a Photographic Guide” by Jerry Jenkins

“Ecological Guide to the Mosses and Common Liverworts of the Northeast” by Sue Alix Williams



Medusa moss

MY ACADIA: 75 Years of Visiting Acadia

BY SUZANNE LOEBL

In August 1950, Ernest Loebel, my new husband, and I stepped out of a spiffy, black limousine at Acadia National Park's Blackwoods Campground. A uniformed chauffeur held the car door, then unloaded our luggage: two enormous backpacks. Some campers doubtlessly were surprised at our glamorous arrival. We were glad when the fancy car disappeared and we blended into the somewhat disheveled looks typical of campers.

Back home in Manhattan, we had planned our ambitious vacation to Maine. We had no car, little cash, and planned to hitchhike whenever possible. We intended to start our trip in Churchill Junction and then canoe down the Allagash Wilderness Waterway to Greenville. From there we would hitchhike to Baxter State Park and climb Mount Katahdin. Then we would hitchhike our way to Bar Harbor and its crown jewel, Acadia National Park.

Not everything worked out as planned. We never got to Churchill Junction; we got to Katahdin, but the famous peak remained shrouded in clouds for five days straight. We landed in Bar Harbor and, for the first night of our stay, luxuriated at a motel on Main Street. Then off we went to camp at Blackwoods. Being sick of hitchhiking, we called a taxi. A limousine is what came for us, hence our seemingly fancy arrival at the campground.

We felt very grown-up, but we were newlywed graduate chemistry students. Both of us had recently immigrated and met at Columbia University. Bar Harbor was unlike anything I had ever experienced: a high-end, sleepy resort town amid unlimited beauty.

Our week in Acadia was magical. We took a boat trip and admired the Porcupine Islands. We watched the sea crashing into Thunder Hole, carefully studied exquisite tide pools, ate our first

"The cabins were shabby, but their lakeshore location and the view of Acadia Mountain were great. We rashly offered to buy one called Judy, fortuitously our daughter's name. All winter long we worried about our foolishness. It was the smartest thing we ever did."



lobster, and hiked up Champlain Mountain. It was soon after the 1947 fire, and charred tree trunks still marred the mountain.

Kind motorists helped us crisscross the island. Most commented on the strange couple "who don't have a car and don't fish." The 500-mile trip back to New York was daunting, but luck was with us. The skies opened 24 hours before we were to leave Maine, and it poured as much as it could. We had befriended the two young men who had pulled into the adjacent campsite. They lacked any reasonable camping equipment and decided to return to their waterproof abodes in Boston. They offered us a ride, and we returned to Manhattan safely and quickly.

Except for a short sojourn in 1961, we did not return to Mount Desert Island for years.

Some people are good at planning their lives; others just amble along. We are the latter

and were thus ill-prepared when our phone rang on an icy day in February 1967. My husband's colleague at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute called. He told us that his brother-in-law's summer landlady wished to sell her small group of summer camps on Echo Lake in

Somesville. Would we be interested in buying one of her cottages? We flew to inspect them. The cabins were shabby, but their lakeshore location and the view of Acadia Mountain were great. We rashly offered to buy one called Judy, fortuitously our daughter's name. All winter long we worried about our foolishness.

It was the smartest thing we ever did.

By then, I had become a writer, and a summer retreat seemed fine. A piece of every one of my 15 books was written on Mount Desert Island. My output ranged from a 25-page picture book to a pre-internet 1000+ page pharmacology text-reference book for nurses. A faint smell of pine needles emanates from each publication.

During the last half century, my summer day is carefully divided between writing and enjoying Maine. The latter changed with the decades. For three decades I was the champion swimmer of the Echo Lake colony. Each year I also hiked many of the trails developed by those who had loved these mountains before me: the rusticators and painters who arrived in the mid-1800s, various volunteers, national park rangers, and Friends of Acadia.

Some hikes were exhausting. Some, like the ones up Beech Hill or Flying Mountain, were short, but they still rewarded me with gorgeous views down onto Long Pond or Somes Sound.

In between swims, hikes, shopping at Beech Hill Farm, and attending lectures and art openings, I crafted my books. The island's library system proved essential. I just finished book number 15: "Plunder and Survival: Stories of Loss, Theft, Recovery, and Migration of Nazi Unmoored Art."

The summer came when I could no longer scale the big rock at the foot of Penobscot, and I gratefully switched to Mr. Rockefeller's carriage roads. Walking around Eagle Lake, Witch Hole and Jordan Ponds, and along the Amphitheater carriage road became an addiction.

In 2023, my left hip gave out for the second time. My skillful surgeon replaced it again. I became adept at walking with a rollator

along paved roads. My conveyance took me along Beech Hill Farm, Oak Hill, and Indian Point Roads, where I feasted on views of Acadia, Saint Sauveur, and even Blue Hill. But I was greedy. My rollator could not negotiate earthen roadways, and I missed being hugged by the assorted micro-environments of Acadia formed by firs, oaks, beeches, birches, and maple trees, as well as the meadows and mountains enclosing Little Long Pond.

With my family's encouragement, I bought an electric scooter. With some trepidation, I can again experience Mr. Rockefeller's 45-mile-long carriage road system.

Before returning to Brooklyn last summer, my friend Walter and I walked along Little Long Pond in Seal Harbor. He walked while I rode my scooter. I greeted trees I had not seen for years. I did panic when we encountered horse-drawn carriages or bicycles. But here I was, at 100 years of age, admiring the tops of the tall trees that stretched towards one another, forming a tunnel. I admired small brooks gurgling under the roadway; Little Long Pond, glistening in the distance; and the mountains of Mount Desert Island framing it all.

My body may be arthritic, but my heart is young. ■

SUZANNE LOEBL is the author of 15 books, including "America's Medicis: The Rockefellers and Their Astonishing Cultural Legacy." Based on her extensive research in the Rockefeller family archives, Loebel paints a vivid picture of the family's many cultural contributions beyond John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s work in Acadia.

