

WOLF'S EYE



Isle Royale Natural History Association

Winter 1994

ZOOM IS DOOM: UNDERWATER VIDEO AT ISLE ROYALE

"Zoom is doom" and "Plan your shoot, shoot your plan" are new rules for the Isle Royale Dive Team, but rules they learned well during a seminar on underwater video held recently at Isle Royale National Park. The team is now better prepared to use new underwater video equipment to continue the park's efforts in documenting and monitoring the rich underwater cultural resources found at Isle Royale.



Instruction for the seminar came fittingly from Eric Smith, Director of Production and AV Services with TV-13 at Northern Michigan University in Marquette, Michigan and R. Bruce and Suzanne Longman of Longman Associates. Smith and the Longmans first got involved with Isle Royale's underwater resources in 1978 when they worked on an NMU sponsored team documenting the shipwrecks found around the island in Lake Superior's treacherous waters. Teaching an underwater video seminar of the park's dive team was a natural continuation of their interest in and commitment to the preservation of Isle

Royale's shipwrecks.

The boundary extends four and one half miles off shore of the wilderness archipelago of Isle Royale. Within these waters lie ten major shipwrecks which represent a wide spectrum of Lake Superior maritime history and provide some of the best diving in the Midwest. Among these wrecks are the Cumberland, a wooden sidewheeler which sank in 1877; the Emperor, a 525 foot ore carrier, which went down in 1947 with the loss of 12 lives; and the America, which carried supplies for the Island residents, and sank in 1928. Approximately 500 divers visit Isle Royale each year. Some come with their own boats and compressors. Others travel with a dive charter. They average six diver per trip. Most are serious, experienced divers, for the cold water and depths of the wrecks make for challenging scuba diving conditions. All appreciate the quality diving experience to be found here, where the NPS and Lake Superior's cold, fresh water work to keep these shipwrecks well preserved.

Time, ice, and the attention of thousands of divers over the years do take

a toll on these historic shipwrecks which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The park has been seeking a more objective method of monitoring shipwreck degradation than the anecdotal reports of visiting divers and dive team members. Although a 35mm slide file collection on the wrecks is maintained, that format is too limited and time consuming to do justice to the extensive resource base. Video provides more images per time spent underwater. In conditions of poor visibility current technology can actually record greater detail more clearly than the human eye can see. Video is easily archived and retrieved for research.

Now the Isle Royale Dive Team is ready to advance this work in documentation and monitoring. They also hope to make video available for interpretive purposes, bringing the wonders of Isle Royale's shipwrecks to the non-diving visitor. In this way resource protection and the public's enjoyment can both be served by the team's new equipment and training.

*Elen Maurer
Park Ranger*



ISLE ROYALE'S CHIEF RANGER CROLL RETIRES

Stuart L. Croll retired after serving 17 years as Chief Park Ranger of Isle Royale National Park and devoting 33 years of distinguished service to the U.S. Government. Close friends, colleagues, and well wishers gathered Saturday, January 8, 1994, at the Northern Lights Restaurant in Houghton to celebrate this special occasion with Stu and his wife Ellen. During the ceremony Stu was presented a Superior Service Award in recognition of his significant contributions to the mission of the National Park Service.

Stu is a graduate of the University of Virginia and served in the United States Navy from 1960 to 1965. He began his career with the Department of the Interior, National Park Service in 1966, first attending the National Park Service Albright Training Center in Grand Canyon

National Park, Arizona, and then was assigned as a park ranger to Olympic National Park in the state of Washington. In 1971, he returned to the Albright Training Center to serve as a park ranger course instructor. While at Albright his influence guided the development and shaped the character of many park rangers now in management positions throughout the National Park Service.

In 1977 Stu became the Chief Park Ranger for Isle Royale National Park where he served with distinction for 17 years. He is particularly noted for his development of a highly skilled dive team and his influence upon diving activities throughout the National Park Service. He emerged as a strong advocate of wilderness values and helped prevent degradation of wilderness areas across the national park system. Because of these and other significant acts and accomplishments, Stu was presented a Superior Service Award by National Park Service Deputy Regional Director William Schenk of the Midwest Region.

Isle Royale's Superintendent Douglas Barnard said, "Stu's contributions will be greatly missed. He has become a skilled and valued park manager. Above all, he is recognized as a supervisor and mentor, who has tirelessly worked to better the National Park Service through his unselfish efforts in recruitment and as a builder of quality employees."

