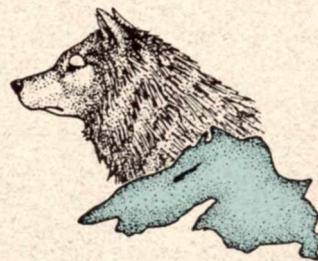


WOLF'S EYE



Isle Royale Natural History Association Newsletter

Winter 1990

Book Tops National Competition

We won! We won big! Moods, Magic & Mystique, the Isle Royale Natural History Association's color publication about Isle Royale National Park won first place, as well as the prestigious Directors Award, in the National Park Service Cooperating Associations Publications Competition. Approximately 200 new publications were entered in the nationwide competition, including those from the biggest and most-visited national parks.

Business Manager Gayle Pekkala attended the convention in Honolulu, Hawaii, and accepted the top award for the association from Herbert Cables, Deputy Director of the National Park Service.

The judges selected this publication from among nearly 200 entries in 16 categories for its overall excellence. The association worked for more than three years to create this award-winning book which is sold by local bookstores, at all our sales units and through mail order.

A key element of the competition was the evaluation of entries by a panel of seven judges, each of whom reviewed all entries and recorded his/her comments. The judges later met to discuss the entries in each category and discuss the winners. For the past several years, Howard Paine of the National Geographic, has hosted the judging



N.H.A. Business Manager Gayle Pekkala accepts the prestigious Directors Award from Herbert Cables, Deputy Director of the National Park Service, at a ceremony in Honolulu, Hawaii. Moods, Magic & Mystique, the Isle Royale Natural History Association's color publication about Isle Royale, won top honors among nearly 200 entries in the nationwide competition.

luncheon and the intense discussions that follow.

Judges's Comments: "Covers and title pages are knockouts. A beauty throughout, gorgeous photography. Beautiful book; beautifully produced. A great selection of mood-creating photos, matching the evocative text. The writing along with the photos should entice anyone to visit the island park. Elegant, clean, simple, inviting. Profoundly poetic; I love the opening

sections. Really first rate!"

Who were the judges? They included the Art Director, National Geographic Magazine; Editor-in-Chief, National Gallery of Art; Printer and Typographer, Acorn Press; Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, University of Maryland; and Director of Publications, National Parks and Conservation Association.

Special credit for this outstanding achievement went to designer Christina Watkins, author Jeff Rennicke, editor Rose Houk, printer Lorraine Press; and to Charles Eshbach, Bruce Weber and Becky Bach of the Isle Royale Natural History Association who coordinated the project.

Credit also goes to Mead Corporation which donated the quality paper, and to association members who believed we could turn out a first rate color publication and made dona-

tions to back up this conviction.

The National Park Service Cooperating Association Publications Competition was first held in 1972. The competition was established to encourage the production of high-quality publications by national park cooperating associations. Our association is one of 63 separate nonprofit associations making educational publications available in more than 350 park service areas.

From the Chairman

Another season of park visitation has come to an end; the Ranger III is wrapped up in anticipation of winter. The fiscal year for the Isle Royale Natural History Association has also reached its turning point. Our year's activities can be viewed from both this perspective of closure, and that of a fresh year about to begin. The fall meeting of the IRNHA Board offered an opportunity to do just that.

The past year was a great success by many measures. The interpretive program at Edisen's was an unqualified hit. Buddy Sivertsen's personal style combined with the unique presence of the place and the human story to be told and captivated the 1500 visitors who made it to the fishery. We hope and expect that this exciting program will be continued and expanded in coming years. Another high point of the year was the recognition of Isle Royale: Moods, Magic, & Mystique by the NPS Cooperating Association Publications Competition. Winning both first place in the book category and the overall Director's Award was a great honor, and recognition of the Association's high standards of quality.