Individuals with mobility challenges may request special use permits to utilize Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMD) within Acadia, including tracked chairs, scooters, non-traditional wheelchairs, and micro-mobility devices. Learn more on the park's website.

ASHLEY L. CONTI/FOA

Share your "My Acadia" story!

We each have a unique and rich connection to Acadia. Whether we came for a single memorable visit or return time and again. What's your My Acadia story?

Share it with us by emailing editor@friendsofacadia.org.
(Send a photo or two, too!)

Update

New Roles and a New Face at Friends of Acadia

Lisa Horsch Clark (pictured right) is now our first vice president of gift planning. In this new role, Lisa leads the continued growth of our planned giving efforts, including the George B. Dorr Society, which honors supporters who have made a legacy commitment to Acadia. Planned gifts provide long-term, sustaining funding that helps ensure the park's trails, carriage roads, wildlife habitats, and historic landscapes are protected well into the future.

In her more than 20 years with Friends of Acadia, most recently as vice president of development, Lisa has cultivated trusted relationships with members and donors and built a robust planned giving program that continues to grow in both participation and impact.

Devin Lueddeke, who has served as Friends of Acadia's development officer for major gifts for the past three years, has been named interim vice president of development as the organization conducts a nationwide search for the role.



Brian Sale (pictured left) recently came on board as our new stewardship manager. Brian comes to the organization with a distinguished career in the United States Air Force and extensive experience leading volunteer groups in wildland fire mitigation, watershed clean-ups, and trail maintenance. Since September 2024, Brian has served as a stewardship volunteer at Acadia, working his way up to the rank of Volunteer Crew Leader and helping to foster new caretakers for the park. He has also volunteered extensively as an ambassador for Friends of Acadia at the Membership Table at the Jordan Pond House and has carried soil as part of the Save our Summits restoration effort.

Brian takes over the role from **Nikki Burtis**, who led the stewardship program with enthusiasm and hard work for five years. While sad to say goodbye, we're excited for Nikki's move to her next adventure!



JULIA WALKER THOMAS/FOA

VOLUNTEER SKI GROOMER JAKE BISON grooms the Hadlock Loop for classic and skate skiing.

Gratitude for Acadia's Carriage Road Groomers!

It's been a stand-out winter for cross-country skiing thanks to a snow-filled season and the dedicated volunteers of the Acadia Winter Trails Association.

BY JULIA WALKER THOMAS

While many of us rested cozily at home this winter, a special group of volunteers routinely ventured out in the cold and dark.

Acadia Winter Trails Association (AWTA) volunteer groomers often stay up late or rise before the sun to set tracks and corduroy on the park's carriage roads. This year, that much-appreciated effort translated to a season of spectacular cross-country skiing along some of the park's most splendid routes. Skiing Acadia's carriage roads is a unique experience that brings locals and out-of-towners into the park all winter.

On a typical morning, volunteers first hit a local gas station to grab a coffee and fuel for the snowmobiles and Kubota. They then head into the park to operate grooming equipment, often staying at it for hours as they circle around particular loops. The grooming

equipment compacts the snow, making a corduroy surface for skate skiers to glide across and setting parallel tracks for classic skiers.

One volunteer, Jake Bison, realized that he'd spent enough time behind the wheel of the Kubota one night that he could have traveled to Portland. "This drive was a lot more enjoyable than being on the road though," he said.

For those who return to the park for skiing year after year, the '25-'26 season has been special. While most winters see a few good weeks of skiing, it's almost unheard of in recent years for good conditions to occur consistently for the majority of the season, as it has this year. That also means the carriage road groomers have worked hard.

As of this writing, ski grooming has occurred almost daily for more than two months, including Christmas Day and the following week as well as New Year's Day and the following week.

Temperatures largely stayed below freezing—rarely rising above the mid-30s during the day and then freezing again at night—perfect for resmoothing the surface for skiing each day.

According to Mark Fernald, the most tenured of the volunteer groomers, this winter has had one of the highest snow accumulations he can remember since he started volunteering. He says 2015 had more snowfall, one single storm delivering more than 20 inches, but “it was not a fun year. Drifts looked like breaking waves.”

He recalls not being able to see the coping stones in some sections because the drifts were so large. “It wasn’t good skiing because you couldn’t pack it down,” he said. “This year has had the best conditions we’ve had in terms of snow quantity, quality, and consistency.”

Carriage Road Grooming Volunteers

At the heart of the Acadia Winter Trails Association are the four active volunteer groomers who are out most days when grooming is approved by the park.

Mark Fernald, a sixth-generation lobsterman from Little Cranberry Island, spends the colder half of the year “off island” at his home on Norway Drive, and has been volunteering with AWTA for the past 30 years. Mark was recruited by his then-dentist, Dr. Bob Massucco, who started the grooming program before it was part of Friends of Acadia. Mark, 73, was 55 when he started skate skiing after years of skiing classic. He quickly found a passion for it, skiing more than 500 miles just this season, including 22 days in a row in the month of February.

Matt Gerrish grew up in Bar Harbor and was recruited by his friend Mike Gilfillan to become a volunteer groomer. “Dr. Massucco taught Mike to skate ski in the 1980s. In turn, Mike taught me in the 1990s, and I started volunteering shortly after.” Gerrish and Gilfillan were long-time AWTA grooming partners and still enjoy skiing together on the carriage roads today.

Phil Lichtenstein is a boat captain in Mount Desert. Lichtenstein was recruited by Paige Steele (former Friends of Acadia manager of the AWTA program) at a College of the Atlantic alumni event in 2014, after Steele learned of his ski and equipment operation experience. Lichtenstein grew up skiing at Okemo Mountain in Vermont. He has been skiing for 61 years and has been skiing and biking on the carriage roads since 1996 when he enrolled as a student at COA.

Jake Bison is in his mid-30s and is the youngest and newest groomer, having just started volunteering last year. He grew up snowmobiling in Michigan with family and is a self-described “lover of winter.” Bison enjoys going on night hikes and skis and often grooms after work. “I see how happy it (skiing) makes people, and I want to help them get out there.” He is also a Stewardship Volunteer Crew Leader with Friends of Acadia during the rest of the year.

