

Wolf's Eye



ISLE ROYALE & KEWEENAW PARKS ASSOCIATION

2009 No. 2

2009 WINTER STUDY NEWS

Isle Royale's 50th annual Winter Study of wolves and moose was conducted this past January and February. Results show that wolf numbers are near their long-term average, while moose abundance is only half its long-term average.

Twenty-four wolves were counted on the island during this year's Winter Study, but since that report was completed, one wolf has died and another has left the island. The East Pack, which has been on a decline for several years, has ceased to exist with the recent death of the alpha female and her eight unborn pups. The cause of the dramatic decline in the East Pack is unclear, but starvation, social instability, and threats from other packs may have all played a role.

For the first time since the study began, a wolf crossed the ice bridge from Isle Royale to Superior's North Shore. Researchers were able to trace wolf prints out on to the frozen lake and determine that the wolf did not return to the island. There is no evidence that any wolves traveled from the mainland to Isle Royale.

Of all the island packs, Chippewa Harbor Pack seems to have fared best over the past year. They increased from five to eight wolves, produced four pups that survived to winter and lost only one wolf. Their territory includes the highest density of moose found on the island.

The newest pack, Paduka Pack has survived its second winter, but had no surviving pups. The pack is made up of just the alpha pair and one other wolf, most likely a yearling from a 2007 litter.

The Middle Pack continued to be a strong pack during the 2009 winter. It is thought that none of their pack died this year and that three pups survived, bringing their number to nine. There were also two lone wolves recorded on the island.

A troubling finding from this year's study was the high rate of congenital bone deformities found in wolves of all ages. This is the first strong evidence of negative physical impacts to wolves attributable to inbreeding. This has raised the question once again of whether it would be appropriate to introduce new wolves to the island in an attempt to genetically rescue the island population. Obviously, this is a very controversial issue, weighing concerns over the welfare of individual animals with wilderness values and predator/prey relationships. Ultimately, it may be up to the Park Service to make this difficult decision.

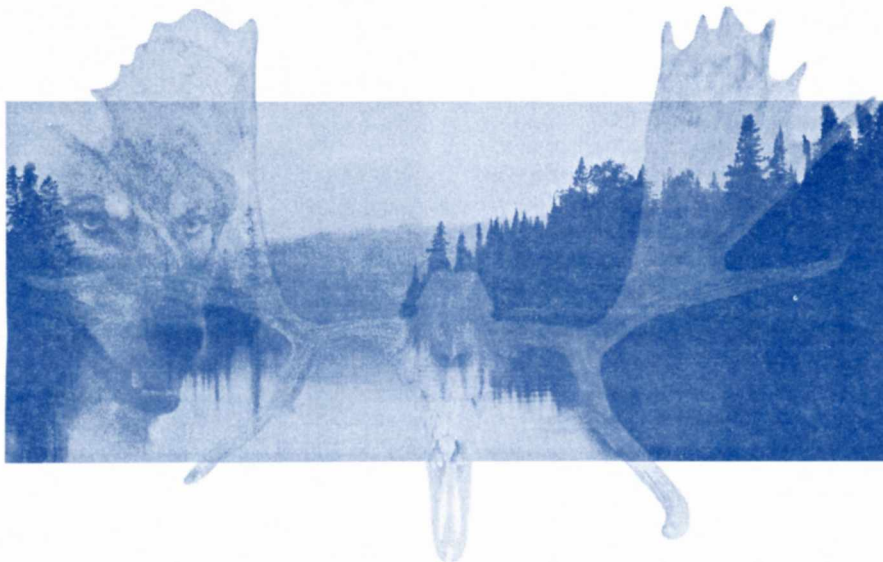
Some positive news over the past two years is that island wolves seem to have retreated from human-populated areas during busy visitor seasons. During 2004-2006 visitor seasons, there were many reports of wolf-human interaction, but that decreased during summers 2007 and 2008.

Isle Royale's 2009 moose population is estimated at 530 individuals, which is down from the 2008 count. Of the moose observed, 10.5% were calves. This is slightly below the long-term average, but higher than expected given the declining trend over recent decades. Although the intensity of ticks declined significantly over the last five years, prominent infestation is still evident.

The deaths of seventeen moose were recorded during this year's Winter Study. Of those, one died from natural causes, probably malnutrition. The remaining 16 were killed by wolves. All of those killed by wolves were older adults, many with arthritis. For the first time in the 50-year study none of the wolf-killed moose were calves.

