

Peaks

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college's annual fund. He also has led COA students on treks across the park.

The Labor Day trek to 20 peaks took Collins and Holt just over 16½ hours.

"This was more just a fun trip," Collins, 46, said of the Labor Day hike. "I think it's uncommon that a [college] president and a trustee member would do such a thing."

"And we start the College of the Atlantic year tomorrow," he added. "So it was a way to get mentally prepared for the college year."

Collins, who graduated from COA in 1992, became the college's president in July 2011. In addition to hiking, his outdoor hobbies include fly fishing and white-water kayaking.

Holt also enjoys a wide variety of outdoor sports, including nordic and alpine skiing.

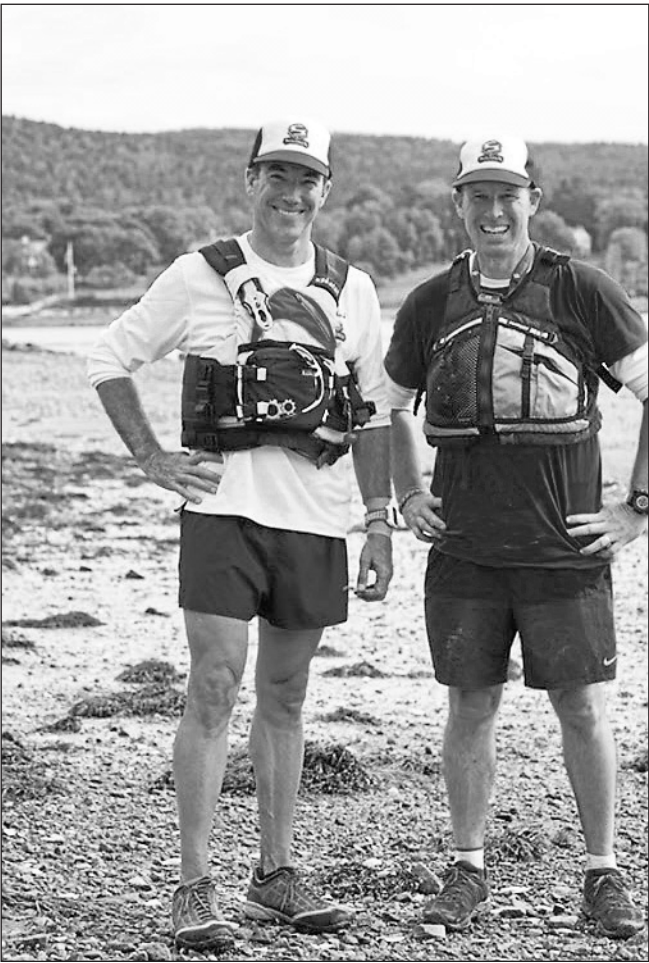
"The best gift ever given to me was an affinity for the woods and an interest in hiking and camping," Holt said. "That was a gift from my grandfather and father, so I've passed that on to my three daughters. We spend a lot of family time in the woods wherever we go, and Maine is obviously our number one choice."

When planning the Labor Day hike together, Holt and Collins created a route that would hit the island's 10 tallest peaks, plus a handful of lesser mountains.

"It was pure selfish enjoyment of the beauty and splendor of the park," Holt said. "It was particularly cool to think about it on the centennial of the National Park Service. ... It was equally a physical and spiritual journey, that's for sure."

The trek began at 4 a.m. By the light of headlamps, Holt and Collins hiked to the top of Bernard Mountain, then continued west to the summit of Mansell Mountain. Skirting around the southern edge of Long Pond, they then traveled up and over Beech Mountain, Acadia Mountain, St. Sauveur Mountain, Valley Peak and Flying Mountain.

"Both of our families helped," Collins explained. "They'd meet us at key spots



COURTESY OF DARRON COLLINS
College of the Atlantic board member Winston Holt of Seal Harbor and COA President Darron Collins pose together near Somes Sound on Sept. 4 during a 31.5-mile journey across Acadia National Park. After hiking several mountains on the west side of Mount Desert Island, the two paddled across Somes Sound to continue their hike east.

with lunch and dinner and stuff like that."