The grooming program has been run by Stewardship Manager **Nikki Burtis**, who departed Friends of Acadia this spring. **Brian Sale** has taken over the role. “This program would not be possible without the dedicated park employees who oversee the care of the carriage roads and equipment, while also keeping up with plowing the roads and keeping everyone safe in the winter,” Burtis said.

Burtis coordinated the program with **Chris Cipollone**, engineering equipment operator work leader for Acadia National Park. Cipollone coordinates equipment repair and maintenance with two mechanics at the park, **Chris Lewis** and **Piper Allen**, who troubleshoot and make repairs to the equipment as quickly as possible.

“The park staff are rock stars. Without them, we wouldn’t be able to be out there. We are so grateful for them and the time they dedicate to the program.” says Lichtenstein. “We are so lucky; I pinch myself every day I pull up and get to start grooming from the Brown Mountain Gate House. I can’t imagine a more beautiful or historic place to get to volunteer and ski.”

The volunteer groomers have spent more than 250 hours out on the carriage roads this season. Fingers crossed that conditions in future years will be just as fantastic! ■

JULIA WALKER THOMAS is Friends of Acadia’s Visual Storytelling and Visual Assets Manager.



Volunteers pose for a photo in February 2026 after receiving medals for number of hours spent grooming during a celebratory event in Bar Harbor. (L-R) Stewardship Manager Nikki Burtis, Acadia Winter Trails Association Volunteer Groomers Phil Lichtenstein, Matt Gerrish, Mark Fernald, and Jake Bison.

Support the Acadia Winter Trails Association

Started in the late 1980s as a personal mission of several local ski enthusiasts, the Acadia Winter Trails Association formally partnered with Friends of Acadia and Acadia National Park in 1990. Friends of Acadia provides financial and fundraising assistance, and the park provides maintenance and other support.

In 2005, the family of Elizabeth R. “Leila” Bright established an equipment fund and an endowment in Leila’s memory and in honor of her love for skiing in Acadia. These provide annual grants to underwrite the purchase and maintenance of grooming equipment, safety training and equipment, fuel, volunteer and staff training and support, and other needs.

If you’re interested in helping support the Acadia Winter Trails Association, consider a donation!

[FRIENDSOFACADIA.ORG/AWTA](https://www.friendsofacadia.org/awta)

NEW MEMBERS

September 1 - December 31, 2025

Anonymous (11)
Susan Abeln
Mary Beth Adams
Kirsten Ahnell
Vikram Albrecht
Isabel Albuquerque
Hector Alcantara
Jonathan Alleman
Alyssa and Stephen Ambrogio
Jessica Anaipakos
Amanda Anderson
Arthur Archer
Nina and Tres Arnett
Chris Atkinson
Tim Bacon
Ellen Barnett
Peter Barrett
Karen Barry
Shannon Basara
Joanna Bassett
Krisna Basu
Pat Bauduin
Nicholas Baumann
Deidre and Michael Beaupre
Danielle Belanger
Rachel Bendon
Deborah Bennett
Gary Bennett
Mary Ann Bennett
Henry Benson
Daniel Berger
Savannah Berry
John Bienkowski
Monika Bissell
David Blezard
Andrea Bloch
Betsy Block
Carol Borow
Cheryl Bowman
Lauri and Ethan Boxer-Macomber
Benita Braun
Paul Bray
Betsy Brazy
Alyssa Brehm
William Brick
Cassandra Brill
Carl Bristol
Ann Brookshire
Diane Brown
Dale Buchanan
Maggie Buchwald
Virginia Budd
Jean and Steve Burleson
Michael Burns
Timothy Cahill
Matt Cain
Megan Callender
Art Carey
Allison Carl
Shelbe Carlson
Anne Carroll
Melinda Carroll
Bruce Cary
Rebecca Cass
John Cecil
Emily Chick

Debora Clary
Kyla Clewis
Denise Clothier-Dortch
David Cloutier
Kathryn Cochrane
Margery Cohen-Jacoby
Madeleine Cole
Doug Collins
Lauren Connolly
Antonia Constantinos
Lisa Conti
Ryan Conwell
Mary Corcoran
Laura Corp
Barbara Cosentino
Jennifer Cottone
Carole Cousineau-Reyes
Casey Cox
Cathy Craft
Matthew Craig
Douglas Crawford
Susan Creasy
Peg and Hayward Crockett
Chris Crouch
Leigh Culver and Eric Brodnax
Julie and James Curry
Nancy Czapek
Kathy Dabrowski
Emily Dagher
Ann Daiber
Dan Dalrymple
Jennifer Dann
Caryl and Bill Davidson
Andrew Davis
Juan Pablo de Lima
Anne and Jurrien Dean
Mike DeFinis
Stephanie Deitz
Jan and Bob DeLaney
Delta Health Center
Suzette and John Devine
Natalie DeVito
Craig Dick
Tracey Dietz
Christina Donnelly
Abigail Donovan
Connor Doughty
Jacob Douthit
Heather Draz
Nathan Duggal
Ben Dunbar
Kathleen Dunn
Annalyn Dury
Joseph Dvorchak
Rebecca and Brian Eastwood
Jeff Eckart
Melody Eckroth
Logan Edwards
Matthew Eisenberg
Christian Elliott
Laurie and Steve Elliott
Sonia Ellison
Elizabeth Elsaesser
Stephen Eustis
Dave Evans
George Evans
Brent Farmer
Carol Farrar
Leon Fay
Lynn and David Feindel

