

Wolf's Eye



Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association

2012 No. 2

High School Local History Smackdown: A View from the Stage

Twelve teams from seven schools took the stage at the historic Calumet Theatre on April 26 for the Tenth Annual High School Local History Smackdown, part of Keweenaw National Historical Park's Fourth Thursday in History series. Through seven rounds, three teams were perfect, and seven teams remained in the competition, successfully fielding increasingly difficult questions about Keweenaw, Isle Royale, Michigan, and national history. After eleven rounds, one team from Ontonagon Area High School once again hoisted the trophy, and another of the school's three teams was tied for third.

For an inside perspective on this popular annual event, the Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association invited team coach and Ontonagon County Historical Society President Bruce Johanson to share his experience with the competition.

Ontonagon has been sending Smackdown participants since the second year of the event. The Ontonagon County Historical Society board of directors has an education committee that reaches out into the community area by offering talks and programs to the schools, as well as to community organizations. Numerous school groups visit the museum and lighthouse each year, and perhaps this is what ignites the original spark of interest in local history among these children. The Smackdown competition seemed like a great opportunity to work with school kids at the high school level.

Unfortunately, our own State of Michigan seems to have gone out of its way to stifle Michigan history studies in the schools, especially local history. With curriculum mandates in place, and the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) instituted as a way



Keweenaw National Historical Park Superintendent Mike Pflaum opens this year's Smackdown. Ryan Holt photo.

of evaluating the effectiveness of our schools, anything that is not covered by the MEAP tests has been pushed aside. Are schools teaching to the test? You bet! As a member of the Ontonagon Area Board of Education, as well as a retired educator, I have seen many of the things that made our local schools unique choked off as schools are pressed into a "one size fits all" mold. Smackdown was a golden opportunity to do something outside of the classroom and give our kids some concept of an identity of the places they are from.

Dick Franti, a teacher in the Ontonagon Area High School, recruits the team(s). This year, we had three teams competing. A team usually consists of four members, with one of the kids being the designated spokesperson. The team members gather, on their own time, at the Ontonagon County Historical

Society Museum for the prep sessions. I direct the prep work, using materials we have accumulated on regional history in the museum library, as well as the computers we have at that site. Having the research material at hand is a big advantage. We start by giving the team members an outline of the history of the Keweenaw region and its role in the development of our country as a whole.

Too many history books used in the schools start with the Spanish explorers, jump to the Revolution, the trek west, the war with Mexico, the gold rush, and then move on to later events, totally ignoring the Great Lakes and our own northern frontier. This is a great opportunity to fill in the information that is left out in the schools. We use, as a starting point, the centerfold map in the KNHP publications, showing the Keweenaw region and the location of all of the heritage sites.

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Winter Study Finds Only Nine Wolves; Moose Increase to 750

The shared fate last fall/winter of three of Isle Royale's wolves—including a young female and Romeo, a lead character during the 2010 winter study—has revealed itself. Sadly, the wolves drowned in an old mine shaft: www.mtu.edu/news/stories/2012/june/story70266.html.

Between January 2011 and January 2012, the wolf population dropped dramatically from sixteen to nine, the lowest number in the 54-year history of the study. The previous low was twelve, the result of parvovirus brought to the island by a domestic dog in the 1980s.

The researchers observed no courtship behavior in the six-member Chippewa Harbor Pack, so the main hope for pups lies with a male-female pair dubbed the West-end Duo. Increased howling among Chippewa Harbor Pack members may be related to the absence of suitable females.

Per capita kill rates for wolves were well below the long-term average, and the annual predation rate on moose was the lowest level ever observed on Isle Royale. The number of old, vulnerable moose are dropping because low numbers of calves

survived during 2002 to 2008. Calf recruitment this year was near the long-term average, including three sets of twins seen. The two-week moose survey in early February indicated a jump from 515 moose last year to 750 in 2012.

In late April 2012, John Vucetich and Rolf Peterson from Michigan Technological University, together with staff from Isle Royale National Park and veterinary assistance from a volunteer medical team (DVM Robert Irmiger and RN Sally Irmiger), radio-collared two wolves within Chippewa Harbor Pack territory.

