

# Canoeing

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wildwater canoes the team uses and think they're kayaks.

They're decked, or covered, like kayaks. They're not open like your average canoe. And they're remarkably narrow. Paddlers wear neoprene spray skirts that seal off the cockpit and keep water out of their boats and can make their way through bigger rapids than racers in open canoes.

"In a kayak, you sit in the bottom [of the boat] with your legs out in front of you, and you use a double-bladed paddle," Owen said. "In a wildwater canoe, you kneel on a kneeling saddle, so your legs are tucked underneath you, and you use a single-bladed canoe paddle."

If that position doesn't sound overly comfortable, it isn't, according to 16-year-old Kellen Doyle of Orono, who began wildwater paddling a year ago and made the U.S. Junior team last summer. But he said the discomfort goes away eventually.

"It's an interesting feeling, five minutes into a paddle, when your legs finally go to sleep," Doyle said. "They stop hurting at that point."

And while you're much more apt to tip over in a wildwater boat — especially when first learning — there's a tradeoff.



Kellen Doyle, 16, (from left) Elias Veilleux, 15, and Cole May, 16, chat before getting on the water of the Stillwater River in Orono Wednesday. They are among the kids who take wildwater kayaking and canoeing instructions from Jeff Owen.

Wildwater boats are amazingly fast.

Owen said at last year's world championships in North Carolina, the under-23 champ paddled a sprint course that top-notch open canoeists cover in about three minutes. The wildwater winner finished in just 55 seconds.

And that's part of the allure for those who take up the sport.

"It's a huge adrenaline rush to just try to keep your balance and paddle and steer all at once," Owen said. "It's like the ramped-up version of [the whitewater canoeing]

that's popular here in Maine."

Hannah Rubin, 18, of Bangor began paddling wildwater boats under Owen's tutelage two years ago and also made the U.S. Junior team in 2015. She loves paddling in general but relishes the speed and unpredictability of wildwater boats.

"I love the fast boats and how much time it takes to stay in them," Rubin said. "There were days [when I was beginning] when I was wet and cold and not very happy, but I just love canoeing."

## Back on the water

Two of the paddlers in

Owen's six-member group — Rubin and Doyle — are veterans. The other four are beginners who are just learning the basics.

And in wildwater boats, it seems nearly everything can be a challenge at first. The paddlers treat each obstacle with smiles, and some good-natured ribbing can take place.

"You never know. I could accidentally roll," one beginning paddler joked, describing the difficult maneuver of flipping one's canoe back upright while staying in the cockpit.

Rubin laughed.

"It doesn't work that way," Rubin said.

Later, Veilleux was back in the water, having capsize in the middle of the Stillwater while performing a drill Owen organized.

Paddlers were trying to edge into the stronger current in the middle of the river, then turn away from that flow as soon as they felt their boat react.

Owen ended up catching up with Veilleux at a downstream island, and getting the still-grinning paddler back in his boat for another try.

Before the workout, Veilleux said he'd tipped over a couple of times the last time out and had come to expect that swimming was an important part of the learning process.

"I joined the canoe-racing team [that Owen coaches] earlier in the year. I really liked that so I wanted to try this," Veilleux said. "This is a lot harder. It's more fun. The boats are a lot faster, a lot tipper. It's just a good challenge."

And the tipping over?

"That's enjoyable, too," he said.

Owen said that reaction is typical.

"The kids immediately see the attraction [of the sport] because any time you get into a high-performance craft or vehicle, there's something special about it. The kids just love it once they try it," Owen said.

Doyle said he enjoyed pro-

gressing in the sport last year, but it wasn't until competing at the world championships that he had the realization that has made him a much more confident paddler.

"One day in North Carolina I realized that the worst the water is going to do to me is take my boat or my paddle," Doyle said. "I'm not going to get too hurt by it. That allowed me to not really worry about what happens and just paddle."

Doyle is still improving daily, Owen said, as are the beginners in the club.

In order to improve, you often make mistakes that dump you back into the unforgiving river.

Just ask Veilleux.

When paddling back to the takeout point, Veilleux almost made it back semi-dry. A sudden change in current made him bobble, and he capsized again, just 20 yards from shore.

