

## How many kinds of birds are there?

There are only three kinds of birds in the world: black birds, brown birds and eagles. So says my friend Sen. Tom Saviello. Tom opines that biologists make things too complicated, splitting species



**BOB DUCHESNE**  
GOOD BIRDING

when they should be lumping them for simplicity. So the state senator from Wilton devised the Saviello classification system where every bird is lumped into one of just three species.

I challenge him on this, of course. How do you fit a cardinal into one of those categories?

Simple, he says, red is just a color variation of brown.

I haven't personally adopted his system yet, but I do see merit in it. For one thing, I could claim to have seen every species of bird in the world by now, and my life list would be complete at three. Better yet, I could finally stop making changes to my list every year.

Last week's column discussed the role of the American Ornithological Union in naming and re-naming birds as our scientific understanding of bird evolution and distribution improves. The American Ornithological Union sets the standard used by all guide books. It is the standard adopted by the American Birding Association, another totally separate organization hell-bent on confusing birders. The American Birding Association sets criteria for deciding which birds are "countable" on official lists.

As a lad, one of the first birds I could identify was a myrtle warbler. But in 1973, the American Ornithological Union decided that the myrtle warbler in the east and the Audubon's warbler in the west were really the same species, even though they look distinctly different. Hence, they were lumped into one name — the yellow-rumped warbler, and I've been forced to call it that ever since.

The 1990s were an especially confusing time for birders. In 1995, the American Ornithological Union split the sharp-tailed sparrow into two species: the Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow and the salt-marsh sharp-tailed sparrow. Not only are they nearly identical, but they overlap and interbreed in Maine, primarily in Scarborough Marsh. To make matters worse, in 2009, the American Ornithological Union decided to rename both sparrows, dropping "sharp-tailed" from each name. That seems minor, but every field guide in North America was rendered instantly out-of-date, including my own book which was published

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AISLINN SARNACKI | BDN

Ron Dobra, the Maine Appalachian Trail Club overseer for the Whitecap District of the Appalachian Trail, clips back evergreen trees (above) encroaching on the Appalachian Trail and secures a new trail sign to a tree (below) not far from the Wilson Valley shelter near Greenville recently. Dobra is one of many club volunteers who maintain the Appalachian Trail in Maine.

# Adopt a trail

## Maine club looking for volunteers to help maintain parts of Appalachian



BY AISLINN SARNACKI  
BDN STAFF

With a hiking pole in one hand and pruning shears in the other, Ron Dobra picked his way along the Appalachian Trail, snipping overhanging branches and making note of eroding soil. For the past 20 some odd years, he has helped maintain the popular hiking trail, which spans from Georgia to Maine and is seeing more foot traffic each year.

"The entire length of the AT — 2,200 miles — even though it's a national park, is maintained and kept open entirely by volunteers," Dobra, 68, of Greenville, said. "So without volunteers there'd be no Appalachian Trail."

The vast majority of Appalachian Trail in Maine — 267 miles of 282 miles — is maintained by volunteers of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club. Each MATC maintainer is assigned a small section of the trail, usually 2 to 4 miles long, and is responsible for keeping that section in good condition.

In recent years, despite the increasing popularity of the AT, the club has struggled to find

enough maintainers to cover every section of the trail in Maine.

"I was told that once upon a time ... there was a waiting list for people who wanted to be section maintainers," Dobra said. "You couldn't just walk in and get one. You had to be put on a waiting list. Well, that's not the case anymore."

The MATC divides the trail in Maine into five districts, each about 60 miles long. Dobra is the overseer for the Whitecap District, which starts in Monson and stretches north into the famous 100-Mile Wilderness, the most remote section of the trail. As overseer, Dobra is in charge of 34 trail maintainers — or he is when all his sections are full.

He currently has four sections of the AT that aren't being maintained, and he's having a tough time finding people to adopt these sections of trail.

"Volunteerism is a tough thing," Dobra said. "You're committed to two or three trips a year. We expect that. And it's not always the case that people can keep that commitment up for a long period of time."

See *Trail*, Page C7

## TV show to feature Maine raft company

Reality TV fans will have another opportunity to see some familiar scenes on Oct. 18, when a local business takes center stage on a new Travel Channel show.

Maureen McDonald, an owner of Penobscot Adventures in Millinocket, explained that a rafting trip on the Penobscot River was filmed last year, and that episode of a show called "50/50" will be aired this weekend.

