

Trail signs point travelers to Fort Kent activities

BY JESSICA POTILA
FIDDLEHEAD FOCUS

FORT KENT — Visiting ATV and snowmobile enthusiasts will have a better understanding of where to gas up their machines or fill their stomachs in the downtown Fort Kent area thanks to two new signs the Valley ATV Riders erected.

The 12 businesses listed on the signs include: Al's Diner, Bee Jays Tavern, China Garden, DOC's Place, Irving/Circle K, Katahdin Trust, KeyBank, Northern Door Inn, Rock's Diner, Subway, Swamp Buck and Walker's Pub. Arrows on the signs point the way to the downtown area. The businesses are accessible to ATV and snowmobile riders via the dike trail.

The signs are located at the east and west stops where the rail bed intersects with Village Road.

Danny Nicolas, president

of the Valley ATV Riders, said the club thought to erect the signs as a way of informing visitors to the area so they can find businesses such as gas stations, restaurants, and banks.

"The local people know where to go, the signs are to show the outsiders," he said.

Steve Daigle, owner of Signs and Designs Plus, built the 4 foot by 4 foot signs for which the 12 downtown businesses paid. Daigle is also co-owner of Walker's Pub.

Daigle described the construct of the signs as "outdoor laminated permanent decal mounted on solid pvc."

The Valley ATV riders maintain approximately 30 miles of ATV trails in the Fort Kent area. Nicolas said the club receives calls from New Hampshire and Pennsylvania from ATV enthusiasts interested in riding on the Fort Kent trails.

He said that when members of the club were install-

ing the signs, a local rider informed them that just an hour before a woman traveling the rail bed on pedal bike stopped to ask him for directions.

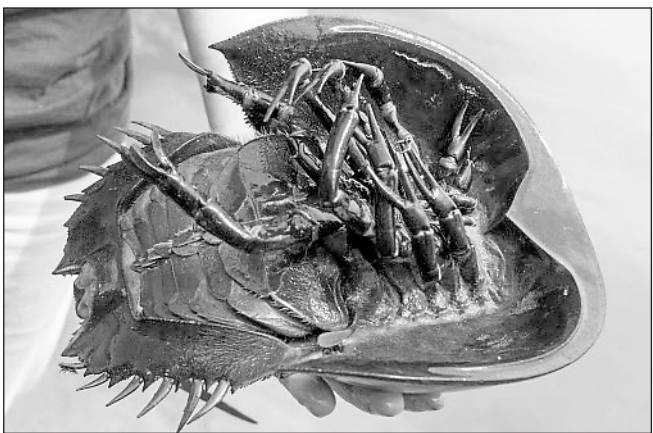
"She came up from Portage by Route 11 and was looking for a place to go eat. She's not from Fort Kent and had no idea where to go. So it's not just the ATV riders and snowmobile riders, you've got pedal bikers that do the rail bed. It's unbelievable the distance that people travel (to enjoy outdoor recreational activities in Fort Kent)."

Fort Kent Town Manager Don Guimond said the signs will be a positive thing for the town.

"It's a great addition. It shows what civic minded people can do," he said. "Things can happen when like-minded people get together. It shows folks they do have access to downtown by ATV and snowmobile in the wintertime."



JESSICA POTILA | ST. JOHN VALLEY TIMES/FHF
Two new signs have been erected in the Fort Kent area directing ATV and snowmobile enthusiasts where to gas up and eat.



AISSLINN SARNACKI | BDN
A live horseshoe crab swimming found in the Bagaduce River in Brooksville on Monday is held by Sarah O'Malley, a naturalist and board member of the Blue Hill Heritage Trust.

Crabs

Continued from Page C1

The group of walk attendees congregated at the edge of the water.

"These are the eyes," O'Malley said, pointing to two bumps atop the creature's hard exoskeleton. "And then there are actually some other eyes lower down as well."

