



1-Minute Hike: Eagle Bluff in Clifton

Difficulty: Moderate. The hike is short but steep to the top of the bluff. The thick leaf litter on the slope can be slippery. The ground is uneven forest floor, with exposed tree roots and plenty of rocks. Exercise caution when exploring along the top of the granite cliffs.

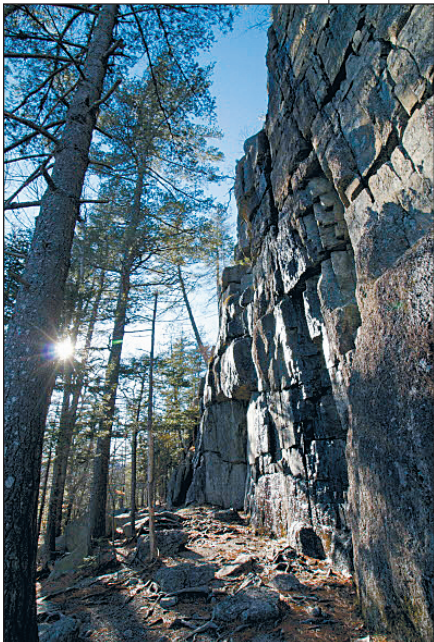


How to get there: At the intersection of Route 9 and Route 180 in Clifton, turn onto Route 180 and drive 2.5 miles until you see a small gravel parking area on the left, just after a gated dirt road, also on your left. (It's easy to miss because it's small and tucked into the woods.) If you reach Springy Pond Road, a dirt road on your right, you've driven a few hundred feet too far.

As of Feb. 26, 2016, there was one small sign about Eagle Bluff visitor rules posted to a tree in the parking area. If standing in the parking area and facing the woods, the trailhead is marked with orange flagging tape near the far left corner of the parking area.

Clifton Climbers Alliance, the owner of the property, warns visitors that vehicles are at risk of break-ins in the parking area, which is currently under police surveillance. The group urges visitors to leave valuables at home and consider leaving their vehicle doors locked. Call 911 to report suspicious behavior.

Information: One of the finest rock climbing loca-



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Sun shines off the cliffs of Eagle Bluff in Clifton. The cliffs are home to more than 100 established climbing routes.

tions in the state, Eagle Bluff in Clifton is also a great place for a short but rewarding day hike. Starting at a small parking area off Route 180, a hiking trail leads into the woods toward

See Hike, Page C2



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Lauren Gilpatrick of the Biodiversity Research Institute holds a snowy owl recently, before releasing it in blueberry barrens in Cherryfield. The owl, which was captured at Portland International Jetport, is the second owl in Maine to be outfitted with a GPS transmitter that will be tracked by Project SNOWstorm, a collaborative research effort to learn more about the species and their migrations.

Unlocking the mysteries of the snowy owl

BY AISLINN SARNACKI
BDN STAFF

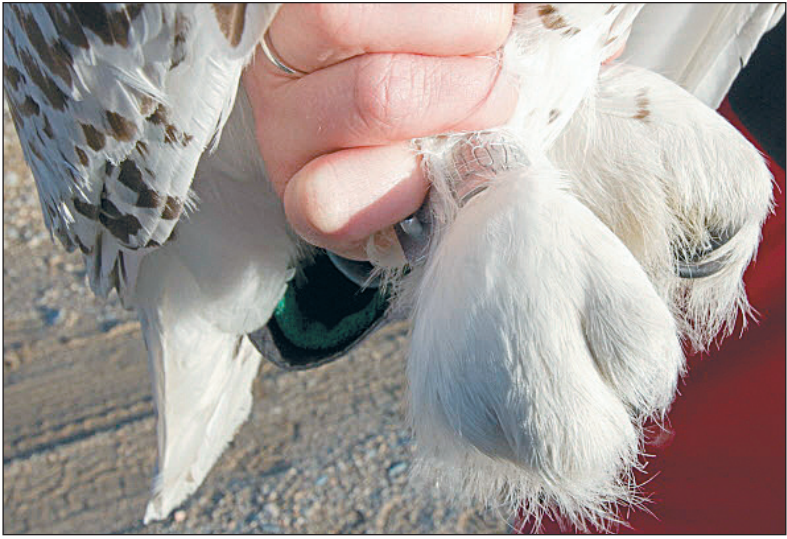
Last winter, a group of researchers set out to capture a snowy owl in Maine. Their goal was to outfit the bird with a high-tech tracking device so it could become a part of Project SNOWstorm, a collaborative research project to learn more about snowy owls and their mysterious winter migrations.

Despite their efforts, the researchers were unsuccessful. That season, Project SNOWstorm captured and placed GPS transmitters on snowy owls from Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio, but the "snowies" hunting in Maine that winter remained elusive and returned to their breeding grounds in the Arctic that spring without being tagged.

This winter, however, Maine finally made its way onto the Project SNOWstorm map.

