

WOLF'S EYE



Isle Royale Natural History Association Newsletter

Winter 1992

IN THE BEGINNING.....

By Bruce Weber

This is an anniversary of sorts. Would you believe seventy years ago began the movement to preserve Isle Royale as a national park? It was a relatively inauspicious moment in history. The National Park Service was only five years old. It was the beginning of the decade of the "roaring twenties." The nation was recovering from the World War. Lumbering and mining had affected Isle Royale. But this was the time when Albert Stoll Jr. began the campaign to set aside the Island from private development.

Albert Stoll, Conservation Editor of the Detroit News, and David R. Jones of the Michigan Department of Conservation, visited Isle Royale in September 1921. Heading home, Jones suggested that Isle Royale be preserved and he encouraged Stoll to promote the idea in his newspaper column. Stoll accepted the challenge. He then persisted for nineteen years until Isle Royale became a national park.

In June 1924, he accompanied National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather on a field inspection of the Island. The energetic Mather declared that "Isle Royale fully measures up to national park standards." But it wasn't until March 3, 1931, that the U.S. Congress passed the law

authorizing the Isle Royale National Park project. And it was to take yet another decade, until 1940, for all the lands to be acquired.

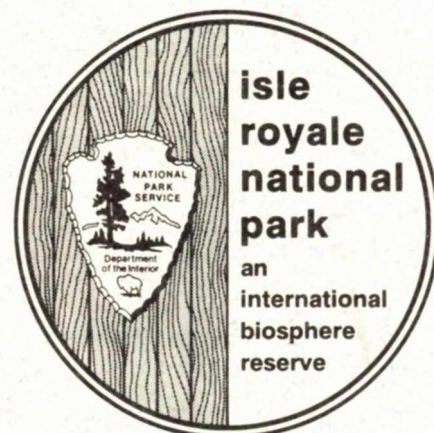
For your curiosity here is Stoll's first Isle Royale editorial. It appeared in the Detroit News, Saturday, December 3, 1921.

Isle Royale, located 65 miles from the mainland of the Upper Peninsula, in Lake Superior, is today practically the only bit of unspoiled nature east of the Mississippi River. This island is part of Keweenaw County and it is 45 miles long, nine miles wide, and has an area of 229 square miles. The heavily-timbered shore line, hills and valleys of Isle Royale have never been molested by the lumberman's ax. The only real herd of moose that Michigan can boast is here. All the caribou that our state possesses are on this island. The Virginia white-tail deer planted there several years ago by the Conservation Department have increased wonderfully. Small game animals and birds abound and under constant patrol of a state trapper of predatory animals conservationists could conceive of no greater wonderland of wild life than Isle Royale.

There are few inhabitants on Isle Royale. Those who remain all year around engage principally in fishing. It is a wonderful summer resort and to its shores each year come tourists and vacationers from every state in America.

The State of Michigan is now facing an opportunity to preserve this bit of Nature's wonderland for its children. The ax of the lumberman will soon be ringing on Isle Royale. Like other areas of our state, the lumberman will leave this bit of natural beauty a barren and desolate island, devoid of timber growth and wild life. Timber cruising has already taken place. This is a forerunner of the ring of the two-bitted ax. Isle Royale is owned by several individuals and everyone, without a doubt, would be willing that the state should become the owner. No greater heritage could the officials of the Conservation Commission leave posterity than Isle Royale in its primitive state. The owners of the island doubtless would sell. It is up to the state legislature at its next session of our present Conservation Commission to act.

Preserve Isle Royale. In years to come, we shall thank the fates for the foresight of those who planned the acquisition of this property for all the people.



Loon Research

The loon is a familiar summer bird at Isle Royale, and many successfully nest here. They are not so readily seen elsewhere. A long term study, lead by David Evers, executive director of the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory is investigating the population dynamics of the common loon in this Lake Superior region. Much of the work is based on recent breakthroughs in the capture of adults, some of which was done at Isle Royale by Dave and the park staff.