As marine arthropods, horseshoe crabs are closely related to arachnids. Their body is divided into three sections, they have 10 walking legs and nine eyes scattered throughout their body, including two large eyes at the top of their head that are used to find mates. They also have light receptors near their tails to help them determine movement and changes in moonlight.

As O'Malley held the creature, its legs, each tipped with a harmless pincher, moved along her forearm.

"Is it tickling your arm?" a woman called out from the group.

"Um, yeah," O'Malley said to a chorus of laughter. "It feels a little weird. I'm not gonna lie."

"Let me give her a little breath here," she said, bending down to place the animal in the water. "And then, if you guys would like to get a closer look, you'll be welcome to."

After a minute of letting the horseshoe crab breathe through its gills, O'Malley handed the animal to 5-year-old Lena Fisichelli of Winter Harbor. She had been at the front of the group the whole time, listening to O'Malley talk about the creature. With its round body cradled in her small hands, Lena stared at its many moving legs for a few moments, then handed the animal back to the naturalist.

Though its spiny body and long, sharp tail gives the horseshoe crab the appearance of being dangerous, it's a harmless creature. The tail's main purpose is to flip the animal over if it gets caught on its back.

As people took turns in-



AISSLINN SARNACKI | BDN
Lena Fisichelli, 5, of Winter Harbor holds a horseshoe crab on Monday while on a guided nature walk organized by the Blue Hill Heritage Trust in Brooksville.

specting the ancient animal up close, someone from the group found a male horseshoe crab. O'Malley pointed out the differences between the two — the male's smaller size and his larger front claws, which he uses to latch onto the female.

At the conclusion of the talk, the two were released together into the warm waters of the Bagaduce River to carry on with the natural ritual that has kept their species roaming the ocean

for millions of years.

To learn more about Blue Hill Heritage Trust and their public nature programs, visit bluehillheritagetrust.org, call 374-5118, or visit the land trust's office in the William Carleton House at 258 Mountain Road. The office is open year-round, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday, but due to a small staff, it may sometimes be unexpectedly closed.

Holyoke

Continued from Page C1

"It hasn't been down there long enough to become a laboratory yet," Legere reported.

We struggled to find a fly that two different fish would eat, but Legere found plenty of flies that a single fish would eat once.

By lunchtime, with nine fish already brought to hand, St. Onge wasn't complaining.

"Well, that was a successful morning," he said with a grin.

And the successful day continued all afternoon, as we worked our way downriver.

Years ago, Legere focused a lot of his attention on fishing the ponds of the Moosehead Lake area, he said. In fact, when he started guiding he had a large boat that he used to take people onto Moosehead, where they trolled for salmon, brook trout and lake trout.

In recent years, he has spent most of his time on the East Outlet and the West Branch of the Penobscot River.

It's what his clients prefer, he said.

"Now, everyone wants to be on moving water. Around every corner is a new adventure," Legere said as our own adventure continued. "And there's nothing like running a river in a boat."

At the end of the day, I'm confident to assert that both St. Onge and I agreed wholeheartedly.

Fish abundant in Penobscot

Last week I told you that American shad and striped bass had flooded into the Penobscot River, and were being caught as far north as Old Town.

I may have spoken too soon: After reading the weekly report of the Department of Marine Resources' Bureau of Sea-Run Fisheries and Habitat, I learned that the flood was just beginning.

(Hint: Grab a rod and go fishing. Now. Really.)



JOHN HOLYOKE | BDN

That weekly report is an itemization of the number of fish, by species, that are counted at the Milford Dam's fish lift.

And as you may remember, as of last week a total of 3,250 shad and 235 stripers had been counted at that facility.

In the past seven days, the influx of sea-run fish has increased in pace. As of Tuesday, those totals had more than doubled for each species in just a week's time. In all, 6,536 shad and 633 stripers have been counted at Milford thus far.

And as my fishing partners and I can attest, both species are very catchable on flies.