You can order a copy of this year's Ecological Studies of Wolves on Isle Royale on our website www.irnha.org. ■

Above image: "Wolf, Moose, and Isle Royale Landscape" by Alain Briot



IRKPA Membership Meeting Moves to the Mainland

This summer's annual membership meeting and programs will be held in the Keweenaw. It is our hope that this will make it easier for our current members to attend and will also attract some new members. The schedule of events follows:

Friday, July 24, 7:30 p.m. • Friends of Fashion, "Isle Royale Women: Memories of a Vanished Era"

This program, first presented in Rock Harbor in 2007, was written specifically for the association's 50th anniversary. From mining to navigation and light keeping to the resort and commercial fishing industries, women on Isle Royale played important roles as wives, mothers, schoolteachers, innkeepers, and business partners. Friends of Fashion will highlight a number of these women who, through diaries, photographs, →

Coaster Brook Trout Not Endangered

You can read the full ruling online at www.regulations.gov

In a ruling released on May 19, the Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service has denied a petition to list the coaster brook trout as an endangered species. "Coaster" is the term used to describe brook trout which use Great Lakes waters for all or a portion of their life cycle.

Isle Royale supports the largest population of coaster brook trout in Lake Superior.

The petition, filed in 2006 by Upper Michigan groups, the Sierra Club Mackinaw Chapter, the Huron Mountain Club and Marvin J. Robertson, requested that the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) list as endangered the "naturally spawning lake run coaster brook trout throughout its known historic range in the conterminous United States."

In its ruling the FWS acknowledges the decline in coasters

due to habitat loss and higher water temperatures attributable to climate change. They note that only 18 coaster populations persist in Lake Superior. "Once abundant and widespread throughout the northern portions of the Great Lakes, populations of brook trout that still exhibit the coaster

ecotypes are presently limited to a few locations."

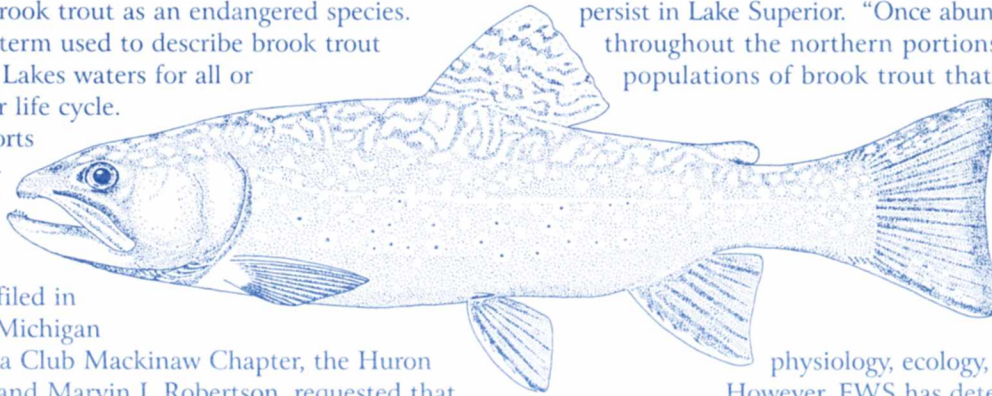
The report goes on to acknowledge that coasters are a distinct form of brook trout, different from stream-resident forms in their

physiology, ecology, and behavior.

However, FWS has determined that this segment of the brook trout population is not significant to the rest of the taxon. On that basis, the request for endangered species listing was denied.

Finally, the ruling states that FWS will continue to assess the status of and threats to Lake Superior coaster brook trout populations. ■

Brook Trout illustration by John Cooper



AMERICA'S BEST IDEA

Acclaimed filmmaker Ken Burns can now add "honorary park ranger" to a resume that already includes two Academy Award nominations, seven Emmy Awards, and 20 honorary degrees. Acting National Park Service Director Dan Wenk recently presented Burns and his production partner Dayton Duncan with honorary park ranger certificates and traditional ranger hats during a ceremony to celebrate their upcoming television series, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*.

Duncan, the series' writer and co-producer, first thought of making a film about national parks during a cross country vacation in 1998. The project, eight years in the making, traces the birth of the national park idea in the mid-1800s and follows its evolution for nearly 150 years. Creating the series was a labor of love for Burns and Duncan who both said that many of their fondest memories include experiences shared with family members in national parks.