Stu and Ellen plan will continue to reside in Hancock, Michigan and enjoy retirement through travel and continued support of the national park system. Ellen will remain the Membership and Mail Order Manager for the IRNHA.

Terry Lindsay
Chief Naturalist

Island Fires

The vast boreal and northern hardwood forests of Isle Royale are known and loved by many, and they have been an object of appreciation for the casual visitor, long-term resident, and curious scientist for decades. Many physical, biological, and human forces have long been at work in shaping these forests, such as climate, soil, and winds, but arguably the most spectacular player in this story is that of fire.

There is ample evidence of a long history of fire on the Island, from prehistoric charcoal remains in lake-bottom sediments, in accounts of 19th century miner's activities of torching forests to clear the land to ease the search for copper, and in research publications and National Park Service (NPS) records of human and lightning-caused fires of this century. The most prominent fire on record for Isle Royale, the 1936 fire, burned some 26,000 acres, or about 19% of the Island, in the Siskiwit Lake and Feldtmann Swamp areas. All in all, we have considerable evidence of the profound ecological influence of fire on the Island.

NPS management of fire on the Island mirrors the philosophies and attitudes toward fire which have prevailed throughout the rest of the country. For much of this century, fire was considered a destructive, unwanted force on the landscape which had to be controlled at all costs. At Isle Royale National Park, attempts were made to suppress all fires, regardless of origin. By the mid-1970's, as the positive benefits of fire (and the negative impacts from suppressing all fires) were becoming more clear, the Park Service moved toward a policy of allowing natural (lightning-caused) fires to burn under certain conditions. Fires at McGinty Cove (1975) and Card Point (1976) were natural fires which were allowed to burn under the natural fire policy.

Then came the great Yellowstone fires of 1988. Those fires burned

ISLE ROYALE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION 800 E. Lakeshore Dr., 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:

Individual Membership	\$10.00
Family Membership	\$15.00
*Supporting Membership.....	\$35.00
*Life Membership.....	\$250.00
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*Includes a gift copy of the *Norther Lightds* poster or a Canvas Tote Bag.

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

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Gayle Pekkala, Executive Director & Editor
Ellen Croll, Membership & Mail Order Manager

**The Annual Summer Meeting
will be held on July 31st,
at Rock Harbor.
Make plans to attend.**

approximately 45% of the park, with the severity of the burn varying across the landscape. Although now generally accepted as a tremendous ecological event, the political fallout from these fires was intense; within months after the fires a major review of the public lands fire policy was mandated. The review team concluded the basic premise of the natural fire policy was sound – fire needs to play its crucial role on the landscape – but recommended several ways to fine tune the policy to better coordinate activities and anticipate the ability to manage a fire event. Interestingly enough, in August of 1988 Isle Royale experienced its largest fire since 1948, the 80-acre Stanley Ridge burn, a lightning-caused fire which was allowed to burn six weeks until rainfall doused it.

So what were the impacts of the Yellowstone events on Isle Royale? The natural fire program was shut down (as with all other NPS units), until a revised Fire Management Plan could be written and approved. The new plan, approved in 1992, addressed the recommendations of the fire policy review team. The Park Service now allows natural fires to burn under certain conditions (suitable weather, adequate personnel to assist if necessary, etc.). We make a critical distinction between human-caused fires – which we will suppress through a variety of strategies – and lightning-caused fires – which we can allow to burn. All fires will be monitored. Under no circumstances will we merely allow them to burn without following their progression and protecting facilities and resources we determine are at risk.

So why should we take the risks of allowing fires to burn? What is the significance of fire on the Isle Royale landscape? The 1936 fire perhaps illustrates how influential fire can be on the plant and animal life of Isle Royale. The 1936 burn, believed to have grown from a mix of human- and lightning-caused fires

began the plant successional process which led to a forest of white birch and aspen, favored browse species of the moose. The small moose herd of the late 1930's, recovering from the dramatic population crash of the late 1920's and early 1930's, now had a sizable area of preferred habitat. In fact estimates indicate that between 1936 and 1945 the moose population had tripled to 600 animals. By 1950, however, as the aspen and birch trees outgrew the reach of moose, the area provided little food for them, and since then has remained the lowest moose density area on the Island.

Other species on Isle Royale depend on the early successional forests that fires help create. Beaver and snowshoe hare populations are at a low population cycle on the Island now, due in part to the lack of fire-created preferred habitat. Much of the white birch forest on the Island is dying (for a variety of inter-related reasons) and being replaced by balsam fir and white spruce. Fire is a major process which would regenerate the birch forest. Jack pine cones require heat from fires to open up so seeds may disperse.

