

Day one – Drive to Rangely – 92 miles around Rangely

One common denominator to all these trips is each one is completely different from each other. After seven of these adventures I think the one most important thing we've learned is that it's impossible to ever say there's nothing left to learn or we're completely prepared for every possibility. I guess that's what keeps us coming back. Pete and I got bit year one, and the others faded away. Looks like we might have 2 new MaineX addicts however. That's a good thing, because I still remember repeatedly repeating to myself the words "never again", but I'm getting way ahead of myself. That phase didn't start rattling around in my head until the last day.



Hello. Heat Exchangers unlimited?



Rangely Inn

So, here goes the chronological account. The original day one plan of riding sleds from Casco to Rangeley was a bust. Snow was old and solid as a rock. No lube or cooling. At first we were quietly muttering that mother nature is a CHB. Warning, the preceding acronym maybe offensive to some people. If you can't figure out what it means, email me a signed statement that nothing can possibly offend you and I'll let you know what it means. We were yelling it towards the end of the trip. But, I digress. My whole point here is if there isn't enough snow, don't do it. Trail reports sounded like we would barely make it through. I don't ever want to put a non-rental sled through that again!



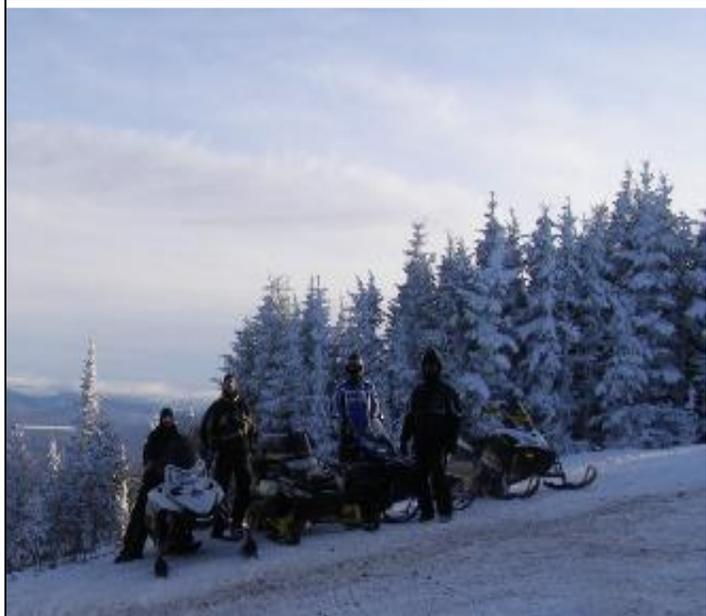
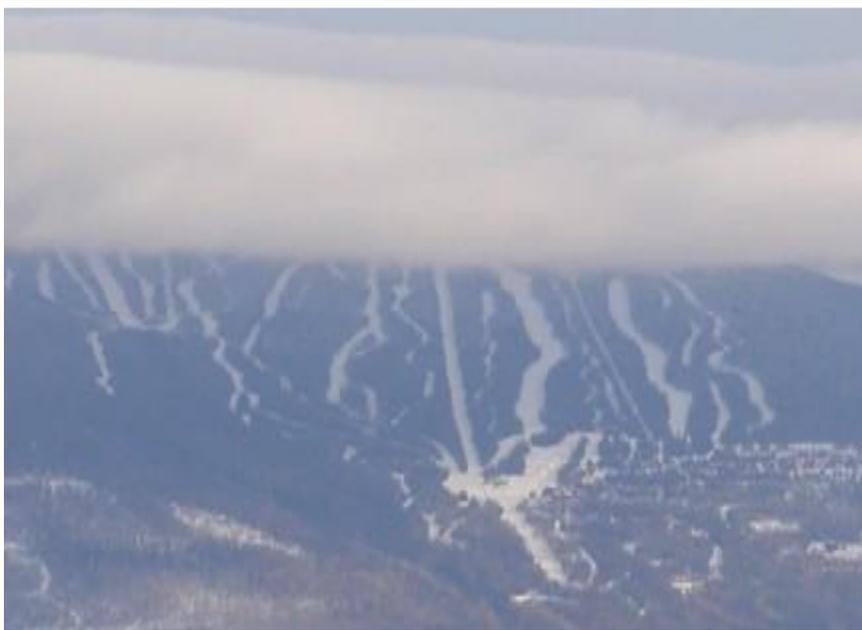
The BatSnowmobile

Back to the chronological account. Day one 2/13/2010. 92 miles around Rangeley. Drive to first night's destination. I'd say on average it takes 1/3 the time to drive from point A to B than it does to ride it. We left late, ate a slow breakfast, and arrived at the Rangeley Inn before noon. I hadn't been there since about 2003. Forgot how cool it is. Last old hotel in town. We were told there used to be a bunch. They all burned down except RI.



