



Writer explores mountain tragedies

BY AISLINN SARNACKI
BDN STAFF

One wrong turn, one forgotten piece of gear or one miscommunication — that’s all it takes for an exhilarating outdoor adventure to turn into a nightmare in the mountains of the Northeast. This stark reality is brought to life in a new

BOOK REVIEW book called “Desperate Steps: Life, Death, and Choices Made in the Mountains of the Northeast,” written by Peter W. Kick of Tenants Harbor and released by Appalachian Mountain Club Books in December.

The book contains 20 true stories of incidents that have occurred in the mountains of New York, New Hampshire and Maine. Most of these incidents are recent, occurring after 2000.

“There’s a whole fascination humans have with accidents and disasters,” Kick said in a recent interview. “I think it’s because we all just kind of think, ‘Wow, this could happen to me.’”

“The purpose of the book is to educate and to incite people to take a more serious approach to their relationship with nature,” he added.

An avid hiker and paddler, Kick was raised in the Catskill Mountains of New York and has a wide range experience in the outdoors. In Maine, people may know him as the former assistant park ranger for the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. He also was the second person to paddle the entire 740-mile Northern Forest Canoe Trail, which threads through rivers, streams, lakes and ponds from New York to northern Maine.

Now living in Tenants Harbor, he works as a licensed Maine arborist and is a freelance writer for outdoor magazines, including Backpacker and Sailing. He also has written three mountain guides for the Appalachian Mountain Club, one of the largest and most influential nonprofit organizations supporting conservation and recreation in the Northeast.

About two years ago, the editors of AMC Books approached Kick about writing “Desperate Steps,” which is modeled after the renowned “Accidents” section of AMC’s biannual Appalachia journal. Published

See Book, Page C4



Paul Warren (from left) of Waltham, Massachusetts, joined Cathy Thompson of Madison and Amanda Bolduc of Skowhegan to compete for Maine in the U.S. National Snow Sculpting Competition at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Their sculpture, “Crying Wolf,” subtitled, “Sheep for Brains,” finished fifth in the event.



COURTESY OF CATHY THOMPSON

Snow sculpture success

Mainers take 5th place in national competition

BY JOHN HOLYOKE
BDN STAFF

Cathy Thompson said that when she and her daughter Amanda Bolduc began ice sculpting a year ago, their learning curve was quite steep.

“We didn’t know how to start,” Thompson, who lives in Madison, said. “We didn’t realize that we had to get a big box and pack snow into it. Then I raided my husband’s tool shop looking for saws and blades, anything that might look like it would cut away snow.”

Her daughter checked out YouTube videos, talked with other artists and finally headed to a local antique shop. Both had art backgrounds and had done sand-sculpting, but their snow-sculpture careers began when they were invited to participate in a competition in Camden.

“I purchased some chisels and some old ice tools that you can’t just find at a local hardware store or Wal-Mart,” Bolduc said.

A year after that humble start — and in only their second attempt at creating a snow sculpture in a competition — they joined Paul Warren of Massachusetts and took fifth place in the U.S. National Snow Sculpting Championships, which were held last week in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.

The duo earned the right to participate as “Team Maine” a year

ago, during their first foray into ice sculpting at Camden’s Winterfest. While two-person teams compete at Camden, the nationals allow three-person teams to participate, so they invited Warren, who originally told Bolduc about the Maine event.

In Wisconsin, they brainstormed a sculpture of a human head with a man holding his hands to the sides of his mouth, yelling. In front of his mouth lies a wolf, and the back of its head is cracked, with sheep lurking in the shadows.

The sculpture was called “Crying Wolf,” subtitled “Sheep for Brains.”

Although neither Thompson nor Bolduc had much experience with snow sculpture, each is an artist in her own right.

Bolduc is an art teacher for a homeschool co-op in Madison and competes regularly in sand sculpture contests in Fort Myers, Florida. In 2014, she was the Florida state champ in the advanced amateur class, she said.

Thompson was artistic as a child but gave up her art during a 25-year career working at a paper mill. Since her retirement, she has returned to painting and has done sand sculpture with Bolduc.

Thompson came up with the original plan, which called for a wolf lying in the man’s mouth. The final concept was a collaborative effort, she said.

One telling moment came when they shared a shuttle from the air-

port with an artist from Alaska. He told the Maine crew his team planned to hollow out a portion of their sculpture. That prompted some brainstorming.

“We decided we were going to have to step up the game,” Thompson said. “We thought about what else we could add to it for creativity and technical difficulty. Our idea was to make the back of the head look like it was cracked open with sheep pouring out of his brains.”

The idea paid off. Although only the grand champion and two people’s choice awards were announced during the competition, the team asked organizers if they could look at the score sheets and learned their sculpture had received the fifth-highest score out of 15 entrants.

Bolduc said the team didn’t enter the competition with any goals and was surprised they fared so well.

“I was surprised because we were competing against these teams that had been going there for years and years and years,” Bolduc said. “This was only our second snow competition. With our lack of experience, we took away so much from going out there.”

Each team began the competition with a cylinder of packed snow that was 8 feet wide and 9 feet tall. They began sculpting Wednesday and were required to finish by 11 a.m. Saturday.

