

WOLF'S EYE



Isle Royale Natural History Association

Spring 1993

Malone Bay Campground Stabilization

The Malone Bay Campground (20IR174) was identified as a significant archeological site by archaeologists from the Midwest Archeological Center (MWAC) in the summer of 1990, when the site was initially discovered and tested. The site contains cultural deposits from the Initial Woodland Laurel Tradition (ca. 100 B.C.-A.D. 600) overlaid by later Late Woodland Blackduck (ca. A.D. 600-1100) deposits and is the only known stratified site on the Island. Preservation of clay and stone artifacts, bone, charcoal, and birchbark is excellent.

It was noted at the time of discovery that an unknown amount of cultural midden (occupational debris including old campfires, animal and fish bone, broken artifacts) was eroding as a result of wave action from Lake Superior. Another impact to the site comes from the use of several informal paths from the campground to the beach by visitors. In summer 1991, a decision was reached to stabilize the site to protect it from further erosion. The implementation of this strategy took place in June 1992 using Isle Royale maintenance personnel and labor from the Student Conservation Association, Inc. (SCA).

The operation consisted of the excavation of a 21 meter-long toe-trench across the upper edge of the site, removal of woody vegetation that may puncture the filter fabric, and placement of gravel and rock fill over the fabric to replicate the original surface and bank contours. All excavation was conducted by the SCA team under the supervision of MWAC archaeologists. The toe-trench was divided into one meter by 15 centimeter increments and excavated in ten centimeter levels. All fill was screened. The filter fabric was placed in the trench and 12 inch spikes with washers were installed in two to three meter intervals to anchor the fabric. The toe-trench was then filled with rock to further anchor the fabric, which was then covered with soil to encourage revegetation.

Part of the plan for site preservation is the construction of formal access from the campground to the beach. Redundant trails will be closed to discourage their continued use. Two access routes on either side of the site will be maintained for visitor use. Where these trails cross the site, they erode and expose artifacts from the midden deposits. Two excavation units were placed along this portion of each trail to recover artifacts which eventually would be exposed by trail use. All excavation and data recovery was accomplished by the SCA team who found several fragments of Blackduck pottery and an unusual

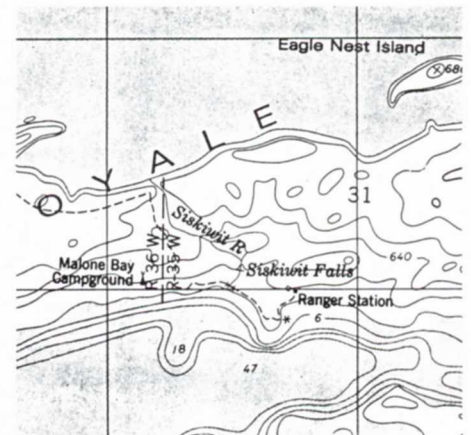
piece of Mackinac ware ceramics in the westernmost trail area.

I was asked, while on the Island, when I planned to come back and excavate the site we had just covered up: I hope to be very old and buried myself before this site sees its next archaeologist. Malone Bay is one of several sites that has been stabilized by the NPS with the intention of preserving them for as long as is feasible, within the limitations of the material used in the stabilization and fluctuations of Lake Superior.

I would like to express my appreciation to the park staff and the SCA crew and their leader, Chris Letts for their help and enthusiasm on the Malone Bay project. No one was quite sure what to expect of this first site stabilization project on the Island, however through the cooperation of various Park divisions and individuals the project was brought to as successful conclusion.

Caven Clark

Midwest Archeological Center,
Lincoln, NE



Logistics, Logistics, Logistics

The detailed planning started in early February 1992, with numerous phone calls to Caven Clark. The Malone Bay project was to be the most unusual, and most challenging of the summer.

Before it was all over, nearly \$15,000 of labor and materials plus untold volunteer hours would go into the Malone Bay archeological site stabilization and campground rehabilitation.

This project, over a six week period in June and July, brought together the efforts of Caven Clark and his assistant from Midwest Archeological Center, the four person east trail crew, the barge crew, and Chris Letts and his SCA

crew. Others within the Maintenance Division supported the operation in various ways.

The campground rehab involved rerouting trails, closing redundant trails, building a footbridge, and building tent pads for two group campsites. Because of the extremely thin, rocky soil at Malone Bay, gravel fill had to be brought in for the tent pads.

