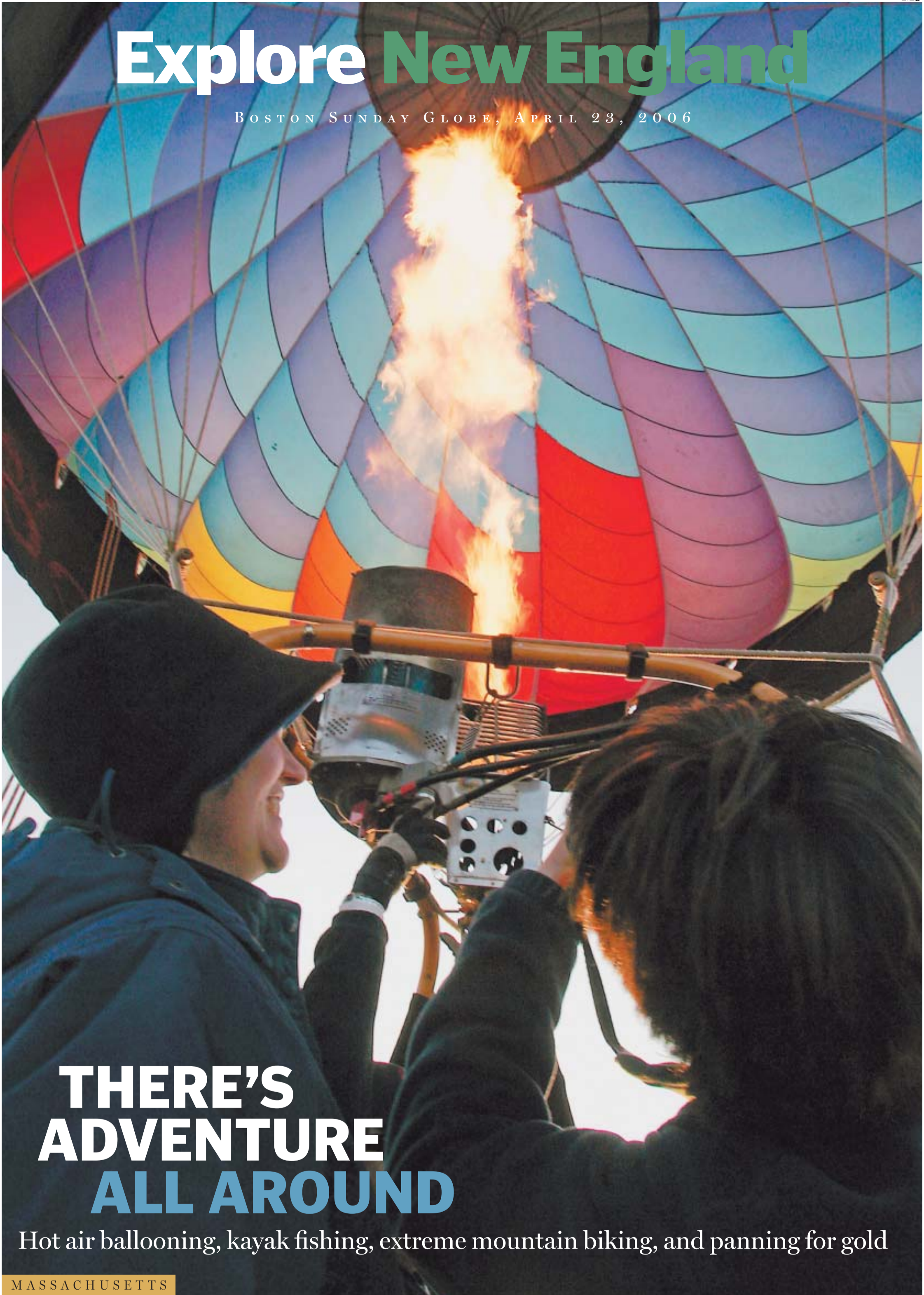


# Explore New England

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE, APRIL 23, 2006



## THERE'S ADVENTURE ALL AROUND

Hot air ballooning, kayak fishing, extreme mountain biking, and panning for gold

MASSACHUSETTS

BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Passenger Mary Thayer, left, and pilot Lisa Fusco get fired up for liftoff in Northampton, where one learns that hot air ballooning requires some degree of faith.



