



## Saving habitat



JOHN HOLYOKE | BDN

## Roach River dam work nears completion as deadline looms

BY JOHN HOLYOKE  
BDN STAFF

Construction is underway as crews build a dam to replace one that led to the dewatering of a section of the Roach River last year. According to Walter Graff, senior vice president of the Appalachian Mountain Club, which owns the land and the dam, despite early delays in the bidding process, the project is on schedule to wrap up this month. “We have until Oct. 15 to complete the dam,” Graff said. “I talked to some of the people [on Monday], and they’re right on schedule.” In May, the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Maine Land Use

Planning Commission reached an administrative settlement agreement on the Roach River dam issue in the wake of last year’s incident. After a dry summer of 2014, about 1 mile of the Roach River described as prime nursery habitat for landlocked salmon and brook trout was dewatered for 10 days while construction of a dam at Second Roach Pond was underway. That dam, Graff said, was built too high to allow water to flow into the river, especially during times of extremely low water. The Appalachian Mountain Club and Land Use Planning Commission entered into discussions about the issue, and in May an agreement was reached.

The agreement called for the Appalachian Mountain Club to hire an engineering firm not involved with the previous dam to plan and design a new dam. That new firm, Wright-Pierce, was approved by the Land Use Planning Commission, as was also required in the settlement. According to the Land Use Planning Commission, the Appalachian Mountain Club has paid a \$15,000 civil penalty, and will, according to the settlement agreement, “complete or substantially contribute” to a project that improves fish passage at a stream or river road crossing at a cost of \$70,000 or more. That work consists of culvert replacement on Blackstone Brook in Blackstone Township, opening

up more than 9 miles of cold-water habitat that is used by brook trout and Atlantic salmon. The Appalachian Mountain Club land is the site of Medawisla Wilderness Lodge, which is in the process of being rebuilt. Graff said the original dam was old and needed replacing. “The dam that had been there was failing, and the pond level for a number of years had been dropping,” Graff said. “We were afraid that the dam would fail, so we went to [the Land Use Planning Commission] to see if we could fix the dam or reconstruct the dam, and in the end we decided to reconstruct it. That was to protect the pond for recreational value — people canoeing and swimming — but also to protect the wetlands

the dam provided.” The dam does not produce hydroelectricity and has no gates. It’s a rock ramp dam, according to Graff. “It’s Mother Nature providing the amount of water that goes over the dam,” he said. However, in order for Mother Nature to do her work, the dam has to be engineered to allow flow into the river during all weather conditions. After the 2014 construction project dewatered the Roach River, Graff said he and the Appalachian Mountain Club were eager to work with state agencies and resolve the issue as quickly as possible. Interim measures were taken to ensure that water flowed into the dam provided.” *See Dam, Page C2*

## It’s robbing season for bees

It’s interesting just how much the fall honey flow has varied between the locations in which I keep my bees. In Carmel, the bees hardly put an ounce of honey in the hives in September, whereas here in Hampden, some of my hives filled two supers (about 70 pounds) in less than three weeks. That means that between all of my honey production hives, I have about 900 pounds of honey. All of the honey supers have been removed from the hive and are stacked up in the garage awaiting extraction. At this time, the goldenrod honey flow has come to an end, and there is just a bit of nectar coming in from asters and other late flowering plants. Instinctively, the bees know they need to store as much food as possible for



PETER COWIN



BDN FILE

Thousands of bees buzz their wings and vibrate to keep warm in January 2014. In the honey world, it’s robbing season for bees.

the winter. With so little forage available, the bees will turn to robbing from each other. Weak hives with low bee populations are at the greatest risk of robbing. Initially, some bees will look to slip past the bees guarding the entrance to the hive. They also may seek alternative routes into the hive, say between the hive top and the supers or through cracks in the wood. Once in, they will fill up with honey and rush back to their own hive. News of the new found source of food quickly spreads and soon hundreds, even thousands of bees

start raiding the weak hive. The guards of the weak hive will defend it to the death and hundreds, even thousands can die for the cause; but sheer numbers of raiding bees can simply overwhelm them. In a few days, the weak hive can be robbed out so badly that they will not even survive to the end of fall, never mind winter. To prevent this warfare, I have reduced the sizes of the entrances to my hives. Smaller entrances are easier to defend. Those hives that still need food are being fed with concentrated sugar solution; *See Bees, Page C7*

## Weather may change the game for bird hunters

For much of August and September, warm, dry weather dominated, and heading into upland bird hunting season, biologist Brad Allen was ready to pass along some age-old advice for those who’d be targeting woodcock. But the day before this year’s season began, much of the state absorbed torrential rain — and Allen’s tune changed. “The old adage for woodcock hunting is, ‘When it’s dry, hunt them high,’” Allen, bird group leader for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, said. “That would have applied until [Tuesday]. And that would have made woodcock hunting difficult.” That adage, according to Allen, doesn’t make sense on first glance. Woodcock feed on earthworms, and one might think that during a dry spell the last place the birds would find worms would



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be high on a ridge. Water does, after all, run down hill. “When it’s dry, you’d think the lowest valley would hold some water. But what woodcock do when it’s very dry is find some conifers, because the soil moisture under a spruce or fir tree is considerably higher than in a clear cut or a dried out area,” Allen said. “This rain will make soil moisture unilateral, and there should be earthworms galore within an inch of the surface.” Allen said hunters who typically are able to find woodcock won’t have to change a thing from previous years. “Just go to the haunts that you know typically, in an average year, hold woodcock,” he said. Woodcock are just one of the birds that hunters will begin targeting in October. Another favorite is the ruffed grouse, often called a “partridge.” Kelsey Sullivan, game bird biologist with DIF&W, said the recent rain won’t bother grouse, but it may change their behavior for the first couple of days of the season. “It won’t affect the number [of birds],” he said. *See Holyoke, Page C2*

## We need to tell you something (and you’re going to love it!):

Next week, this section of your Bangor Daily News will become NEXT. Award-winning journalist Meg Haskell has rejoined the BDN to chronicle the experiences, challenges and issues facing the “Baby Boom” generation—a generation poised to shape Maine’s future. Join Meg every weekend as she takes a look at what’s NEXT.