"The premise [of the show] is very cool," McDonald said.

"They surprise people, I assume in city situations, with the cameras and say, 'You have an hour to go with us, and you'll be with us ... for 50 hours.'"



**JOHN HOLYOKE**

According to the Travel Channel website, hosts Samantha Brown and Chris Grundy are traveling the country, asking couples that same question.

"If you said yes, it's wheels up on an unforgettable two-day adventure getaway worth \$50,000," according to the website. "And you'll get to choose where you go, what you do, what you eat and when you sleep. But there's one catch: You must drop anything and leave right now."

McDonald said each show is 30 minutes long and includes two adventures. One recent episode featured a couple that jetted off to Abu Dhabi, she said.

The spontaneous nature of the show is riveting, McDonald said.

"When I talked to the couple that actually took the adventure with us, they had four children, and they were working," McDonald said. "They had to talk to their parents to arrange childcare for two days — of course, the cameras are rolling, they're in the back of the limo on their way to the airport — and they're trying to reorganize their lives to do this adventure."

McDonald said she worked with the show's producers, Big Table Media, for three months in order to set up the trip.

"It was a big fever pitch on that day. It was an all-day thing," she said. "Then we never heard from them again. I thought for sure that the story got scrapped. But we were very pleased when we found out [a couple of weeks ago] that this was coming to fruition."

McDonald said the trip the couple embarked upon took some customizing in order to make it fit in with the program's constraints.

"It was interesting. We couldn't have them go on a standard, 'Hey, See *Holyoke*, Page C4

## 1-Minute Hike: Penobscot Mountain Trail

**Difficulty:** Moderate-strenuous. The Penobscot Mountain Trail is about 1.5 miles long, according to the National Park Service, and is just one of several trails that explore Penobscot Mountain. Expect plenty of exposed tree roots and rocks, as well as some wet, slippery granite in places.

**How to get there:** The closest parking area in Acadia National

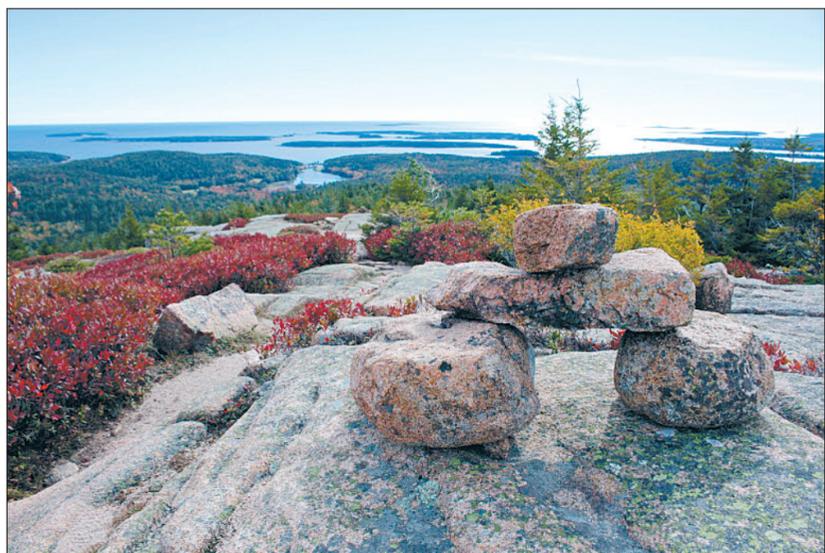


**AISLINN SARNACKI**

**Watch the video**  
bangordailynews.com

Park to Penobscot Mountain Trail is at the Jordan Pond House off the Park Loop Road. After driving onto Mount Desert Island on Route 3, veer left at the intersection and drive toward Bar Harbor for about 7.6 miles and turn right to enter Acadia National Park at Halls Cove Visitor Center. Drive straight forward for a few hundred feet, then turn left at the intersection onto the Park Loop Road — Halls Cove Visitor Center

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AISLINN SARNACKI | BDN

Special rock piles known as "Bates cairns" mark the Penobscot Mountain Trail in Acadia National Park on Mount Desert Island. Bates cairns were designed by Waldron Bates, who blazed many of the original paths in the park

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

## Your new section is here!

This section of your Bangor Daily News is now **Outdoors**

Moved to Friday to help you better plan your weekend, hike or getting ready to hunt, writers John Holyoke and Aislinn Sarnacki will continue to show you the best of what Maine's wilderness has to offer.

