

My name is Gary Smith and I am a charter boat captain with River Run Tours operating out of Bath. I have circumnavigated Swan Island on numerous occasions for our passengers. Swan Island is not only beautiful to observe from the water but is even more special when one can experience its beauty, history, wildlife, and recreational opportunities on the island.

The general public was able to access Swan Island safely when the ferry was operating however today, access to the island is limited to those with boats, kayaks, and canoes. I have personally boated and kayaked to Swan Island and with years of experience with both, access to the only dock available to boaters and when non-boaters are paddling against the current can be challenging if not dangerous for those not familiar with tidal waters. At particular times during the tides, the currents can be rapid resulting in fatigue to kayakers and difficulty docking for boaters on the camp side, floating dock.

Since the termination of the ferry service to Swan Island, both residents and visitors of Maine have lost the opportunity to experience a gem that offers so much. Its rich history, wildlife viewing, recreational opportunities, and conservation efforts are experience based opportunities for youths and adults. To inspire future Maine historians and conservationists should be a primary mission of Swan Island. These opportunities should be available to all and not limited to a few. The town of Richmond would also benefit economically if ferry service was restored. Visitors are likely to patronize the businesses in Richmond when planning a trip to Swan Island.

To quote the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's website page, "Swan Island, at the head of Merrymeeting Bay, welcomes hikers, campers, birders, anglers, wildlife watchers and explorers to its shores for an unforgettable Maine experience." It is time to restore the ferry service to Swan Island so that all can have the opportunity for an unforgettable Maine experience.

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River Run Tours  
LD 976

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