

Hike

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100,000 acres east of Baxter State Park. This land is owned by Roxanne Quimby and managed by Ellitsville Plantation Inc., a private Maine-based foundation formed by Quimby.

In 2011, Quimby went public with a proposal that this land and additional acreage — up to 150,000 acres — be added to the National Park System, half of it becoming a national park and the other half becoming a national recreation area. Over the past several years, this proposal has met a great deal of resistance, as well as support, in local communities and throughout the state.

While the matter is still under debate, the public is welcome to enjoy the scenic gravel roads and growing trail network of the Katahdin Woods and Waters Recreation Area. Different types of recreation are permitted in different parcels of the land.

Barnard Mountain lies near the Katahdin Loop Road in a large day-use section of the recreation area. The road is open to vehicles seasonally. Therefore, this hike is only easily accessible during the summer and fall.

In this area, hunting is not permitted. Dogs are allowed if on leash. And camping is only permitted by request. In addition to hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking are permitted on certain trails in this area.

The Barnard Mountain hike starts at the north end of the Katahdin Loop Road, on an old logging road that is blocked off to vehicles. You can park there in a small gravel parking lot. A sign at the trailhead indicates that it is a 1.2-mile walk along the old logging road to the more traditional hiking trail, which switchbacks up the mountain for about 0.8 mile to end at an open granite ledge topped with a picnic table.

The logging road section of the hike is a great opportunity for viewing wildlife, because you can see far ahead of you on the road. Moose, white-tailed deer, bear and coyotes often walk along this road. You'll likely see their tracks, if not the animals themselves.

On the road, you'll cross Katahdin Brook on a footbridge. Just after that, you'll pass a lean-to on your left.

The Barnard Mountain Trail will be on your right and is marked with a small sign. The trail was constructed by the Maine Conservation Corps in 2014 and includes several short sections of granite steps. It is not currently marked with blazes or any other type of trail markers, but it's well maintained.

A little less than half-way up the trail, it travels through a narrow gap between two sections of a large split boulder. The slope then becomes a bit steeper as you near the top of the mountain.

Currently, the trail ends at a large granite ledge topped with a picnic table.



Barbara Bentley, former president of Friends of Baxter State Park, sits on a picnic table on an open granite ledge of Barnard Mountain in the Katahdin Woods and Waters Recreation Area near Millinocket recently. From the outlook, which lies at the end of Barnard Mountain Trail, Bentley takes in a view of Mount Katahdin, as well as South Turner and North Turner mountains.



Charlie Jacobi (foreground) and Howard Whitcomb hike up the Barnard Mountain Trail on in the Katahdin Woods and Waters Recreation Area near Millinocket recently.

There, you can look out over the woods of Baxter State Park, with Katahdin straight ahead. To Katahdin's right is South Turner and North Turner mountains. To its left, off in the distance, you can see the distinctive ridge of Big Spencer Mountain in the Moosehead Region.

For information about the Katahdin Woods and

Waters Recreation Area, including an up-to-date trail map, visit katahdinwoods.org. If you have specific questions about trails, visitor use and access, call Ellitsville Plantation Inc. recreation managers Susan and Mark Adams at 852-1291 or email them at lunksoos@gmail.com.

Personal note: Snow

buntings stirred from the gravel road and flew into the underbrush ahead of the bus as we made our way along Katahdin Loop Road to Barnard Mountain on Nov. 8, east of Baxter State Park. It was the last day of the Northeast Alpine Stewardship Gathering, that year held in Millinocket.

I chose the Barnard

The logging road section of the hike is a great opportunity for viewing wildlife, because you can see far ahead of you on the road. Moose, white-tailed deer, bear and coyotes often walk along this road.

Mountain hike for my group field trip because I had yet to visit the proposed national park. I was lucky to be joined by several inspirational conservation leaders, including Barbara and Bill Bentley of the nonprofit Friends of Baxter State Park; their dog, Davis; Charlie Jacobi, Acadia National Park resource specialist; and Howard Whitcomb, author of "Governor Baxter's Magnificent Obsession," a documentary history of the formation of Baxter State Park.

We were led by Susan Adams of Ellitsville Plantation Inc. She and her husband, Mark, serve as recreation directors for the Katahdin Woods and Waters Recreation Area.

It was a blustery, cold day, but the sun warmed our backs as we walked along the old logging road toward the mountain, following moose and deer tracks pressed into the gravel road. The trees were mostly bare of leaves, allowing us to see far into the forest.

I enjoyed the trail and the stunning view at the end of the hike, but what truly made the trip special were my companions. All the people in the group had spent years hiking and camping in Maine, especially in the nearby Baxter State Park, and they had many interesting stories to tell. And truly, there's no better way to get to know a person than going for a walk in the woods together.

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

Law

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for Animal Planet, has seen the show thrive with an audience that has grown since its debut three years ago, Seestedt said.

"I really can't say too much about it at this point. What I can say is that the show is doing better than it ever has," Seestedt said. "We have a larger, stronger, more active fan base than ever before. The show is performing strongly; Animal Planet is a big believer in it, as is the warden service."

But fans still have a little longer before they have to say goodbye to wardens Kris MacCabe, Jonathan Parker and all their favorite "stars" of the show.

Seestedt said 10 hours of the show were filmed through the summer and are ready for airing, and another 10 hours — a full season — will be provided to Animal Planet after crews return from the field after deer season ends later this month.

Seestedt said that Engel Entertainment has already formulated a plan for the show's finale, and said it will be worth watching.

"In nonfiction television, the usual formula is that a show keeps going on and on and on until it fades away or people lose interest in it and it just fades out and nobody ever knows what happens to it," Seestedt said. "We want to make sure that when we do a 'North Woods Law,' we do it in a way that is respectful to what the show is, and to the people who love it. And basically, [we want] to give them the signoff that we think they deserve."

Wilkinson agreed with Seestedt's assessment, and praised the working relationship that the Maine Warden Service had with production crews.

"It was basically kind of a collective decision here in house that it was time to end the relationship, and it isn't in any way [indicative] that things are bad," Wilkinson said. "Things are fantastic with Engel. They've been supportive. We've been supportive of them. But it was time for us to step away from the [show] while it was doing well."

Seestedt said he and his crews have loved working on the show.

"We are sad to see something end that we love so much, but we're excited to do it in the way that we're going to do it," he said.

This summer, the DIF&W began offering Camp North Woods, a camp designed to capitalize on the show's popularity and introduce youngsters to outdoor recreation.

In August, Wilkinson said he hoped the camp would grow from the 96 who were chosen to attend this summer to as many as 1,000 campers per year in 2018. On Thursday, Wilkinson said the DIF&W would continue to try to grow Camp North Woods.

The show's popularity with Mainers is hard to deny: At several annual events, including a "North Woods Law" day held at the Maine Wildlife Park, thousands of fans wait in line to meet their favorite wardens from the show.

"It's incredible what this quirky little show with a positive message has done, and how it has connected with people," Seestedt said.

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