



MAINE WILDERNESS GUIDE



Maine Wilderness Guides Organization Newsletter
JANUARY 2009

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The *Maine Wilderness Guide* is the official newsletter for the Maine Wilderness Guides Organization (MWGO). Published seasonally, it is emailed to members and Maine state legislators.

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Maine Wilderness Guides
Organization

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Blaine runs class II rapids on the Allagash early June.

A Conversation With Blaine Miller

By Gil Gilpatrick

I first met Blaine Miller on the Allagash in the early 1970's. Although we live only a few miles from each other, the Allagash is where our paths most frequently crossed. I remember one occasion of our meeting when I learned a lot about the kind of guide, and man, that Blaine Miller is.

We had both put in at Indian Stream and planned on spending the night at Pillsbury Island. It was late in the day, and we were battling a head wind. Blaine's party was a few hundred yards ahead of us and arrived at the multi-cell campsite first. When I arrived, it appeared only one cell was available, and I reluctantly prepared to move on up the lake against the wind with my tired guests. Blaine came to me and said he thought one party was occupying two tables. Then he went and confronted the greedy people and convinced them to move over to make room. I was indebted to him for his intervention, but he went a step further and insisted I take the larger of the two available cells! That's Blaine Miller.

Blaine was a schoolteacher for 33 years, so his guiding activities during those years were restricted to the summer months; canoe trips became his main thrust. He revealed that canoe trips with fishing were his favorite kind of guiding. I suspect this was because he just liked the kind of people who do that sort of thing. In 2001 he retired from teaching and expanded his guiding activities to include hunting and fishing. He is very selective about the hunters he guides. He told me that he asks them as many questions as are asked of him.

When asked about any bad experiences he has had in nearly 40 years of guiding, he replied they were few and minor. He attributes this to careful advance preparation and restricting what he allows his guests to do, such as no whitling, no wood splitting (unless experienced) and always wearing PFD's when on the water. Since 2001, he has carried a satellite phone on his excursions.

Guides are known for the stories they tell, so I asked what sort of things he told his guests. Space here prevents telling the whole stories, but the subject of one of them is amusing. He tells about "canudists" he has encountered. Another is about the budworm spray plane that crashed in Eagle Lake in the 1970's. An aerial photo of the floating plane appeared in National Geographic magazine. Two canoes were in the photo around the plane. Blaine was in one of them; Brady Scott was in the other.

Blaine has two pieces of advice for young guides. The first is, "Don't give up your day job." It is a tough business and there are always lean years. The other, and more important, suggestion is that a guide must be a "people person." If you don't like dealing with people, you will not be successful as a guide. Both are sage counsel for young women and men considering a guiding career.



Gil Gilpatrick is a Master Maine Guide, a founding member of the Maine Wilderness Guides Organization, a life member of the Maine Professional Guides Association, and has served as a member of the Advisory Board for the Licensing of Guides since 1996.

He is a member of the New England Outdoor Writers Association and is the author of seven outdoor-related books. Contact him at Gil@GilGilpatrick.com.

A Busy Year

By Cathy Johnson

2008 was a busy year for the Maine Wilderness Guides Organization:

- We participated in the 4 week long technical hearings regarding Plum Creek's proposal to develop two resorts including up to 2000 house lots in the Moosehead Lake region.
- We made a presentation to the Land Use Regulation Commissioners and participated in meetings with LURC staff regarding the ongoing revision of LURC's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
- We served on the Governor's Task Force Regarding the Management of Public Land and Publicly-Held Easements and the Recreational Access and Conservation Forum which grew out of the Task Force.
- We provided the Administration a list of priority carry trails to consider for protection in the Allagash region.

In each of these contexts, we were one of only a very few voices in support of wilderness recreation and provided our unique perspective as guides whose livelihoods depend on the existence of wilderness areas. Many members of MWGO also participated in the public comments hearings around the Plum Creek proposal and in the workshops about LURC's Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This is an important way to augment the voice of the organization.