Collins said having a support crew on such a long, fast-paced hike is key to success and safety.

"We're not talking about hiking in the wilds of Alaska," Collins said. "There are no grizzly bears or poisonous snakes, but it doesn't take much. You can really easily injure yourself, so it's good having a crew that knows where you'll plan on being and at what time."

Reaching the shore of Somes Sound around 9:30 a.m., the two men hopped in kayaks and paddled across the sound just north of The Narrows. They then continued their trek, hiking to the top of Norumbega Mountain, Bald Peak, Parkman Mountain, Gilmore Peak and Sargent Mountain, the second-tallest mountain in the park at 1,373 feet above sea level.

From there, the pair turned south to hike Penob-

scot Mountain, then walked around the north end of Jordan Pond and between the famous Bubbles to scale Pemetic Mountain, the fourth-tallest mountain at 1,248 feet above sea level. By then, it was about 3:30 p.m.

"One of the coolest things was to be on top of Pemetic and to look west to where we'd walked," Collins said.

Hurrying down the gradual north slope of Pemetic Mountain, Holt and Collins passed the northern tip of Bubble Pond to hike the famous Cadillac Mountain, the park's tallest mountain at 1,530 feet above sea level. By then, they'd been hiking practically nonstop for about 12 hours.

"The biggest physical challenge was the West Face Trail of Cadillac Mountain," Collins said. "I was just really tired by then, and that is a really steep, really long trail."

When Collins and Holt arrived at the summit of Cadillac at around 5 p.m., their

"It was amazing going the direction we did, which was from west to east. When you get over onto the main trails, you can see the pressure that these trails have on them, and you can understand the importance of groups like Friends of Acadia that are doing so much to preserve, protect and strengthen those trails that are so high in foot traffic."

WINSTON HOLT OF SEAL HARBOR

journey wasn't over quite yet.

Descending the mountain's east slope to the Gorge Path, they then scaled the equally formidable Dorr Mountain, named after George B. Dorr (1855-1944), a man known as the father of Acadia National Park. At 1,270 feet above sea level, the summit of Dorr Mountain is the third-tallest mountain in the park.

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Continuing west, they walked around The Tarn, up the rocky trail of Huguenot Head, over the summit of Champlain Mountain and past The Bowl and Beehive to reach their last peak: Gorham Mountain. Hiking by the light of headlamps once more, the two men made their final descent, ending their long walk at 8:30 p.m. at the Gorham Mountain parking lot on Park Loop Road, just south of Thunder Hole.

"Our next adventure is to do it in the winter on snowshoes," Holt said.

To see a map of their journey, visit connect.garmin.com/modern/activity/1342375290.



ASHLEY L. CONTI | BDN
Eagle Mountain Guide Service's JR Mabree (left) laughs with Matthew Cornman as Cornman fills out his paperwork for a bear he killed in Township 24 on Tuesday.

Camp

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hunters, helping ensure they're having a good time.

The hunters — who often arrive with a buddy, knowing none of other 10 or 12 hunters in camp — bond and often leave as friends.

Then, if Whitegiver and his guides have truly been successful, they'll return in a year or two, whether they harvested a bear or not.

That, at least, is the goal. And at this camp on Route 9, that's often just what happens.

Arrive as strangers

Matthew Cornman and his 31-year-old son, Shane, first visited Eagle Mountain Guide Service two years ago, after a fluke meeting between Shane and Whitegiver's daughter.

On a flight from Colorado to the East Coast, the two began talking. Shane Cornman was a hunter. Whitegiver's daughter, now 32, told him what her dad did for a living and fired up her iPad, showing off his website.

Before long, the Cornmans had booked a three-day bear hunting trip to Maine.

Neither bagged a bear when they visited in 2014, but both were hooked. Their hunt ended too soon, they agreed. They had a great time meeting and socializing with the other hunters in camp and began planning to return — this time for a full week.

