

A store to equip you for the N.H. wild

By Marty Basch
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

GROVETON, N.H. — This is moose country, but judging from the taxidermy display at Emerson Outdoor Outfitters, the region is home to many indigenous species.

Detours

“We’re interested in having trophies here that are representative of the local area,” says store owner Brian Emerson. “Most important are the moose, black bear, and white-tail deer.”

Life in this part of the north country revolves around outdoor activity, making Emerson’s superstore a kind of sporting goods institution. But the founding Emerson family itself occupies a place in the community as a retail institution.

For 75 years, the family has done business in this small paper mill town, which will soon face the closing of its livelihood mill. In 1932, Ralph and Dorothy Emerson opened a Main Street variety store with a sign over the door boasting, “nothing over a dollar.”

That business was ravaged by fire in the 1950s and rebuilt. Over the years, the family has expanded, continually adding to its inventory of hardware, building supplies, and hunting and fishing equipment. Then in December 2004 the family expanded the outdoors arm of the business with a 30,000-square-foot facility up the road from the original store.

Now the hardware business is operated by Ralph and Dorothy’s son Jim, and Jim’s son Brian runs the outdoor sports emporium.

Inside the two-floor, lodge-like store is everything from firearms to fishing poles, basketballs to backpacks, and a trout pool. Think L.L. Bean meets Cabela’s. The taxidermy displays feature a wide-ranging assortment of wildlife, such as caribou, mountain lion, bass, and pike. Some are on loan from area hunters and anglers, others were purchased by Emerson on the Internet.

The location is in many ways a natural. Sportsmen flock to the top of New Hampshire for the hunting, fishing, paddling, camping, snowmobiling, and hiking. From the flowing upper Ammonoosuc River

to the ranges north of the White Mountains, the wilds of the Great North Woods are ripe for the hook and bullet crowds as well as the backpacking clan.

Besides having an impressive inventory of clothing and equipment, one of the big draws of the store is its knowledgeable staff. Employees can dish out advice on fishing flies or the latest area snowmobile conditions. In the gun room, chatter revolves around the competitive deer pool, which lists size and weight of animals taken, with the proceeds going to a high school scholarship fund. And if you need a guide, the staff can suggest one.

While Emerson’s offers much for a variety of sportsmen, the store has some special treats for archery enthusiasts. They can practice indoors on a paper range, or go 21st century with an interactive computerized TechnoHunt that lets users choose from 1,000 scenes in which to have a simulated hunt. There’s also a 12-week winter league, which attracts 50 or so locals.

“The interactive video system is some of the most realistic forms of practice people can find,” said Emerson. “It kind of promotes making people be patient and wait for the right shot.”

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Emerson Outdoor Outfitters

149 State St. (Route 3)

Groveton, N.H.

603-636-2211, 866-636-2211

emersonoutdoors.com

Open daily 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Fridays till 8.

Archery rates range from \$3 per hour for paper targets to \$10 an hour for the TechnoHunt experience with other options.

Directions: Groveton is about 180 miles or three hours from Boston. Take Interstate 93 north into New Hampshire to exit 35 for US Route 3. Continue north on Route 3, which becomes State Street in Groveton.





John Richard, archery tech at Emerson Outdoor Outfitters in Groveton, N.H., takes aim on the paper range. The store offers goods from outdoor wear to hardware to firearms to fishing poles.