We feel that we also made a difference

in the park by hiring Joanne Hannula to staff the desk in Rock Harbor during some of the hours that ranger staff were cut back due to budget shortfalls. We may well do more of this next season, as the details of new budget cuts are realized. Our anticipated contribution to park operations should total about \$9500 in the coming year, and could go higher, depending on park needs and our ability to contribute. The Board has come out strongly in favor of restoration and expansion of interpretive programs as our highest priority concern. The exact mechanisms for achieving this end are not set: we might hire interpreters, or we might find ways to free staff from other duties to spend their time on interpretation. However it is accomplished, we've set this as a primary goal for the coming year.

In the area of new initiatives, we're working with Bill Fink and the Copper Country Community Arts Council to begin an Artist in the Park Program on Isle Royale. Chris Gale is helping to pursue a grant from the Michigan Council for the Humanities that will help support one or more artists for a brief sojourn on the Island next summer. We hope that this will prove to be a pilot project that leads to a more ambitious and long-term arrangement in the future.

This turning point in the year also reminds me that we'll be holding a biennial election next spring. If my calculations are correct, we'll need to fill all seven slots! Charlie Eshbach and Paul Hinzmann are ending their six years of service, Chris Gale and Marcia Young are finishing their initial three-year terms (necessitated by the changeover in 87/88), and Jan Dalquist, Pat Johns and I are finishing our two-year freshman terms. Even if my figuring is not all correct, we will need to see some fresh faces and willing workers, so I'll put out the call right now. Give some serious thought to running for the Board, if you are energetic, enthusiastic, and committed to helping further the aims of the Isle Royale Natural History Association. It requires attendance at quarterly meetings in Houghton and Isle Royale, individual and committee work, and thoughtful deliberation on policies and activities. A formal call for nominations will be forthcoming this winter: in the meantime, give it some thought.

NOTES

□ On Thanksgiving weekend, 11 a.m. Saturday morning, the 642 foot freighter Kinsman Independence grounded on a reef at the entrance to Siskiwit Bay. Fortunately there were no injuries to the crew of 30, and the ship was refloated at 8:45 p.m. Sunday by two commercial tugs. The Cleveland-based ship was towed to Thunder Bay where inspection revealed gashes severe enough to possibly warrant scrapping the ship. Later, management decided to make repairs. The gashes run 150 feet from the bow on one side and 120 feet from the bow on the other side. Ballast tanks were ruptured but on-board pumps drained the water. The ship was carrying 80,000 gallons of fuel oil for its engines. No oil leak was reported. The ship was 24 miles off the usual Passage Island course to Thunder Bay. Personnel from the Coast Guard Marine Safety Office monitored the rescue.

□ Now is a great time to give a gift of the new IRNHA 100% cotton **short sleeve T-Shirt** in our popular Wolf/Moose/Loon design. Member price is \$10.25. Available in sizes S-M-L-XL. Colors are teal blue and coral pink.

Also, our popular IRNHA **Sweatshirts**, with Wolf/Moose/Loon design, may be ordered in sizes S-M-L-XL-XXL in light mint or gray. Member price is \$20. Add \$3 for the shipping of either two T-Shirts or one Sweatshirt. Michigan residents, please add 4% sales tax. We accept MasterCard and VISA.

□ With this issue of WOLF'S EYE, Bruce Weber, Park Naturalist and Association Coordinator will pass the editorship to a new person. Bruce has been WOLF'S EYE editor for most of the decade, a period during which the association and the newsletter have seen vast growth. Since 1981, IRNHA has expanded from 100 to 850 members, and WOLF'S EYE has progressed from a mimeographed format to the attractive quarterly newsletter you hold in your hand.

□ Your membership renewal notice will arrive soon. It's a good time of year to inquire of your employers if they make "matching contributions." Also, take the opportunity to ask friends to become members. And remember, we also have two categories of corporate membership.

Isle Royale

Natural History Association

87 N. Ripley St., Houghton, MI 49931

A nonprofit membership organization that assists Isle Royale National Park by publishing and selling educational materials to park visitors. Gifts, bequests, memorials and memberships are U.S. tax deductible.