See Snow, Page C2

Bobcat or lynx? You be the judge

Every so often, a reader will send me a photo of a wild critter, throw themselves at the mercy of the court, and ask the age-old question: What is this?

Sometimes, I’m stumped. Much of the time, I have a pretty good idea. But all of the time, I ask for a second opinion.

The reason: Long ago, I learned that there are thousands



JOHN HOLYOKE

of critter experts here in Maine. Mess up on an animal ID, and you’ll hear about it. Immediately ... and repeatedly.

Birders are particularly enthusiastic, I’ve found. But that’s another story.

As a member of the outdoors team working for the daily newspaper that nearly sits on the edge of the wilderness, we also get phone calls from readers seeking help. Again, I usually seek a second opinion.

How do you trap a skunk? *Call an animal control officer.* How do you stop the hawks from eating the birds at my feeder? *Call Bob Duchesne.* How can I finally bag my first deer? *Your guess is as good as mine ... and I’ve yet to fill my tag after years of hunting.*

One time, a woman called me looking to identify an animal she’d not even seen. This, I’m proud to say, was one of my proudest moments.

“I heard this animal,” she told me. “It was big. I could hear it walking on the paving stones outside my bedroom. Then it made a noise.”

“I’m not sure I can help you,” I told her. “Unless ... you can make the noise for me.”

She did, perfectly grunting out the call of a bull moose. That noise, I knew. And not even the critter experts could have disagreed with me ... because she didn’t call them.

Earlier this week, I received an email that was more or less typical: Andy Koziol of Holden saw a critter, took a photo, and said his friends were of two opinions. Some said the cat was a bobcat. Others saw a lynx.

Luckily, nobody called it a mountain lion ... that happened

See Holyoke, Page C2

1-Minute Hike: Holbrook Island Sanctuary State Park

Difficulty: Easy to moderate, depending on the trails you choose to hike within the park. There are about 7.5 miles of trails to walk, and many of them are shorter than 1 mile and travel over relatively even terrain.

How to get there: From the roundabout by Tradewinds Marketplace in



AISLINN SARNACKI

Blue Hill, take Route 15 (Route 176) west toward Brooksville. In about 4 miles, the road comes to a T. Turn right onto Route 176 and drive 2.5 miles. Before the Gulf Station, turn left onto Route 175 (Frank’s Flat Road) and cross a bridge over the Bagaduce River. After a little over a mile, you’ll come to a T; turn right onto Route 176 (Coastal Road). Drive 0.1 mile, then turn left onto Varnumville Road. Drive 2.6 miles and you’ll come to a T; turn left onto Route 176 (Coastal Road). Drive 1.7 mile and

Watch the video
bangordailynews.com

turn left onto Cape Rosier Road. You should start seeing brown road signs directing you to Holbrook Island Sanctuary State Park. Drive 1.6 miles and turn right onto Back Road. Most of the trailhead parking areas of the park are located on Back Road and marked with signs. A trail map will help you decide where to park.

Information: Located in the coastal town of Brooksville, Holbrook Island Sanctuary State Park was donated to the State of Maine in 1971 by a local resident named Anita Harris. A nature lover, Harris wished this gift would “preserve for the future a piece of unspoiled Maine that [she] used to know.”

The park is 1,230 acres and protects a variety of habitats, including old fields, a pond, an estuary and saltwater marsh, the mossy evergreen forests of Backwoods Mountain, a beaver flowage, and rocky beaches on the Penobscot Bay. It also includes Holbrook Island, a small isle off



Seaweed clings to a barnacle-encrusted rock on a rocky beach accessible by the Back Cove Trail of Holbrook Island Sanctuary State Park recently.

the coast near Goose Falls.

The park also features a number of old family cemeteries, old foundations and impressive stone walls that remain from people who used to live on and farm the land — the Bakemans, Hutchins, Howards and Grays.

A part of Maine’s state park system, the park is managed in a way that keeps with Harris’s vision. Therefore, the park has not and will not be altered by modern park facilities and management techniques. A network of old farm roads and paths have simply been

turned into blazed hiking trails for visitors to explore, and the forest and other natural habitats have been left in Mother Nature’s hands.

The park is home to about 7.5 miles of marked hiking trails; some are loop trails, while other must be

hiked out and back.

In all, there are nine trails: Bakeman Farm, Fresh Pond, Aaron, Summit, Goose Falls, Beaver Flowage, Goose Falls, Back Shore, Ice Works and Mountain Loop trails. Trail maps and brochures are available at trailheads throughout the park, but it’s always wise to do a little research ahead of time. You can print off a trail map and learn details about each trail on the Friends of Holbrook Island Sanctuary website, friendssofholbrook.org.

Also available on the website is the card required for the “I Hiked Holbrook” trail challenge. Designed for young hikers, the challenge is a kind of scavenger hunt. A different “secret symbol” is posted on each of the nine trails. Hikers are tasked with finding and drawing each of the symbols on the challenge card, along with the date they hiked each trail. When all nine symbols are gathered, students grades K-8, can turn their cards into park headquarters for a free T-shirt.

See Hike, Page C4