



2018 Issue 1

Wolf's Eye

Newsletter for the Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association

Sweepstakes Winners!

Congratulations to the following folks for winning these great prizes in IRKPA's 2017 sweepstakes! You can support IRKPA and have a chance at a great prize by buying tickets in 2018.

1st Prize-2 nights at the Keweenaw Adventure Company's cottage in Copper Harbor-Dave & Alina Luce

2nd Prize-Sunset cruise on Isle Royale Queen IV-Mike & Linda Meetz of Iowa

3rd Prize-2 IRKPA books-Mary Siarkewicz & James Czerwinski of Illinois

2018 Bob Linn Scholarship

Do you know a graduating high school senior who is either a child/grandchild of an IRKPA member OR in the Copper Country Intermediate School District? Well, if they have been accepted to college with plans to major in a natural, earth, or environmental science field, they are eligible to apply for this **\$500** scholarship! Application forms are available at irkpa.org (under "Get Involved" then "News"). The deadline to apply is April 1, 2018.

Annual Meeting & Service Projects

See page 3 for more details. We hope that you'll join us for the meeting, the service projects, or both!

Memories of Isle Royale

By Susanna Ausema

In August, I had the opportunity to chat with IRKPA life members Grant and Marilyn Merritt. Grant's father, Glen, was one of the founding members of the Isle Royale Natural History Association in 1957. Grant served on the Board from '74-'80, and as Board President from '78-'80.

Although Grant Merritt's family history on Isle Royale stretches back to the 1860's, when his grandfather, Alfred Merritt, first came to the island, Grant started forming his own impressions of Isle Royale in 1939, at age 5, on his first visit to the island. He remembers traveling to the island aboard the *Winyah* (which replaced the *America* after its demise) and catching his first fish from a rowboat off of Scoville Point.



Marilyn and Grant Merritt on Merritt Island.

Grant has continued to visit the island nearly every summer since then.

Grant recently discovered that his grandfather Alfred, who owned over a dozen small islands in the Isle Royale archipelago, was supportive of the idea of turning Isle Royale into a National Park. He noted that the Island Copper Co. was willing to deed a portion of its holdings on Isle Royale to the Federal Government for "park purposes." As quoted from a letter written in September of 1923 by

Alfred to Dr. Mike Rice of Detroit, "I suggested...that

it might be the best plan to interest the Federal Government in this part of Isle Royale as a National Park." He later accompanied Stephen Mather, first Director of the National Park Service, on a trip around the island to give Mather a chance to see if it met the criteria for a national park. Mather concluded that it did.

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When asked why his grandfather would have been supportive of the island becoming a National Park, Grant said, "I'd imagine that he realized that otherwise it would have been bought up by honky tonks and the whole feel of the place would have changed."

I asked Grant about his most memorable experiences on Isle Royale. Topping the list were the special parties thrown each summer for (commercial fisherman) Art Mattson's birthday, where about 15 island families would get together to have a big harbor picnic.

He remembers going on a camping trip with his father and their neighbors, the Snells. They took off in the *Handy* and Grant kept an official boat log from Tobin Harbor to Siskiwit Bay. The present campground didn't exist at that point, but folks tended to camp along the shore a ways west of the current Malone Bay campground. They found an old boat in Siskiwit Lake and spent the afternoon fishing. The next morning when they awoke, their gas can was empty and it was bobbing up and down in the lake! Neighboring campers from Lanse, MI, had stolen their gas and taken off!

Another memorable experience was catching 55 pounds of lake trout in just 35 minutes while fishing with Roy Snell. One of those fish, a 17 pounder, earned Grant second place in a fishing contest. Some of his best memories clearly involved strong friendships with other life lessee families.

Marilyn says that some of her best memories involve laying on their dock in Tobin Harbor, watching the northern lights dance overhead. She said that one night their son called them down to the dock and they were amazed to see the lights "dancing overhead like Casper the Ghost, or like something from outer space. We felt dumbfounded. It was amazing."

Although the old family cabin has no running water or electricity, it has plenty of charm. The Merritts' extended family reunites at the cabin each summer to carry on the traditions started so long ago. Their grown children and grandchildren love the island for many of the same reasons that we do: beautiful hiking trails, great fishing, and social connections. Marilyn added that "our kids were pretty much raised up here, and they want their kids to have the same experience."

The Merritts have a card table that serves as a kind of guest register, where everyone has a chance to write a comment on it at the end of their visit. One child wrote, "Maybe if they (the park) made the paths smoother I could see nature." This elicited laughs from the elder Merritts. Another grandchild wrote, "Next year let's spend 2 weeks here instead of 1!" Obviously the love that Grant and Marilyn feel for Isle Royale is being passed down, creating the next generation of island stewards.

2 Wolves Remain...



Photo: R. Peterson

The 60th annual Winter Study is now underway on Isle Royale. A small team of researchers will spend about 6 weeks conducting aerial and ground surveys to determine wolf and moose populations.