We were pleased to see that, as a

result of our and others' testimony in the Plum Creek hearings, development was removed from the north shore of Long Pond, which is part of the Northern Forest canoe trail. Unfortunately, however, LURC decided to allow extensive development, including a resort, at Lily Bay. LURC also decided to allow a portion of the resort on Moose Mountain to be located on Indian Pond. Finally, LURC is allowing Plum Creek to be paid for the conservation they were required to provide to achieve a publicly beneficial balance between development and conservation. We had raised significant concerns about all three of these parts of the Plum Creek plan. So the final result is a decidedly mixed bag from the perspective of MWGO.

It is still too early to know the final impact of our work on LURC's Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Our support of LURC's vision to protect remote areas for primitive recreation was very important, given strong opposition from some, and it appears that LURC will continue to support remote, primitive recreation. We have also shined a light on the problem of development along immovable paddling routes and carry trails, and we are optimistic that LURC will address the issue. It will be important for guides to attend and speak out at the public hearings on the draft plan that will likely be held in the winter.

The Final Report of the Governor's Task Force Regarding the Management of Public Land and Publicly-Held

Easements included a recommendation that there be further development of backcountry recreational opportunities. The Recreational Access and Conservation Forum which grew out of the Task Force has begun discussing the need for a comprehensive plan for recreation in Maine's North Woods.

The Administration is considering possible land acquisitions in the Allagash region. We have encouraged them to consider protecting the important carry trails in to the Allagash. We have also made it clear that we would actively support any land acquisition projects which emerge.

With a foot in both camps, the Maine Wilderness Guides Organization continues to be an important voice bridging the gap that sometimes arises in policy discussions between wilderness recreation and commercial uses of Maine's North Woods. Throughout the year, there are multiple opportunities for public comment on policy issues, and we strongly urge our members to go to the hearings and write letters in support of wilderness recreation. We will keep you posted as those opportunities arise.



Cathy Johnson is Senior Staff Attorney and North Woods Project Director for the Natural Resources Council of Maine where she has worked for 19 years. She handles land protection and forestry issues for NRCM.



Maine's Canada Lynx

By Gary Roberts

The Canada lynx is a secretive, medium sized feline of Maine's Northern Woods. Its white tipped fur, tawny in summer and gray in winter, is faintly spotted. The lynx has black ears with uniquely long tufts, a heavy facial ruff, and a short, black tipped tail. Though similar in size to a bobcat, the lynx appears much larger because of its long legs and huge furred feet.

At the southern border of its range, this rare, elusive feline is only found in three of the lower 48 states: Washington, Montana, and Maine. In Maine, confirmed sightings have been made in northern Franklin, Piscataquis, Somerset and Aroostook counties. Lynx home ranges are approximately 18 miles, and they prefer as habitat large areas of young balsam fir and northern hardwoods that offer dense cover for their primary food, snowshoe hare. Because the lynx is built with specialized adaptations for hunting snowshoe hare in deep snow, its numbers in Canada are known to fluctuate with the 10 year cycle of the hare population, but in Maine, it's believed the lynx population is affected more by habitat change. Changes in

forestry practices have reduced clear cutting, which was ideal for maintaining snowshoe hare habitat.

Serious threats to Maine's lynx populations include the northerly expansion of more aggressive predators like bobcats that are taking advantage of lesser snowfalls and displacing lynx from their historical territories. Ever increasing human activity and development into our northern forests

is also a factor, as are losses due to predation, incidental trapping, and roadside kills. During a 5 year study conducted by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife between 1999 and 2003, 32 lynx were radio collared and only 17 dens and 37 kittens were found. Because of the small numbers of lynx in Maine, the loss of a single animal can be deemed critical to their survival.

