

Hike

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the bluff, then splits. At this fork, the left trail leads up to the top of the bluff, which rises about 700 feet above sea level. The right trail leads around the bluff to the base of sheer granite cliffs, where approximately 130 climbing routes have been established.

This dramatic landmark used to be owned by Donald “Donnie” Nelligan Jr., a well-known rock climber who allowed the public access to the bluff for hiking, climbing and bouldering (climbing on boulders) for nearly 20 years. When Nelligan died unexpectedly at the age of 62 in the summer of 2013, the future of Eagle’s Bluff became uncertain.

In response, a group of Maine climbers formed the Clifton Climbers Alliance and set to work fundraising to purchase Eagle Bluff so it would remain open to the public long into the future. The group partnered with the Access Fund, a national advocacy organization that works to keep climbing areas open throughout the country. Through many private donations and contributions from the Quimby Family Foundation, Land for Maine’s Future program and The Davis Conservation Foundation, the alliance was able to raise \$150,000 for the purchase.

In August of 2014, the Clifton Climbers Alliance closed on the sale and became owners, stewards and caretakers of Eagle Bluff.

“Quite a bit along the road and most of the cliff is ours,” said Ben Townsend, member of Clifton Climbers Alliance, who said the piece of newly conserved property is approximately 165 acres.

A small parking area for Eagle Bluff has been created beside Route 180, and the Clifton Climbers Alliance have plans to improve that area by adding a kiosk and trail signs. The group also plans to replace old climbing hardware of the cliffs in the near future, Townsend said.

From the parking area to the top of Eagle Bluff, the trail is almost exactly 0.5 mile and is marked with orange, pink and blue flagging tape tied around trees. Traveling through a mixed forest, the trail starts out relatively level, then steeply climbs the northwest side of the bluff through rocks and past large boulders. Along the way are old cedar trees filled with holes drilled by woodpeckers looking for insects.

About 0.2 mile into the woods, the trail splits. The left trail leads to the top of the bluff. Along the way, the trail passes a side trail on the right that acts as a shortcut to the bottom of the cliffs for climbers coming down from the bluff. Continue straight ahead to climb to the top of the bluff, where you’ll pass by a large boulder then reach the edge of the cliffs. The trail then turns north and traces along the top of the cliffs through stands of small pines and beds of lichen and moss. The trail dead ends at the northernmost edge of the cliffs.

Along the top of the cliffs



AISLINN SARNACKI | BDN

Little Peaked and Peaked mountains are seen from the top of Eagle Bluff, a popular hiking and climbing destination in Clifton, just a 20-minute drive from Bangor.

are open areas of exposed granite that are great spots for picnicking or simply sitting and enjoying the view.

Eagle Bluff rises just 700 feet above sea level, but it provides breathtaking views of the region. From the cliffs, hikers look down on the nearby Cedar Swamp Pond and can follow its feeder stream as it winds north through the hills. And northwest, beyond the stream, are the distinctive humps of Little Peaked and Peaked mountains, known by locals as Little Chick and Chick hills.

On average, it takes about an hour to hike to the top of the bluff and back down to the parking area. Adding a short side trip to the bottom of the cliffs adds another 30 minutes

or so to your adventure. The view of the cliffs from their base is well worth the extra walking. To reach the cliffs, veer right at the fork and you’ll climb up the bluff a short distance, traveling through rocky terrain. The trail then levels off and travels around the south side of the bluff to the base of the cliffs.

Public access to Eagle Bluff is permitted from sunrise to one hour after sundown. Camping, fires and overnight use is not permitted. These visitation rules are posted on a tree at the parking area.

Commercial guiding or instruction on the property requires prior approval. For information about guiding, email joe@accessfund.org.

For general information about Eagle Bluff, visit cliftonclimbersalliance.org or email info@cliftonclimbersalliance.org.

Personal note: When I pitched the “1-minute hike” column to my editor more than four years ago, I did it with a video I’d taken of Eagle Bluff. The video was terrible. I see that now. But it served its purpose, helping to persuade my editor that I had a good idea. And that’s how my “1-minute hike” column and online video series began.

Though I rarely return to a trail I’ve already written about for my blog, there have been exceptions. On Friday, I decided to make Eagle Bluff one of those exceptions.

The sky was blue and the wind was brisk when my dog, Oreo, and I hit the trail, following flagging tape to the top of the bluff. Oreo rolled on the rough granite as I sat down in the sunlight and took in the view.

On the way down the bluff, Oreo pulled me down a side trail, which traveled along a steep slope. I slipped on a layer of dry leaves and fell to the side, landing on a rock. In the process, I let go of Oreo’s leash, and he sauntered off, sniffing at the base of trees ahead, totally unconcerned. Sitting on the ground, grasping my bruised thigh, I called him back to me. He ignored the request. Anger flared up inside me, and I shrieked at him to “get back here and help Momma!” Sensing the urgency in my tone perhaps, he obeyed. I grabbed his leash, dusted off my pants and pride, and we returned to the main trail, which we followed to the base of the cliffs.

Weeping with melting snow and ice, the towering rock took my mind off my bruises and frustration. Late afternoon sunlight filtered through the trees and bounced off the wet granite. Tree roots twisted over rock shelves, and pine needles carpeted the forest floor below. I ran my hand along the rough rock and lingered a while, soaking in the quiet before heading back to the busy road.

For more of Aislinn Sarnacki’s adventures, visit her blog at actoutwithaislinn.bangordailynews.com. Follow her on Twitter: @1minihikegirl.



