

Friday, April 29, 2016

1-Minute Hike: Roque Bluffs State Park

Difficulty: Easy-moderate. The trails travel over forest floor, mowed grass and narrow bog bridges. The forest floor is muddy in some places and very uneven due to a lot of exposed tree roots. The most difficult part of the trail network is where Mi-hill Trail travels up the steep western slope of Houghton's Hill.

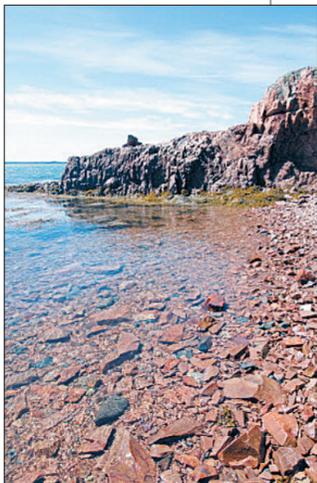


AISLINN SARNACKI

How to get there: Roque Bluffs State Park is easy to find because it's located in the town of Roque Bluffs on Schoppee Point Road, which is at the end of Roque Bluffs Road. To get there from Route 1 in Jonesboro, turn onto Old Route 1 and drive 0.8 miles, then turn right onto Great Cove Road. Drive 4.7 miles, then turn right onto Roque Bluffs Road. Drive 1.4 miles, then veer right onto Schoppee Point Road. The sign for the park will be on your right, along with the main parking area.

The main parking area for the park will be closed (gated off) during the off-season, Oct. 31-May 14. During that time, park outside the gate, along the side of the road, or in one of the smaller parking areas located nearby. A good parking area for trail access is located on the west side of Roque Bluffs Road, just before the road ends at Schoppee Point Road.

Information: Located on the scenic Schoppee Point south of Machias, Roque Bluffs State Park features a half-mile sand and pebble beach and 6 miles of hiking



AISLINN SARNACKI | BDN

A hiking trail leads to viewpoints on Pond Cove in Roque Bluffs State Park.

trails that lead through a beautiful, mossy forest to the views along the rocky shores of Great Cove and Pond Cove.

The park covers 274 acres, including the 60-acre Simpson Pond, which attracts a variety of waterfowl, including Barrow's goldeneyes, redheads, gadwalls and

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BDN PHOTO BY AISLINN SARNACKI

Tamra Wight (right), who owns Poland Spring Campground with her husband, discusses campsite rental fees with Rocky Kyllonen of Lewiston on Monday in the campground's office. In addition to running the campground with her family, Wight is a middle school teacher and the author of a book series for ages 8-12. The third book in the series, "Mystery of the Missing Fox," published by Islandport Press, was officially released Tuesday.

Campground capers

Maine author writes third 'eco-mystery' for children

BY AISLINN SARNACKI
BDN STAFF

Piles of dead leaves and pine needles dotted the ground of Poland Spring Campground when Tamra Wight returned home from teaching middle school on Monday. Her son, Ben, had been hard at work, raking campsites in preparation for the busy season ahead. Her husband, David, was working on opening the campground's water lines. And later that day, Tamra would be in the office, listening to voice-mails and jotting down reservations.

The Wights have owned the 132-site campground in Poland, Maine, for the past 18 years, and they've been managing it longer than that. By now, they're used to the hustle and bustle each spring. There's a long list of chores to complete, and they work together to whittle it down.

"I raised both of my kids here," Tamra Wight said. "It's a really great lifestyle."

The hard work and excitement of opening up a campground in the spring is one of the many themes in Tamra Wight's newest book, "Mystery of the Missing Fox." Published by Islandport Press, the 200-page book was officially released on Tuesday, April 28, and is the third installment of the Cooper and Packrat mystery series for middle-school aged kids.

The book series follow the outdoor adventures of a boy named Cooper Wilder, whose family owns and runs a campground in Maine. Cooper is a young naturalist, constantly monitoring wildlife in the woods and waters around his home, aspiring to someday become a



BDN PHOTO BY AISLINN SARNACKI

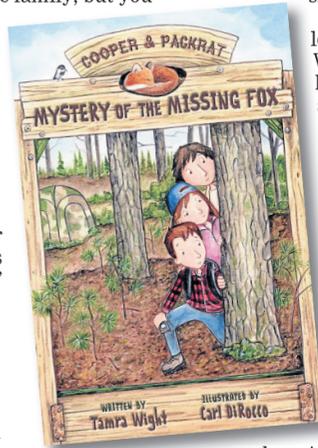
Tamra Wight, author of an eco-mystery book series for ages 8-12, watches bald eagles feeding their young Monday at Poland Spring Campground, which she and her husband own and manage with the help of their two children. Aspects of her family's life on the campground are reflected in her books.

Maine Game Warden.

"Everybody said, 'Write what you know,' and this is what I know," Wight said. "With the campground, you have a changing cast of characters. You've got the family, but you know people come and go, interesting people."