CONNECTICUT

KARI J. BODNARCHUK/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



MASSACHUSETTS

ERIK JACOBS/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



NEW HAMPSHIRE

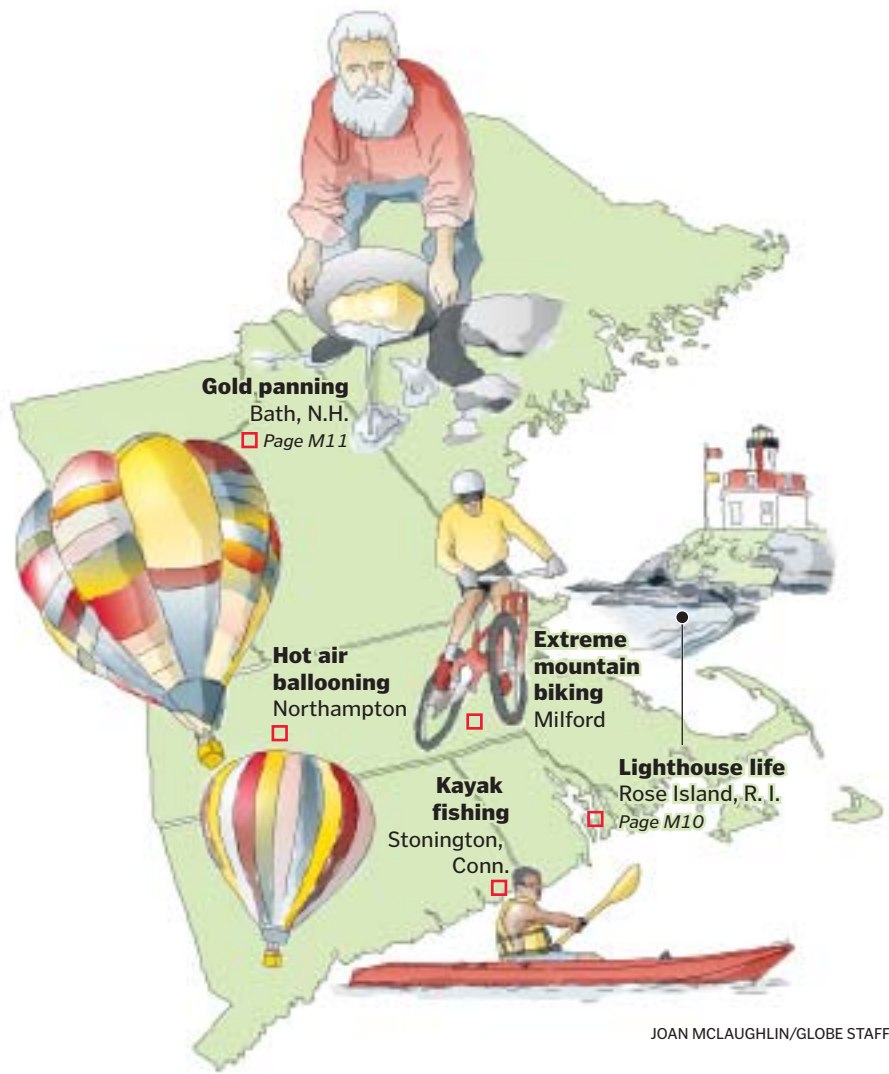
GEOFF FORESTER/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Kayaker Jerry Sparks fishes in Little Narragansett Bay; Dane Berke gets some air on a bike trail in Milford; and an optimistic prospector gears up to pan for gold in the Ammonoosuc River in Bath.

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# Guide to adventures across New England



JOAN MCLAUGHLIN/GLOBE STAFF

## KAYAK FISHING

# You know paddles — how about boils, casts, and reels?

By Kari J. Bodnarchuk

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

STONINGTON, Conn. — It was 5 a.m. on a crisp morning, too early for anything but delivery trucks, expectant anglers, and with luck, fish to be stirring. Jerry Sparks, a local fishing guide, and I had set off to hook striped bass and bluefish on Little Narragansett Bay. The hitch: We were casting our lines from kayaks.

“The cool thing about a kayak is that you’re so close to the water, you can see every wave and ripple,” Sparks said.

Sparks, 55, runs Northeast Kayak and Guide Services in Stonington and is a professional fisherman for the Wilderness Systems Kayak-Fishing Team. He has been fishing for 50 years and kayak fishing for nearly a decade. I, on the other hand, haven’t gone fishing much since I was a kid.

I am in the minority when it comes to kayak fishing, a kayaker becoming an angler instead of the other way around. I had heard that fishing from a kayak can be a great challenge and, if you hook a big fish, pretty exciting — there are stories of salt-water anglers getting towed for miles while reeling in a fish.

“Look at that one boil,” Sparks said,



KARI J. BODNARCHUK FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Howard Wright of Portland, Maine, off Peddocks Island in Boston Harbor.

while we were casting in a place he called Bluefish Cove. “The fish are running. Let’s shoot a few casts here.”

I wasn’t sure what a boil was, but I followed his advice and cast in the direction he had pointed. Sure enough, within seconds I felt a tug on my line and then watched my rod arc dramatically. I started reeling, while the fish yanked and flapped on the line. The tip of my rod dipped underwater, my paddle slipped off my boat, and my kayak was quickly towed across the cove by that feisty little fish. Then the line went slack.

“That’s too bad — he had some weight,” Sparks said. “Give it a few more minutes and we’ll clean this place up,” he added, always the optimist.

Native Americans have been fishing from kayaks for centuries, but kayak fishing, as a sport, has taken off in New Eng-

land (and beyond) only in the past several years. It has gained in popularity as gas prices have gone up and more waterfront property has been developed, and recreational anglers have discovered its appeal.

“It’s all about the stealth of the kayak,” Jeff Lopez, 33, of Winthrop, said. “You can just glide in over the fish and they don’t even know you’re there.”

Another advantage is that “you can get to where the big fish are in the skinny water,” said Lopez, who has won several kayak-fishing tournaments and was named the Extreme Edge 2005 Northeast Kayak Angler of the Year.

You can also launch in six inches of water without a boat ramp, and then paddle miles of coastline and shallow, untouched inlets where the big boats can’t go. And you can drift-cast along shore without worrying about access issues.