

Wolf's Eye



Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association

2013 No. 2

Dollar Bay Students SOAR to National Park Service Award

National Park Service Director George B. Hartzog, Jr. started the popular and successful Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) Program with 300 participants in 1970. Last year, more than 257,000 volunteers of all ages donated 6.7 million hours of work helping to preserve and protect national parks.

Each year, parks are invited to nominate volunteers for the George and Helen Hartzog Awards for Outstanding Volunteer Service. This year's Hartzog



Dollar Bay High School SOAR students on Isle Royale this spring

Youth Group Volunteer Service Award winner was Isle Royale National Park's nominee, Dollar Bay High School's Student Organization for Aquatic Robotics (SOAR).

The SOAR students took on a daunting challenge: designing and building submersible remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) for combating invasive species at Isle Royale National Park. Over 18 months, 25 students in 9th to 12th grade, approximately one-third of

continued on p. 2

Project SISU Receives "America's Best Idea" Grant

Keweenaw National Historical Park (NHP) is one of 34 national parks across the country selected to receive a 2013 America's Best Idea grant from the National Park Foundation, the official charity of America's national parks. Inspired by the critically acclaimed Ken Burns' documentary, "The National Parks: America's Best Idea," the program funds activities designed to connect diverse, underserved, and under-engaged populations throughout the United States with their national parks in innovative and meaningful ways.



Project SISU students on their way into the Adventure Mine in Ontonagon County this June.

"One of the great things about our national parks is that every American can relate to these treasured places if given the chance to experience them," said Jonathan B. Jarvis, Director of the National Park Service. "It's our mission to engage visitors from all backgrounds in the diverse stories that we tell in our national parks. Thanks to the support of the National Park Foundation, we can propel that outreach, and engage new audiences that would otherwise never have the opportunity to experience a national park."

continued on p. 2

Volunteer Crews Repair Historic Structures and Leaky Shelters

Once again, the Dassler Cabin Crew performed maintenance and repairs on historic structures in Tobin Harbor. Their donations to IRKPA's Historic Preservation Fund were the primary funding source for necessary materials and supplies. Seventeen volunteers—many longtime returnees, including

group leader and IRKPA life member John Dunn—donated 1,040 hours and \$2,100 for this year's projects. They are Chet Anderson, Larry Bryan, Michael Bussinger, Janet Dunn, Jim Clement, Gary Gulick, Roger Gustafson, John Hartsough, Liz Kidera, Mary Powell, Mike Reuter, Robert Rudd,

Marie Rust, Zachary Sorenson, Alan West, and Charlie Zamzow.

Another life member, Dan Rogalla, provided funds and recruited members Tom Gehrke, Steve Hoecker, and Paul Moscherosch to reshingle five leaking shelter roofs.

Thanks to **all** of IRKPA's volunteers!

Dollar Bay SOAR, from p. 1

the entire student body, took part in the project. Teacher Matt Zimmer's marine robotics science elective course included both in-class work and many evenings and weekends working on the Isle Royale project.

The SOAR team engineered an ROV to monitor docks and inspect boat hulls for invasive mussels. The design has sufficient image quality to discriminate between invasive mussels and other organisms and enough contrast to pick out mussels against the substrate in low light conditions; can record images for future reference and for baseline and mitigation; and is portable, durable, and low maintenance.

Two years of hard work, after-school hours, mix-ups, and mistakes has paid off. We won a national award. I don't know how else to put it, words cannot describe the experiences we had in Washington D.C. The three of us that got the honor of going to Washington D.C. were beyond fortunate. We had the chance of meeting some of the leaders of the National Park Service. Just seeing them in person was crazy enough, but getting to talk to them was overwhelming.

~ SOAR student Tom Dunstan

The complexity of the project has increased as the SOAR team members build their knowledge base and become increasingly more sophisticated in their work. According to the SOAR newsletter, a new website and blog are planned. "We have a big year ahead of us, and we have big shoes to fill."

In addition to SOAR's national award, Dr. David Gilbert, an IRKPA life member, won the 2012 Midwest Region Hartzog Enduring Service Award for his years volunteering as the doctor on call for Isle Royale.

Congratulations and thanks to these outstanding volunteers! Their work is truly inspiring!

Project SISU, from p. 1

"The America's Best Idea program gives people—particularly youth—incredible opportunities to connect to our national parks through unique and innovative ways," said Neil Mulholland, President and CEO of the National Park Foundation. "From experiences that center on history, the environment and even adventure, we are able to capture the imagination of a new generation of park-goers in ways that benefit their lives and the future of the parks."

