IRKPA Hosts 62nd Annual Meeting

Mark your calendars now! All members are welcome and encouraged to attend our upcoming annual meeting and associated activities, which will take place during the final weekend of July on Isle Royale.

$1000 for IRKPA

Do you ever shop online? If so, with the simple click of a button, you could benefit IRKPA. Over 2,000 stores have signed up through the iGive program, to donate a percentage of each purchase to the charity you choose. It’s FREE for you. IRKPA has received over $1,000 since the program started in 2012. Sign up now and every time you shop at one of these stores online, you’ll be helping Isle Royale NP and Keweenaw NHP!

Visit iGive.com, select IRKPA as your cause, download the app or button, then start shopping!

Wolves On The Move

By Susanna Ausema

When the October issue of this newsletter was printed, the most up-to-date information regarding the wolf translocation process was that four wolves, 2 to 5 years old, had been captured in Minnesota and released on Isle Royale. Each wolf was radio-collared and its subsequent explorations were tracked.

In late October, researchers noticed that one of the collars hadn’t moved in days. A team returned to Isle Royale to search for the collar or the wolf itself on November 1. They discovered that the male translocated wolf had perished of unknown causes, and its body was sent away to be necropsied.

The remaining wolves explored far and wide, but distinctly avoided the northeastern end of Isle Royale, which is the known territory of the two remaining original wolves, which remain uncollared.

The translocation efforts continued after the government shutdown ended, with the goal of capturing wolves in Canada. A National Park Service news release on February 6 explains that unusually cold temperatures and poor weather conditions prevented capture and subsequent translocation of wolves from Ontario.

Map shows movement of translocated wolf, Jan 26 to Feb 2, 2019. The wolf crossed an ice bridge on Jan 31, heading back toward Grand Portage, MN.

Continued on page 2
(Continued)

Not only that, but one of the wolves previously trans-located has apparently found a way back to the main-land. Park staff and longtime island researcher Rolf Peterson monitored GPS data from the radio collars and conducted aerial surveys.

Peterson said, “We flew out across the open lead and out over the ice pack then determined that the wolf’s signal was still to the north, straight to the mainland.”

Mark Romanski, Isle Royale’s Division Chief of Natural Resources, corroborated Peterson’s observation with GPS data indicating that a female wolf translocated in October 2018 had crossed the ice on January 31, 2019, headed back toward the area in Minnesota where she had been captured.

While not totally unexpected, this turn of events was disappointing to those involved with the project. Isle Royale National Park Superintendent Phyllis Green, noted, "Nature and the instincts of wildlife will always prevail in the wilderness of Isle Royale. When we made the decision to restore the predator-prey relationship, we knew we would have to respectfully work with whatever curves nature threw at us, whether it’s adverse weather or wolves working out where they choose to fit on the landscape. We’re going to continue the project for the next 3 years, a window we feel affords us the opportunity for successful restoration."

The press release also stated, “The NPS continues to work with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to move wolves from Canada this winter.

Another project taking place during winter study was the radio-collaring of 20 female moose. Blood and fur samples were collected, as well. The data gathered from the collars will help park staff and MTU researchers follow the movements of the moose.

MTU researchers will stay on Isle Royale until March 4th to complete their surveys and re-search.

Upcoming Exhibit at Keweenaw NHP

A National Endowment for the Humanities traveling exhibit called "Jacob A. Riis: How the Other Half Lives," will be on display at the Calumet Visitor Center in the fall of 2019.

Jacob Riis (1849-1914) was a pioneering newspaper reporter, social reformer, and forerunner of modern photojournalism in New York City at the turn of the twentieth century.

Visitors to the exhibition will experience immersive life-size photographs, as well as artifacts and personal documentation. Public programs and events will be associated with the exhibit, along with related sales items. To learn more, visit https://nehontheroad.org/exhibition/riis/.

IRKPA is providing partial funding for this exhibit.

Get Down and Dirty with IRKPA!

IRKPA will offer some great opportunities to volunteer in our parks this summer. Dates and details are yet to be decided, but at least one of the service projects will focus on the removal of invasive plant species at Keweenaw NHP and/or Isle Royale.

For information about the Keweenaw project, please contact Darcy (mqbob@gmail.com or 906-869-1390). Contact Sandy (upnorthigo@aol.com or 269-462-3982) for information about the Isle Royale project.

Thanks for your interest in helping our parks!

Sweepstakes Winners!