Membership Categories:

Single Membership \$5.00

Husband and Wife Membership \$8.00

*Supporting Membership \$35.00

*Life Membership \$150.00

**Corporate Sponsor \$1,000.00

**Corporate Patron \$5,000.00

(Life memberships may be paid for in two annual installments of \$75.00 each)

*Includes a gift copy of Isle Royale—Moods, Magic and Mystique.

**Includes a premium gift of a beautifully framed photo of an Isle Royale scene (16" x 20")

Board of Directors:

Dr. Patrick Martin, Chairman

Jan Dalquist, Charles Eshbach, Chris Gale,

Paul Hinzmann, Patrick Johns,

Marcia Young; William Fink, Ex-Officio.

Staff:

Bruce Weber, Coordinator and Editor

Gayle Pekkala, Business Manager

Ellen Croll, Membership and

Mail Order Clerk

Aurora Borealis

By Bruce Weber, Park Naturalist

Nature herself participated in our Christmas celebrations by providing an aurora of considerable brilliancy.

—Robert E. Peary, enroute to the North Pole, 1910

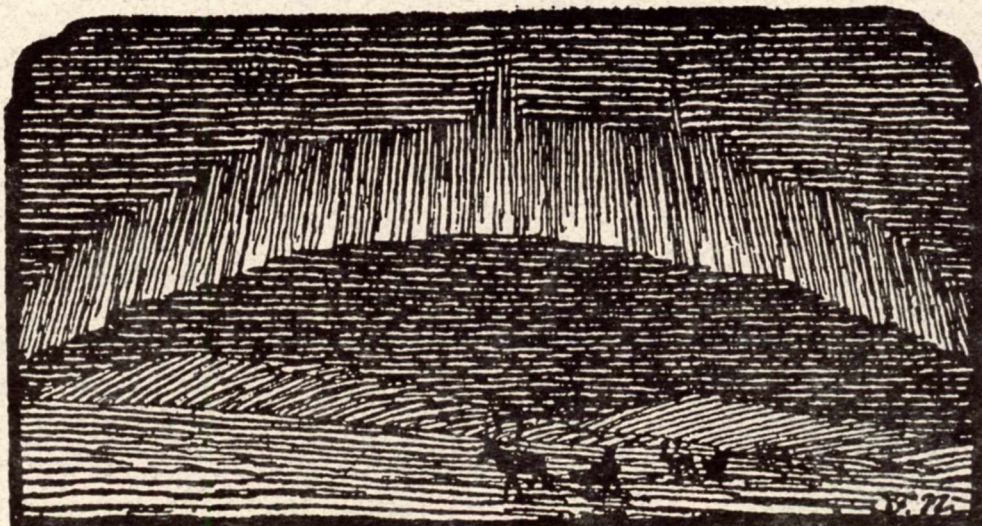
Seeing the aurora borealis, or northern lights, is one of the delights of being at Isle Royale. The remote location of our wilderness island, away from competing electric lights, makes it possible to view the night sky more completely than usual. At times, the dancing lights of the aurora can resemble the glow from a distant forest fire, or moving search lights, or swaying draperies. In any form, they are a delight that has entertained visitors to the north for centuries. In 1868, Frederick Whymper, in his "Travel and Adventure in the Territory of Alaska" described them well when he wrote:

Just as we were turning in for the night a fine auroral display in the northwest was announced, and we all rushed out to witness it... It was not the conventional arch, but a graceful, undulating, ever-changing "snake" of electric light; evanescent colours, pale as those of a lunar rainbow, ever and again flitting through it, and long streamers and scintillations moving upward to the bright stars, which distinctly shone through its hazy, ethereal form. The night was beautifully calm and clear...

My interest in the aurora was stimulated recently when I watched a 27 minute video produced by the Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska. This "Aurora Color Television Project" highlights video footage taken, with special equipment, for NASA and the National Science Foundation. The video data is accompanied by the swirling music of the Symphony in Ursa Major, plus an informative pamphlet.