Project SISU is a local program designed to bring cultural awareness and pride to local Calumet middle school youth. Throughout the summer and fall, with the leadership of National Park Service staff and volunteers at Keweenaw NHP, the kids are visiting historical sites, volunteering at local festivals and events, and gathering information and photos. They are creating a youth-focused activity map to direct local and visit-

ing youth and families to interesting and fun places in the Keweenaw.

For many participants, this is their first time visiting some of these sites, and their enthusiasm is contagious. While the park is thrilled to have received this grant to connect with area youth, it's even more exciting to see the kids de-

velop an appreciation for the area. The students have been blogging and posting photos about their experiences (<http://calumetprojectsisu.blogspot.com>).

For a full listing of participating parks and program descriptions, please visit the National Park Foundation website (www.nationalparks.org/our-work/programs/americas-best-idea).

We are a group of students from Washington Middle School who have SISU (a Finnish word used to describe strong will, motivation, and determination). Thanks to a grant from the National Park Foundation, we are spending our summer visiting and exploring the Keweenaw National Historical Park Sites and loving the place we call home. We hope you come visit some of the amazing places we have been!

~ From the Project SISU blog

The National Park Foundation, the official charity of America's national parks, raises private funds that directly aid, support, and enrich America's more than 400 national parks and their programs. Chartered by Congress as the nonprofit partner of the National Park Service, the National Park Foundation plays a critical role in conservation and preservation efforts, establishing national parks as powerful learning environments, and giving all audiences an equal and abundant opportunity to experience, enjoy, and support America's treasured places at www.nationalparks.org.

2012 Isle Royale Natural Resources Highlights

Canada lynx: Two years of field-work verified that Isle Royale meets U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service requirements for reintroduction of Canada lynx, a federally threatened species that humans extirpated from the island in the 1930s.

Bats: Acoustic surveys indicated a seventh bat species on Isle Royale, the tri-colored bat (formerly known as the eastern pipistrelle); two dead bat specimens on Government Island verified its presence. The Windigo staff housing area is popular with bats; the effectiveness of exclusion efforts is under study. Bat detectors installed on the Ojibway fire tower and Rock of Ages Lighthouse will monitor migration.

American martens: For the first time in 95 years, an American (pine) marten was captured on Isle Royale. The healthy young female is now radio collared. Believed extirpated in the 1930s, martens reemerged in 1990 when tracks were seen. Genetic analysis of scats collected over six years show this marten is a separate subspecies; the closest mainland population with similar DNA is in Newfoundland.

Common loons: Isle Royale is a stronghold for the common loon, threatened in Michigan, with 238 adults and 30 fledglings counted in 2012, both near the 14-year average. Recovered geoarchival tags from loons banded in 2010 and more chicks banded in 2012 will help identify the wintering grounds of this population.

Raptors: Twelve young fledged from nine eagle nests, but only one osprey fledged from four nests, reflecting the trend of a gradually increasing eagle population and chronically low osprey numbers. The big avian news for the year is that a peregrine falcon chick fledged on Passage Island, the first in 57 years! Reestablishment efforts with hacking boxes on Feldtmann Ridge, Palisades, and Passage Island between 1987 and 1991 fledged 50 falcons, all but two of which dispersed, but no subsequent nesting was observed.

Fish: Cisco that may have been endemic to Lakes Sargent and Richie are now likely extinct. Surveys since 2010 failed to collect any fish, and the deepest water in the lakes now exceeds the upper

lethal temperature for cisco in summer.

Zebra mussels: Surveys found 52 zebra mussels within park boundaries, mostly at Windigo, Belle Isle, and Mott, showing a decline in numbers and providing no evidence of ongoing reproduction. The commercial ferries were all free of the invaders, as were 34 recreational boats inspected, but the US EPA R/V *Lake Explorer II* from Duluth was asked to leave Washington Harbor so that ISRO divers could scrape mussels off in deep water outside the park boundary.

The 16-page 2012 natural resources report includes much more information about these and other species (birds, frogs, turtles, snakes, and record numbers of insects—some good, some nasty) and natural resources division activities. Email kbradof@irkpa.org for a copy. This year's projects include surveying inland lakes for cisco, collaring martens for habitat and population studies, quantifying snake habitat, capturing bats to study winter migration, monitoring loons, reducing invasive plants, and removing zebra mussels.