So what can members of MWGO do to help protect Maine's Canada lynx? We've already got a good start. When MWGO advocates to conserve large areas of wild, unfragmented forestlands for multi-day, human powered trips and when our members speak up for sensible development in our north woods, we are also advocating for Canada lynx habitat. But what more can we do? As an organization we could expand our advocacy to include IF&W recommendations for forestry and wildlife management as well as climate related pollution controls, and we can speak out against the large scale construction of high volume/ high speed roadways in undeveloped areas. As individ-

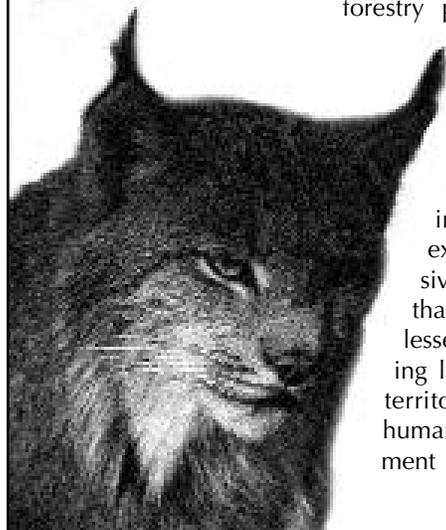
ual guides and outdoor enthusiasts, if you think you've seen a Canada lynx, try to document the sighting and report it to IF&W. If you're a trapper, be sure you know lynx habitat and sign, and avoid setting traps in those areas, and, if you do trap in lynx country, adopt the trapping recommendations of IF&W.

The Canada lynx has no control over its fate in Maine, but as concerned citizens we do. Maine woodsmen use to call the lynx "Ghost of the Woods," but it's now up to us to ensure that doesn't become a reality.

Order: *Carnivora*
Genus: *Lynx*
Species: *Canadensis*
Family: *Felidae*

Height: 24-26 inches
Length: 32-39 inches
Tail: 2.0-5.5 inches
Weight: 18-30 pounds

Life Span: 15 years
Gestation: 63-70 days
Litters: 1-8
Maturity: 10-23 months



Gary Roberts, Maine Guide and Naturalist, has specialized in leading programs and guiding trips with a natural history perspective for over 20 years. For more information go to www.winterwrenguides.com or contact Gary at grobert6@maine.rr.com.



ICE Formation, Safety, Rescue

By Kevin Slater

In the winter I spend an average of six days a week crossing ice. Since I do a lot of guiding in winter, my safety and the safety of my clients depends on my knowledge of ice conditions. Beginning in November, I keep a daily log of high and low temperatures, wind speed and direction. This gives me valuable base-time data, and I also chisel check the ice in bays as it begins to form throughout November. An ideal fall freeze is when we have an extended period of cold weather (single numbers to lower teens), with little wind, until we get an ice thickness of about four inches before snow comes.

To understand ice, one needs to be aware of the special properties of water. As with most liquids, as water cools it becomes denser — up to a point. Water reaches its maximum density at 4 C (39 F). In the fall when the surface water reaches 4 C, it sinks. This is called turnover, and it happens in spring and fall. Once a lake has cooled to 4 C, the surface water can continue to cool below 4 C until it freezes. If water was most dense at its lowest liquid temperature, just above 0 C, a lake would freeze from the bottom up. This new ice is black ice, so called because it has very little air in it, and it is like looking through glass into the deep black water of the lake.

Ponds and Lakes

Calm, cold nights in November are needed for the surface water to freeze. Lakes begin to freeze first along the shoreline, eventually freezing across bays. The middle of the lake or areas that receive more wind are the last to freeze. If you could view the progression of a lake freezing from an airplane, you would see it freezing in many large plates. All the

bays or coves skim over. In the main lake the ice tends to grow out from the lee shore further than from the windward shore. Where these plates meet is where you will find pressure ridges later in the season.

Pressure ridges are formed where plates of ice meet. As the ice continues to freeze, it expands, but the shoreline keeps it from expanding outward. The energy associated with expansion has to go somewhere; in this case it is subduction (downward) and abduction (upward) at pressure ridges. In my experience, pressure ridges tend to be most active earlier in the winter, in December and January, where there is not much snow on the ice to insulate it from extreme temperature swings. Thaws, especially early in the season, are also associated with pressure ridge activity.