Field work with this project began three years ago, and already new and fascinating aspects of the loon's natural history are being discovered. For example, loon pairs are usually site faithful to the nesting lakes, but not always. Additionally, it is now known that Michigan loons do visit the Florida coast in January. Answers to the question of how best we can ensure the loon's survival can be answered through project's like this one.

The project is divided into five major components: Field Marking, Population Monitoring, Natural

History, Behavioral Observations, and Environmental Contaminants. Each examines an important part of loon conservation, yet are most powerful when pieced together.

Field Marking: This includes the vocal-tagging (sound recording) of males and the color-marking of adults and juveniles. This is the second year of vocal-tagging at the Seney National Wildlife Refuge (8 males) and at Isle Royale National Park (6 males). This year marks the first time that marked male loons have been vocal-tagged in successive years and will put to test whether or not male yodels are unique.

A total of 142 loons were banded in 1991, including 80 adults. This is done by approaching loons on the water at night and quickly dropping a handheld net over them. They are marked on the leg and wing and released. Seven study sites were used for capture and color-marking, including (followed by number of banded loons):

Isle Royale National Park
(17 total, 8 adults, 9 young)
Ottawa National Forest
(28 total, 17 adults, 11 young)
Hiawatha National Forest
(11 total, 7 adults, 4 young)
Seney National Wildlife Refuge
(5 total, 3 adults, 2 young)
Lake Superior State Forest
(7 total, 4 adults, 3 young)
Northern Lower Peninsula
(10 total, 6 adults, 4 young)
Northern Wisconsin
(64 total, 35 adults, 29 young)

This is a major expansion over the past efforts, since between 1987 and 1990 the total number of loons banded was 32. With captured loons, Dave determined sex of juveniles by chromosome analysis, determined the mesh size of commercial trap nets which would allow adult loons to pass, and collected bacteria cultures from trachea and cloaca.

Population Monitoring: The Great Lakes loon population is monitored during spring and fall migration, and during nesting. The spring and fall migration is monitored at Whitefish Point from April 15 to June 7 and August 15 to November 15. A total of 4,814 common loons

were counted using a standard method. This is a 40% decline from our average counts in the past. Fall counts are not yet complete, although they appear similar to last year's: approximately 2,000 individuals.

Natural History: Field marking and surveys allow us to investigate previously unattainable information on the common loon's natural history. For example, at the Seney National Wildlife Refuge, Dave found interesting pair relationships. One pair which produced two young after three nesting attempts in 1990 were both leg banded that year. In 1991, the females returned on April 22, yet the male could not be found. Soon, the female paired with an unmarked male. The missing male was assumed to be gone (due to a demonstrated site faithfulness) but on May 5 he was found on an adjacent pool, healthy but not paired. The new pair courted but did not nest. Therefore, an entire nesting season was foregone because the established pair broke up.

Behavioral Observations: Over 200 hours of observations at the Seney National Wildlife Refuge were accumulated between May 15 and August 7. Behaviors were divided into eight categories and were analyzed to locate statistical differences in the nesting ecology of loon pairs. To date, males and females appear to equally share incubation and chick rearing duties.

Environmental Contaminants: A blood and feather sample was taken from each loon to investigate their contaminants. The Diagnostic Lab at Michigan State University is investigating heavy metals such as mercury, total PCBs, and organochlorines like dieldrin. One concern for the loons in the Great Lakes Region is the adult's high levels of mercury. They probably accumulate this mercury through the food chain while on their nesting grounds. By recapturing adults each year the degree of these mercury loads can be determined.

If you have further questions or comments contact David Evers, Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, HC 48 Box 115, Paradise, MI 49768.

