

Isle Royale Wolf Study Released



Sarah Hoy photo

(Article courtesy of Michigan Tech)

With fieldwork's return to pre-pandemic levels, Michigan Technological University researchers were able to estimate wolf and moose abundance on Isle Royale for the first time in two years. The seven-week expedition by ski and plane took place Jan. 25 through March 6 on the 210-square-mile island, part of a roadless Lake Superior archipelago 56 miles from Michigan's mainland and 18 miles from the Minnesota shore. In addition to population estimates, updates about the lives of wolves and moose are included in the annual Winter Study report by Sarah Hoy, John Vucetich and Rolf Peterson of the Michigan Tech College of Forest Resources and Environmental Sciences (SFRES).

Evidence collected over the past year indicates the reintroduced wolf population is well-established and healthy. At least five litters of pups have been born on Isle Royale since wolves were translocated to the island in 2018-19, said Hoy, CFRES research assistant professor. She noted one litter was born in 2019, two in May 2020 and two more in May 2021.

"Each time we carried out aerial surveys this winter, we saw wolf tracks across many parts of the island and we also regularly saw groups of wolves traveling or resting together," said Hoy. "It is such a pleasant change from five years ago when there were only two wolves on the island and the future of the wolf population looked pretty bleak. It just goes to show how quickly wolf

populations are able to thrive in places where they are free from persecution." The wolves appear to be living in two packs, one in the island's western region and the other in the eastern.

While the wolf population is thriving, moose seem to be having a harder time, said Hoy. Estimates from this winter indicate there are 1,346 moose on the island, down 28% from the 1,876 estimate in February 2020 — after the moose population experienced rapid growth between 2010 and 2019. Researchers conducting the winter study didn't spot many moose with calves, however. Only 4% of the moose counted during the annual survey were calves, the lowest number observed since 2007.

"Over the past year we found an unusually high number of moose that appear to have died due to malnutrition," Hoy said. "The population appears to be suffering from a food shortage, especially in winter when moose don't have many good options of things to eat."

Researchers think the poor growth of balsam fir saplings they observed during fieldwork is partially due to moose overbrowsing in previous years. An outbreak of spruce budworm, a moth larvae that feeds on the needles of balsam fir and white spruce, is an additional peril. Ground-based field crew members Ky and Lisa Koitzsch reported that spruce budworm larvae appear to have eaten needles and buds on many trees in some areas of the park. The full report can be downloaded at isleroyale-wolf.org

Where in Keweenaw NHP?

Do you know Keweenaw National Historical Park well enough to identify this location? If so, email IRKPA Executive Director Mark Wilcox, at executivedirector@irkpa.org.

Include your guess and if you like, a personal story or memory about the place. We'll print our favorite response in the *Wolf's Eye* and send a prize to the winner.



Thanks to our interns Brooke and Robin!

IRKPA was fortunate to have two incredible young women to serve as interns this season. Over the summer they worked the counter at both ISRO and KNHP gift shops, helped with inventory, assisted NPS staff when needed and many more tasks.

Brooke Luepnitz, our college intern, has returned to Michigan Tech's College of Business and is also taking her talents to the Quincy Mine Hoist Association.

Our high school intern was Robin Kisiel, a junior at Houghton High School. She is active in the student council, soccer, and Nordic Skiing. A big Thank You to Brooke and Robin for all you've done this past tourist season.

Executive Director's Report

Mark Wilcox

As I approach the completion of my first year at IRKPA, I find myself experiencing a wide range of emotions. On one hand I certainly feel like I'm just getting started. On a daily basis I'm learning new things, enjoying new experiences and meeting new people. So while I still have much to learn, the IRKPA staff, officers, board and membership make me feel like I've been here for quite some time.

That said, the highlight of my first year (not counting my overnight trip to Isle Royale in May), is actually the opportunity to work closely with both IRKPA and NPS staff, and our incredible Board of Directors. I challenge you to find a more dedicated, talented and passionate group. These people view our parks as living entities that require care, support and love.

I appreciate the fact that the board has allowed me to "play to my strengths," i.e. marketing, media relations and producing the triennial newsletter you now hold in your hand. I hope I can continue to earn your trust.

As I've previously indicated, things certainly are looking up for IRKPA. Under the guidance of Retail Manager Sharon Kisiel, we continue to set sales records both online and in our four retail locations. The popularity of several of our publications has prompted their re-printing and we are looking into an exciting new publication in the coming year.

On page 4 you'll find information on our upcoming membership meeting in Calumet. I encourage you to attend this meeting and I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can.