The archeological site stabilization project protected a significant prehistoric occupation site along 100 feet of shoreline. After trimming the embankment to a smoother contour (and salvaging artifacts), it was covered with a filter fabric and then one to two feet of rock and soil. The combined project was particularly tough logistically since the work was 0.3 miles over a hiking trail from the dock. The gradually sloping lake-shore at the site would not allow for landing by the LCM (the Charlie Mott) or permit the barge to get close enough for the crane to reach the beach. A temporary work barge, dubbed the "Muskrat" was constructed from two floating dock sections to ferry rock and gravel from the barge Beaver to the shore. The crew sped up the process by using the Muskrat as an unloading platform that could reach the shore via a series of ramps. Through this arrangement the material was wheelbarrowed from the Muskrat to the shore and then to the work sites. All told, approximately 165 tons of rock, gravel, and soil were moved by the barge, crane, wheelbarrow and the sweat of many.

Doug Boose

*Maintenance Worker Foreman,
Isle Royale National Park*

An SCA Outlook of Malone Bay

They came from Ohio, Illinois, Minnesota, California, and Florida to be part of the 1992 SCA high school work group on Isle Royale. None had visited the Island before, none knew each other or me. The six volunteers did know that they were part of a 35 year old tradition of service to the environment. In 1992 some 400 of their SCA peers engaged in conservation projects across the country.

1992 marked my tenth summer as a SCA supervisor, with eight of those years on the Island. Now my introductory letter to the crew runs seven pages of advice, admonishments, and exhortations about what to bring and what to leave at home. The letter is backed up by a stack of additional material sent by the good folks at the Houghton office of the Park. Everything you need to know is covered.

But just when you think you have it all down, the Island always comes up with a surprise, and 1992 was no exception. The good news was the absence of biting insects. Adjusting to life with swarms of mosquitoes and black flies can be difficult for newcomers to the Island. We were all well supplied with repellents of every make and flavor, but hardly ever had to use the stuff. The reason the insect population never got going was also the second surprise: it was cold last summer! There was frost on the first day of summer, temperatures in the 20's, ice on the decks and docks, even frost in July. The crew would have been very glad to trade all the bug dope for woolly hats, gloves, and socks.

Another surprise was our en-

ISLE ROYALE

NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

800 E. Lakeshore Dr., Houghton, MI 49931

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listment into the Malone Bay navy. Much of our part of the project had to do with bringing ashore and carefully placing some 165 tons of gravel fill and rock. Most of the fill was used to protect the archeological site, and the rest to surface the new tent pads in the campground. Getting the stuff into place involved the navy; a variety of boats, barges, floats, and gang-planks; a fleet of wheelbarrows and amphibious beachheads every morning the weather allowed us to work.

The crew shivered, but complained little. We worked on our hands and knees. We troweled, shoveled, and raked. We pushed heavily loaded wheelbarrows. Fleet Allison estimated one day that each of us had pushed the wheelbarrows over seven miles of rocky, rooty, upsy-downsy terrain.

We took turns planning and cooking meals under the sky on a two burner propane stove. We ate some very peculiar concoctions, unique even in the world of wilderness food. My personal favorite was Biffy Surprise, but Buzz Brown's corn flapjacks had quite a following.

Not surprisingly, long days of brushing out trails, rolling rocks around, and wheeling gravel tended to make us grimy. We scrubbed and rinsed our clothes by hand in buckets of chilly lake water and prayerfully hoped for a good drying day. Then, out of a distaste for sticking to their sleeping bags or because of peer pressure, the SCAs gave themselves the infamous bucket baths. For this, a pail of lake water was left sitting in the sun long enough to heat it up to oh, say, 50 degrees. Sometimes a dunk in the whirlpool in the Big Siskiwit River was ventured.

Like the 15 crews before, the

SCAs fell in love with the Island in many ways. The crew log is packed with enthusiasm for the succulence of lake trout and wild strawberries, the beauty of sunsets and wildflowers, the tang of smoke from a birchwood campfire or spruce essence on a hot, still day.

