

Hunters to kick off moose season



Spectators watch as moose are brought to the Ashland tagging station on the first day of the 2015 Maine moose hunting season.

BY JOHN HOLYOKE
BDN STAFF

Bright and early Monday morning, this year's first group of moose hunters will head into the woods hoping for the best.

Those hunters also will have Mother Nature on their side. According to the National Weather Service, temperatures in northern Maine, where hunters will be heading afield, will drop into the 30s on Sunday night and will only reach the upper 50s on Monday.

In many past years, September moose hunters have had to deal with higher temperatures, which tend to discourage moose from moving as much during daylight hours.

No matter what conditions those hunters face, the state's moose biologist says they'll be in for an adventure in a special place.

"There's a beauty to Maine," Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife biologist Lee Kantar said. "There's a beauty to coastal Maine, and there's beauty in different places. But the moose woods has its own feel to it. It's a northern forest that doesn't exist in a lot of other states. We've got mountains and waters, and the biggest part [of that forest] is moose."

Maine's moose hunting season is split into four sessions, with hunters assigned to a specific session and to one of the state's 29 wildlife management districts (only 24 of the 29 wildlife management districts are open to hunting this year). For 2016, a total of 2,140 permits have been allotted.

Here's the breakdown:
— Sept. 26-Oct. 1: 720 bull permits have been allocated in eight

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No moose permit? No big deal.

Right and early Monday morning, 720 lucky moose hunters — along with assorted relatives and friends — will head into the woods of northern Maine to embark upon adventures that some have been looking forward to for years.

You? Me? The rest of us unlucky folks? Well, our names didn't pop out of the computer-hopper during this year's moose-permit lottery.

We're sad. We're left out. We're simply out of luck.

Or are we? Of course we're not. Trust me.

As it turns out, I'm a bit of a (self-proclaimed) expert in enjoying this uniquely Maine spectacle. Except for that one time back in 2006, I've become quite adept at not winning in the lottery. Heck, you might as well call me an expert on moose hunt enjoyment (when you don't know anyone with a permit, but don't want to sit home and pout about it).

Over the past dozen or so years, I've gotten into the woods — or, more accurately, *close to the woods* — for nearly every moose hunt.

Notice I said, "close to the woods." That's an important distinction. It's the basis for Rule 1 on our list of Having Fun on a Moose Hunt You Haven't Been Invited To.

Rule 1: Don't horn your way in on someone else's hunt. Maybe your mother-in-law has a permit. Maybe she hates you, and doesn't want you around, even on holidays. Don't pester her to include you on her hunt. Don't promise to cook all the meals, or to field dress the moose. Don't.

If mom-in-law wants you around, she'll ask. If she doesn't, don't fret. Move along to Rule 1-A.

Rule 1-A: Don't go into the woods in an active hunting zone to try to call a moose if you're not a part of a hunting party. Prospective hunters don't think this is helpful. They won't appreciate your efforts. They might even get angry. Leave the calling to the actual hunters and their pals. Or to your mother-in-law. Heck, if you obey this rule, she might even invite you to Christmas dinner.



JOHN HOLYOKE



The Maine Appalachian Trail Club is replacing all 42 privies that it maintains along the AT in Maine.

LINDA COAN O'KRESIK | BDN

A privy problem

Maine trail club races to replace outhouses

BY AISLINN SARNACKI
BDN STAFF

Spiders fled from the outhouse as Craig Dickstein of Caratunk, a trail maintainer for the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, sliced through its back wall with a reciprocating saw on a recent Saturday, carving up and around the seat, then over to the side wall, which was covered with graffiti left by Appalachian Trail hikers.

"The stuff of nightmares," said Carington Rhodes of Washington, another MATC trail maintainer, as he watched a particularly large arachnid scamper out of the old building. "You're never going to feel safe in a privy again."

The small wooden privy had stood by the Appalachian Trail at the base of Pleasant Pond Mountain for 30-some-odd years, its plastic roof filled with holes left by falling tree branches, ice and snow. But three weeks earlier, Dickstein had hiked up to

the privy and nailed the door shut. Its contents had reached as high as the seat.

"Privy closed," read the sign Dickstein tacked to the door. "This facility has been deemed 'Code Brown' and is closed for business."

Fortunately, the Pleasant Pond privy was next on the list to be replaced by the Maine Appalachian Trail Club as a part of the organization's privy replacement initiative. Launched in 2013, the plan is to replace all 42 privies the MATC maintains along the AT in Maine with new, more sustainable and environmentally friendly privies.

The reason is simple: they're filling up and falling apart.

A trail problem solved

Established in 1923, the Appalachian Trail is roughly 2,190 miles and travels through 14 states, starting in Georgia and ending atop Mount Katahdin in Maine.



The old pit-style privies are being replaced with new, more environmentally friendly ones along the AT in Maine.

Along the way, 31 clubs work together to maintain the trail. In Maine, this work is conducted, for the most part, by the

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Remember: The best way to enjoy moose season as an observer is to go where you're absolutely sure the moose will be.

Luckily, as a self-proclaimed expert in permit-free experiences, I know that secret.

And since I'm not allowed to charge folks for my knowledge (I'm not a guide, after all), I'm required to tell you my secrets ... for free.

Go to a tagging station. Up in Ashland and Houlton and Presque Isle and Fort Kent, those stations will be booming by noon on Monday, as successful hunters bring their moose back to town.

If you've never spent any time around a successful hunter at a tagging station, let me tell you how this experience will play out.

First, you say, "Hi. Nice moose!" Next, the hunter will tell you their entire story, starting with what they ate for breakfast and finishing with the long drive back out of the woods. No detail will be left out. I promise. (Trade secret: Us grizzled old journalists call this process "interviewing." Sounds like a pretty grueling job, doesn't it?)

Then, after laughing at the right times as the tale unfolds, move along to the next smiling hunter. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.

Eventually, in order to get a true taste of Maine, look around for some local fare.

Some tagging stations even have concession stands on site, which can be very handy. A warning: Don't set yourself apart as a flatlander by trying to peel the

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1-Minute Hike: Harriman Point Preserve

Difficulty: Easy. The preserve is home to about 1.5 miles of trails that travel through forests and old fields. A little less than a mile of those trails is actually an old woods road, which is smooth and wide. There is no significant change in elevation throughout the preserve. If you explore all of the trails in the preserve, the total hike is 3 miles, out and back.

How to get there: From the intersection of Route 172 and Route 175 in south Blue Hill, follow Route 175 south 7.5 miles, then turn left onto Harriman Point Road. Drive 0.5 mile and the

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Seaweed blankets the rocky shore of Allen Cove at Harriman Point Preserve in Brooklin recently. Watch video of the hike at bangordailynews.com.

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