

Wolf's Eye



ISLE ROYALE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

2000 No. 3



Isle Royale Artists-in-Residence

Sixteen of our past artists in residence gathered on Isle Royale for this summer's IRNHA annual meeting and millenium celebration. Pictured at Scoville Point: Back, left to right: Ladislav Hanka, Joyce Koskenmaki, Keith Taylor, Robert Root and Amy Arntson. Front, left to right: Jennifer Williams, Deborah Eddy, Shelia Larkin and Marilyn Brandenburger.

All Expenses Paid, but No Vacation

Smitty Parratt, Isle Royale Branch Chief of Interpretation, recently returned from fighting wildfires in Montana, and wrote this account of his adventures.

It is a moment that will be imprinted on my mind forever. I was standing near the fireline we'd dug out of the cliff side slope the day before, a fireline three feet wide that dropped over 800 feet over cliffs and through mountain forest terrain of Montana. Water at high pressure was streaming out of the nozzle I trained on nearby vegetation to soak it down so that the backfire soon to be lit would not cross our line, and would help imprison the 17,000 acre Ryan Gulch fire. Firefighters from our

20-person crew were spread up and down the steep slope, so steep that it was difficult to stand. The sight of the back fire above us exploding into tree tops working its way down toward us was exhilarating.

Suddenly what we all dreaded happened. Firefighters above me were screaming at the top of their lungs, "Rock, rock, rock_" A two-ton boulder leapt over the thirty foot cliff above me, followed by a score of 10 to 50 pound rocks, which rocketed at over 80 miles per hour right down our fireline where moments before I had seen half of our fire crew working; the ground shook with the impact. Then an eight-foot long two-foot diameter section of tree in full flame somersaulted over the cliff and followed the boulder and rocks. Moments later, as the dust and smoke cleared, I felt certain that one or more of our crew must have per-

ished. Fortunately this was not the case. One had leapt out of the boulder's path, but strained some muscles and ligaments. Another ducked behind a small stump, and the boulder missed him by a couple of inches as it flew over his head. A third stood motionless, with nowhere to go, and the boulder missed him by four feet. That night we had to discuss this close call in depth to work through it.

We were called "Minnesota-8," and we came from Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin from all walks of life. We included a cement truck driver, construction worker, Department of Natural Resources employees, and National Park Service employees from St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, and Isle Royale National Park.

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MEMORIES OF ISLE ROYALE

At this summer's annual membership meeting in Rock Harbor, we were treated to a wonderful afternoon of Isle Royale reminiscences from many of our long time members, among them Laurie, John, and Judd Snell; Bob Janke; Grant Merritt, Jack and Sally Orsborne; and Wes Farmer. Other IRNHA members who were not able to attend the meeting sent their recollections of Isle Royale by mail. We share excerpts from two of those letters with you in the issue and will include more in issues to come.

From Bob Hakala: (Bob and his wife, Jean, live in Juneau, Alaska. After 12 years in the NPS, he transferred to the Forest Service in Alaska in 1962 and worked with them until his retirement in 1977. They maintain a cabin retreat in Gogebic County, MI, and return to Michigan twice each year.)

From our wilderness cabin some thirty miles from Alaska's capital city, Juneau, Alaska, Jean and I extend greetings to all who are so fortunate as to be in attendance at the Isle Royale Millennium Celebrations. The invitation to contribute recall of our life and work at the park results in a flood of memory. First and foremost, appear the faces of the many with whom we worked and lived, the Park Service families, the families of commercial fishermen, the cottagers who for scores of years had been the summer people, the men of the Coast Guard, and the all too few intrepid visitors who somehow found their way to the Isle Royale shore.