During a flyover in January, wolf tracks were spotted. The plane followed the tracks for 30 miles on the east end of the island. Since then, the two resident wolves have been spotted traveling slowly with full bellies. The male is about 9 years old, and his daughter is about 7. They reproduced in 2014, but the pup died within its first year; the female has rejected further courtship advances from the male.

The moose census requires about 25 hours of flying; moose are counted on 91 plots scattered across the island. The moose population has been increasing for the past five years.

The NPS is awaiting a final decision regarding the wolf management plan. The recommended alternative is Alternative B, the immediate limited reintroduction of wolves.



Fourth graders hold items in Ranger Karl's foundry demonstration (NPS photo).

Keweenaw NHP Reaches Local Youth

By Katie Keller, KNHP Education Technician

Dig deep into the recesses of your mind, to when you were in fourth grade. What were you like? When I was in fourth grade, I remember that I finally felt like one of the “older kids” because I turned ten. Fourth grade is a year of transition, physically, mentally, and emotionally—you have one foot in childhood, with the other poised to take you into the great unknown—your future.

To celebrate the National Park Service Centennial in 2016, the Obama Administration took advantage of this pivotal time by establishing the Every Kid in a Park program. Since 2015, all fourth graders across the United States can receive a free pass to visit federal public lands. The National Park Foundation expanded upon this program by offering grants that help tackle the expensive transportation costs that typically prohibit many schools from visiting national parks.

Keweenaw NHP (KNHP) has received this grant for three successive years for the Copper TRACES (**T**echnology, **R**esearch, **A**rt and music, **C**ommunity, **E**nvironment, and **S**ervice) field day. Copper TRACES occurs in May throughout the industrial core of the Calumet Unit of KNHP. Over 500 fourth graders from a six-county area come for a daylong field trip where they attend educational stations that are staffed and supported by over fifty volunteers. Educators and students love it, with many citing that it is the best field trip they have ever been on. In turn, KNHP has developed greater park awareness with not only local schools, but with those fourth graders that visit the Calumet Visitor Center and the Keweenaw Heritage Sites the subsequent summer.

Interested in volunteering or taking part in Copper TRACES (May 15-17)? Contact me at kathryn_keller@nps.gov or (906) 483-3175.

Upcoming Workshops

Isle Royale Botany Workshop (June 4-9, '18)

This workshop is open to anyone with beginning or intermediate knowledge of plant ID. Explore early season plants in the Rock Harbor area on field trips led by botanist Janet Marr, co-author of *Island Life: an Isle Royale Nature Guide*.



Keweenaw Botany Workshop (July 24-26, '18)

Explore the Keweenaw Peninsula's rugged bedrock shorelines, ridges, forests, and wetlands with Janet Marr and learn to identify plants in diverse habitats, including boreal species and rare arctic disjuncts.

Isle Royale Night Sky Photography Workshop (tentative dates September 4-8, '18)

Beginning and intermediate photographers are invited to join Lake Superior Photo's Shawn Malone for this nature photography workshop with particular emphasis on capturing images of the night sky over Isle Royale. Workshop activities will include instruction and photography excursions around Rock Harbor.

IRKPA Annual Meeting

Location: Calumet Visitor Center

Date: Saturday, July 28, 1:00 p.m.

The meeting will include a presentation by NPS Biologist Isaiah Messerly, from the Great Lakes Exotic Plant Management Team. Other presenters will discuss the impact of invasive species on cultural resource management.

IRKPA will host two associated service projects (Isle Royale and the mainland) in conjunction with the annual meeting, both involving the removal of invasive species.

More details to come in the May *Wolf's Eye!*

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IRKPA is the membership-based nonprofit partner of Isle Royale National Park and Keweenaw National Historical Park. Gifts, bequests, memorials, and membership are U.S. tax deductible.

Membership Categories

Individual \$25	Household \$35
Supporting \$50	Sustaining \$100
Patron \$250	Life \$1,200*

*may be paid in four annual installments

Board of Directors

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Alison Pontynen, sales & visitor services manager
Susanna Ausema, Rock Harbor sales manager & newsletter editor

IRKPA has signed up for **The Paypal Giving Fund**, which is a great partner in fundraising for non-profits. If you plan to make a donation to IRKPA, please consider either paying by check or at www.paypal.com/fundraiser/hub. About halfway down the page, you'll see a search bar where you can type "IRKPA." Click "Search" and IRKPA will pop up. It's easy!

Why does it matter? Because PayPal covers all transaction fees, meaning 100% of your donation benefits our parks! The alternative, making a donation on irkpa.org, means that 3.5% of your donation goes directly to Square to cover its fees. PayPal Giving Fund will issue your donation receipt. Thank you!

If you haven't renewed your IRKPA membership, today's a great day to do so! Pay online at www.irkpa.org/support/renew or by check. Thanks to those of you who have renewed for 2018!



Do you have questions, comments, or suggestions about the newsletter? Please contact the Wolf's Eye editor at susanna@irkpa.org. Thank you!

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