And so as each summer's thunderstorm rolls through, many of us on the Island turn our eyes toward the clouds and watch for those flashes of lightning. In almost every case, any fire which may start will quickly be doused by rain or burn only a minor area around the individual tree. At some point, however, the right conditions will come together, and the type of fire which can really create change on the landscape – as has happened for thousands of years – will again return to the Island. The minor inconvenience such an event would cause, such as smoke in the air or closure of a trail, will be overshadowed by the significance of the fire to health of the Island ecosystem. Let's hope we can all appreciate it when the time will come, as it likely will.

*Jack Oelfke
Natural Resource Specialist*

Membership News

The bills were sent out in January. The response has been terrific. We appreciate your continued support. We hope to hear from all of you very soon. We also have some handsome shirts for sale--some are at very special prices. Check your catalog for details.

Welcome to New Life Member Sheila Albrecht of Amherst, WI and a very special thank you to her for her donation in loving memory of her husband, Stephen Albrecht, and the wonderful times he had on the island with his family as a Scoutmaster with his troop, 296 Amherst, Wisconsin. Stephen died last August.

Other New Life Members are: Marjorie McPherron, Laguna Hills, CA
Dick Conte, MD, Carson City, NV
Pam Dyke, Oryden, MI
Marilyn Mitchell, Cheboygan, MI
Kenneth Matzner & Jaqueline Worden, Charleston, IL

We wish to thank all our members for the support they have given us through the years.

The Sleeping Giant

I watched him at sunset
and said, "You sleep well now."
over and over like waves
upon the shore

And though Mother Superior
rocked the horizon about him
the Giant still rested firmly.

And who could not sleep for
thousands of years with stars
above and Mother's ceaseless
lullaby.

The Sun descended to the right
of His head leaving an afterglow
like embers of the Giant's campfire.

A thin nimbus swirled dusk's spectrum
above his head like dream spirits
guiding the Giant deeper into sleep

"You sleep well now."

*Matt Welter
SCA 1990-91*

Rock Harbor Renovations

Work is in progress for renovating the Rock Harbor Visitor Center. Terry Lindsay, the Chief Naturalist at Isle Royale will be seeking a grant from the National Park Foundation for funding.

The renovations include development of a small series of professionally designed and constructed museum exhibits for the interpretation of wilderness and wildlife protection. The information desk will be redesigned along with a renovation of the IRNHA display area.

A cost share grant proposal will increase the chances of funding approval from the National Park Foundation. The IRNHA has started a fund with more than \$1,000 to help with these renovations. But that is only a small proportion of what is needed. If you would like to help in funding this worthwhile project, please send your tax deductible donation to IRNHA/Rock Harbor Fund, 800 E. Lakeshore Drive, Houghton, MI 49931. Any and all help will be greatly appreciated.

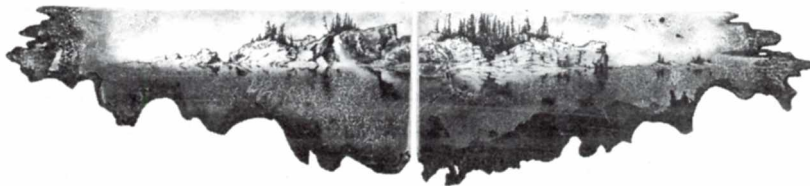


Image size 39.5" x 8.5"

Paper size 44" x 15

From the Depths of Minong

The IRNHA is proud to offer its members a limited edition of 100 signed and numbered etching by 1992 Artist-in-Residence Ladislav Hanka.

With a method called drypoint, Hanka engraved and etched metal plates using a diamond tipped stylus, sculpting them to form a raised burr. This embossment, producing lines and tones of exquisite quality, breaks down quickly and is responsible for the limited size of the edition. The image is imprinted into Somerset Satin papers of pH neutral and 100% rag content. All materials used are of archival quality and meet museum standards.

Artists have had a long standing influence on the formation, expansion, and direction of this country's national parks. They translate the national park's purpose as places to preserve and enjoy into images that give others an understanding of places they may never visit. Your purchase of *From the Depths of Minong* will bring you aesthetic pleasure and help support the Artist-in-Residence program.

The price of the print is \$260.00 which includes UPS shipping. Michigan residents, please add \$10.00 sales tax.

Orders may be sent to the office at 800 E. Lakeshore Drive, Houghton, MI 49931 or by calling 1-800-678-6925. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover.

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