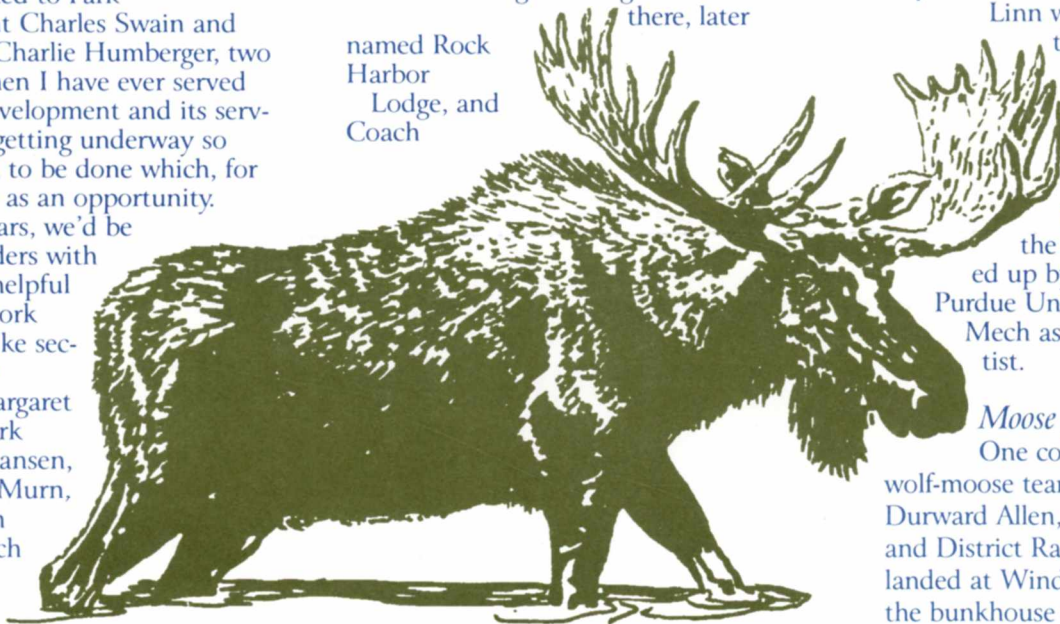
When in the spring of 1950 I came on duty as Park Ranger #3, ten years after the park had been established, I reported to Park Superintendent Charles Swain and Chief Ranger Charlie Humberger, two of the finest men I have ever served under. Park development and its services were just getting underway so there was a lot to be done which, for my part, I saw as an opportunity. During five years, we'd be rubbing shoulders with a competent, helpful and friendly work force, people like secretaries Louise Fretter and Margaret Uren, chief clerk Martin Christiansen, foreman John Murn, plumber Salem Lahti, radio tech Louie Baranowski, Ranger II skipper George Greenleaf, dock foreman Frank Kuusisto, cook Johnnie Rose, rangers Bob Linn and Bob Janke, laborer Ben Radeka, and many, many others.

But first we had to get settled in at Mott Island, the first of some twenty two moves we would be making. My bride Jean and I were housed in what could be considered a cute converted tool shed with the added convenience of a privy which we shared with storekeeper John Markham and his family. The next year we had that facility, which had been moved closer to our house and painted, to ourselves. Now, all of this to me was no problem for I was a farm-raised Yooper, but to city-raised Jean that was quite an adjustment.

Happily for me, the job description that Chief Ranger Humberger gave me included as item #13, the initiation of an interpretive program at Rock Harbor Lodge. With ranger duties well in hand and enough wood split for Jean's kitchen stove, I got a series of programs underway at the lodge, which included establishing the Harbors View Self-guided Nature Trail. Lodge folks were very helpful as they encouraged my efforts, and even the summer cottagers overlooked my limited knowledge about the island. I recall especially Bertha Farmer whose father had discovered Snug Harbor and began a lodge

named Rock Harbor Lodge, and Coach

there, later



Orsborne who at the lodge operated what was probably the smallest post office in the nation.

Our Windigo family, to which we moved in 1951, was small, ranging from our family only—which numbered

three after son Ron was born, to a couple of dozen when the lodge was operating and the sparse number of boats landed. During the brief summer season, we worked closely with Betty Pritchett and later Hal and Fran Mattson, successive Windigo Inn managers, to make visitors welcome and to afford them means to learn about the area. A little museum in the ranger station and the improved Ghylbank Circuit Trail helped. To help keep the lodge operating Jean would occasionally do its laundry. For much of the year our nearest neighbors were the families of commercial fishermen on Washington Island: the Sivertsons, Eckels, Ekmarks, Skadbergs, Hansons, and many others including long time summer cottagers Edgar Johns, George Barnum, and Frances Andrews. To this day we recall Linnaea Eckel's fish cakes as the best ever.

From Ben Zerby:

I was Chief Park Ranger at Isle Royale from 1958 to 1962- Bob Linn was Park Naturalist at that time. The Wolf-Moose Study was begun in 1959. It started with a meeting of ten or twelve scientists from the U.S. and Canada on the island and was headed up by Durward Allen of Purdue University with L. David Mech as the principal scientist.

