



2019 Issue 3

Wolf's Eye

Newsletter for the Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association

Sales Up, More \$ for OUR Parks!

IRKPA's Sales Manager, Alison Pontynen, recently shared the excellent news that sales are up about 18% over the record high sales of last year. This is particularly great news, as one of the primary ways that IRKPA is able to provide funding to the parks is through sales revenue. So, if YOU want to help us give more support to Isle Royale NP and Keweenaw NHP, shop with us! www.irkpa.org/shop

Sean Gohman to Lead Commission

Sean Gohman has been selected as the new Executive Director for the Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission. Sean has deep connections to the Keweenaw Peninsula where he has conducted research and archaeology work while obtaining his PhD and MS in Industrial Heritage and Archaeology. Sean is replacing Scott See, who served as the Executive Director for ten years.

The KNHP Advisory Commission was established, along with the park, by an Act of Congress on October 27, 1992. The commission and its members serve at the request of the Secretary of the Interior.

Happy Retirement to IRKPA's Executive Director!



Kristine Bradof

Having served as IRKPA's Executive Director for nearly a decade, Kristine Bradof retired at the end of September. Reflecting on her tenure as Executive Director, Kristine cited her work in improving the financial health of the organization as her most important achievement.

In fact, on her watch, increases in overall revenue combined with operational cost savings have allowed for the addition of staff, the distribution of more financial aid to both Isle Royale NP and Keweenaw NHP, the build-up of our

financial reserves, and the implementation of a much-needed e-commerce system to manage our retail sales and inventory.

Kristine, a skilled writer and editor, has received recognition for those abilities and has used them to work with authors to shepherd two re-prints and four new books through the publication process—three of which won Public Lands Alliance national awards.

We are indeed grateful to Kristine for her years of service to IRKPA and our two Upper Michigan national parks. In retirement, she intends to continue to live in the Keweenaw where she has made her home since 1991. She is looking forward to having more time to travel, explore the region, and continue her volunteer work in the community.

Kristine says that she looks ahead to the "new and exciting ways that our capable, talented and dedicated year-round staff," together with our young summer assistants and active group of volunteers, will continue to carry IRKPA forward.

Kristine leaves us, in her words, "wishing the best for the future of IRKPA and our national parks," and we, in turn, wish her all the best in the years ahead.

Written by Lynn Bjorkman, IRKPA Board President

Mock Cluster Kill Site by Susanna Ausema

A highlight of IRKPA's annual meeting on Isle Royale this summer was a presentation and hands-on exercise led by Chief of Natural Resources Mark Romanski. Mark enthralled his audience by providing an in-depth look at the wolf translocation project, from logistics involved in capturing the wolves and transporting them to the island, to the data that is now being collected.

The following day, IRKPA members were given an exclusive opportunity to take part in a "mock cluster kill site" field exercise. Through this simulation, Mark demonstrated how data is gathered from sites where wolves spend time (as indicated by maps generated from their GPS collars). After following the GPS unit to the center of the cluster area, our IRKPA "technicians" fanned out 50 meters into four equal quadrants, and searched each quadrant for signs of wolf activity. Half an hour of bushwhacking yielded a beaver skull, a moose calf pelvis and femur, and even the nearly imperceptible resting spot of the well-fed wolf within this simulated kill site.



Board member Sandy Wilhoit discovered a beaver skull.

Two technicians on Isle Royale were responsible for following a more rigorous version of this protocol throughout the summer. As IRKPA members soon realized, the amount of physical exertion required to get to these sites, and the attention to detail that must be paid in order to thoroughly document them, is extreme.

Last month, the National Park Service coordinated with the Michigan DNR to translocate 4 wolves from the Upper Peninsula, to add to the genetic diversity of Isle Royale's wolves. Now the plan is to watch and wait. Will packs begin to form? Will pups be born next spring? Will there be a noticeable effect on the moose or beaver populations? We'll await answers to these questions and many more.

New Citizens Welcomed at Keweenaw NHP by Kathleen Harter



Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Photo: Brockit, Inc.

On May 23, 2019, Keweenaw National Historical Park hosted a Naturalization Ceremony for new immigrants to become United States citizens at the Calumet Visitor Center.

On this cold spring day, twenty-three people from across Michigan's Upper Peninsula participated in a moving ceremony that concluded with a Pledge of Allegiance and finalized citizenship papers.