So far, two snowy owls captured in the Pine Tree State have been outfitted with GPS transmitters to join the ranks of Project SNOWstorm under the names "Brunswick" and "Casco."

"Through this work, we are gaining a better understanding of the lives of these majestic birds," said Lauren Gilpatrick, a wildlife biologist with the Biodiversity Research Institute of Portland, which partnered with Project SNOWstorm to capture and outfit the two Maine owls. "Being involved with Project SNOWstorm has personally been a career highlight for me. Getting to work with such a large group of some of the



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Lauren Gilpatrick of the Biodiversity Research Institute displays a numbered leg band recently placed on a snowy owl before the bird was released back into the wild. The leg band will help researchers track the owl well into the future.

Researchers outfit 2 birds captured in Maine with tracking devices to monitor their winter migration

nation's top owl experts is a great honor."

Project SNOWstorm was established in the winter of 2013-2014 in response to one of the largest snowy owl irruptions ever recorded. That winter, snowy owls migrated from their breeding grounds in the Arctic south to Canada and U.S. in large numbers, delighting wildlife photographers while worrying airport administrators.

Snowy owls are attracted to airports because their open terrain closely resembles the Arctic tundra they call home. Unfortunately,

they pose a serious threat to aircraft and passenger safety. The large, white owls weigh an average of 5 pounds, with a wingspan of 4 to 5 feet. A collision can cause significant damage to an aircraft and be fatal for the bird.

The Federal Aviation Administration ranks the snowy owl as the 17th most hazardous bird to aircrafts in a list that includes 66 bird species and groups. Because of their large size and their tendency to fly low to the ground, snowy owls can cause serious

See Owls, Page C4

Why are moose permits declining?

Lee Kantar said he knows newspaper headlines across the state will trumpet the fact the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is planning on decreasing the number of moose permits quite drastically this year.

Kantar, the state's moose biologist, said he hopes that Mainers don't look at those numbers — 600 fewer permits allotted, bringing the total of available moose permits down to 2,140 — and assume the worst about the moose herd overall.

The proposed number of moose permits has passed through the first of three stages in the DIF&W's rulemaking process. Some minor tinkering may be done over the next two months, but chances are good that the number of permits won't change much between now and hunting season.

To put those numbers in perspective, this marks the third straight year the number of moose permits has been reduced, after hitting an all-time high of 4,110 in 2013. This year's total, if it remains near 2,140, would be the lowest number of permits allotted in the state since 1998.

Kantar said he and his fellow biologists focus on small sections of the state, determining how many permits should be allotted in each Wildlife Management District.

In other words, biologists aren't running around yelling, "The sky is falling! We've got to decrease moose permits by 600, statewide!"

But Kantar realizes some folks might take the permit reduction that way.

"People like to say, and the media likes to say, 'Here's the total number of permits. You changed it by X percent,'" Kantar said. "I don't know that [when decisions are being made]. I'm not playing dumb. But I look at every management district, one by one. That's my concern. The whole is the whole. But that's not how we manage moose. We manage it, right now, district by district."

Among the questions biologists ask, according to Kantar: Are there enough bulls? Is the bull-cow ratio at the level we want? How is reproduction?

And after considering those factors, biologists figure out how many moose permits to propose in each district.

Let's be clear here: Kantar and the state biologists face a largely thankless task, with detractors on both sides waiting to pounce.

See Holyoke, Page C4

Maine-made canvas gear has international appeal

BY MICKEY BEDELL
BDN STAFF

KINGFIELD — All over the world, people carry Jane Barron's Maine-made backpacks. Australia, Sweden, Norway, Romania, Germany, Japan — the list goes on and on.

Through it all Barron keeps on sewing, riveting and snipping in her living room-turned-studio for Alder Stream Canvas — often with the same patterns she has used for 25 years. Surrounded by tables, fabric and tools, Barron whips between work stations, hammering holes in leather and snipping fabric, whizzing



canvas pieces through her sewing machine. The comfort of these motions reverberates with each step: Every cut, every press is like watching a dance unfold.

The roots of Barron's business all began with a canoe trip in the '80s. She and her cousin were planning to take a ride down Alaska's Yukon River and also wanted to hike the Chilkoot Trail. They needed a pack that was big and waterproof for the canoe but also comfortable for the hike. A little bit of research led Barron to



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canvas and leather, which she has worked with ever since.

"A lot of my first customers were canoeists, because I was guiding canoe trips," she said. "People that were going on the canoe trip would see the pack and say, 'Oh, I want one of those!' And I'd make one, you

know. It was really thrilling to be like, 'Oh, I've got to make him a pack!'"

From that point forward, friends and family were constantly asking Barron for packs. She mostly would buy what she needed in bits and pieces, sewing as a

See Canvas, Page C2

Jane Barron of Alder Stream Canvas puts together leather-and-canvas backpacks at her Kingfield home. "A lot of people ask, 'How'd you learn?' And I guess what I'd say is, 'Slowly,'" Barron said. "I learn a little more every year."