Moose Burgers—

One cold January day the wolf-moose team of Dave Mech, Durward Allen, Pilot Don Murray, and District Ranger Roy Stamey landed at Windigo and on arriving at the bunkhouse found a large bull moose entangled in the power cord for the pump motor on the diesel trailer. Every time the group ventured near the bunk house the moose would chase them away to

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Isle Royale Natural History Association - Annual Meeting

Rock Harbor Auditorium, July 23, 2000

Welcome and opening remarks were made by IRNHA Board of Directors President Gary Pethe. He read the IRNHA Mission Statement, and introduced IRNHA staff and Board members. The next Annual Meeting will be held the weekend of July 28-29.

Executive Director Jill Burkland presented the highlights of the year. Publications: IRNHA published *The Island Within Us: Isle Royale Artists in Residence 1991-1998*, our largest publishing project to date. A *Rocks and Minerals Checklist* text and design has been produced for Isle Royale. The third edition of the park newspaper *The Greenstone*, Boaters' brochure, and the IRNP Wilderness Plan Newsletter were published. Discussions were held with the Quincy Mine Hoist publications director about taking over their publications program.

Membership: A member survey was designed to get feedback on IRNHA programs and services. A special membership program and picnic were held in Rock Harbor in conjunction with the Millennium Celebration. A new membership data base has been designed and implemented.

Fundraising: IRNHA was awarded a \$14,000 grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and a \$1,000 grant from The Parks Company for publication of *The Island Within Us*. An in-kind donation of \$9,000 worth of paper from Mead Paper was received for the book. IRNHA raised over \$8,000 in donations from individuals for a variety of projects.

Sales and Marketing: The IRNHA website was updated and moved. Our products were exhibited at The Great Lakes Booksellers Association Annual Trade Show, The Sea Kayaking Symposium, and Great Lakes Small Craft Symposium in downstate Michigan. Plans have been made for a cooperative sales outlet with Quincy Mine Hoist Association at the Copper Country Mall for Christmas 2000.

Programs: The July Millennium Celebration in Rock Harbor was planned and coordinated with IRNP. Artists-in-Residence Programs were held in Hancock and Rock Harbor. Arrangements have been made for a traveling display of the Artists-in Residence Collection to Great Lakes Aquarium in Duluth, Muskegon Museum of Art, and Boniface Fine Arts Center in Escanaba in 2000-2001.

Aid to Park: IRNHA contributed over \$14,000 to IRNP in aid for park newspaper, geology and shipwreck exhibits for the Windigo Visitor Center, loon survey, and other interpretive projects. \$5,000 was contributed in in-kind help in Rock Harbor and Windigo Visitor Centers. Ways to support the interpretive and publication activities of Keweenaw National Historic Park were beginning to be explored.

Administrative: Don Durfee has been hired as Office Manager / Membership Coordinator. Additional office space has been rented.

Nancy Leonard gave the Treasurer's Report. Aid to the park is up 25%. Income for FY 99 was \$160,232; expenses were \$169,087, leading to a loss for the year of \$8,855. Total assets equal \$185,124, including \$117,000 in inventory. IRNHA is a sound organization.

Christine Manninen gave the Publications Report: It was an exciting year for publications. The Artist-in-Residence book is the largest project to date. Other upcoming projects include a collection of diaries and reminiscences. The poster series will continue. A new historical map of the Island will be available for Christmas. A lighthouse poster will be ready in the spring. A *Rocks and Minerals Guide* is being completed. Items are being considered for Keweenaw Nat'l Historic Park.

Steve Merritt presented information about the Membership Survey. IRNHA currently has approximately 900 memberships.

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Isle Royale Natural History Association - Annual Meeting *continued...*

President Gary Pethe thanked those who organized the program, and announced Board appointments. Nancy Leonard, Chuck Boyle, and John Dunn were reappointed. The IRNHA by-laws were revised to provide continuity on the Board. Next spring three new Board members will be elected. The ballots will be mailed to members in the Wolf's Eye.

Pete Armington gave the Park Report for Isle Royale. Rejuvenation and restoration of the park continues and accelerates. The park's successes outnumber the failures. NPCI is being sold, no significant changes are expected through 2002. 80% of franchise fees will go to the park, this amount is expected to be \$30,000-40,000. Isle Royale will receive \$330,000 to complete phase II dock restoration at Rock Harbor and replacement of power lines. A new water tank has been installed, and the fee program paid for new docks at Beaver Island and Hay Bay. Due to a small base increase, there was an increased campground crew. A new tri-plex was constructed in Windigo, from Housing Initiative funds. It replaces two old houses. Cyclic money was used to replace the fuel dock at Windigo. The park is getting into compliance with regulations in regard to fuel pumping, storage, and transport. More funds are needed. The park acquired a new tugboat. In the future, a new engine is needed for the LCM, water and sewer improvements are needed in Windigo, and the park hopes to re-establish wilderness rangers. Armington concluded by saying the park faces challenges ahead, but things are looking better.