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Amy Feitelson
Patricia and John Ferroni
Mark Feuchter
Ann and Vincent Figueredo
Lanie and Amy Finlayson
Rita Fischer
Allston Fishburne
The Flicks
Joy Flynn
Mr. and Mrs. Howard W. Fogt
Maureen Foley
Trina Fontneau
Tera Ford
Suzanne Foster
Elaine Fowler
Stuart Francis
Amanda Franks
Ellie Freeman
Margaret Fritsche
Beth Gallie
Jennifer Garcia
Suzanne and Tim Gay
Matthew Geertsma
Nancy Gelb
Jennifer Gelston
Elizabeth Gemmill
Megan Gibson
Priyanka Gill
Patrick Gillson
Tracy Ging
Zoe Ginsberg
Abraham Gladstone
Jeffrey Golin
Carolina Graham
Bambi Grander
Karen and David Gray
Donna Grecian
Carolyn Greeley
Todd Green
Katherine Gregory
Tess Grossi
Jillian Guarino
Roberta Hagen
Jennifer Haggard
Yuma Haidara
Matt Haldeman
Angela and Richard Halloran
Robert Hamilton
Anne Hannan
Sara Hardee
Tom Hargrave
Jessica and Dylan Harig
Laura and Robert Harmon
Michael Hartsog
John Haug
Elizabeth Hause
April Heers
Courtney Hemingway
Rachel Hems
Raven Henin
Carol Henley
Kelly Henry
Dorothy Herrin
Elizabeth Hewlett
Tara Hicks
Catherine Higgins
Amanda Higgs
Christine Hitchen
John Hoglund
Ole Hongcanthong

Myra Houser
James Howard
Greer Howard-Tabah
Emma Hsiao
Randy Hughes
Madison Hulme
Barbara Hunt
Gail and Robert Huntz
Jill Hurley
John Hutchins
Tinamarie Illar
Carlo Innocenti
Thomas Jacobs
Wayne Jalenak
Anne Jerome and Jeff Clarke
Alex John
Christine Johnstone-Bruce
Maureen Jones
Kyle Jordan
Lily Jordan
Patricia and Ben Journeay
Rebal Jurdi
Kavita Kabelitz
Matthew Kahmann
Nick Kallergis
Lisa Kan
Patti and Tom Karp
Lorri Katzfey
Diana and Stephen Kaye
Allie Kaylor
Alice Kelly
Jennifer Kelmenson
Mark Kempton
Andrew Kenney
Paul Kenny
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Donna and John Kistenmacher
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David Kleinman
Stephen Klyza
Nathan Knepp
Cyd and Tom Knoble
Grace Koehler
Rainer Kohler
Marilyn Kopelson
Jonathan Korr
Mitch Korzenko
Robyn Kozierok
Linda Kramer
Joyceann and Gregory Kroger
Aleksandr Kucher
Matthew Kuehnert
Sarah Kuhn
Paul Kusterer
Isidora Lagos
Philip Lally
Ann Larsen
Xan Lasko
Julia Lau
Danielle Lax
Chris Lay
Cheryl LeBlond
Mark Lehrner
Ashlyn Lembree
Renee Lemieux
Meegan LeMott
Sally Lensink
David Lerner
Sharon Levine

Andrew Lewis
Christopher Lilly
Dawn Link
Kelli List
Talia List
Rowan Litter
Athina Livanos-Propst
Kenneth Loman
Linda Long
Linda and Tom Loomer
Megan Loomer
Ann and Paul Looney
Jerry Lu
Deborah Luber
Rebecca Lubin
Joseph Machado
Rachael MacLagan
Silvia MacMurdo
Kristina Macon
Donna Maerz
Peter Malliet
Shuo Mao
Chrystal Maragos
Catherine Marin
Harrison Mark
Tricha and John Marosek
Victor Marshall
Janet Marten
Tim Martin
Karen Matherson
Sarah Mathison
Matthew McClane
Barbara McCormack
Jean McCormack
Mary and Ken McDonough
Patrick McDonough
Paul McGarry
Jean and Mike McGinn
Brookie McIlvaine
Sheila McJilton
Ashley McNamara
Jennifer McNichol
Kari McPartland
Michael Medaglia
Gabriella Melson
Nan Merrow
Beth and Jim Meteer
David Mignogna
Mark Miller
Michael Mills
Evan Minor
Rebecca Missimer
Rachel Mitchell
Randy Mitchell
Diane Mohan
Farhad Mohsin
Donna Moore
Clifford Morehead
Steven Morency
Taylor Morley
Paul Mormon
Kriste Mossman
Ryan Mulqueen
Susan Murray
Bryan Nale
Robert Natowitz
Brian Nelson
Bill Newman
Alex Nickle
Krzysztof Niski

Ayumi Nobuki
Natalie Noonan and Spencer
Bleecker
Kelly Nowak
Bruce Nutting
Nikki Oliveri
Alene Onion
Douglas Orenstein
Sarah Orenstein
Samantha Palsgrove
Barbara and David Palten
Christine Papio
Jan and Charles Parmalee
Morgan Parrish
Kaitlyn Parry
Shyam Patel
Susan Payne
Kenneth Peacock
Taylor Pelletier
Ronald Pelton
Charles Pepper
Juliana Perkins
Fanny, Michael, Leo, and Isaac
Pertnoy
Mallory Peterson
Tom Peterson
Jamie Pettit
Amy and Erich Pica
Paulette Pidcock
Shane Pidgeon
Nancy Pilotte
Orlando Plasencia
Chris Plier
Sivan Plotkin
Sarabeth Pollom
Harriet and Philip Polster
Oscar Ponce
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Hari Pradhyumnan
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Jeanene Procopis
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Gita Ramachandran
Alexandra Ratie
Virginia and Devon Rauth
Michael Rayder
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Gi Reed
Kevin Reed
Christine Reppke
Shannon Rezac
Jodi and Hedwig Richards
Daniel Ring
Adela Rios
Eugene Rioux
Melissa Rittenberg
Paul Robak
Mark Robbins
Joseph Roberts
Danielle Robinson
Megan Robinson
Lisa Rogers
Marissa Roh
Susan and Charles Roscoe
Karen Rose
Lisa Rosen
Julie Rosencrantz
Susan Rossnick