One of the wolves, an 84-pound male, was already radio-collared, having been handled in 2009 as a mere 53-pound "runt." He is full sized now, sporting a new radio-collar. The other wolf was a young female, probably one or two years old, weighing 68 pounds and non-reproducing. It is likely that she will reproduce only if she lives long enough to grow to full size. She is the second confirmed female in the population, and was previously undetected because there were no genetic studies of the wolf population in 2011 or 2012.

A crowd funding effort (www.petrish.com) generated funding in spring 2012 that should permit analysis of 2012 samples, but further funding is still needed to completely update the recent history of the population from analysis of fecal DNA. Until that is done, there will be uncertainty about the age and gender of the wolves remaining in the population.

Snowshoe hares are at or near the peak of their ten-year cycle. Raptors like great-horned owls and goshawks responded to the abundant prey. A snowy owl, part of the widespread irruption of juveniles south of their usual range, was seen in late February. Fox abundance was steady, and otter tracks were recorded over about half of the island. Ravens were less abundant, with few moose carasses available, but open water allowed several eagles to overwinter.

Ecological Studies of Wolves on Isle Royale 2012 by John A. Vucetich and Rolf O. Peterson (\$4.95)

Winter Study 2012: Notes from the Field by John A. Vucetich (\$6.95)

Changes to IRKPA Bylaws Proposed

The IRKPA Board of Directors proposes two changes to the bylaws, shown in boldface below. Members are invited to send any comments or concerns regarding the changes prior to the July 26 board meeting.

Changing "Treasurer" to "Secretary/Treasurer" wherever it appears in the bylaws (main sections affected below) will comply with state law requiring that one of the officers be designated Secretary. One person may hold more than one office, as long as the Board of Directors consists of at least three persons.

The second change formalizes the Executive Committee that has had regular conference calls, followed by email summaries to the Board, since early 2011. The Committee has been a very helpful means of communication with the Executive Director between Board meetings.

Changes proposed are as follows:

Article IV. Organization/Administration
Section 4. The **Secretary**/Treasurer of the Association.

The **Secretary**/Treasurer of the Association shall be responsible for monitoring the finances of the Association on a monthly basis. The **Secretary**/Treasurer must be continuously cognizant of the overall financial condition of the Association. The **Secretary**/Treasurer must work closely with the Executive Director to review operational expenses and proposed purchases.

The **Secretary**/Treasurer shall report to the Board:

1. In a timely fashion, any serious financial situation that he or she believes might exist.
2. In a timely fashion, the general financial condition of the Association.
3. and submit with the Executive Director a Financial Report, which shall be given to each Board Member at each

regularly scheduled Board meeting.

The Secretary/Treasurer is authorized to sign any official papers that require the signature of the Association's Secretary.

Section 5. Committees of the Board.

The president shall serve as the Chair of an Executive Committee. The Secretary/Treasurer and at least one other board member shall serve on the Executive Committee. When there is a President-Elect, that person shall serve on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall meet in person or electronically as determined by the President or requested by two Executive Committee members or the Executive Director. The Executive Committee shall provide guidance to the Executive Director and is authorized to make necessary decisions between Board meetings.



Coach Richard Franti (left) and KNHP Superintendent Mike Pflaum (right) flank the 2012 Smackdown champions from Ontonagon Area High School, Diamond Match Devils team members Shane Ollila, Logan Graff, Dillan Thompson, and Tom Croteau. Ryan Holt photo.

It is important that the kids have a picture in their minds of where the different places actually are.

The teams all train together, and we have assembled a battery of questions. As we go through our list, we expand on each question, giving the background. We do not emphasize memorizing dates, though we try to keep things in chronological perspective. The team members are first drilled as individuals, and then later, we pit the teams against each other in mock competitions using the same rules they will face in the real event. This year, we met a total of four times. In the past, we have tried to get together weekly or bi-weekly, starting in March.

This year, we had three teams, the Diamond Match Devils, Parker's Pirates, and The Old Victoria Loggers. Our coaches are really just the persons of record who sit with each team at the competition. This year Dick Franti, Tom

LeGault, and I were the coaches, but I want to emphasize that our kids all initially train for this event altogether, as one BIG team representing our school.

We have always felt that we are at something of a disadvantage as we are the farthest removed from Calumet and Quincy, the main focal locations of the KNHP, but we never let our kids forget that the copper rush started on the banks of the Ontonagon River, and that the last operating copper mines were in our county (and, as current events unfold, copper mining and processing may soon resume in our area). We have to work especially hard learning as much about the other county areas as we can to overcome this disadvantage.