Anyway, we did a nice 92 mile loop that took us into the Arnold trail system at one point. So far, none of us have determined exactly why the Arnold trail system is called that. There's no Arnold, Maine, and there's no Arnold snowmobile club, and if there was why would it be called Arnold. One of those Maine history mysteries. I'll figure it out if I ever spend the time. Hopefully someone that knows will read this and tell me! Anyway, at one break Tim showed us how his Ski-Doo looks like a bat if he opens up his side doors, and we helped some not too bad looking lassies (our age) get their sleds going, after their idiot dudes left them. The dudes were gone in a flash, and one of the damsels couldn't get her sled going. She wasn't pulling too hard, so I figured I could give it a few pulls and send her off.

Nope. We all took turns pulling and no luck. Up comes the cowl. We find a disconnected battery with a note... "connect for electric start". Long story short, we think it was a loose fuse. Spark was good, and plug was dry. Fuel pump? Anyway, we got it going just as their idiot men returned. Climbed up Kennebago mountain. More fun miles and back to RI for an expensive dinner with slow service. But the help was entertaining and we had fun hanging out.



Day two, 2/14/2010. Short 108 miles Rangeley to Jackman. + about 100 miles.

We take our time and get on the trail about 10AM. 12 miles out Pete throws a pick through his front heat exchanger. This is a trip killer, but Pete's the one member that actually has a hot backup. Pete calls Chase Team Matt and Plan B is in place! They meet 1/2 way and make the exchange. Pete is back to trail ready by 2 PM. We did about another 100 miles waiting around for Pete. No problems - except for the box. But, 3 miles out MY sled puts a pick through the heat exchanger! Plan C. I drive to Jackman, hope to get repaired next day - rest of team rides. Oh, and plan D is for me to rent a sled. Ugh! I was bumming, since I didn't expect to get my sled fixed in a day.

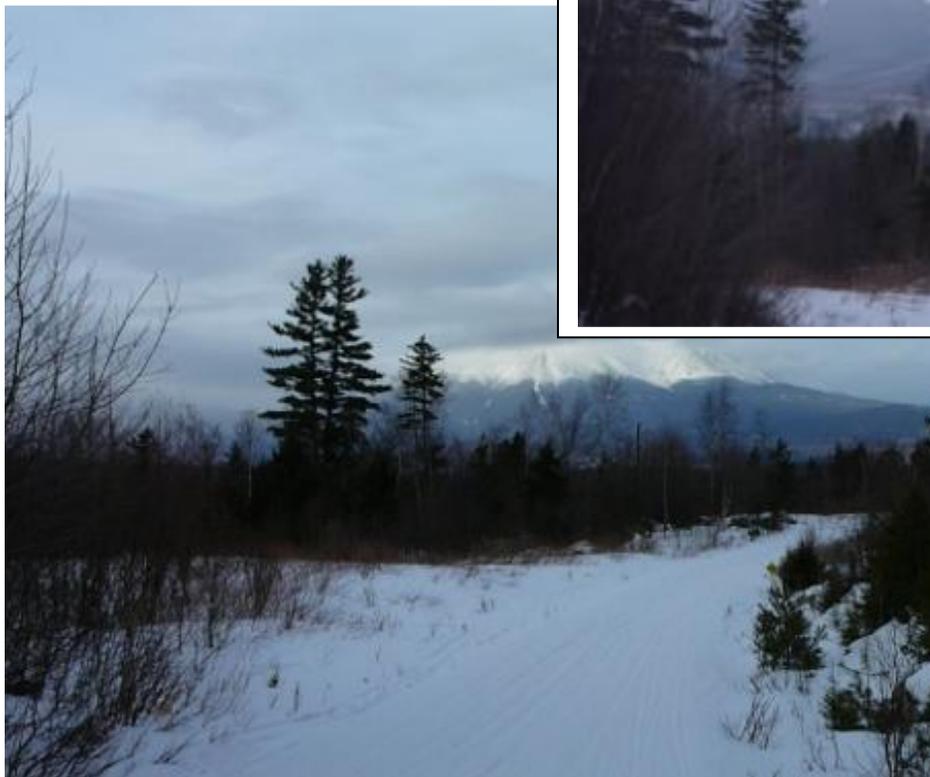
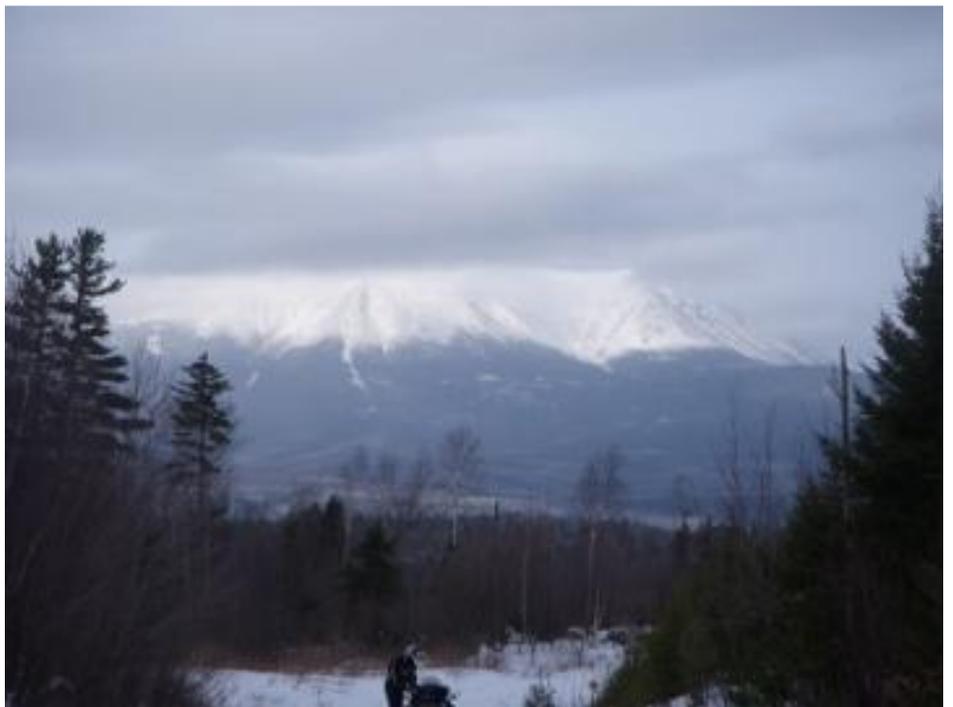