Refreshments and Isle Royale Reminiscences followed the meeting.

MEMORIES OF ISLE ROYALE

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BOARD MEMBERS RE-APPOINTED

Three members of the IRNHA Board of Directors have been re-appointed to three-year terms. The appointments of Chuck Boyle, John Dunn, and Nancy Leonard will help provide continuity at a time of new fundraising, marketing, and membership efforts. Chuck is head of the Membership Committee and a member of the Marketing Committee; John is head of the Finance Committee, and Nancy is IRNHA's Treasurer and head of the Marketing Committee.

David Duchamp is the new president of the board.

An election will be held in spring 2001 for three positions on the board.

the end of its power cord "leash." Roy called in on the radio and asked for permission to kill the moose, which was given. Roy shot the moose with the only gun around, a 38 caliber revolver. From that time on, whenever anyone on the winter study had free time, we spent it preparing moose. We had moose steaks, moose burgers, stewed moose, roast moose, and finally Dave got the idea of making pemmican. To make the pemmican, we needed to make some moose jerky. Surprisingly, the thinly sliced layers of meat dried well on an outdoor clothesline, even in the sub-freezing and sometime sub-zero temperatures of an Isle Royale winter. By the middle of March when the study was winding down and all parties never wished to look a piece of cooked moose in the face again, there was an ample amount left for the wolves.

The Day Jack Moved On—

On a cool Sunday morning in October there was a knock at my door on Mott Island. It was Pete Edisen - he said that he had been over to Jack Bangsund's cabin the night before and left about 9:00p.m. Jack had been pulling nets that day and he was tired and decided to turn-in. In the morning Pete, seeing that Jack was not up yet, walked over and shouted at his door, "Jack, are you in there?" No answer - so Pete went in the tiny fish shack through the kitchen and back to the small bedroom where Jack was still in bed. Pete shook him and he did not move. So, here was Pete at my door thinking we needed to do something. Pete Parry, Frank Taddeucci and I cranked up the Mallard and followed Pete to Jack's camp. We found that Jack had been gone for some time, perhaps soon after he had turned in the night before. Rigor mortis had set in and it was difficult to get the body through the narrow bedroom door. I had called the C.G. Cutter Woodrush which arrived at Mott in the evening and transported Jack on his final voyage to Minnesota. I know much has been written and told about the rugged commercial fishermen of Isle Royale, but there are no superlatives that can be chosen which adequately describe these people. Bangsund, Edisen, Holte, Johnson, Rude—to name a few—were people my family and I will never forget.

All Expenses Paid, but No Vacation continued...

We included men and women. I came as the Branch Chief of Interpretation from Isle Royale, and was the oldest in the crew. Jack Oelfke, the Branch Chief of Natural Resource Management from Isle Royale, acted as assistant crew boss.

We came for different reasons, as well. Many were looking forward to the money, some to the adventure, and others for advancing in the Incident Command System to more responsible positions, such as squad boss or crew boss. The attraction for me was shedding the role of supervisor I have worn for the last 22 years of my professional life for a couple of weeks and just being one of the gang.

Our day would begin at 6:00 a.m. in early morning freezing darkness. Some would make a bid for the telephone (one phone, 800 people), then we'd all march in line in our yellow nomex shirts, green nomex pants, and firefighting boots to an enormous breakfast. Then we boarded school buses to negotiate the narrow dusty mountain roads and climb up to 5,500' and again attack the fire. A high point of each day was the enormous lunch, which some would wrinkle their noses at and others would dive into. A small minority of us chose the vegetarian option. During the day, we might chisel away with shovels and pulaskis constructing a fire line, very tiring work. Or we might enter a burned area and put out all remaining smoke and cinders. Then again we might spray the fire to stall it, or mark a future fire line along a compass line. Sometimes we would just sit in the bus or out in the shade of pine trees for an hour or more while the overhead decided

what we should do. Once we guarded homes from the threatening fire, and built a fire line around one home. Throughout the day huge helicopters would fly overhead to dump water on hot spots, for \$7,000 per hour. It was reassuring to know they were nearby. And then we would return, sometimes as late as 9:00 p.m., grab a quick and again enormous dinner, line up for a shower, maybe hit the commissary for a souvenir t-shirt, then grab some shut eye before getting up again at around 6:00 a.m. Day after day, with no days off for two weeks straight.