Looking back: The Living Community

The following is an excerpt from "The Living Community of Isle Royale" by Robert M. Linn and Robert G. Johnson, published in The Wolf's Eye, August 1958.

The beginning of the story of the living things of Isle Royale leads ultimately to the sun. In the last analysis it is the energy of the sun reaching the earth as sunlight that provides the energy, the fuel, for life. Whether it be a simple little Bunchberry, a majestic moose, or even the timber wolf — each utilizes the energy of the sun to carry on the activities of its life. Although the sun provides energy for all life, it is easy to see that not all organisms can harness the solar energy directly.

Carpeting Isle Royale is a luxuriant cover of green forest. It is made up of many millions of individual plants of several hundred different kinds. A major portion of the is covered with a forest of balsam fir, white spruce, and paper birch, while a good deal of the remainder is cloaked beneath stands of sugar maple and yellow birch. These are the two dominant forest types of Isle Royale. Each of these forests has its own peculiar complex of lesser plants. Growing in the spruce-fir forest, for example, are the Pipsissewa and the Wood Lily, while in the sugar maple forest such plants as the Large White Trillium and the Mayflower are more typical. These forests are thus quite distinct in their composition and very different in their general appearance, but in either case they are made up of myriads of green plants.

The green plants of the island are nature's first step in harnessing the solar energy and making it available for life here. These organisms are the basic producers of food in the community of living things. It is the green plants — and only they — which can directly utilize the energy of the sun.

There are a great many forms of life which do not have the ability to mold the raw, inert elements of the earth into the living materials of their bodies, and so in order to derive the energy for their lives it is necessary that they fall back on the reservoir of tissues built by the green plants is the source of their livelihood. The energy of the sun has already been captured for them by the green plants and they use it second hand. A very large number of Isle Royale animals feed on plants this way.

The Northern Red Squirrel feeds largely on the seeds of the fir and spruce and on the hazelnut and the fruit of the alder. The moose too, is a vegetarian feeding largely on birch, aspen, willow and many forms of aquatic vegetation. It is quite a difficult proposition to place the majestic moose and the lowly aphid on the same plan of importance, but their places in the community of life on Isle Royale are essentially one and the same.



Remembering Kathryn Omoto

Author and architectural historian, Kathryn Omoto, active in the early days of Keweenaw National Historical Park, has passed away.

Kathryn died on July 15 in Leland, Michigan. She was 87.

A Detroit native, she earned a degree in history of religion from Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. She earned a master's in art history from the University of Michigan and a PhD in American studies from Michigan State University.

From 1970 until 1997, Kathryn served as Michigan's State Historic Preservation Officer. In that capacity, she served as an initial member of Keweenaw National Historical Park's Advisory Commission.

She is the author of several books on Michigan architecture including, *The Sandstone Architecture of the Lake Superior Region*, *Buildings of Michigan* and *The Campus Guide: Cranbrook*.

In 2012 she was named a Fellow of the Society of Architectural Historians.

Bill Fink, the first KNHP superintendent, has fond memories of Omoto. "She was a fun person to work with. I remember two things that most impressed Kathryn about the Copper Country. She was always impressed by the closed-in front porches and the winter walks," Fink said. "The adaptations to a rigorous winter climate impressed her."

Another former KNHP superintendent, Frank Fiala, has fond memories of Kathryn as well. "I truly valued Kathryn's participation, console and friendship during my tenure at the park. Her past experiences as Michigan's SHPO, her preservation connections throughout Michigan, her participation in the park's Advisory Commission and her genuine love of the Keweenaw were instrumental in forging the development of the park. She was a remarkable person, I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to work with her on behalf of Keweenaw National Historical."

A celebration of Kathryn's life was held August 4 in Leland.

Memorial Donations in her name can be made to Fishtown Preservation Society, PO box 721m Leland MI 49654.



Photo Courtesy of Fishtown Preservation Society

Houghton gift shop Closes Oct. 31, Calumet open on weekends

The Gift shop in the Houghton Visitor Center will close for the season Oct. 31. The store in the KNHP visitor center, will begin winter hours on Nov. 1. The store will be open from 10 am to 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Don't forget you can do your Christmas Shopping online at irkpa.org.



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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.

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IRKPA Membership

Meeting October 15

We have rescheduled our Annual Membership meeting for October 15th @1:00 p.m. It will be held in the Keweenaw National Historical Park headquarters. We will begin with a short meet and greet and will then move on to a guided walking tour in the area. Hopefully you will be able to join us.

Additionally, our October Board Meeting will be held on October 14th @1:00p.m. in the conference room of the Keweenaw National Historical Park headquarters. An agenda will be posted on our Website. All are invited to attend.