For those more interested in Atlantic salmon returns, there's more sobering news: The seasonal total now sits at 323 — 130 fewer than had arrived in the Penobscot by the same date in 2015.

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John St. Onge of Cumberland makes a cast while fishing the East Outlet of the Kennebec River on Sunday. St. Onge was fishing with guide Dan Legere of the Maine Guide Fly Shop after winning the BDN's annual drift boat trip contest.

Challenge runs set for Sunday in PI

While 5K races are becoming more common throughout The County, runners who want to take on a more challenging road race have had few local opportunities to do so.

With the creation of a new CompetitorME Challenge on June 26, runners can now face that challenge through both a 5K and the County's only 10K course, all while taking in the beauty that is northern Maine.

The CompetitorME Challenge will kick off on Sunday, June 26 at the Presque Isle Middle School Track. Part of the CompetitorME Community Wellness Series, the CompetitorME Challenge features a Kids 1 Mile Fun Run, 5K (3.1 mile) run or walk, and 10K (6.2 mile) run.

Registration on event day is from 7-8 a.m., with the Kids Fun Run beginning at 8:15 am, and the 5K/10K events beginning at 9 a.m.

Registration on the day of the event is also done online, so to avoid lines pre-registration is strongly encouraged. Registration can be found by searching "CompetitorME Challenge" at RunSignUp.com.

The first 100 registrants receive Atayne event shirts. Everyone receives a finisher medal, age group and overall awards, chip timing, personalized bibs, plus a fully-supported and staffed Course.

Entry fee is \$25 per person and \$25 for the kids' run.

The CompetitorME Challenge is one of the first events in the newly-launched Community Wellness Series. This series was created by CompetitorME to encourage youth and adults to make fitness a lifestyle. CompetitorME events are designed to be an experience rather than a race, including both walkers or runners and all ability levels.



BDN FILE
Paul Brown of Swanville (front) and Rick O'Donald of Newburgh navigate through some whitewater during the final day of the 2015 Penobscot River Whitewater Nationals Regatta.

Regatta

Continued from Page C1

actually honored us with the ACA 'event of the year' award," Phillips said. "That was very [gratifying]. And it's not just me. I'm the guy standing up front, but there are 10 or 12 people on our committee who work very hard at this."

This year's regatta will be run two weeks earlier than the 2015 edition, according to Phillips. The goal: To avoid the potential for low-water conditions and make the races a high-water success.

"We moved forward a little bit hoping we were going to have a little bit more water," Phillips said. "The official practice day and opening ceremony is Wednesday, July 6, and from there we race July 7 through July 10."

On most days, racers will tackle the downriver course, a 9½-mile challenge that will take paddlers from the starting line at Old Town's Binette Park to Eddington Bend.

"We use mass starts, by class, so last year we had 10, 20 boats at a time go," he said. "Down you go, and the first one to the line wins. It's very fun."

Shorter races — always a crowd favorite — will take over the Penobscot on Saturday.

"The sprint races are on

Saturday, and to me, the sprint races are the funnest races," Phillips said. "We basically just run the Great Works rapid in Bradley. It's about a quarter mile and it's on the strongest whitewater on the course. It's Class III [rapids]. Again, as fast as you can go, but one boat at a time."

The whole race takes just a few minutes, and spectators line the course to cheer their favorites.

"There's a lot of fun to be had, not just for the paddlers, but also for the spectators," Phillips said. "It's a great location over there in Bradley. You can see the entire race. You can see someone start and finish without moving. It's really, really exciting."

Phillips said feedback from last year's competitors was fantastic, and he expects many of them to return.

"There are people who go to the nationals every year for decades, and a lot of those people were saying, 'This is the best nationals that we've had in a long time,'" Phillips said. "They liked the venue. It was right in town, so lodging was close."

That's not always the case, he said.

"Some places we go, like The Forks [in western Maine], you're in the middle of nowhere," Phillips said. "Camping out's OK, but you don't have all the activity that we had here in Old Town. This is a good venue."