The kindness of the park staff touched us from the beginning to the end of our stay. Tug Captain Roger taught us songs and gave us accordion concerts. We traded tales and banter with the trail crew, and learned working skills and a lot of Yooper talk. Doug Boose became a Bunyanesque figure when he made a mercy run with fresh food and MAIL on the eve of the 4th of July weekend. Archaeologists Caven and Casey painstakingly explained the project plan and techniques for basic archeology to us and somehow kept the magic in it.

Excerpts from the logbook convey some of the responses to our work: "We're hiding the site from robbers and the Lake.... we found copper flakes, flint, pot shards..... things never held in human hands for hundreds of years..... found a great piece of pottery today, with rim and lots of decorations--Blackduck!..... Can imagine groups of hunters making weapons, families camped along the shore--Wow!"

1992 was a fine year for SCAs on the Island. So many people reached out to welcome us, to help, teach, and share, that the success of the program was no surprise. These many friends helped the crew learn, earlier than in most years, to enjoy the wilderness and savor the moments, and to greet each day with anticipation.

We finished the summer with a fine canoe trip through the inter-

ior lakes. The final week blurred, filled to overflowing with travel and new experiences. The traditional last day was spent at the Rock Harbor Lighthouse, Edisen Fishery, and visiting the Petersons at "Wolf Camp." It was topped off by a last night feast, a gift from Doug and Lynda Boose, and then the ride back on the Ranger--veterans now, survivors, old Island hands. The rocky profile faded astern, the dock at Houghton appeared, and our triumph and mourning mingled. With hugs and handshakes, pledges and promises, the crew became seven individuals with seven different directions. Then there I was again, fumbling through the gears in my old truck, trying to remember traffic rules, trying to drive a straight line up that hill when all of a sudden I couldn't seem to see through the windshield very well.....Thank you Isle Royale.

Chris Letts, SCA Supervisor

Isle Royale Wolf/Moose Monitoring, Winter 1993

The 35th annual Winter Study program at Isle Royale was completed in early March. This research and monitoring effort, based out of the Windigo area, is a seven week program to census the wolf and moose population on the Island. Early surveys confirmed a slight rise in the wolf population to 13 individuals (up from the 12 of the past two winters), but one of the lone wolves was apparently killed by the West Pack in early February, when it was encountered within the West Pack terri-

tory. The dead wolf came from a 1989 litter at the Island's east end (450 Pack).

The remaining 12 wolves were partitioned into three packs plus one loner. The 450 Pack increased to seven individuals with the addition of two pups born in 1992, while the West Pack and 550 Pack (in the middle of the Island) each remained at two individuals. Because of this continued trend of low reproduction, the disappearance of the wolf from Isle Royale remains a strong possibility in the future.

The moose population has continued to rise, reaching the highest level since systematic counts began in 1960. The population is now estimated to be at 1880 animals.

Other research projects in this year's Winter Study included an ongoing investigation into the balsam fir forest decline on the Island, and the coring of two west-end lakes to retrieve sediments from the lake bottoms. These sediment cores contain the pollen of

vegetation which grew on the Island during the warmer climates of several thousand years ago. Knowing what grew on the Island then will help scientists predict what vegetation will inhabit the Island should global temperatures rise as predicted under current theories of global climate change.

*Jack Oelfke,
Natural Resource Specialist,
Isle Royale National Park*

Our Condolences

We were saddened to hear of the death of long time member and friend of Isle Royale, Robert Noetzel of Houghton, MI. Bob was a regular summer visitor to the Island and he will be missed by his friends at Isle Royale.

Updates

The Board has approved a motion to publish Dr. Janice Glime's manuscript on the mosses and liv-

erworts of Isle Royale and the Upper Peninsula. This will be approximately a 157 page guide book with 127 color photos. The book is due out in June 1993. A revised edition of the *Flora of Isle Royale* is also due out this spring. The Board also approved Tom Gale's proposal for a pictorial history book of Isle Royale. This book will be published the summer of 1994.

The 1993 publications brochure will be printed shortly. You will receive a copy in the mail. Our new sales number is **1-800-678-6925**. Orders can be placed during the day or left on the answering machine. After the tone, please leave your order along with your credit card number and expiration date.

Rolf Peterson will be the speaker at the **Spring Meeting** of the IRNHA. The gathering is set for Tuesday **May 11, 1993** at 7:00 P.M. at the Franklin Square Inn in Houghton.

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