People have connected to and lived on the Keweenaw Peninsula for thousands of years, and the emigrant and immigrant histories that have emerged are central to KNHP. These migration histories are a primary park theme that resonate with many visitors today, so this event was particularly relevant and meaningful.

Refreshments were provided by IRKPA.

Loon Guys – 30 Years on Isle Royale

by Bill Beckman

How do a microbiologist from Iowa and a geography teacher from Minnesota become known as “the Loons Guys” of Isle Royale? Read on to find out!

Common loons are a threatened species in Michigan, and Isle Royale has consistently had the largest breeding population in the state. In 1989, a study on the loons of Isle Royale was conducted in what was intended to be a single year survey. However, one of the volunteers, microbiologist Mike Meetz, realized that one year’s data point tells nothing about the viability of the Isle Royale loon population and that a longer study should be conducted. Park scientists agreed, and Mike volunteered to return and assist the park with a yearly common loon survey.

Being a junior high geography teacher, I felt I was well trained to work with “wild life,” so when Mike invited me to take part, I enthusiastically agreed.

Immediately we began to read all we could about loons and their behavior. Under Natural Resource Chief Jack Oeflke and then bio-tech Dr. Alex Egan we learned even more. Alex showed us how to age the young loons that we were observing. Through the Isle Royale Common Loon Breeding Atlas, we learned about territories and nest locations. We continue to collaborate with Natural Resource Chief Mark Romanski and his staff as we survey and monitor the loon population.

Like the birds we study, we have found ourselves migrating back to Isle Royale each year in late July. As Mike likes to say, we follow the same routes, visit the same lakes, view from the same locations, about the same time of day and make the same mistakes each year. Park staff began referring to us as “the Loon Guys.” We call ourselves the Isle Royale Loon Survey Team, with the acronym of “IRLoST.”



Loon chick. M. Meetz

Over the last 30 years, we have learned a lot about loons. In the process we have gotten to know the inland lakes and trails rather intimately and made many friends. The park staff (which seems to get younger every year, though we haven’t aged a bit) has changed over time but its commitment to science and this project has not.

We thank Superintendent Phyllis Green and the park staff for their support over the years, as well as the Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association.



Author and Mike Meetz

Service Project Success! by Sandy Wilhoit

A big thanks to all of IRKPA’s members who participated in our 2nd annual invasive species removal service trip on Isle Royale. Our hardworking volunteers collaborated with the National Park Service to remove several hundred invasive plants, including Curly Dock, Common Mullein, Thistle, Mountain Bluet, and Sweet Clover. The group again focused its efforts on the eastern end of the island. Perhaps as a result of IRKPA’s work last year, less Mountain Bluet and Common Mullein were found in repeat areas.

If you are interested in taking part next summer, please contact Board Member Sandy Wilhoit, at sswilhoit@aol.com or 269-462-3982.



Photo: Alan West

Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association

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 Facebook.com/IRKPA
www.paypal.com/fundraiser/hub

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

Board of Directors

Lynn Bjorkman (President), Kay Pusakulich, Alan West,
Darcy Rutkowski, Steve Trynoski, Sandy Wilhoit,
Emily Fiala, Dan Rogalla, Linda Guiliani

Staff

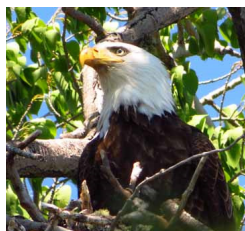
Alison Pontynen, Sales & Visitor Services Manager
Susanna Ausema, Membership Outreach Manager &
Wolf's Eye Editor
Pam Heide, Office Manager & Inventory Specialist

The search to fill our Executive Director position is now underway. Until this position is filled, our very able part-time staff—Alison Pontynen, Susanna Ausema and Pam Heide—will continue to manage our daily office operations, outreach activities, and park stores, with oversight from the Board's Executive Committee.

Join us for the 2nd annual “**Big Boat BOO!**” on Wednesday evening, October 30. This popular event invites community members onboard the *Ranger III* to learn about Isle Royale while enjoying treats along the way.



Participants also enjoy a special one-night-only sale in IRKPA's park bookstore, so come on down to get a head start on your holiday shopping, while also benefiting our parks!



Memberships are expiring soon! IRKPA memberships run through the calendar year, expiring December 31. Be on the lookout for a paper renewal form in your mailbox. **Thank you** for your support!

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