"And there's lots of wildlife here to draw from inspiration from," she added.

Wight describes the Cooper and Packrat books as "eco-mysteries" or "eco-adventures," combining ecological themes and the action-packed mystery genre. With a full cast of unique and likable characters, Wight weaves lessons of wildlife and wilderness ethics into a page-turning storyline that is filled with adventure, excitement and humor. At the not-entirely-fictional Wilder Family Campground on Pine Lake,



Cooper and his friends solve mysteries, interact with quirky campground guests, strive to protect local wildlife and deal with complex issues involving family and friendships.

"I like to throw a lot of family in there. We're a very tight-knit family," Wight said. "And we cater to families [here at the campground]. We've met a lot of families."

Since debuting with "Mystery on Pine Lake" in 2013, the Cooper and Packrat series has received great reviews from Kirkus Reviews, and has been applauded by readers on online bookselling sites

such as Amazon.com.

"If you'd have told me 10 years ago that this would have all come together, I wouldn't have believed you," she said. "It just kind of morphed into it, and it works."

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Finicky fish make vacation a challenge

When we headed to sunny Florida on vacation last week, I packed more ambitiously than I had on a similar trip the year before. Added to the flip-flops and T-shirts, I also toted a fly rod and some saltwater flies, and planned to put them to good use.

The vacation rental was on the beach, you see. New Smyrna Beach, to be precise. You might have heard of it:



JOHN HOLYOKE

It's known as "the shark-bite capital of the world." And the year before, I'd taken frequent walks down along the water, and chatted with plenty of anglers who were having a grand old time.

None, I noticed, were fly fishing. But that didn't matter: I do most of my fishing with a fly nowadays. Back in Maine, it doesn't matter if I'm on a pond or river or stream; a fly rod is likely in my hand. Florida? What could be different? I figured I'd give it a try.

And fly fish I did. Kind of. For two days, as a steady 30 mph wind whipped in off the Atlantic, I waded into the frothy water, tried my best to cast while remaining upright, and hoped a stray fish might participate.

"You know, most people down here just use bait," one of our party pointed out.

I knew. But I also knew that if the fish weren't biting, I'd rather be casting a fly than staring at a surf-casting rod that I'd planted in the sand, waiting for action that might or might not come.

"I am a fly fisherman," I said, in retrospect sounding quite pompous. "I'll catch those fish on a fly."

I was, it turned out, quite an oddity on that stretch of beach. I finally realized that one morning when I noticed that an entire construction crew had crept onto the rocks on the beach, and were watching me quite closely.

I'd like to think that this crew was impressed by the sheer power and grace of my casting. But I suspect that wasn't the case. Instead, I now realize that they were likely waiting to see if the stupid tourist was going to get washed out to sea before a shark bit him, or after.

After two days of getting pummeled by waves and catching no fish, I sheepishly made an announcement.

"Um ... I'll be back in a bit," I said. "I'm going to drive over to the ... uh ... bait shack."

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Bass for cash: 9-year-old girl's tournament debut pays off

BY JOHN HOLYOKE
BDN STAFF

SWANVILLE — Eight months ago, Sophia Ames celebrated her ninth birthday a bit differently than most girls her age.

Her father, Rustin Ames, gave Sophia — an avid angler — a gift he knew she'd love: new fishing gear ... and entry into a bass fishing tournament.

Sophia continued to practice her fishing on her home water — Toddy Pond — for the rest of the summer, and come open water season this year, she began looking forward to her first bass tournament.

"I knew she was ready for [the full-day event] because she'd proven it to me

at camp, many times, fishing for eight, 10 hours and just barely taking enough time to eat her sandwich," Rustin Ames said. "[She fished] off the dock, [and caught] one right after the other."

On April 16, she cashed in on the second part of her birthday gift and competed alongside her dad in a tournament on Swan Lake in Swanville as a two-person team.

It was quite a debut. It didn't take long before Sophia started to catch fish.

"I didn't think we would catch eight fish," Sophia said, referring to the tournament limit of eight weighable fish that make up a full bag limit in an event. "[We did] in like five minutes." After that quick start, So-

phia admitted she had a few questions.

"Will we catch any more fish?" was one concern, she said. "And, is it normally like this?"

She needn't have worried.

From that point on, the Ames team began culling their fish — putting the larger fish that they caught in their live well, and returning the smaller fish to the lake. Tournament bass anglers must keep their fish alive, and store them in live wells — aerated boxes full of water — on their boats until the weigh-in.

Rustin Ames said that for one two-hour period, he didn't even fish. Instead, he was busy making sure his

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COURTESY OF RUSTIN AMES

Rustin Ames of Orland and his daughter Sophia, 9, show off a few of the bass they caught during Sophia's first bass fishing tournament on April 16 on Swan Lake in Swanville. The duo caught eight small-mouth bass that weighed a total of 35.31 pounds and finished second in the event.