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NEW MEMBERS

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Markus Rottner
Alan Rowland
Aubri Rush
Katie Ruze Walter
Francis Ryan
Abby S.
Nicola Sabin
Laurie Sacerdote
Toby Sadkin
Melissa Salm
Kelley Sanborn
Robert Sanchez
Denise Sandler
Caleb Sansalone
Paula Saxon
Greta and Heller Schaefer-Shoop
Jason Scheff
Sandy Schipp
Andy Schlag
Barbara Schneider
Bruce Schroder
Frank Schultz
Mike Schulz
Catherine Schurr
Max Schweiner
Anna Sessions
Nihal Shah
Susan Shapiro
Jonathan Shea
Jean and Tim Sheehy
Wendy, Alan, and Brandon Sheridan
Justin Shipe
Rhonda Shoffeitt
Marte Siebenhar
Kevin Siegrist
Madison Simao
Alison Simmons and Louis Menand
Nancy Simpson
Bailey Sims
Chris Singleton
Todd Sipe
Richard Skilton
Danial Sloan
Betsy Smith
Blaine Smith
Jason Smith
Justin Smith
Kathryn Smith
Suzanne Smyth
Lara Solomon
Jiyoon Song
Joan and Paul Sorensen
Alina Soto
Helen Sparks
Nicolaas Staalberg
James Stanfield
Kathryn Stanitski
Phoebe Stanley
David Stapleton
Beverly Starbala
Thomas Steele
Richard Stewart
Bradley Stockard
Spencer Stout
Kathryn Stransky
Laramie Stroud

Molly and Mike Sullivan
Beth Suttmoeller
John Swagerty
Jessica Szekely
Michelle Tan
Becca Tanasi
Michelle Tatro
Marian Taylor
Catherine Teamkin
John Tercyak
Elena Thayne
Carissa Thomas
Jamie Thompson
Mark Thompson
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Lorraine Toly
Alexandra Tony
Sylvia Torti
Kendra Tovey
Rosanne Tricoles and Glenn Colville
Mary-Ellen Trogani
Michael Trovini
Eric Trumble
Terry Turner
John Vandenbosch
Angela Vick
Doreen Vigue
Kira Vine
Esther Vogel
Austin Vogt
Heather Walk
Charles Walters
Kasey Walters
Mary Walto and Jim Fernberger
John Walz
James Ward
Deborah Watson
Katherine and Matthew Weeden
Erik Weenink
Steven Weinstein
Johanna Welch
Katharine Wellman
David White
Sue Whiteside
Charlotte Whitmore
Michael Wien
Barbara Bowie Wiesel
Wayne Wilkins
Elizabeth Williams
Lisa Wills
Cassidy Wilson
Diane Wilson
Janet Wilson
Karen Woodring
Laurel Woods
Joseph Yalch
Benjamin Yeterian
Raluca Yonescu
Robert Yore
Peter Yost
Bill Young
Aleksandra Zakrzewska
Patricia Ziemba
Ginger Zierdt

IN NOMINE

September 1 - December 31, 2025

Acadia National Park
Acadia NPS staff working during the shutdown
Annie
John Artz
Julie Banzhaf-Stone and Steve Stone
Dorothy Blanchard*
The Dunham and Bodman Families
Quinn Bonovitz
Pamela Brannick
The Brown University Running Club training trip
Rebecca Buchanan
Stephanie Chamberlain
Susan Choma
Dwight* and Mary Clark
Jan Clark
Daniel Clayberg
Bailey, Caleb, and McKenna Cole
Madeleine Cole
Tris and Ruth Colket
Darrell and Berit
Ted Deitz
Michael and Patricia DiZazzo
Marjorie Dole
Jess Elliott
Emma
First Responders in Acadia National Park
Friends of Acadia volunteers
Sheldon* and Jill Goldthwait
Anne Green
Gwen Houser
Zachary Irving
Irmgard Jacobs
The Johnsons
Jord
David and Jill Korr's 40th Anniversary
Anne Kozak
Mary and Dr. JR Krevans, Jr.
Stephanie Kumble
Sally Lagoy
Debby Lash
Camila Lim
Mary Beth and Christi
Marilyn Mays
Trinity Acadia McKinnon
My family - past, present, and future
Melissa Bechtel Niedermann's 50th Birthday
Northeast Harbor for Triumph Motorcycles
Dave Oliver
Martha and David Pacini
Duncan Green
Teresa Pierce's 50th Birthday
Ellen Pope and Pat Welch
Michael and Ceil Pulitzer
Bob and Charlotte Pulitzer
John and Caroline Quinn
Jennifer Robinson
Ed and Martie Samek
Elizabeth Sandlin
Thomas Sandlin
Judy and Peter Scarafile
Emily, Andy, and Kevin Schuchart
Randy Shepard

Evan and Rachel Smith
Bradley and Sandra Smith
Staff of Acadia National Park
Eric Stiles
Talia and August
The Ball Family
Mary and Peter Thompson
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Thompson III
Kevin Threadgold
Todd Tompkins and Kelly McCool
Michael Trumble
The Robert Warner Family
Fabio Simao
Hannah Whiteley
Liz Williams
Lise Williams and Beth Pepper

* Deceased

IN MEMORIAM

September 1 - December 31, 2025

Andy and Lolly Anderson
O. Kelley Anderson, Jr.
Armando's Garden
Jim and Winnie Atkins
Louise and Floyd Bailey
Cecil, Edward, and Benjamin Barnes
Herman Bieber
Malcolm and Dorothy Blanchard
Alice Bouchard
Nathaniel R. Bowditch
Clem Brezinka
Ruth D. Brock
Daphne Brooks Prout
Herbert Bryant
William H. Buchanan, Jr.
Dow L. Case
David Caswell
Zachariah Chafee
Gilbert Chin
Aimee Beal Church
William Clack
Dwight E. Clark
Edward and Joan Cochran
Norman Coone
Dr. Nancy Dew Taylor
Charles and Beverly Cunningham
Anne and Bruce Daube
George Demas
Francis W. Dinsmore and Sallie Dinsmore
Mark W. Dodd
Donald P. Doolittle
George Dover
Maryanne Dreyer
Steve Dungan
Steve Durban
Elizabeth C. Epp
Martin Everett
Judith Fischer
Charles Fitzgerald
Heather Fowler
Thomas H. Fox
Russell Fox
Karen Gardner
Jeannette Gerbi
Louise Hall West