Lake ice basically occurs in two different colors, black and gray. Black ice is stronger because it has less air in it. Gray ice obtains its color from the presence of air, and the lighter the shade of gray, the more air the ice contains, and the weaker it is. Black ice is formed by topdown freeze at the surface; gray ice is usually a mix of melt freeze snow, refrozen slush, or a combination of all that formed above the black ice. I have observed over the past few years, as we have gotten more thaws in winter, that gray ice is becoming the dominant form of lake ice in the northeast.

Slush is often a feature of our lakes, especially after a heavy snowfall followed by mild temperatures. Slush can either be pressure or over-flow related. Pressure slush occurs when the weight of the snow on the ice is great enough to create enough pressure for lake water to percolate up through cracks in the ice and spread over the surface. Over-flow slush

most often occurs near shore and at inlets and outlets. Ground water springs near shore flow all winter under the snow pack, and anything that causes an increase in water level (e.g. human controlled dams) will cause overflow slush at inlets or outlets. Slush is not dangerous in and of itself, but it makes for difficult travel conditions if it is deep and covers an extensive area.

Rivers and Streams

Ice begins to form first along the shoreline, because the current is slowed and because of the cold conduction of frozen ground. The water is often 32 F, and only its movement keeps it from freezing. However, even streams and rivers with strong current can develop frazil ice — small disc shaped platelets drifting in the current. Frazil ice sometimes becomes attached to the bottom of the riverbed and grows by accretion to form anchor ice.

The shore ice develops first and becomes thickest in areas of slower current, like the inside of river bends. Shore ice continues to grow outward from shore and may eventually span the entire channel. As winter progresses, water levels drop and cracks that run parallel to the shoreline begin to develop in the shore-fast ice.



RIVERBED CROSS-SECTION

Ice Safety and Rescue

I always carry a small lightweight (5/16" diameter x 50 ft) throw-bag with me, whether I am traveling by snowmobile, dog team, or snowshoes. If I am checking the ice to find a safe route, I also use an ice chisel to chisel check as I go, and I have a pair of self-rescue ice picks on a lanyard around my neck. The bevel of the ice chisel should be fairly low angle, 15 to 20 degrees, and very sharp. Mine is mounted on a 6' long spruce pole, and with a very hard thrust it will go through 2" of ice. With a moderately hard thrust I know I have at least 2" of ice under me; I am able to check ice thickness over some distance reasonably quickly.

Two inches of ice will hold a person or a snow machine, but I recommend a minimum of four inches. Early in the season when traveling on thin ice, mark the trail with evergreen boughs and stay on this trail. Under these conditions I chisel check a trail approximately every 50' and will do so again if the temperature goes above 24 F.

On lakes the last places to freeze are also the first to open up in the spring — the inlets and outlets of rivers and streams. Narrows in big lakes often produce enough current to open and close throughout winter. Always chisel check and use

extreme caution in these areas.

The size and activity of pressure ridges varies greatly from winter to winter, even on the same lake. The rule of thumb is to always cross perpendicular to the ridge itself.

Slush often forms on top of ice that is thick enough to safely travel on unless it is near the edge of open water. Pressure slush is most common on lakes and overflow slush on rivers. Slush is water on top of the ice, so it seeks the low spots. You can often avoid it by hugging the shoreline where the ice is higher. If you have to cross a river, do so with extreme caution. Wide places will have shallower water, thinner ice and faster current. Narrow places will have slower current, thicker ice, but also deeper water. The bottom line is that there is no effective rescue method for someone going through river ice in current where the water is over your head. Thoroughly chisel check every step if you must cross.

Traveling by snowmobiles on ice has advantages and disadvantages. The main disadvantage is that you don't feel the snow and ice under your feet, and you can very quickly get yourself onto thin ice or deep slush due to the speed that even a Tundra can travel. The two greatest advantages of traveling by machine are that it spreads the weight out over more surface area and that you can use it as a portable anchor on the ice.