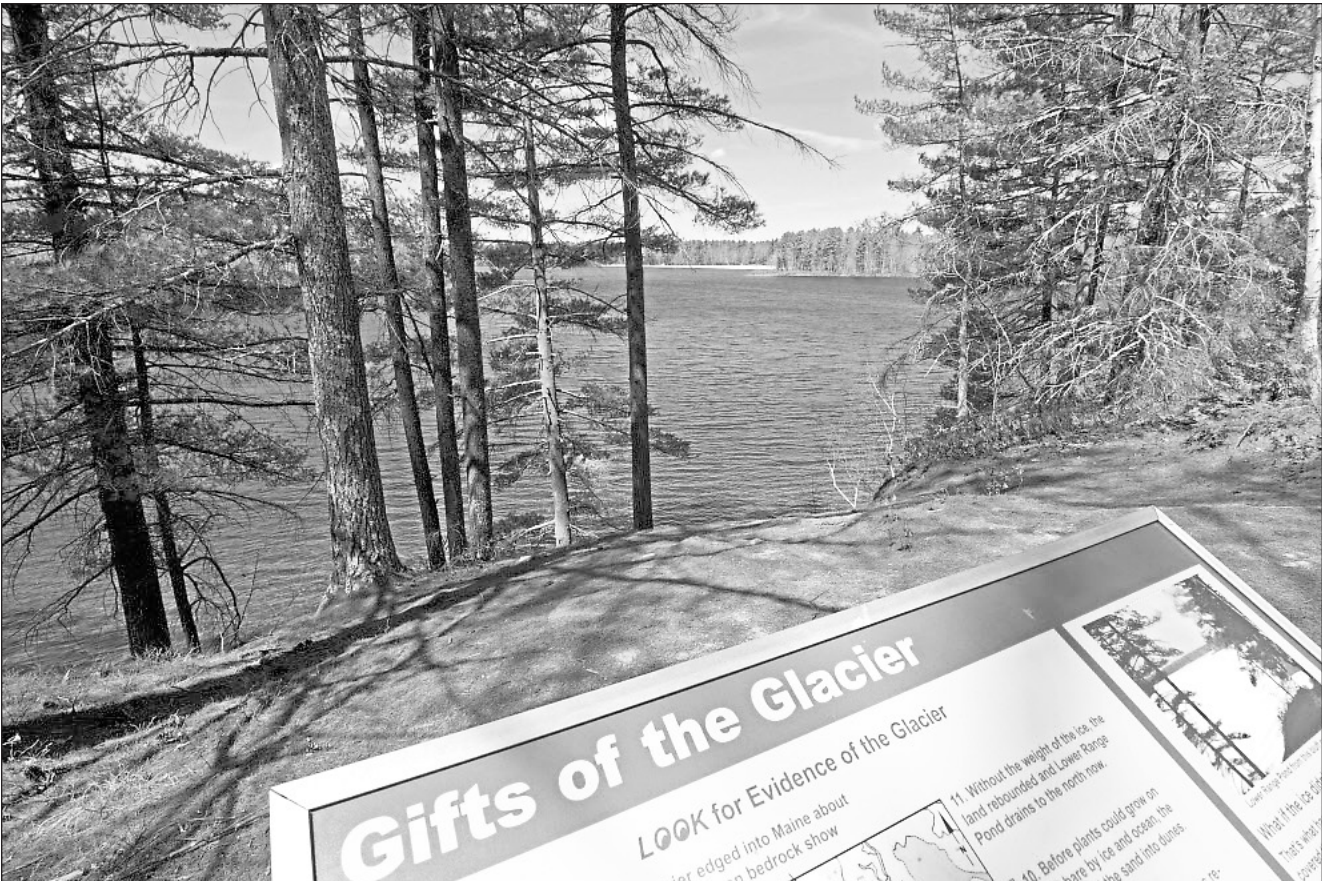
When Owen arrived, Veilleux was still grinning.

"I've got to tell you, Elias, I'm really impressed with your good humor," Owen said.

Veilleux, soggy but none the worse for the experience, nodded in appreciation.

Just another productive day on the water.

The MaCKRO junior and under-23 wildwater teams are still accepting members ages 14-23. For information, call Jeff Owen at 866-8518 or email jowen@rsu26.org.



An interpretive sign is located at a viewpoint of Lower Range Pond at Range Pond State Park. The sign, which includes information about glacial deposits in the region, is one of many interpretive signs along a 1-mile loop trail in the park.

# Hike

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range of outdoor activities during all seasons.