One day I was forward hose person spraying trees that were becoming enveloped to their crowns with fire, trying to keep them from torching. Behind me were members of my crew helping hold the hose, directing where another blaze should be sprayed, and looking out for my safety. We were then a seamless team. Even with a smoke mask, bandanna, and fire shield, however, I breathed in so much smoke that I became nauseated, had a searing headache, and could not eat dinner. Soot worked its way out my nose and coughing from my lungs for some time after.

More than once we had to evacuate when the fire or winds became threatening. Once I recall jogging as trees were torching ahead of us beside the road. Another time, flames licked the side of our school bus as we evacuated down the mountain road.

Then, as quickly as it had started, our work duty was over. We exchanged addresses and promised to stay in touch; then I was a supervisor again back at Isle Royale, coughing up the smoke and grinning about the adventure and camaraderie. I was a lit-

tle surprised when people who found out I had fought a fire in Montana thanked me, again and again, but when I recalled the image of the two ton boulder flying down upon us from above, I thought that perhaps we had literally put ourselves on the line to save the homes and forests of Montana.

Dear Wolf's Eye,

Below you will find a poem called "Offerings". I am sending it to you because it is about one of Isle Royale's living resources: Monica Johnson. She and Milfred run the Wenonah out of Grand Marais to Isle Royale. We became friends when my wife and I worked at Isle Royale.

On one of our return visits to Isle Royale, my wife and I had an experience with her, which I describe in the poem that was simply magical.

Sincerely, Matt Welter

Offerings to Monica



*The old fisherman's daughter
has hair the color of wonder
bread she crumbles and lets fly free
over the white and cobalt hull
of her vessel, the Wenonah
she does this from the breast*

*for herring gulls who swoop
like clots of whitewash
flying off the Rock of Ages
lighthouse against ultramarine
pointed snowy wings interlace
fold, drop and baptize in aqua.*

*"You've got to make offerings
to the seagull gods or they'll hide
your fish under the deep blue sea
or not lead you back to shore
when there's a dense fog or
when the whitecaps are blowing."*

*Her words are tender as whitefish cheeks
and I can see the old man's nets
looming the veins of her hands.
A cloud of gulls follows her
like the spirit of her father
as she tosses her hosts skyward.*

IRNHA Move

September 8 was moving day for IRNHA. Our small office in Park Service Headquarters in Houghton has become too small to meet the needs of our staff of one full-time and two part-time employees. We will retain that office for mail order sales and inventory storage. Lauren Rastello, our mail order specialist, will remain there.

Executive Director Jill Burkland and Business Manager Don Durfee will move to office space in the Paymaster Building on Quincy Hill in Hancock. The Paymaster Building is an historic building originally owned by the Quincy Mining Company and presently operated by the Quincy Mine Hoist Association. We will be sharing the building with old friends David Harmon, editor of our book *Borealis*, and long-time IRNHA board member Bob Linn, employees of the George Wright Society.

Our phone numbers and mail address will remain the same, although our e-mail address has changed to irnha@irnha.org. If you wish to visit us in our new offices, drive through Hancock on US 41 and head up Quincy Hill toward Calumet. The Paymaster Building is on the left, just past the scenic overlook and before you reach the Quincy Mine Hoist.

Isle Royale Natural History Association
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In order to improve customer services on the IRNHA website, we have changed our internet provider. Our new provider Pasty.com can supply us with a secure web server which will make it easier and safer for customers to order IRNHA products on line.

We have also made some initial design changes to our website. Let us know what you think.

**Our website address remains www.irnha.org
our new e-mail address is irnha@irnha.org**

For those of you who live in the Houghton/Hancock area: You may be able help us save on our monthly internet service bill. For every member we find who is willing to switch their internet service to Pasty.com we will receive a reduction on our bill; if we can find 5 people willing to switch, we will get our monthly service free.

Please give us a call if you are interested.



Isle Royale Natural History Association

800 E. Lakeshore Drive
Houghton, MI 49931
Tel: 906-482-7860 or 800-678-6925
e-mail: irnha@irnha.org
website: www.irnha.org

IRNHA is a non-profit membership organization that assists Isle Royale National Park and Keweenaw National Historic Park by publishing and selling educational materials to park visitors.

Gifts, bequests, memorials and memberships are U.S. tax deductible.

Membership Categories

Individual \$15
Household \$25
Supporting \$50
Sustaining \$100
Life Membership ... \$500*
Corporate Sponsor . \$1,000
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in 5 annual installments.*

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