Is it worthwhile? Do the kids learn anything? Perhaps the final evaluation is that the traveling trophy has been ours to display six times, and the school presents the teams with certificates of merit

to recognize their out-of-school work as Smackdown team members. This year, we were especially gratified that that all members of the winning team were former Summer History Intern Program (SHIP) participants, a program that our Society has run for the last five years.

Brian Hoduski, one of the KNHP staff people in charge of running the Smackdown, suggested at the recent Keweenaw Heritage Sites meeting that other sites may consider adopting a Smackdown team, as the Ontonagon County Historical Society has done. Actually, we never looked at it in this light, but I guess that is exactly what we have done. We saw the Smackdown event as a means of furthering our own mission of educating the public about our own heritage, and gathering support for our work.

Bruce H. Johanson, President
Ontonagon County Historical Society

IRNP Celebrates *Ranger III* Great Lakes Protection Milestone

This spring, the National Park Service and Isle Royale National Park made significant progress in protecting the island and Lake Superior from invasive species through the installation of a new ballast water treatment system on the *M/V Ranger III*. The first such permanent system installed on a freshwater vessel in the Great Lakes is a "milestone in Great Lakes protection history," noted Isle Royale Superintendent Phyllis Green.

The installation fulfills the National Park Service obligation to prevent transfers of aquatic invasive species to the Park via its own vessel's ballast water and to prevent species such as zebra mussels, found on the Island but not in the Keweenaw Waterway system, from being transported back. The *Ranger III* now can serve as a platform for testing additional freshwater systems and to help researchers develop compliance tools for

the US Coast Guard and states to use when inspecting ships.

A dedication ceremony for the new ballast water treatment system, featuring free public tours of the *Ranger III* and a celebratory Waterway cruise to the South Entry, will be held on the Houghton waterfront, Thursday, June 28th.





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IRKPA 2012 Annual Meeting

Please let us know if you plan to join us in Rock Harbor for our annual meeting events Friday, July 27 through Sunday, July 29, held in conjunction with the Isle Royale Families and Friends Association's annual meeting. Here's what we have planned:

- Friday night folk music program with Emma, Carrie, and Susan Dlutkowski
- Saturday geology walk/talk with Justin Olson, interpretive ranger and Michigan Tech graduate student studying Isle Royale

Sunday, July 29, Events

- Botany walk in the morning with IRKPA workshop leader Janet Marr
- Annual business meeting (1 p.m.)
- Update on the Isle Royale Cultural Resources Management Plan
- Unveiling \$50 for 50 Years donor plaque
- Tobin Harbor tour on the *M/V Sandy* with Lou Mattson, whose family's fishing/resort history goes back to the late 1800s (cost tba)
- Picnic on the Guest House deck for IRKPA and IRFFA members (cost ~\$15)
- Evening program of historic images with Cultural Resources Manager Seth DePasqual
- 3D video of several Isle Royale shipwrecks

We will have a group campsite reserved, but please let us know in advance if you plan to camp. Should be a great time!

iGive.com Helps IRKPA

Help IRKPA when you shop or search the internet through iGive.com. Kristine has earned \$40 for IRKPA in just four months after registering our cause, but so far, she's the only active supporter. Imagine what IRKPA could earn if more friends sign up! It's easy—just install the iGive button in your browser, and donations will accrue automatically (percentage determined by each retailer).

iGive's 350,000 members help their favorite causes with every purchase and search. Now you can help IRKPA at no cost to you by signing up at www.iGive.com.

Member Email Updates

About 80 members used to receive email updates every month or so from Jill when she was executive director. If you wonder why you don't still receive them, Google changed every email address in the list to "no name" when my new account was created in 2010. I'm happy to send updates to those who would like them and don't use Facebook. Just email kbradof@irkpa.org, and I'll create a new list—with a backup in case Gmail has other ideas!

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[Facebook.com/IRKPA](https://www.facebook.com/IRKPA)

IRKPA is a nonprofit membership organization that assists Isle Royale National Park and Keweenaw National Historical Park by publishing and selling educational materials for 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 \$1,200*

*may be paid in four annual installments

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