MICKY BEDELL | BDN

Jane Barron of Alder Stream Canvas puts together leather-and-canvas backpacks at her Kingfield home recently.

Canvas

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hobby. But one day she got stuck ordering 20 yards of canvas to make a single pack for a friend’s husband.

“I thought, ‘What am I going to do with 20 yards of canvas?’” she said, shaking her head and eyeballing the piles of the fabric scattered on tables throughout her home. “But then another friend wanted a pack and another friend, and that’s how I started. Just friends and family at first.”

The work was appealing to her. Barron had always been interested in sewing, spending much of her youth deconstructing and reconstructing products to figure out how to make them herself. Making packs was a challenge she accepted happily.

“I always liked figuring out how to piece things together,” she said.

And she had always been drawn to the flexibility of part-time work, spending

her life as a Registered Maine Guide and a cross-country ski instructor, substituting in kindergarten and fourth-grade classrooms, working in a canoe shop and even sewing pants for L.L. Bean around Christmastime, where she used to watch the maintenance guys fixing the sewing machines so she could bring those skills home.

“It was a good fit for a lot of years,” she said. “I’d try to sort of piecemeal my existence together.”

Her decision to go full time with her canvas bag business wasn’t really a decision. The business just grew and grew until that’s what she was doing all the time. She never really stopped to say, “This is it. No more piecemeal.”

More often than not, these days, you’ll find Barron at home sewing 50 different products for “different types of people,” with her main focus being backpacks, as she has for the last 10 years.

That is, unless the snow outside is perfect for cross-country skiing. Then you’ll find her on the trails.

Things to Do Outdoors

DOVER-FOXCROFT — Piscataquis and Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation Districts workshop, “Trees in Transition: Succession Planning for your Woodlands,” 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Saturday, March 5, Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District, 42 Engdahl Drive. Registration required. 564-2321, ext. 3, or info@piscataquisswcd.org.

FREEPORT — “Float Fishing Alaska” with Dan Tarkinson, 7-8 p.m. Friday, March 11, L.L. Bean camping department, 95 Main St. Video footage and photos from an adventure in the remote Togiak National Wildlife Refuge of Bristol Bay, Alaska. Free. 877-755-2326.

FREEPORT — Maine storytellers Capt. Kendall Morse, John McDonald and Brian Daniels telling classic Down East stories in the spirit of “Bert and I,” 7-8 p.m. Friday, March 4, L.L. Bean camping department, 95 Main St. Free 877-755-2326.

KENNEBUNKPORT — Ice rescue technician courses for fire, rescue EMS and law enforcement personnel, Saturday, March 5, in Westbrook. Course conducted by Lifesaving Resources LLC includes three hours of classroom and five hours of practical sessions. gerald@lifesaving.com or 967-8614.

MACHIAS — University of Maine at Machias Maine Writers Series: Catherine Schmitt, author of “The President’s Salmon: Restoring the King of Fish and Its Home Waters,” 4 p.m. Friday, March 11, Merrill Library, UMM. Free and open to all. tessa.mellas@maine.edu.

ORONO — Penobscot County Conservation Association’s 78th annual Sportsmen’s Show, 5-9 p.m. Friday, March 11; 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Saturday, March 12; 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday, March 13, University of Maine Field House. Tickets \$8 for ages 11 and up. conservationassociation.org.

ORRINGTON — Curran Homestead Living History Farm and Museum has canceled the Harvest of Diamonds ice-cutting reenactment event on Sunday, March 6, at Fields Pond. Safety and weather conditions were major factors in the cancellation.

PERRY — Washington County Community College student senate Freezin’ for a Reason 16th annual Polar Bear Dip, noon Friday, March 11, Pleasant Point Reservation pier. Benefits Ronald McDonald House in Bangor and Sarah’s House of Maine in Holden. Karen Gookin, 454-1054, or Tabitha Hanson, 454-1094. Pledge sheets and additional information, wccc.me.edu.

POLAND — Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife ice fishing

derby to benefit scholarships originally scheduled for Camp North Woods, 6 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, March 12, Range Pond State Park, 26 State Park Road, has been canceled.

UNITY — Unity Fire Department’s third annual T-Pot Memorial Fishing Derby, 6 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, March 5, Unity Pond. Weigh-in at Kanokolus Beach at the public boat landing on Kanokolus Road. First, second and third prizes for trout, bass, pickerel, perch and crappie. Tickets \$10 per person in advance at Albion Bait, Depot Country Store, Chase Toys, Mac’s Hardware, Patterson’s Store, Parson’s

Small Engine; Kanokolus Beach on the day of event. Fundraiser to benefit the department’s Side by Side ATV fund for off-road rescues and wildland firefighting.

WINSLOW — Hunter Safety Courses: 6-9 p.m. March 16-17 and 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. March 19; 6-9 p.m. April 13-14 and 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. April 16; 6-9 p.m. Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 and 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Sept. 3; 6-9 p.m. Oct. 5-6 and 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Oct. 8, Winslow Fire Department. Don Perrine at 238-0279.

For a complete listing of calendar items or to submit your event, visit www.bangor

COMING SOON

3.11

As You Like It (NT Live)

3.12

Manon Lescaut (Met Opera)

3.19

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes - A live production, featuring the world’s most famous detective

3.20

Simone Dinnerstein

3.26

True Blues

4.3

Popovich Pet Theater

4.10

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6.9

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