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	\$10.00
Family Membership	\$15.00
*Supporting Membership	\$35.00
*Life Membership	\$250.00
**Corporate Sponsor	\$1,000.00
**Corporate Patron	\$5,000.00

(Life memberships may be paid for in two annual installments of \$125.00 each)

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

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

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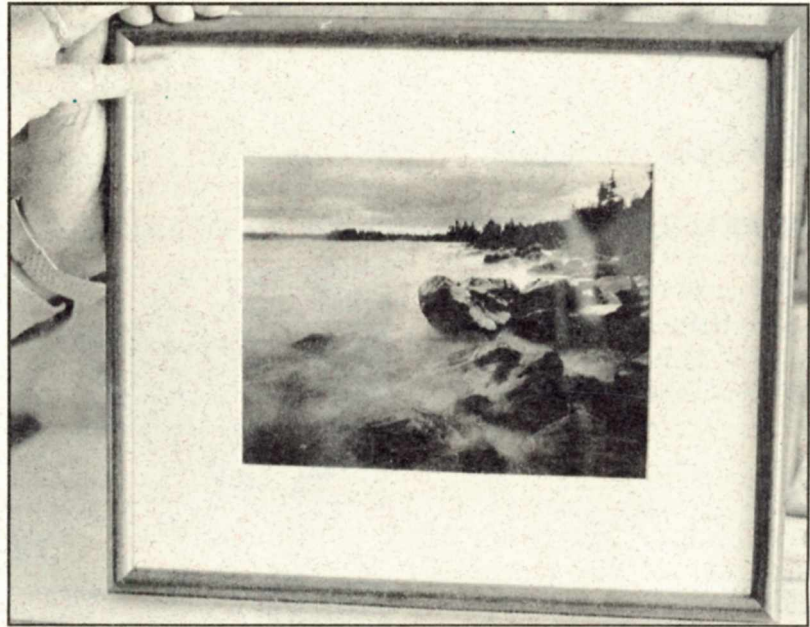
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Gayle Pekkala, Business Manager and Editor
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Artist-in-Residence Program

The Artist-in-Residence Program will be continued in 1992. A minimum of four artists will be selected for this year's program. The program will run from mid-June to early September.

The residence will move from the Kemmer cabin to the Dassler cabin and the IRNHA will pay for a new canoe with Aid to Park donations.

Applications for the 1992 will be taken up to March 1, 1992. If anyone is interested in applying please contact Gayle Pekkala, Program Coordinator, Isle Royale National Park, Houghton, MI 49931, telephone (906) 482-0986.



Blake Point— one of 3 framed photographs donated by Jeff Korte — Artist-in-Residence 1991.

Chairman's Corner

We had a productive Fall meeting with all the IRNHA board members in attendance. While two of the new members had to drive considerable distances to attend, their presences was appreciated and their input helpful.

Superintendent Bill Fink also was at the meeting and explained his vision of an expanded Artist-in-Residence Program involving internationally acclaimed artists as well as virtual unknowns. The Park Service will move the location of the program this year from the Kemmer cabin to the Dassler cabin near Scoville Point. The cabin is in better condition, and there will be better access to the Rock Harbor area by walking overland. The Park Service will be purchasing a canoe this spring to be used by visiting artists. Funds provided by the IRNHA to support the interpretive mission of the Park have been increased this year and will be partially used in the Artist-in-Residence Program.

Bob Linn, Chair of the Publications Committee, outlined the different projects currently under way. The children's **Discover Isle Royale National Park** book and the America shipwreck map were introduced in November. The **Dorothy Simonson Diary** will be available in the next few months and **Borealis**, the first in a series of publications of Isle Royale stories, will be available by early spring. Dr. Janice Glime's book on the mosses and lichens of Isle Royale is scheduled for late 1992. There will also be new sweatshirt, T-shirt and poster designs available next spring. Work on the update of several books will continue next year.

The board also considered the proposed IRNHA budget for fiscal year 1992 and reviewed the request by the Park

for the 1992 donation to support interpretive programs. Typically the donation to the Park is about 10% of our gross sales.

We are trying to increase our membership by mailing our publications brochure to a greater number of people during the next year, including each of Michigan's Welcome Centers. If you have not seen our most recent brochure be sure to let us know and we will gladly send you one.

If you would like to see yourself in print, and have a short recollection or story about your time at Isle Royale, we would be interested in reading it and will consider it for inclusion in the **Wolf's Eye**.