I usually do my first ice check by a combination of on foot and snowmobile. I use Ski-Doo Tundras or Skandics for bush travel because of their superior flotation. Standard equipment on all sleds includes an axe, throw-bag, snowshoes, ice chisel, two mountaineering ice screws, and a shovel.

Any suspect areas are chisel checked first on foot; then I bring my Ski Doo up to the last chisel hole and repeat the process. I'm backed up by another person, keeping a safe distance, (100 feet) who is also on a Ski-Doo and who has a throw bag. Should the first person go through, the second tosses the throw-bag. On glare ice, where the thrower has poor traction, clip the t-bag to the handle on the front ski for an anchor, and the swimmer can pull himself or herself out. A larger throw-bag (1/2" diameter x 75' L) is preferable for snow machine travel because it can double as a towrope if one machine gets stuck in the slush. If you are alone and get stuck in slush, you can use the ice screws for an anchor. Then cut two poles, and with the rope make a Finnish winch that will pull as well as any come-along to get yourself unstuck.

Along with judgment and the proper safety/rescue gear, curiosity, respect, and a healthy amount of fear should be your constant companions when crossing ice.

Walk well!



Kevin Slater operates *Mahoosuc Guide Service* in Newry Maine and offers wilderness canoe trips in Maine, Utah and Montana. MGS also offers exceptional dog sledding expeditions in Maine, and in Northern Quebec in partnership with a remote Inuit tribe.

You can contact Kevin at: info@mahoosuc.com

Eric Stirling: Owner West Branch Pond Camps

By Greg Shute

The second week of November and Eric Stirling is hustling to get a new workshop closed-in before the first snowfall covers West Branch Pond Camps. It's an unusually warm day when I visit Eric, the leaves have mostly fallen and the tamaracks around the pond are golden in the late fall light. The historic Camps are located on First West Branch Pond in Shawtown Township, northeast of Greenville, and have been in Eric's family for four generations. This is where he was raised and what is now home to Eric and his wife, photographer Mildred Kennedy, and their eight-week-old daughter, Avis Clare.

Eric is a classic example of a person who spent his formative years living close to the natural world and whose career path has now brought him full circle. After some time away for college and a few years teaching math at the Hyde School in Bath, Eric has returned as the sixth owner in the camp's history. When presented with the opportunity to purchase the Camps from his parents, he didn't have to think twice. Running the camps was always his long-term vision.

Out going and articulate, Eric has been a thoughtful spokesperson for the need to conserve the northern forest region and for the traditional life styles that this area affords. Like many sporting camps, West Branch Pond caters to a group of dedicated repeat customers, with more eco tourists than hunters and fisherman visiting these days. Native brookies still thrive in the pond for those guests who do come to fish. Moose on the hoof are a big draw, and guests can often observe several at one time feeding around the pond.

When I asked Eric to comment on the future of Maine's sporting camps his enthusiasm was obvious. "The sporting camp tradition is unique to Maine, and the people who visit appreciate that, for the most part, the camp is a constant in a quickly changing world." With nearby land conservation efforts in the works, West Branch Pond Camps is well suited year round to provide their guests a classic North Woods vacation for years to come.

To Contact Eric at West Branch Pond Camps: (207) 695-2560. Email: info@westbranchpondcamps.com





Michelle plops down to catch a few rays during a great Maine winter day of snowshoeing.



Its not how many of these guys see you, its how many you see.

Mountain Woman Guide Service

By Shannon LeRoy

Mountain Woman Guide Service is owned and operated by Michelle Young. Michelle has lived and worked in the western Maine mountains all of her life, and her specialties are hiking, kayaking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and leading moose tours. In addition, she has the unusual specialty of panning for gold in the Swift River. She loves her job of guiding as it gives her opportunity to share with her sports the natural beauty of the untamed remoteness of the western Maine forests, the clear sparkling waters of the lakes and rivers, and the breathtaking sights of the scenic mountains and valleys. She never gets tired of seeing the excitement and thrill that her guests have when seeing a majestic moose or a graceful deer or when they hear the distant call of a loon. She works with people of all ages during all four seasons. She especially enjoys taking anglers fly fishing on the famous Rapid River for salmon and trout and hikers to the Angel Falls, where one can view the largest single drop falls in the state. In the past Michelle worked with Sunday River for the National Wildlife Federation's Family Summit where she led over 100 people on hikes over the course of a week.