Day 3, 2/15/2010 Jackman to Shin Pond. 223 miles.

In the morning I call the dealer and of course they're no help. Ugh, call the rental place. Dana's Rental Jackman, Maine. I first ask if he can weld a heat exchanger. He says yes, but he has a better solution - epoxy it. Says he does it all the time, works great. I'm in! I drive over and he's backing a sled out with the same repair. GREAT! But, it's going to take time. No way to fix it and ride to Shin Pond. So, I stay behind, get my sled fixed and drive to Shin Pond. Rest of the team rides to Shin Pond.

I was repaired by noon. BTW: Dana used Mighty Putty, as seen on TV. I haven't looked, but I think I've rode my sled about 1000 miles so far no problems. I do want to replace the exchanger, but hell I want to see how long it'll last! It's already been through the worst temps I would ever want to put my sled through. That would be 185. But, I don't know. From what I've heard there's no telling if it'll last 1,000 or 100,000. Guess a tube of mighty putty is going to be standard equipment.

So, I get to home for the day (Mt. Chase Lodge) way ahead of the team, unload and put on some shake out miles. Sled is cranking! Better be conservative! I get back nice and early. Apparently, the rest of the team wasn't aware that dinner is supposed to be around 6. It was just us so, they waited. Finally, like 7:30 we gave up and sat down. The team shows up.



Day 4, 2/16/2010 Shin Pond to Caribou 185 miles.