Burns, the director and co-producer, said the cinematography in the series is the most stunning of his nearly 30-year career. He mixed scenic shots with archival footage and photographs and supplemented them with first-person accounts from historical characters as well as personal memories and analysis collected from more than 40 interviews. Like his prior epic works including *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, and *Jazz*, Burns' latest documentary has a quintessentially American theme.

"National parks embody an idea as uniquely American as the Declaration of Independence and just as radical: that the most magnificent and sacred places in our land belong not to royalty or the rich but to everyone- and for all time," said Burns. "While making this series, we discovered more than stories of the most dramatic landscapes on earth. We discovered stories of remarkable people from every conceivable background. What they had in common was a passion to save some precious portion of the land they loved so that those of us who followed might have the same chance to fall in love with that place. Without them, parks would not exist."

The National Parks: America's Best Idea, a six-part, 12-hour series is scheduled to air on PBS stations nationwide this September. It will also be available on DVD from IRKPA.

IRKPA Membership Meeting Moves to the Mainland

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and oral histories, will provide the audience with a glimpse of a remarkable but now vanished era on Isle Royale.

Refreshments following. Keweenaw Heritage Center at St. Anne's, Fifth & Scott in Calumet

Saturday, July 25, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m. • Ranger-led Walking Tour. Explore Calumet & Hecla's former copper mining site and Calumet's historic commercial district. Meet at Park Headquarters, Red Jacket Rd, Calumet

Saturday, July 25, 11:15 – noon • Annual Membership Meeting. KNHP Headquarters, Red Jacket Rd, Calumet

Saturday, July 25, 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. • Pasty Picnic. Calumet Waterworks Park, 5 mi W. of Calumet on Lake Superior. (Please let us know that you are coming! RSVP 800-678-6925)

Other events taking place in the Keweenaw July 23 – 26

Thursday, 7/23, 7:00 p.m. • Keweenaw Heritage Center at St. Anne's, 5th & Scott in Calumet. "Italians in the Keweenaw," 4th Thursday in History Program

Saturday, 7/25, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. • Quincy Ruins Walk. Guided walk through surface ruins of the Quincy Mining Co. Meet at Quincy Mine Gift Shop on U.S 41 in Hancock.

Saturday & Sunday 7/2 & 26, All day • Civil War Reenactment, Fort Wilkins, Copper Harbor



Friends of Fashion on Isle Royale

Recent news reports and publications like Richard Louv's book *Last Child in the Woods* address growing concerns over America's youth and their lack of interest in both natural and cultural history. In his book about the divide between children and the outdoors, Louv directly links the lack of nature in the lives of today's wired generation—he calls it nature-deficit—to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as the rises in obesity, attention disorders, and depression.

The National Park System is working to reconnect young people with their parks, not only wilderness parks like Isle Royale, but also parks that are rich in America's history, like Keweenaw National Historical Park. On this page, we are pleased to present three encouraging stories about youth and our parks!



The following are excerpts from a letter from Boy Scout Ben McGahn, Troop 331 Prior Lake, MN, to IRKPA Board President Bob Guiliani after their chance meeting on Isle Royale:

"I think one of my favorite parts was when we saw the moose in full velvet. It was an awesome sight, to have this huge animal only a few feet away from you! The moose was a large bull, and his antlers were almost like the ones that had fallen off, except they were a deep chocolate brown. It was a few feet off the trail, and we would have missed it if it had not been eating so loudly. We stood around for a few minutes, just watching this huge creature eat. After a few minutes, the moose wandered off, and we continued down the trail with a great memory."

"This trip to Isle Royale was one of the best trips I have ever done. I cannot wait until I can do it again. Thanks to the park rangers, the programs were great. I still can't believe I hiked almost 50 miles from Rock Harbor to Windigo. Thanks again Bob for taking our group picture."

First Bob Linn Scholarships Awarded

The Isle Royale and Keweenaw Parks Association has established a new scholarship in memory of Bob Linn. Bob was a founding member of the association and Park Naturalist for Isle Royale National Park for many years before becoming Chief Scientist for the National Park Service. After retiring from NPS, Bob founded the George Wright Society. The George Wright Society is housed in Hancock, but works internationally to promote scientific research and resource stewardship in parks and protected lands in the U.S. and around the world.