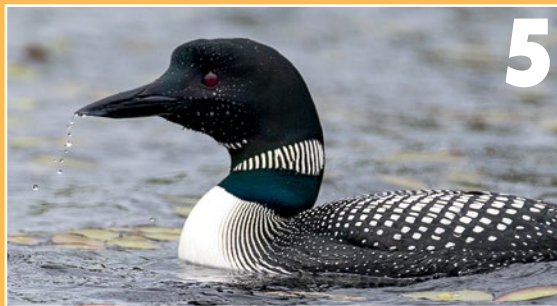
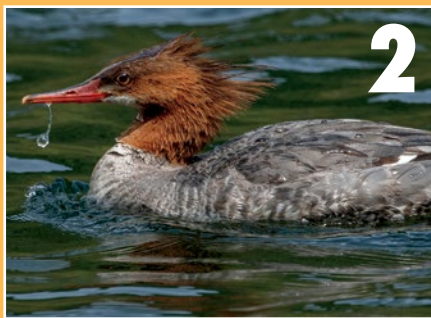
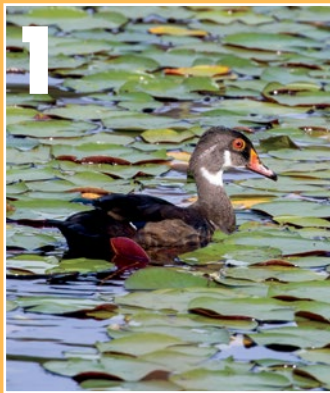
continued on page 44

TEST YOUR ACADIA Q

Who's That Floating on the Lake?

Can you identify these freshwater-floating birds?

We give a well-deserved nod to the common loon in this issue (see story on page 16), but the lakes and ponds of Mount Desert Island host a gaggle of different waterfowl in the summer, all head-turners in their own right!



- American black duck • Common loon •
- Common merganser • Mallard duck •
- Wood duck

1 _____ 2 _____
 3 _____ 4 _____
 5 _____

ANSWERS ON PAGE 50

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IN MEMORIAM

continued from page 42

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 Wayne Hartman
 Jeremy Head
 Valerie K. Healey
 Robert M. Hepner
 Heidi Hershberger
 John Hoche
 Muffie Hoche
 Emily Hoff
 Leo and Dotti Hoffmann
 Randy Houser
 Fitzgerald S. Hudson
 Richard Hyde
 Charles S. Johnson
 Howard Katz
 David Keister
 Arthur J. Keller
 Ron Kirkpatrick
 Jasper Kitchel
 Camilla Thoron Knapp
 David J. Krieger
 Eric Lange
 Peg Lawson
 Carolyn Lee
 Leung and Ursula Lee
 Doug Leland
 Regina Lennox
 Bob Lindemann
 Alice Long
 Edward Lynch
 John F. McCann
 Marian Michel
 Mrs. Charles Morton Smith
 CJ Mowers
 Joe Murphy
 Grover Nevells
 Nancy Nimick
 Peter C. O'Brien
 Bernadette M. Palmer
 David J. Parks
 Art and Judy Pew
 Peter Poulin
 Simone Poulin
 George Price
 Kate Davis Quesada
 David Rabasca
 Nancy Ellen Rabasca
 Linda and Frank Ramseyer
 Connie A. Ratta
 Hilary S. Reed
 F. Lynn Reid
 Donald and Bette Reinhold
 Sabina Reinfeld Paiewonsky
 Paul and Dorothy Richardson
 Martin and Zelma Ritvo
 Aldene and Sally Robbins
 Deanne Roberts
 Lauren Kathryn Roche
 Rev. Arthur Rudman
 Lynne M. Ruppert
 Julie Russell
 Ed and Wilma Savitski
 Ali Schenck
 Ann and Gunther "Jack" Schlager
 Tom Schnieder
 Paul and Suzanne Schrag
 Katherine "Puss" Schutt
 Dorothy Setzer

Jeanne B. Sharpe
 Joan Siegrist
 Monica Silverston
 Mark Simon
 Bob Sinnett
 Anthony Smalley
 Cindy Stake Sternfield
 Carl Stanitski
 June Marie Stork Sokol
 Charles Strange
 Reid Smith Suchanec
 Judy Testa
 August Thoma
 Bettie Thorndike
 Paul Todd
 Philip A. Toscano
 Betty Jane Vining
 Robert C. Wendt
 Louise West
 Howard and Nancy White
 Deborah Williams
 Kathryn Williams
 Thomas Witt
 George Alcheson Woolley

NEW TRAILBLAZERS

September 1 - December 31, 2025

Anonymous (1)
 Glenn Bayfield
 Tracey and Thomas Bissell
 Meg and Terrence Connelly
 Linda and John Day
 Carron and Benjamin DeGrass
 Jessica Donnelly
 Sue and Peter Finnigan
 Laurel Ford
 Wayne Jalenak
 Christine Johnstone-Bruce
 Patty and Rich Marshall
 Richard Mazza
 Martha McCluskey and Carl Nightingale
 Nan Merrow
 Jane and Hugh Millward
 Chris Nadeau
 Deirdre Newman
 Kelly Nowak
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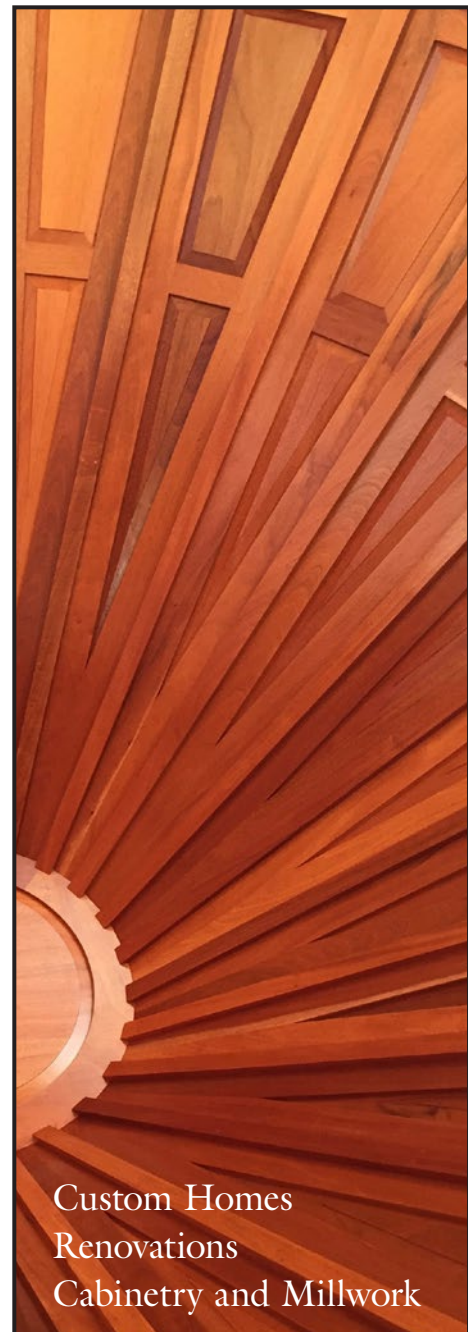
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Update