"When I got here, it was just like you were at home," Matthew Cornman said. "It's a riot. ... It's a hoot. You torment everyone [in fun]. It's a great time."

Matthew Cornman especially appreciates the work of the guides and the friendly nature of the people they meet during their Maine travels. This year, after returning to Maine, he made sure to tell first-time hunters what he learned during his last trip here.

"Listen to the guides," he said. "If he tells you something, listen. He does this for a living. This is what he does. Do what you're told, and I guarantee you'll see bears."

On Tuesday, Shane Cornman saw a bear. He'd also seen three on Monday. And his dad saw one and filled his tag on a bear that showed up at the bait three times before he pulled the trigger. First, he said, he wanted to make sure the bear didn't have cubs with it.

Then, Matthew Cornman became the first of this week's hunters — most pay for a six-day hunt — to earn center stage at a post-hunt ritual.

Back in the lodge, an old bearskin rug is draped over a chair in a position of honor, you see. Successful hunters — or those who've seen interesting things — are required to sit in the chair, drape the hide over them and tell their tales.

Whitegiver doesn't have a name for that bearskin yet, switching between "The Rug of Not Shame" or "The Story Rug" when describing it.

Matthew Cornman didn't really care and looked forward to his time under the rug. He had earned it, after all.

"Matt said there's no exceptions," the hunter said. "It's camp rules."

And although another rule is unwritten and optional, it also seems to be part of the culture at the camp: Pitching in on camp projects can be a lot of fun.

Hunter builders

Bear hunting can provide an experience that's a lot different than other hunts. For one thing, it's not necessary to wake up early, like you might if you were

targeting moose, deer or turkeys. Bear hunters typically don't head into the woods until midafternoon, which leaves them plenty of time to enjoy themselves during the morning.

"You go to moose camp, and you never see the camp in daylight," Whitegiver said. "You're up at 4 o'clock in the morning, you're gone before the sun comes up, and you come back and it's dark. You spend a whole week at camp, and you never know what [the camp] looks like outside."

At bear camp, that's not the case. Some hunters go on morning ATV rides or find a spot to go fishing. And others volunteer their services to help out on camp projects.

On Tuesday, that meant building a deck that will help provide accessibility for an annual wounded warrior hunt, which takes place during the fourth week of the season.

"[The hunters] initiated this one," Whitegiver said. "They said, 'Oh, you've got the lumber. Let's get her built.'"

That's often the case, the guide said. And he joked that he likes to know what kind of trades the hunters have mastered, just in case he can find work for them.

"We've had guys work on trucks, guys work on generators," Whitegiver said. "If there's a problem, there are guys who want to fix it."

Shane Cornman said pitching in comes naturally, and he's glad to play a part in camp projects.

"We were always raised that way," he said. "We were raised on a farm, and work is work, play is play. But if somebody needs some help, it don't matter what we're doing. We're dropping everything to help 'em. That's all this is: helping [Whitegiver] out."

On Tuesday, four of the 13 hunters in camp tackled the deck project in the morning and made good progress. After hunting and a home-cooked meal prepared by Whitegiver's wife, Lisa, they adjourned to the great room, where they could play pool or foosball or just tell stories.

Watching hunters who were strangers just two days before interact as new friends is one of the things Whitegiver looks forward to.

"That's my favorite part," he said. "Bear hunting and the success of bear hunting is exciting. But relationships you build and the friendships you make, especially when they come back? I love it."

So, too, do the Cornmans. "We come here, it's just like going to a family function," Shane Cornman said. "Really good people. Everybody here's from a different state. Some of 'em's farmers, some of 'em's construction workers, I work in the oil fields. But everyone gets along. It doesn't matter who you are. You start a conversation."

After Tuesday's successful hunt, Matthew Cornman learned that his role in camp soon would change. For the rest of the week, having filled his tag, he wouldn't be joining the others in the woods each afternoon.

And Lisa Whitegiver, the head cook, was thrilled at the news.