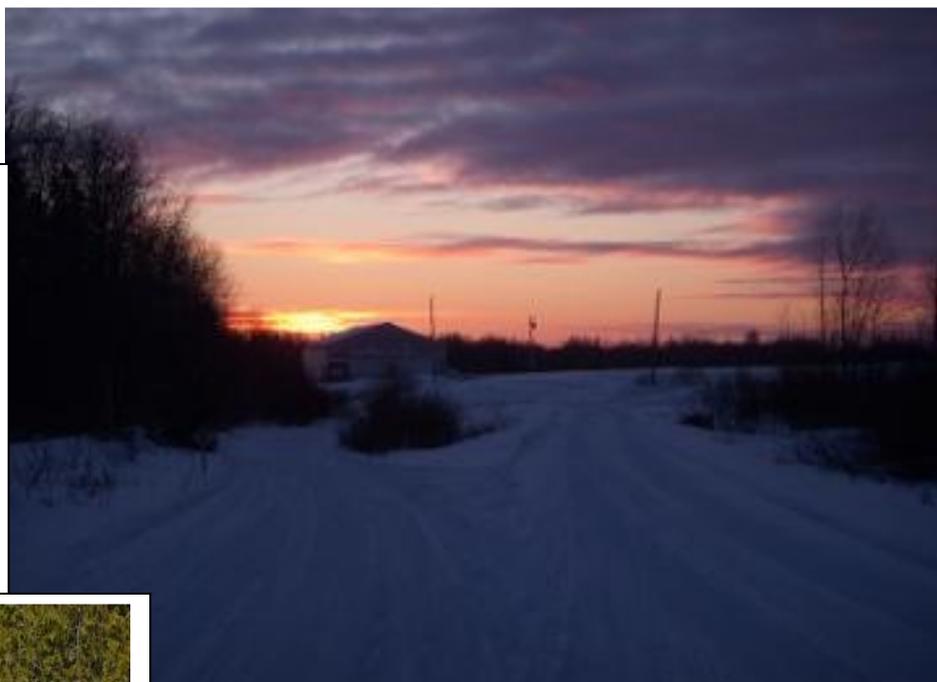
The team is 4 strong again! Snow cover is light, but plenty enough. Day 4 was pretty uneventful. I could barely recall any details and had to query the group. We did find an awesome lunch spot, but I didn't make note.

Took ITS 81S out of Shin Pond to 112 east. Then took ITS 83 east & hooked into ITS 83 north just south of Monticello. Took that up to Mars Hill then took ITS 81 north into Presque Isle over ITS88 and that awesome power line trail. Then through Fort Fairfield (where Pete almost snaps his neck on that huge drop) to ITS 90 west and into Caribou.

Finding Caribou Cabins was somewhat of a challenge. We were right across the street at one point, but didn't know it. They need just one last sign to get you across the road. Nice cabin for \$100! Can't beat that with a stick!

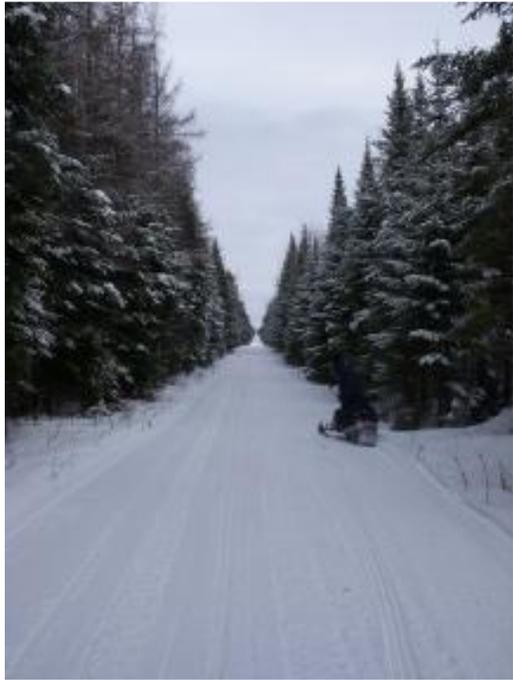


Mt. Chase Lodge

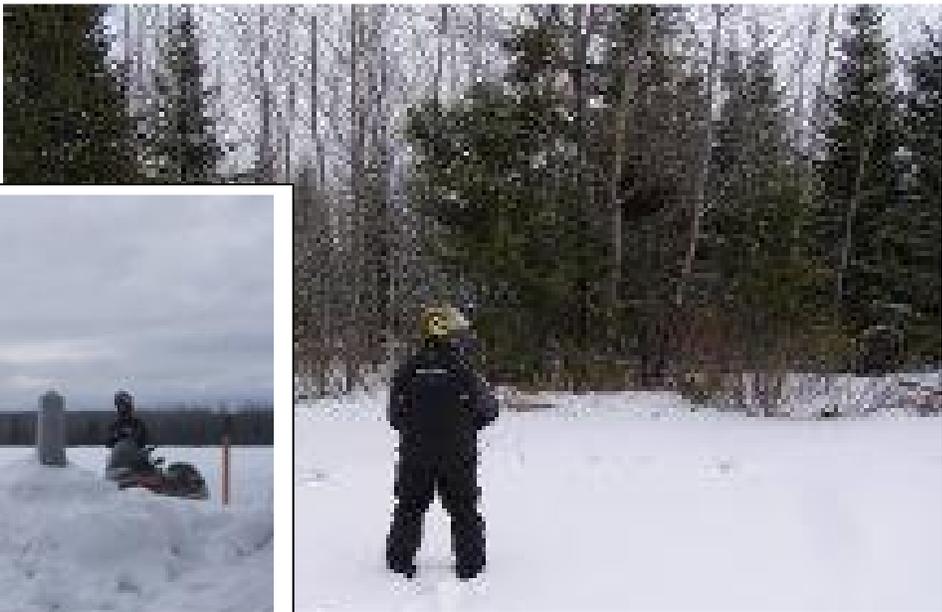


Day 5, 2/17/2010. Loop up to Fort Kent and back. 228 miles.