Chris Gale

Membership News

Membership renewal bills have been sent out for 1992. We are hoping you will continue to support the work of the association.

Special Welcome To: New Life Members

Susan Bertolino, Houghton, MI - NPS Employee
Bob Krumenaker and Susan Edwards,
Santa Fe, NM - NPS Employees

New Book Published

The Isle Royale Natural History Association has just released its newest book, **Discover Isle Royale: An Island of Diversity**, by Fran Vashon. Fran is a writer with The Creative Company which specializes in children's activity books.

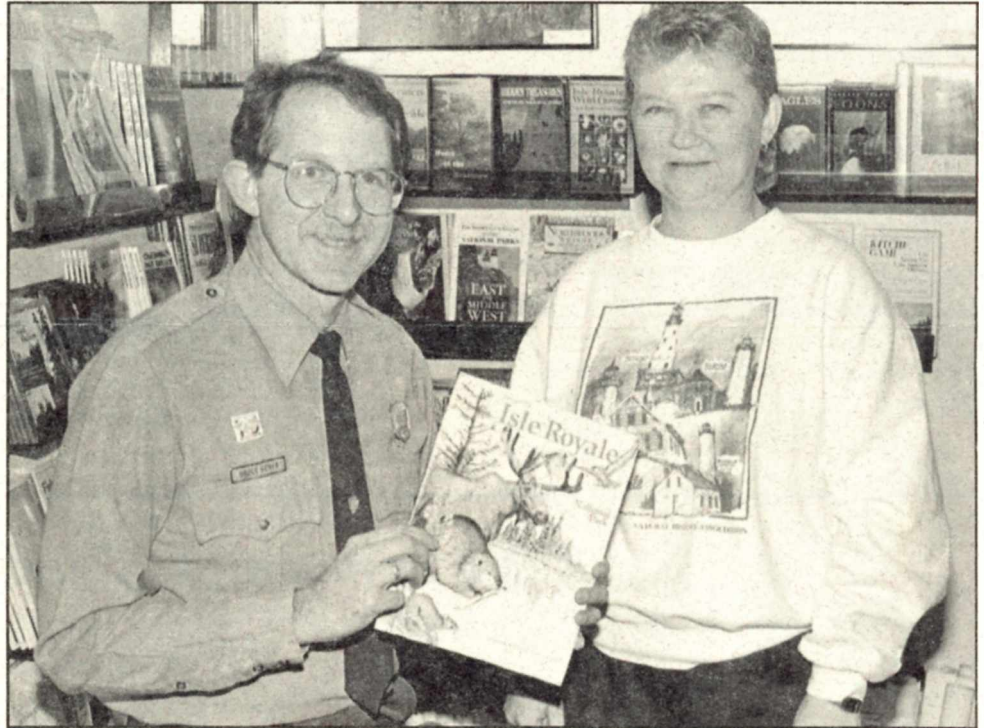
The idea for the book came when Bruce Weber and I were at the Biannual Conference for the Cooperating Associations in Hawaii in 1990. There we met Dick Ruehrwein, owner of The Creative Company and saw the type of book he produces. Our association had long long aspired to do a children's book. In March 1991, Fran came up to Houghton to do research for the book and left overwhelmed with information on Isle Royale. After several editings, the 33 page children's activity book was completed. The book includes games, puzzles, and readings about the Island.

The well-illustrated book points out that Isle Royale is a unique wilderness island and contains information on the flora, fauna, and history of the Island

and the park. The book is written specifically for kids and will help them learn about Isle Royale's wildlife and well as why humans have visited the Island since prehistoric time.

The book sells for \$4.95 and is available at the Visitor Center in Houghton or through mail order in the 1992 publications brochure.

Gayle Pekkala



Association Coordinator Bruce Weber and Business Manager Gayle Pekkala with new "Discover" book. Photo by Jeff Brain

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Isle Royale Natural History Association
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Houghton, Michigan 49931

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