"That's great!" she said. "Now I have help in the kitchen."

As is the camp custom, Matthew Cornman took that news in good spirits.

"I was a short-order cook once," he said. "Sign me up."

And no matter how his son's hunt progresses this week, no matter what he may be asked to do in the kitchen, he said he's sure of one thing.

"I will be back again," he said. "I guarantee I'll be back again."



AISSLIN SARNACKI | BDN
The trails of Bluff Head Preserve in Sedgwick officially opened to the public on Aug. 18. The preserve is owned and managed by the Blue Hill Heritage Trust.

Hike

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This trail is known as the Oaks Trail because of the forest's abundance of tall oak trees in this area.

Marked with blue painted blazes, the trail weaves through the forest, and at 0.34 mile, the trail splits into a loop. To the left is the Pine Trail, which passes through a stand of tall white pines; and to the right is the Erratic Trail, which travels by a number of glacial erratics, which are boulders that were transported to the area by glacial ice thousands of years ago.

It doesn't matter which trail you choose, since they connect, forming a loop that is about 0.3 mile long. Arcing off that loop is the 0.2-mile Bluff Overlook Trail, which travels to the viewpoint atop the bluff. The Bluff Overlook Trail is steep in a few places and includes a long section of rock steps and two short sections of wooden stairs.

From the overlook atop the bluff, hikers can see above the trees to the north, west and south to the Bagaduce River and surrounding forestland and fields. At the overlook is an open area where you can settle down on a rock or a layer of fallen pine needles and rest for a bit before continuing your

hike around the loop and back to the trailhead.

The trails are for foot traffic only. BHHT asks that visitors to the preserve stay on marked trails and carry out what they take in. Dogs are permitted on the property but must be leashed at all times.

Founded in 1985 by residents of the Blue Hill Peninsula, the BHHT is a nationally accredited nonprofit with the mission "to conserve in perpetuity land and water resources that support the long-term health and well-being of the natural and human communities on the Blue Hill Peninsula." To date, BHHT has protected more than 7,000 acres.

For more information, visit bluehillheritagetrust.org, call BHHT at 374-5118 or visit the land trust office at 258 Mountain Road in Blue Hill. The office is open year-round, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. However, there are times when the office is unexpectedly closed when BHHT staff are out working on land trust property.

Personal note: I couldn't make it to the grand opening of the Bluff Head trails on Aug. 18, but thanks to BHHT outreach and development coordinator Chrissy Beardsley Allen, I had the information I needed to explore the new trails on my own just a few weeks later. Allen sent me a trail map and directions by email, but that in-



AISSLIN SARNACKI | BDN
Stone steps lead uphill in Bluff Head Preserve in Sedgwick recently. The trail leads to the top of a bluff and a view of the Bagaduce River.

formation is now available on the BHHT website so the public can access the property easily.

Mine was the only vehicle at the preserve trailhead on Thursday, Sept. 1, when I headed into the woods with my dog, Oreo, pulling impatiently on his leash. It didn't take long for us to reach the top of the bluff. Fluffy white clouds dotted the sky over the Bagaduce River, which I had visited with BHHT in June on a guided walk to find prehistoric-looking horseshoe crabs. The Bagaduce is one of the few places in Maine where horseshoe crabs breed, and our group was lucky to find two of them in the shallows doing just that.

The Bagaduce River is about 12 miles long and is one of the most productive estuaries in Maine because

of its narrow constriction and broad coves, according to Beginning with Habitat, a collaborative program of federal, state and local agencies and non-government organizations to maintain sufficient habitat to support all native plant and animal species currently breeding in Maine. The tidal fluctuations within the Bagaduce River's waterways provide favorable conditions for a productive shellfishery. The intertidal flats beyond the Narrows include more than 1,000 acres of habitat for soft-shell clams, marine worms and other invertebrates. Furthermore, waterfowl and wading birds flock to the river's watershed for the more than 2,700 acres of available habitat ideal for feeding, breeding and resting during migration.