



SCOT MILLER

Photographer Scot Miller's trips to the Katahdin region are featured in his Presque Isle photography exhibit, "Thoreau's Maine Woods," and shaped his interpretation of American conservation.

Photos

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death in 1862. He spent more than a decade presenting it as a speech, which was quite popular, "espousing the joys and benefits of walking" and "celebrating America's wild lands," Miller said.

Muir, a Scottish-born naturalist who founded the Sierra Club and lived to 1914, was influenced by both Emerson and Thoreau and channeled their New England-born philosophies "into the political process" as the vast American West was being allocated. Muir's

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"American Forests" in 1897 was a "steaming rebuke to business interests" and helped support an executive order by Grover Cleveland setting up 13 national forest preserves in western states, Miller said.

These days, the modern conservation movement is facing uncertainty and challenges in pursuit of more open and public lands, and rural communities find themselves in disagreement

over managing forests and open lands. But Miller said he's optimistic about the future.

"We've inherited a wonderful legacy of wild spaces that are open to all," said Miller. "It's up to us, in my estimation, to carry this forward to new generations."

Miller's exhibit at University of Maine at Presque Isle's Reed Gallery runs through early January.

Holyoke

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My second indication of the extent of the cutting came on that same July day, when I pulled up to a clearing we've always referred to as "the parking lot," because that's where we've typically hopped out of our trucks and headed into the woods.

Instead of a parking lot, it was a log yard, with piles of large trees stacked up, awaiting transport.

Things would be different.

And they were.

Over the course of November, we found that the landscape had changed vastly. Trees we once used as landmarks were no longer there. Old, grown-in skidder paths had been replaced — sometimes in the same spots, other times running in different directions — by other, newer (muddier) tracks.

And in some spots that we'd formerly been able to see about 35 yards into the woods, we found a virtual moonscape, with vistas stretching 150 yards in any direction.

Not optimal, of course — the deer weren't likely to prance across the treeless prairie, posing for us — but in some ways an improvement.

None of us ever did get a deer this year, though Pete and Billy still may cash in with their muzzleloaders. But overall, we were encouraged.

We saw more deer sign than ever. We saw more deer, too.

As the sun set on the regular firearms season Satur-

day afternoon, we were left muttering a familiar but different refrain.

No longer do we want someone to come in and clear out a few of those pesky trees, you see. Now, we're waiting for some regeneration to occur. And when it does, we'll be here — and we'll be ready.

"Wait until next year," we told each other, in that familiar, yet different way. "Once this starts to grow back, there will be deer all over these woods."

That, at least, is the hope.

Of course, we're nothing if not optimistic.

Hennessey book signing set

Fans of longtime BDN outdoor writer and artist Tom Hennessey can catch up with him Saturday, when he signs copies of his latest book, "Leave Some for Seed," at the Old Town Trading Post.

Hennessey will be on hand from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. for the signing.

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Ski

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The result: More pass-holders sign up early and show up to ski as soon as the ski area opens.

"It just gives you that base business and the base of enthusiasm, and that critical mass of people being there," Sweetser said.

And that trend has been replicated at small ski areas around the state. Sweetser said that among the 18 Alpine areas that are members of the Ski Maine Association, only three — Baker Mountain in Moscow, Mount Jefferson in Lee and Quoggy Jo in Presque Isle — rely entirely on natural snow.

The rest are making their own.

"Everybody's doing it because, even though we all know in Maine that the deepest snows are in February and March, Christmas is a vacation period," Sweetser said. "Kids are off from

school, so people have the time [to ski]. So people have really decided that if the little ski area is going to be successful, you'd better have the product when the people have the time to enjoy it."

Sweetser said that reliance on snowmaking has even crept into the cross-country ski business, with nordic areas around the state seeking to provide a reliable track for their customers.

One of the challenges facing ski areas, according to Sweetser, is the cost of electricity required to make snow. Recent advances have aided ski areas in that regard.

"The real key has been the new technology in snowmaking has made it much more efficient, so there is much less energy required to make X amount of snow," Sweetser said. "We're an energy-intensive industry when we're making snow."

And Sweetser said a change in branding and

focus among community ski areas has changed popular opinion. Instead of viewing a smaller mountain based on its size, owners have begun focusing on what they can provide that's different from the larger operations.

"In the late '90s, people kind of looked at their community areas as, quote, 'Just a little ski area,' because everybody wanted to get to the biggest hill or the tallest summit," Sweetser said. "These community areas have taken on a new role in the communities where they're being viewed as a recreational asset."

Some areas have added or improved cross-country trails, or added mountain bike trails. Others have tubing hills. And most have embraced youth programs with a goal of introducing children to the sport.

"As the Maine Office of Tourism says, 'Maine is the outdoor adventure capital of the east,'" Sweetser said. "The brand of Maine is outdoors, be active, and skiing fits perfectly with that."

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