"We're trying to promote the park as more than just a beach," said Range Pond State Park Manager Adam McKay in a recent phone interview.

Range Pond State Park — which is pronounced "Rang" Pond — was established in the mid 1960s, when the state of Maine purchased most of the 740 acres of the land for the park from Hiram Ricker and Sons, bottlers of Poland Spring Water. Now a division of Nestle Waters North America, the Poland Spring Bottling Company still bottles water at a plant beside the park and maintains a partnership with the Maine Department of Conservation's Bureau of Parks and Public Lands, which operates Range Pond State Park.

The park's amenities include a playground, picnic areas, restrooms, a group shelter, seasonal lifeguards and a boat launch limited to 10 horsepower motors.

For visitors looking to stretch their legs, a wide, surfaced promenade parallels the pond for 1,000 feet next to the park's Main Beach, and easy trails branch off it, totalling about 5 miles of walking.

Among those trails is a mile-long nature trail that is easy enough for young children and includes numbered interpretive displays that help visitors better understand the park's natural features, wildlife and history. Starting at an interpretive display at the south end of South Beach, the nature trail travels south through the woods on a wide gravel path, passing a wetland on the way to the small, sandy Frenchman's Beach. From there, the nature trail leads to a scenic overlook atop a

hill formed out of a glacial deposit, then the trail loops around a wetland through a quiet, mixed forest.

The interpretive displays located along the trail include text, diagrams and photos of local wildlife and plants. Topics covered in the displays include the water cycle and watersheds, the glacial and human history of the property, and the history and science behind Poland Spring mineral water. And when you're done with your walk, be sure to stop by the park drinking fountain for a drink of the famous Poland water.

At the north end of the park, starting at the north end of the main beach, are more easy walking trails, including a 2-mile loop that is groomed for cross-country skiing during the winter, and a 1.5-mile loop that serves as a multi-use trail during the winter, according to McKay. These trails are well established but aren't yet shown on the trail map.

In addition, the park features about 5 miles of single track mountain biking trails that are easy enough for beginners, McKay said. These trails are not yet shown on the park map, but the trailhead is across from the park sign at the beginning of State Park Road. A gravel parking area is being established there, and there are plans to build a kiosk at the trailhead with an updated park map showing the biking trails.

Park hours are 9 a.m. to sunset daily unless otherwise signed at the gate. Dogs are permitted on the trails if kept on a leash no longer than 4 feet at all times. Dogs are not permitted on the beaches between April 1 and Sept. 30; they are permitted on the beaches during the rest of the year. Owners are expected to pick up after



Range Pond State Park, which features beautiful sand beaches and easy walking trails, is open to the public year round, but lifeguard stands and other facilities in the park are closed during the off season.

their pets, disposing of waste properly.

Park admission is collected at the gate year-round. If an attendant isn't present, and I leave admission in the metal canister at the gate. Admission for Maine residents is \$6 for adults; \$1 for ages 5-11; and free for under age 5 and seniors over 66. For nonresidents, adults are \$8; ages 5-11 are \$1; seniors over 65 are \$2; and under age 5 are free.

For information, call the park at 998-4104 or visit [www.maine.gov/rangepond](http://www.maine.gov/rangepond).

**Personal note:** I'd never been to Poland, Maine, until I traveled there to conduct an interview with the owners of Poland Spring Campground to write a story for the BDN Outdoors. While there, I took the opportunity to visit Range Pond State Park, where I was taken aback by the beautiful, wide, sandy beaches on Lower Range Pond.

At first I assumed all the sand must have been carted in there for the public (and some sand may have been), but as I walked the park's nature trail, I learned from interpretive displays that deep sand and gravel deposits were left by a glacier retreating from the region long ago, and these deposits

act as an aquifer for the famous Poland water.

It being a weekday and so early in the year, the park was almost empty, though I hear it can get very busy during summer weekends. While there, I came across a solo kayaker, a group of fishermen in two canoes, a family playing in the sand and a couple of dog walkers using the easy trails.

While on the nature trail, I scanned the wetland for wood ducks but only found turtles — about 10 eastern painted turtles basking on logs.

After my walk, I returned to the Main Beach and found it empty, so I sat down in the soft sand and enjoyed the sun, then wandered a bit, stopping every now and again to inspect freshwater snail and clam shells. Also buried in the sand were rocks of different colored granite and flecks of mica — a shiny, layered mineral that almost looks like glass and causes the mountains of western Maine to sparkle.