I've read every shred of Maine/Quebec/NB history I can find. Particularly, how the borders got defined. Of course, there is the big question of how USA ended up with a big peninsula called Maine surrounded by Canada on three sides. Canada got jipped big time. Recorded history mostly attributes how the Maine/Canada borders were established due to logging disputes. There was even a war over it. Nobody got shot though. Then you have parts of the border that is a strait line. I figure there was no dispute or natural boundaries in his case, so they just drew a line. We've been trying to get there for a number of years and finally did.



It didn't disappoint. It's like no other part of the border I've seen. It's the most lax part (at least apparently) as far as security goes. The trail actually straddles it at points with south bound in Maine and northbound in Canada. At one point, the Canada side is a wide open field. No fence. Mexicans, eat your heart out. The main thing that intrigued me was once a friend of mine told me there are points that if you hold 60 mph you will hit zero G's for about 100 feet at a time. Well, it's true. But, it's much tighter than I imagined. I imagined open fields were you could go off and be sure nobody is sitting there just under the lip. So, we took them at about 40mph, and it was good.



We needed to hit the Polaris dealer in Fort Kent and it threw us off course and we ended up taking a chance on some local trails. Kind of confusing signage, but we figured it out. We weren't too late to reach our planned supper destination Dean's. The trail home was one of those strokes of luck. We heard the trail was beat, but the groomers were out just before we passed through! Awesome.

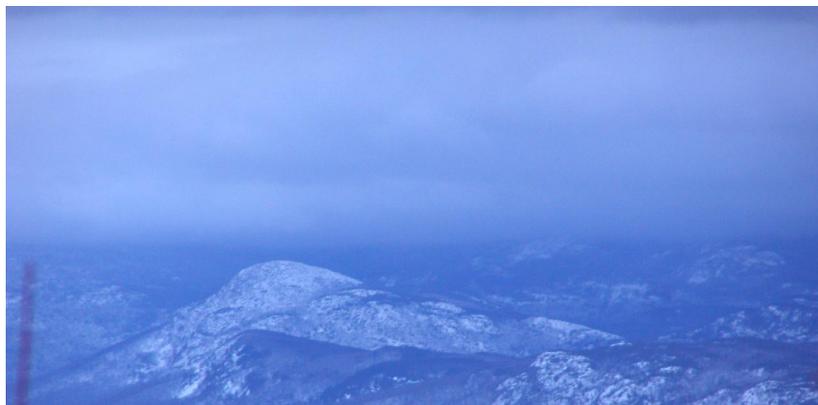
Day 6, 2/18/2010. Caribou to Shin Pond 177 miles.

We took ITS 88 ALL the way, but it turns out that the first part isn't that great until Presque Isle. It goes along a river - snow was sparse, but we prevailed. As we came into Oxbow we noticed the trail had changed. The trail never went past Homestead Lodge and we didn't know The Oxbow Lodge was closed. Turns out Homestead menu features Bison meat raised right there. I had a steak sandwich. It was great. Tastes like beef. Back to Mt. Chase Lodge early for a change. Dinner was awesome as usual.



Day 7, 2/19/2010. Shin Pond to Greenville. 197 miles.

Well I'm figuring I'm back to chase truck. Not for long I find out later. Easy drive to Greenville, check in, shower, wait for the boys. About 6:30 or so, they call with the news. Tim's Ski Doo has hifax issues. Pete is taking a turn in the trailer. I sure wish I had a good reason to keep my sled on the trailer, but I didn't.



Day 8, 2/20/2010. Greenville to Eustis 85 miles.

We're talking worst conditions ever. Well 40 miles of it was OK - 45 miles was hell. Stop every 2 miles to pack the tunnel with snow. I think I was a bit better off, because the Yummy's heat exchanger melted the snow too fast. I could pack more snow and the cool would have to conduct further. This is where I was repeating the phrase "never again" to myself. We scrapped Casco to Rangeley. We should have also scrapped Rangeley and Jackman and spend the whole time on the northeast side. Oh well. Was there something else? Oh yeah, the Yummy owner wanted me to note that the Yummy was the only machine to make the whole trip without a break down.