Michelle has been a member of the Maine Wilderness Guides Organization for two years now which she joined because of what MWGO represents to Maine Guides. She is also a member of the Professional Maine Guides Association, Rangeley Guides Association, Trails for Rangeley Area Coalition, Mahoosuc Land Trust, Coos Canyon Guides Association, Appalachian Mountain Club, M.S.A. (Maine Snowmobile Association), and a volunteer lake monitor for Maine lakes.

**You can contact her through her web site:
www.mountainwomanguideservice.com**



Shannon LeRoy is a new MWGO board member, Programs Manager for Appalachian Mountain Club's Maine Wilderness Lodges, a Registered Maine Guide, avid birder and certified Tracker. She and her husband owned Medawisla Wilderness Camps until 2006. In her spare time she heads up the Moosehead Area Birding Club and works on the Committee for the 100-Wilderness Sled Dog Race. She also loves kayaking, photography, cross country skiing and bird hunting. She lives in Monson, Maine with her husband Larry and Cheyenne her Springer spaniel.

MWGO Mission

Providing a unified voice for
Maine's professional wilderness guides
as they work to sustain a historic way of life
and conserve and protect remote woods
and waters for future generations.

Member Benefits

- Professional Development Workshops: First Aid, Wilderness Survival, Winter & River Guide Training.
- Newsletter updates on wilderness issues, educational opportunities, guides network.
- Website providing advocacy bulletins, trainings, marketing opportunities.
- Organization patch and decal.
- Annual Guide Rendezvous.
- Pro-deals on outdoor equipment. *(Registered guides, sporting camp owners and outfitters only.)*

We currently have arrangements with Old Town Canoe and Kayak, Eureka Tents, Cascade Designs, Mountain Safety Research (MSR), Duluth Pack and Jane Baron's Alder Stream Canvas. Discounts range from 5% to 45 % depending on the company. In most instances we are limited to one order per year placed by March 1st. Please contact Greg Shute, gshute@chewonki for the guidelines for pro orders

Change in Collection of Annual Membership Dues

For the last three years all memberships have lapsed on December 31, but beginning October of 2008, your membership in MWGO will remain current for 12 months from the date dues are paid. Starting January, 2009, expiring members will be notified on a monthly basis when their membership renewals are due. Notices will be going out shortly to members who last paid their dues in January, 2008. However, anyone wanting to renew for 2009 at this time is welcome to do so with the understanding that the renewal membership period will start the month payment is received. Use the renewal form on this page or downloaded one from our website:

www.MWGO.org

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Membership Form

Cut and send in envelope with check made out to Maine Wilderness Guides Organization to:

**MWGO Membership • P.O. Box 1149
Bethel, Me 04217**

Membership Categories

- This is a new membership
- This is a renewal membership

- Friend of MWGO (Annual) \$25
- Friend of MWGO (Life) \$250
(Supporter of MWGO mission and goals.)

- Registered Maine Guide (Annual) \$50
- Registered Maine Guide (Life) \$500

Check Guiding Classifications held: Master Hunting
 Rafting Fishing Recreation Other _____

Guiding Specialities: Hiking/Camping Canoeing
 Rafting Kayaking Fishing Hunting Nordic
 Skiing Dog Sledding Winter Camping

- Sporting Camp Owner or Outfitter \$150
(Annual membership for businesses using MWGO Guides.)
- Fishing Hunting Family Recreation
- Canoe/Raft/Kayak Winter/Mushing/Nordic

- Corporate Sponsor (Annual) \$200
- Corporate Sponsor (Life) \$2,000
(Supporter of MWGO mission and goals.)

Member Name _____

Guide License Number _____

Business Name _____

Street Address _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____