For more of Aislinn Sarnacki's adventures, visit her blog at [actoutwithaislinn.bangordailynews.com](http://actoutwithaislinn.bangordailynews.com). Follow her on Twitter: @1minihikegirl.

## Things to Do Outdoors

**BANGOR** — Penobscot County SWCD annual plant sale, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, May 7, 1423 Broadway, USDA Service Center back parking lot. Locally grown perennials, herbs, bare-root edible plants and trees, garden seedlings, flowering bushes. Kids Crafting Corner, \$5. Children can decorate flower pot or birdhouse.

**BAR HARBOR** — Symposium on integrative approaches to prevention and treatment of acute and chronic Lyme disease, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, May 7, Gates Auditorium, 105 Eden St. A panel of experts will dive into the most recent advances in treatment and prevention. Speakers include Bea Szantyr, M.D.; Keelyn Wu, D.O.; Meryl Nass, M.D.; and Richard Matthews, D.C. Free and open to the public. [mdilyme.org](http://mdilyme.org).

**BRUNSWICK** — Birding outing to Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Crystal Spring Farm, 7:30 a.m. Thursday, May 12. Led by Jan Pierson of Merrymeeting Audubon. Walk is through a variety of habitats, including fields, forests and wetland. Bring binoculars. Meet at Crystal Spring Farm Farmers' Market Green, Pleasant Hill Road, Brunswick. Ted Allen, 729-8661.

**EDDINGTON** — Spring breakfast, 6-9 a.m. Saturday, May 7, Eddington Salmon Club, 4 Riverside Drive. Menu includes ham, eggs, pancakes, homemade baked beans, homefries, coffee, tea and juice. \$6 for adults; \$3 for younger than age 12.

**GRAND LAKE STREAM** — Downeast Lakes Land Trust staff giving introduction to land trust and presentation on recent and planned conservation and land management efforts, 6:30 p.m. Friday, May 6, Grand Lake Stream School Building, 15 Water St. Community Forest Tour, 10 a.m. Saturday, May 7. Meet at the school to car pool. 796-2100 or [info@downeastlakes.org](mailto:info@downeastlakes.org).

**HARPSWELL** — Harpswell Heritage Land Trust Birding for Kids, free, hands-on work-

shop for families, 9-11 a.m. Saturday, May 7, Curtis Farm Preserve, 1554 Harpswell Neck Road. Learn how to identify birds by shape, size, beaks, songs and habitat. Bring binoculars. [hhlmaine.org](http://hhlmaine.org), 837-9613 or [outreach@hhlmaine.org](mailto:outreach@hhlmaine.org).

**KINGFIELD** — Sustainable Community Symposium on local living and creating a more sustainable community, 7-9 p.m. Friday, May 6, Sugarloaf Outdoor Center, 5092 Sugarloaf Road. Speakers include Larry Warren, founder of Maine Huts and Trails, Amber Lambke, executive director of the Maine Grains Alliance, and James Manzer, a solar design adviser for ReVision Energy. Individual tickets may be purchased for \$30 at <http://mainemountainchildrenshouse.org/2016/sustainable-community-symposium/>. Drinks, desserts and entertainment included.

**ORLAND** — Fifth annual gun show sponsored by the Buck's Mills Rod and Gun Club, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, May 14, and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday, May 15, Orland Community Center, 21 School House Road. \$5; free for under age 15 if accompanied by an adult. Snacks, treats, drinks available from kitchen. Isaac Dorr, 944-8036.

**SEARSPORT** — Discover the Trails of Searsport, hosted by Coastal Mountains Land Trust, Friends of Sears Island, and Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, 7 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, May 14. Bird walk Cloe Chunn of BBWC, 7 a.m., meeting at the gate to Sears Island. Hosting organizations brief overviews of their work, 9-10 a.m. Union Hall in downtown Searsport. Two walks: Long Cove Headwaters Preserve or Sears Island, 10:30-11:30 a.m. or noon-1 p.m., with naturalist Ron Harrell at Long Cove and naturalists Cloe Chunn and Aleta McKeage at Sears Island. Sign up, Alden Mead at Coastal Mountains Land Trust, 236-7091.

**For a complete listing of calendar items or to submit your event, visit [www.bangordailynews.com](http://www.bangordailynews.com).**

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