Wolf-Moose Research Reveals Some Surprises

Two big pieces of news have emerged so far in this 55th year of wolf-moose research on Isle Royale. Long-awaited news of wolf pups came in early July when Rolf and Candy Peterson heard two or three pups at Siskiwit Bay and observed tracks along the beach (see photo, courtesy of boater Chuck Johnson). Other surprising news is that genetic analysis of wolf scat shows four to five females among the nine wolves counted in February 2012, with most of the wolves four years old or younger.

Said Chief of Natural Resources Paul Brown, "We are still a ways off from making any decisions about the future management of wolves on the island, but these results are very encouraging." This good news follows no sign of pups born in 2012, the first time in the study's history. Twenty-seven park visitors and staff reported seeing wolves in 2012, mainly brief glimpses.

Winter study 2013, cut short by unfavorable weather, counted eight wolves—one-third the number in 2009—and about 975 moose, near the long-term average. The moose-to-wolf ratio has risen from an

all-time low of 15 in 2006 to 122 now, well above the long-term average and reflected by the highest-ever per capita kill rate (how well fed the wolves are). Ten sets of twin moose calves are the most seen in 55 years, reflecting good forage and a low predation rate. Winter ticks are on the rise again.

Researchers witnessed dramatic attacks led by the female of 2012's West-end Duo (now Trio) on a lone collared female called Isabelle in and near Huginnin Cove. Isabelle had been born to the Chippewa Harbor Pack in 2009; the new member of the Trio is her older brother. Fortunately, she survived the attacks and is still alive.

A national team assembled by Park Superintendent Phyllis Green is reviewing climate change scenarios and a series of potential effects on wolves, moose, and other species on Isle Royale. The park website (nps.gov/isro) will post further information from the team; comments can be directed to ISRO_Wildlife@nps.gov. John Vucetich, Michael Nelson, and Rolf Peterson discuss the three management options being considered in a May 8 *New York Times* op-ed



(www.nytimes.com/2013/05/09/opinion/save-the-wolves-of-isle-royale-national-park.html) and in the George Wright Forum (www.georgewright.org/291vucetich.pdf). The public will have opportunities this year to provide input to the discussion of climate change effects and planning for the future of wolves on Isle Royale.

This year's annual report (available from IRKPA for \$4.95) also includes information about possible ripple effects of the decline of wolves on beaver, ravens, fox, and snowshoe hare. John Vucetich's *2013 Winter Study Notes from the Field* (\$5.95 from IRKPA) follows winter study as it unfolded.



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IRKPA 2013 Annual Meeting

Join us for our annual meeting events in the Keweenaw, October 4-5! Here's the plan:

Friday, October 4

- 5 p.m. Annual membership business meeting at Keweenaw National Historical Park's Calumet Visitor Center, 98 5th St., Calumet.
- 6 p.m. Pasty picnic at the Calumet Visitor Center (\$10 RSVP by October 1)
- 7 p.m. Michigan Tech Prof. Emeritus (and IRKPA life member) Bill Rose presents "Growing Geo-heritage Tourism in the Keweenaw."

Saturday, October 5

- 9:00 a.m. to noon. IRKPA board meeting, Quincy Mine Office Building, 49445 US Hwy 41, Hancock.
- 1:30 p.m. Michigan Tech Professors Emeriti Larry Lankton and Bill Rose present "The Life of a Lake: the Geologic and Human History of the Keweenaw Waterway," a narrated cruise on the *Isle Royale Queen IV*. Houghton waterfront. (\$25, \$20 IRKPA members; RSVP by Friday, Sept. 20.)
- We hope to arrange a screening of George Desort's new Isle Royale film, *Fifty Lakes One Island* Saturday evening. Stay tuned!

Keweenaw Photo Workshop

Join professional photographer and IRKPA life member Bob Guiliani for a colorful weekend in the Keweenaw! The Calumet-based workshop begins at 12:30 p.m. Friday, October 4th and ends 5 p.m. Sunday. Included are drives to famous Brockway Mountain Drive, Lake Superior shorelines, local lighthouses, and an old mine, plus an informative scenic boat tour of the waterway, sunrises, and sunsets. A great photo awaits you at nearly every turn! Workshop cost is \$350 (\$340 for IRKPA members). Meals and lodging on your own. Check the IRKPA website or contact us for a flyer with more information.



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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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