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Glen Mittelhauser, the biologist leading the "Plants of Baxter State Park" project, inspects a blackberry blossom with his loupe, which magnifies it 15 times, beside Abol Stream Trail in Baxter State Park IN 2013.



COURTESY OF GLEN MITTELHAUSER

Diapensia lapponica (white flowers), Kalmia procumbens (small pink flowers), and Rhododendron (lapponicum larger purple flowers) are in bloom on Katahdin in Baxter State Park in 2014. These flowers are just three species of 857 plant species documented in the park and included in the 2016 field guide "The Plants of Baxter State Park."

Guide

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research professor at University of Maine School of Biology and Ecology; Arthur Haines, botanical researcher and founder of the Delta Institute of Natural History in Canton, Maine; Baxter State Park naturalist Jean Hoekwater; Marilee Lovit, botanist; and Megquier. In addition, many people contributed in some way to make the project possible and are listed in the book's extensive acknowledgment section.

"It's a book of rigorous science and beautiful photographs," said Michael Alpert, director of the University of Maine Press, "and I tried to have the highest production standards I could have."

"I think it will give many people a perspective of Baxter they may not have had," Alpert continued. "People love the mountain; they're inter-

ested in the moose; but they may have overlooked the plants."

The lead botanist for the project, Mittelhauser spent four field seasons in Baxter State Park, leading groups of volunteers over mountains and along the edges of remote ponds, bushwhacking through swamps and thickets, as they documented 86 species of trees, 508 species of wildflowers, 60 ferns and other spore-producing plants, and 203 graminoids, including sedges, rushes and grasses.

For this labor-intensive and often buggy field work, 66 volunteers donated about 4,200 hours of their time. In addition, more than 120 people donated financially to the project, as well as more than a dozen organizations.

"What a great gift to Baxter State Park we're celebrating here," said Hoekwater in a prepared statement. "Glen Mittelhauser was the right person at the right time to spearhead this project."

"He's not the 'right kind of person' for this project," said Bissell at the book launch. "He's the only person to do this. You have to be the Glen Mittelhauser... If you know Glen, he probably would have done this if nobody else would have helped. He has to be in the natural world. He has to see it and catalog it and understand it."

An alumnus of Bar Harbor's College of the Atlantic, Mittelhauser is the director of the Maine Natural History Observatory, a nonprofit organization established in 2003 to help further the knowledge and understanding of Maine's flora and fauna. He's also an author of the 2010 guidebook "The Plants of Acadia National Park," and the 2013 guidebook "Sedges of Maine: A Field Guide to Cyperaceae."

"What I like about producing these guidebooks is it opens up our current knowledge to everyone," Mittelhauser said.

The 857 different plant

species documented in Baxter State Park represents about a third of the 2,490 plant species known to grow wild in Maine, and over half of Maine's 1,527 native plant species, according to the field guide's introduction. The park has a great diversity of plants, in part because of the wide range of elevations found in the park — from about 570 feet above sea level near the Abol Deadwater to 5,267 feet above sea level at the summit of Katahdin. Because of this, the park is home to plant species that are at the south end of their range, as well as species that are at the north end of their range.

The flora of Baxter State Park is also notable for its large percentage of native species. Of the 857 different species found in the park, 745 (or 87 percent) are considered native to Maine. And only seven species found in the park appear on the list of invasive or potentially invasive species maintained by

the Maine Natural Areas Program. According to Mittelhauser, this is an exceptionally small number of invasive species for an area that sees 65,000 visitors from all over the world each year.

Though "The Plants of Baxter State Park" is now in bookstores, with a retail cost of \$29.95, Mittelhauser said that the project isn't over.

"We couldn't check all 200,000 acres [of the park], so the phase we're entering now is the one where everyone can contribute," Mittelhauser said. "There are more plants to discover in the park."

If you do find a plant in Baxter State Park that you can't identify in "The Plants of Baxter State Park," Mittelhauser asks that you take photos of the plant and record its GPS coordinates, then send him an email with that information at purplesandpiper@gmail.com.

"I'm most excited now that everyone can be botanists and go out and use the book," Mittelhauser said. "I'm hoping within the first year, people will contact me about a dozen or two plants that we hadn't found."

Measuring 6 inches by 9 inches, and less than an inch thick, the field guide will fit easily in a backpack.

"This weighs less than a full Nalgene bottle," Megquier said. "There's no excuse not to put this in your pack."

"The Plants of Baxter State Park" can be purchased online at friendsofbaxter.org/store and at many bookstores throughout Maine. It can also be found at the Baxter State Park Headquarters at 64 Balsam Drive in Millinocket or the Baxter State Park Visitor Center near Toque Pond Gatehouse.

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