

# UNH Wildcats 1, New York Rangers 0

Okay, New York, you win for fashion, cool, and expense. But when it comes to tent pitching, you're goin' down.

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Outdoor Education Professor Brent Bell (left) and park ranger in New York City's Central Park

New York may be the city of superlatives – the most populous, the most expensive, the most taxis – but when it comes to tent pitching, the Big Apple's best have nothing on the University of New Hampshire.

On Saturday, June 22, Associate Professor of Kinesiology Brent Bell was finishing a multi-day Manhattan visit with former students with a few days of R&R with his wife, UNH Media Relations writer Beth Potier. Avid cyclists and outdoorspeople, Bell and Potier were biking through Central Park when they came upon Adventures NYC – an annual festival promoting outdoor activities including kayaking, rock climbing, fly casting, and camping. Drawn by professional as well as personal curiosity – Bell is integrally involved in the College of Health and Human Service's experiential and outdoor education programs – the duo came across a challenge they couldn't resist: a beat-the-park-ranger tent pitching competition that invited passersby to try and raise a four-person tent in less time than the professionals' best of 3:27.

Potier cautioned her husband that adding time pressure to tent pitching might not necessarily be good for their marriage, but they beat the day's second-fastest time by roughly 30 seconds – and bested the rangers by nearly a minute. And while the prize for winning, a Sibley Guide to Birds, was unexpected, the victory was not. “The strategy was simple,” Bell explains. “Set up poles away from the tent, thread the poles, work in opposite corners, and together throw and snap the fly. I didn't realize how fast we were until the rangers looked shocked.”

Shocked, and yet Bell thinks that with a second try he and Potier would have shaved off another 30 seconds. “Maybe it's just all the times Beth and I have had to set up our own tent quickly in the rain or while being swarmed by bugs,” he muses. Whatever the reason, the outdoor educator was tickled to find himself unexpectedly at home in the most urban of environments, a habitat better known for being “intense” than . . . in-tents.

As for Ranger X, he's probably commiserating over a double cosmo with his colleagues and thinking about enrolling in one of Bell's outdoor education classes. If he can make it there, he'll make it anywhere.

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