Congratulations to Elaine Granch of Dearborn, Michigan, who won a round trip for two to Isle Royale on the Isle Royale Queen IV and two nights' lodging at the Rock Harbor Lodge. Second prize, a round trip for two on the Ranger III, went to IRKPA members Arlene and Gene Radtke of DePere, Wisconsin, who had just told their grandson about Isle Royale being their "favorite place ever" before learning they had won. The third prize to IRKPA member Anne Okonek of Cor- nell, Michigan, is her choice of two of IRKPA's own publica-tions. Tickets for this year's Keweenaw-focused sweepstakes will be sent in the summer membership mailing and will also be available in our park visitor centers and at events.

Thanks to all who participated in the sweepstakes! Donations this year exceeded $1,750 in support of our parks.
The Bellhop Returns

By William Buffett, edited by Susanna Ausema

Shortly after my high school graduation in 1951, I was hired to work as a bellhop in one of America’s least known national parks, Isle Royale. After taking a train from my home in Omaha to Duluth, MN, I boarded a bus that rolled north along the shore of Lake Superior to Grand Marais. Early the next morning, I boarded a scow called the Detroit, whose job was to pick up the catch of Isle Royale fishermen and return it to the mainland markets. Every once in a while, it would toot its horn and a fisherman would come rowing out in his boat to give us some fish. The Detroit dropped me off at Rock Harbor.

I might not remember much of this, if it were not for the fact that my mother saved all the letters that I had written home. Quotes from these letters follow.

“The work that first day was pretty hard—chopping wood and carrying canoes around—really made construction work look easy. Rather sore this morning, but we just washed windows and rugs, and did some painting, so it wasn’t too bad. Another guy and I made four trips up to the diesel plant from the dock (1/2 mile) pushing barrels of oil—all up hill. I thought I’d keel over. The food is swell and plenty of it. The air and water are the best.”

When boats arrived in 1951, bellhops donned white jackets, greeted guests when they landed, and escorted them to their room. “Today two boats came in—the Isle Royale Queen at 1:30 and the Ranger II at 3:30. Twenty-two passengers arrived in all. The Ranger brought 500 pounds of ice and about a thousand pounds of coal. It was a lot of work taking care of that stuff.”

“Duties of a bellhop? Well, before breakfast we bring hot water to all the guests staying in the cabins as they have no running water. After breakfast we fill oil cans for stoves in the cabins, put up the flag, sweep the porches of the dining room, lodge and office. Jobs then vary—pumping fuel oil by hand from barrels to tanks, rolling oil barrels to the tanks, chopping and lugging wood, painting, picking up along the shoreline, cutting grass, etc. They have been short of help in the kitchen so I’ve been going there when I run out of work. It’s good for extra food sometimes so I don’t mind at all.”

“The wildflowers are beginning to bloom and are very beautiful. Of course the lake is pretty and crystal clear. Every time we want a drink we just kneel down at the shore line. There are a lot of abandoned mines and you see moose quite often. There is a small family of beaver near here, and ducks and loons are close by. The fishing is good and getting better. Tonight we took a four-mile trip down to see some fishermen. Mr. Fisher (the superintendent) is looking for some more guides, and figures they would be the best. It is interesting to see their layouts and to hear them talk. They are all Scandinavian and are great humorists.”

Sixty-six years later, at the age of 84, I returned to the island on a vacation with my family. Returning to Isle Royale felt like a religious experience. There was no Almighty, in human form anyway, or any flowery angels; there were no claps of thunder or flashes of heavenly light, but on my return to Isle Royale, I felt transformed. The biggest surprise was how happy I felt doing nothing. I could just sit on a bench, take in the scene, and experience an unfamiliar delight. I’d been in beautiful settings before, but in this place I felt something I don’t remember experiencing before—bliss.
Longtime IRKPA member Scott Benson wrote a note expressing his connection to Isle Royale. His membership goes back to around 1970, and since then, he’s backpacked many times and explored different areas of the park via canoe and kayak. He says “I still miss (Isle Royale), and the Good Lord willing and the creek don’t rise, I shall return, though perhaps not with 50+ pounds on my back!”

Keweenaw NHP will host the 17th annual High School History Local Smackdown on April 25 at the Calumet Theater. Copper Country high school students will test their knowledge of all things related to local history. The format is similar to a spelling bee: teams of four players are asked short-answer questions about local history topics, which increase in difficulty as the rounds go higher. It’s an exciting evening worth watching!

IRKPA contributes reference books to each team’s school library.

Once you’ve finished reading this, please share your copy of the Wolf’s Eye with a friend or fellow outdoor enthusiast! You can help us inspire others to be stewards and supporters of our parks!

Printed on recycled paper

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Calumet, Michigan
Permit No. 7

800 E Lakeshore Dr
Houghton, MI 49931-1869

Forwarding Service Requested