The Bob Linn Scholarship is designed to pay tribute to Bob by providing \$250 in financial assistance to a graduating senior from a local high school, or a child of an IRKPA member, who plans to pursue a college major in biology, forestry, or earth sciences.

This year, because we had two exceptionally well-qualified applicants, the George Wright Society contributed an additional \$250 in order that we could give scholarships to both.

This year's recipients are:

- Gabriella Jukkala, from Baraga High School, who will major in biology at Northland College in Ashland, WI next year.
- Haley Juntunen, who will graduate from Chassell High School and go on to study biology at the University of Minnesota.



Gabrielle Jukkala receiving award from IRKPA Director Jill Burkland

2009 HISTORY SMACKDOWN

The Firesteel Phantoms of Ontonagon High School withstood 16 other teams to claim the traveling Smackdown trophy in the seventh annual High School Local History Smackdown sponsored by Keweenaw National Historical Park. The team lasted 15 rounds, proving their expertise in the history of the four-county Copper Country in front of an appreciative, cheering crowd.

This Smackdown was no cakewalk: Firesteel Phantoms faced some fierce competition, particularly from a Hancock High School team and a team from Jeffers High School who came in second and third places, respectively. Students were excited and tense as the questions got more difficult and the rounds continued. All three teams had seasoned students that had competed in past years.

Each of the 68 students took center stage at the Calumet Theatre to field questions about local history, on topics ranging from ethnic customs to mining processes. "These students really know their history," said Keweenaw National Historical Park historian Jo Urion. "They should be really proud of themselves." Kathleen Harter, the park's Chief of Interpretation, added "They studied hard and their knowledge and teamwork were on display tonight. It was great to witness so many students and teachers interested in local history."

Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association
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Online Wolf's Eye Available in Fall '09

Would you be interested in receiving your "Wolf's Eye" newsletter online, rather than in the mail? We are looking at this option as an ecological and economic improvement to our present method of printing and mailing 1000 newsletters three times a year. We asked this question in a recent email message to those on our listserve. We had 38 responses; 32 said they would prefer to receive the newsletter online, 3 said they want to continue to receive a paper copy, and 3 were not sure.

We will begin sending online copies to those of you who prefer, while continuing to print paper copies for those of you who wish. We need to hear from all of our members, so let us know how you would like to receive "Wolf's Eye." You can drop us a note at jburland@irnha.org or call us at 800-678-6925.

The 2009 "Greenstone" and "Keweenaw Guide" are available now online at park websites. You can view and download copies by following links at the bottom of the IRKPA website www.irnha.org. Or if you would like us to mail you a copy of the papers, just phone us at 800-678-6925 or send an email to jburland@irnha.org.

IT'S IN THE MAIL

By now you should have received a letter from IRKPA president Bob Guiliani requesting your help in meeting our mission of supporting education and research at Isle Royale and Keweenaw National Historical Park. You can help by returning your board election ballot and a tax-deductible contribution. Your participation is needed and appreciated!

New Logo: *The Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association has a new logo to match our new name.*

The winner of our logo contest is Bob Orton from Calumet, Michigan, who submitted the logo you see to your right. Bob is a graphic designer for the Book Concern in Hancock.

Lake Superior Holding Steady

According to US Army Corp of Engineers reports, Lake Superior is predicted to remain at its level of a year ago over the course of this summer.

As of May 8, the lake was at 601 feet, which is two inches above what it was on the same date last year. That is six feet below the average May lake level, twenty feet below the record high, which was set in 1986, and eighteen feet over the record low, which was recorded in 1926.

Lakes Michigan, Huron, and Erie are expected to remain at or above last year's levels and Ontario is forecast to be at or below its level of last year.



800 E. Lakeshore Drive, Houghton, MI 49931
Tel: 906-482-7860 or 800-678-6925

e-mail: irnha@irnha.org
website: www.irnha.org

IRKPA is a non-profit membership organization that assists Isle Royale National Park and Keweenaw National Historical Park by publishing and selling educational materials to park visitors. Gifts, bequests, memorials and memberships are U.S. tax deductible.

Membership Categories

Individual \$25	Household \$35
Supporting \$50	Sustaining \$100
Patron \$250	

Life Membership \$1,000*

*Life memberships may be paid in 5 annual installments.

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