Employee Housing Construction Continues at Harden Farm

Construction continues on a 56-bedroom employee-housing facility at Harden Farm in Bar Harbor, made possible through the support of generous donors and a 2-to-1 match by federal funds.

Identified as a potential site for employee housing since 1959, eight one-bedroom apartments were constructed in the 1960s by the National Park Service (NPS). Last year, work began to build additional housing on the property, expanding the housing options for the park's employees.

NPS is leading project design and development. In December, they awarded two major contracts to complete the construction. A \$3.4 million contract will connect the site to the town of Bar Harbor's sewer system, and a \$7.4 million contract will construct an additional 28 bedrooms for park-employee housing (phase 2 of the project).

The construction at Harden Farm is possible through donations from Friends of Acadia, including from their Raise the Roof campaign, a \$2 million grant from the National Park Foundation, funding from the National Park Service's Centennial Challenge and Housing Improvement Programs, and Helium Act funds.

The new units at Harden Farm, combined with the 58 seasonal-housing beds created by Friends of Acadia and Acadia National Park, will significantly increase the availability of attainable housing for park and partner employees—supporting every aspect of park operations.



Update

2026 Federal Appropriations for the National Park Service

Congress finalized the Fiscal Year 2026 Interior–Environment appropriations bill as part of a broader funding package, which was signed into law on January 23, 2026. The spending measure provides \$3.27 billion for the National Park Service, about \$70 million less than last year. The package most closely aligned with the Senate’s version of the Interior Appropriations bill, which Friends of Acadia supported. Thanks to the efforts of park supporters around the country, a proposed \$1 billion reduction for the Department of Interior did not move forward.

The short-lived, partial government shutdown in January did not impact National Park Service operations.



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GET INVOLVED

A LITTLE BIT OF VOLUNTEERING CAN ACCOMPLISH A WHOLE LOT OF GOOD!

Whether you volunteer for a few hours, all season, or year after year, you'll see a new side of Acadia, feel a deeper connection to the park, and leave this national treasure better than you found it.

Thank you to Chilton Trust for supporting our volunteer stewardship events! (listed in dark green)



Drop-in Stewardship Volunteers

While being led by our amazing Volunteer Crew Leaders, you'll help with important work like cutting back vegetation, clearing drainage features, and building bogwalks. The program runs June through October on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Come once, come many times. Tools and instruction are provided, and no experience is needed.

Special Events

Lend a hand at one of our volunteer events that give back to Acadia and surrounding communities. Help pick up trash and debris in the communities around Acadia during our Earth Day Roadside Cleanup on April 25. In the fall, help rake leaves on Acadia's carriage roads during Take Pride in Acadia Day on November 7.

Save Our Summits

Hike to one of Acadia's iconic summits AND help Acadia National Park's efforts to restore native vegetation! Acadia National Park, in collaboration with Friends of Acadia and Schoodic Institute, invites tenacious hikers to bring bags of provided soil to the summits of Penobscot and Sargent Mountains. Hikes run Wednesdays and Fridays all season beginning June 24. Registration opens June 8.

Membership Table

During weekdays from June to September, volunteers staff a table at Jordan Pond House, helping spread the word about Friends of Acadia. They get to chat with park visitors from around the country and the world and share stories about our incredible park and the work Friends of Acadia does.

Office Volunteers

Many volunteers prefer to work directly with Friends of Acadia staff in the office, and we have plenty of opportunities to help the organization throughout the year.

Wild Gardens of Acadia

During summer and fall months, docents greet visitors at the Wild Gardens of Acadia, which showcase the park's indigenous flora. Training is provided, and both weekend and weekday volunteer opportunities are available. It's an excellent way to expand your knowledge about the Wild Gardens of Acadia and its plants.



JULIA WALKER THOMAS/FOA



RHIANNON JOHNSTON/FOA

Learn more at friendsofacadia.org/volunteer. To stay apprised of future volunteer opportunities, sign up for our e-newsletter at friendsofacadia.org/newsletter

America at 250: Celebrating Our National Parks

This year, as our nation celebrates its 250th anniversary, I am grateful for the 433 national park sites that invite us to celebrate, to contemplate, and to learn from our shared history.

Our national parks celebrate the astonishing beauty of this country, our shared accomplishments, and steps toward progress. They reflect our collective efforts to protect important places for public access. And they preserve hard truths—chapters of displacement, injustice, conflict, and struggle that challenge us to grow. They are classrooms, memorials, and ponds in which to see our own reflection.

Here in Acadia, the last 250 years are part of a much longer story. Long before it became the first national park east of the Mississippi River, this land was home to the Wabanaki people and their ancestors, who have stewarded—and continue to steward—these mountains, forests, and waters since time immemorial.