What causes the aurora? People used to believe that it was the sun's light reflecting from ice on the Arctic Ocean, or from ice crystals in the atmosphere. Today we know that the aurora is actually light created where we see it in the sky. But the process starts with the sun. From this ball of very hot gasses, atoms and independent electrons escape and are blown through space as "solar wind." Periodic solar flares (sun spots) increase the abundance of atoms and charged electrons, and therefore the opportunity to see northern lights.

It takes solar wind three days to travel the 93 million miles to earth. Some of the electrons get trapped by the earth's magnetic field, travel along



Auroral curtain illustrated in a woodcut by Fridtjof Nansen.

magnetic lines into the earth's atmosphere, and when they strike atoms of gas in the envelope surrounding the earth, the gasses glow. When an electron strikes an oxygen molecule, pale green light is given off. When nitrogen is struck, red light is created.

The height of the aurora is amazing. At times, it appears to be only a few feet above our heads. Actually it is greater than 50 miles above the earth. That's high! It happens above our clouds and above our weather. A typical aurora may be 60 or 70 miles above the earth and several hundred miles long. It's because the electrons are very tiny and they bump into molecules hundreds of times as they come down toward earth. Each time an electron bumps into a molecule, a small flash of light is created and the electron slows down a little. Finally, by the time the electron reaches 50 miles above earth, it has used up its energy. It takes billions of electrons to create enough light in the sky for us to see even the smallest part of an auroral display.

Another amazing fact: there is an aurora at both north and south poles. Most of the time, the northern lights and the southern lights are essentially alike and move around in the same way at the same time. Mirror images, poles apart! It was not until 1773 the southern lights, which are called "aurora australis", were documented

for the first time. Not until 1967 did scientists know northern and southern lights were matching images.

The number of nights you'll likely be able to view the aurora depends where you're located on the planet. At Isle Royale, it's about 25 nights per year. In Tennessee it's only about five nights. Generally the number of nights the aurora can be seen increases as you travel from the equator north, reaching a maximum of 243 nights a year in the auroral zone—a line that runs east-west through the middle of Alaska.

Photographing the aurora requires a camera with a good lens, plus a sturdy tripod. S.I. Akasofu in his "Aurora Borealis, The Amazing Northern Lights" suggests photographing the lights on a night when they are not moving too rapidly. They can move as fast as a moving search light, or like wind blowing through drapes. As a general rule, photos are best if you manage to include recognizable subjects in the foreground,—i.e. trees and lighted cabins. A wide angle lens is best. Open it to the maximum. Try to keep your exposures under 30 seconds and use fast (ASA 400) film. Experiment with exposures and you should get good results.

If I've stimulated your interest in learning more about the aurora, write to me for information on publications that are available.

Dancing at Lake Desor

Chuck Annable of Oberlin, Ohio sent us this poem which he wrote while hiking Isle Royale.
"The beauty of its wilderness is inspirational and this was sheer serendipity". Thanks Chuck; —the editor.

*The wind called a dance on a full moon night,
And the birches lined up to swing with delight.*

*Rosy pinks and whites and black polka-dot,
Their raiment caused a stir in the forest lot.*

*Some hair turning golden for 'twas autumn time,
Other yet green, pleased to wear their summer fine.*

*Purple asters by the thousands cloaked the dance hall floor,
And the first tune up was: "On The Banks Of Lake Desor".*

*Well, they swang and they swayed and they waltzed all about,
The trees that weren't invited could only weep and pout.*

*They danced through the eve and the night till dawn,
And when the sun came up the dance went on.*

*The poet had to go, he left 'round noon time,
But the birches still a-boogied in the bright sunshine.*

*A willing partner you will find in any birch gal,
Simply go to Gitche Gumee and the Isle called Royale.*

Chuck Annable



Welcome New Life Members: Grant and Marilyn Merritt, from Minneapolis, Minnesota

WOLF'S EYE

Isle Royale Natural History Association
87 North Ripley Street
Houghton, Michigan 49931

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