History is everywhere in the park. The inland streams of Great Meadow served as waterways for Indigenous people moving to and from the coast.

Pink apple blossoms sprinkled among evergreen trees are reminders of the small farms that sustained families of 18th- and 19th-century European settlers on the island's rocky shores.

And Champlain Mountain gives us views from one of the first parcels of land donated to what would become Acadia National Park.

In the early 20th century, visionary citizens such as George B. Dorr worked alongside local communities and philanthropists to create the East Coast's first national park and the first in the nation created from privately donated lands. That achievement marked a turning point in the American conservation movement. It demonstrated that preservation was not reserved for only a few grand Western landscapes, but a national commitment to protect beautiful and important places nationwide.

As Chairman of the Board of Friends of Acadia, I see every day how deeply people care about this shared inheritance. Volunteers devote thousands of hours to repairing trails and carriage roads. Scientists study ways to make changing ecosystems more resilient. Educators bring students outdoors to learn from living landscapes. Supporters invest in projects that will ensure these resources endure for generations to come. Together, we are engaged in collective stewardship.

As we celebrate 250 years of our nation's history, may we recommit ourselves to stewarding these landscapes and stories—preserving what has long been called "America's best idea" for the centuries still to come.



—Bill Eacho

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



"As we celebrate 250 years of our nation's history, may we recommit ourselves to stewarding these landscapes and stories—preserving what has long been called 'America's best idea' for the centuries still to come."



LILY LAREGINA/FOA

THE BOWL viewed from the Champlain South Ridge Trail.

ANSWERS to Acadia IQ
Floating Birds Quiz on page 43

1. Wood duck
2. Common merganser
3. American black duck
4. Mallard duck
5. Common loon

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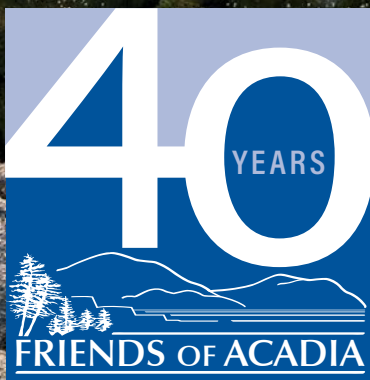
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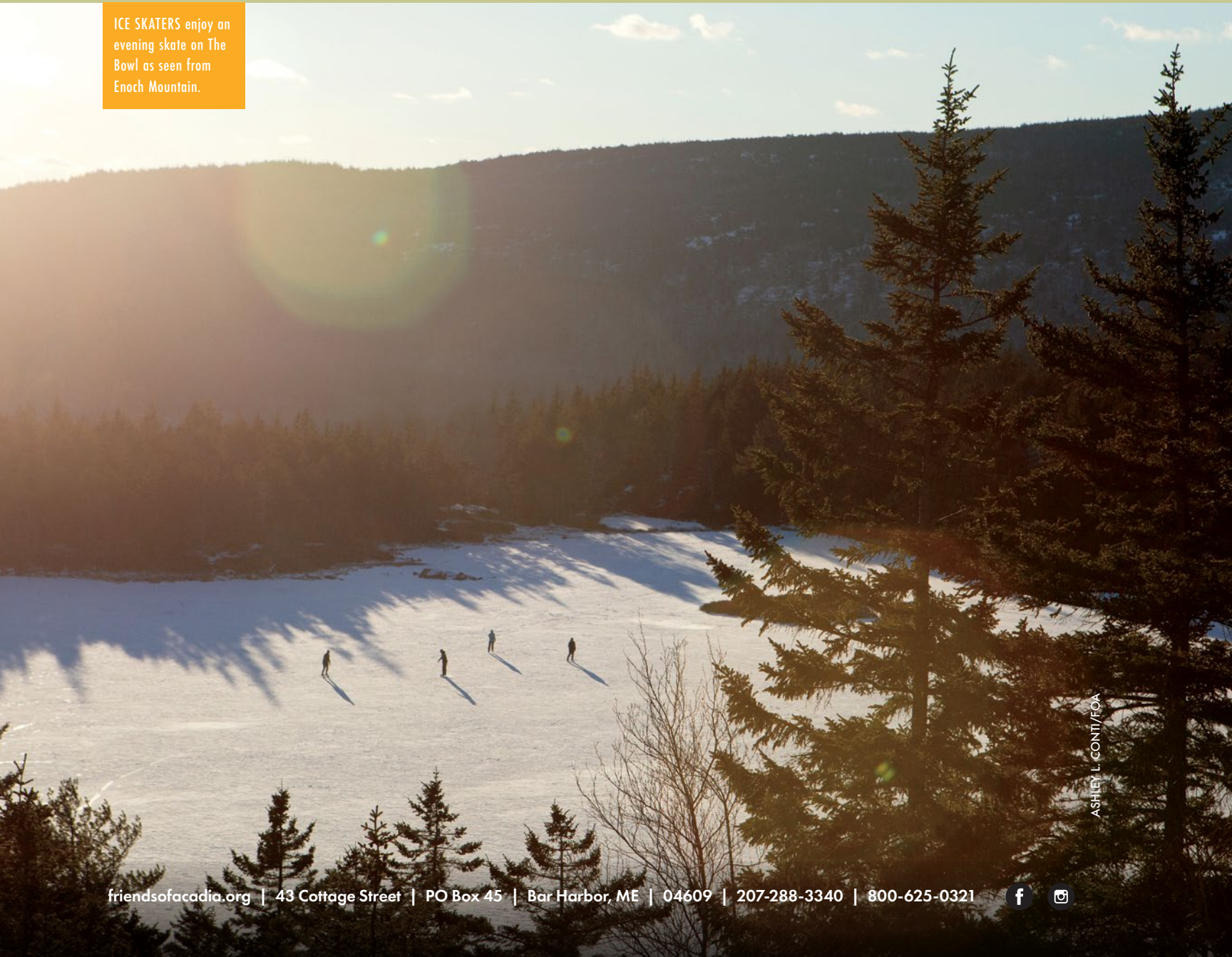
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ASHLEY L. CONTI/FOA

