

A Trip to Isle Royale



On August 2, the crew of Dilly Dally aboard Dale & Lisa Broom's Morgan 462 ketch, left Washburn marina bound for a week of sailing, hiking and swimming at Isle Royale National Park. For those who aren't aware, Isle Royale (pronounced "royal", not "roy AL") is a 50 mile long wilderness island located at the north side of Lake Superior. Even though it is closer to MN and Canada it is actually a part of Michigan. Newcomers Joyce Hennes, George Paulos and Teresa Woestman joined Captain Dale Broom and club members Don McGrath, Jerry Sicard, Tony Green and Kevin Crothers. We were accompanied most of the time at the island by sailors Norena Hale, Wayne Hokemeir, Kim Wright, Marge Collins and Paul Hinck aboard his sloop Donna Lee. It was a trip on which we will all look fondly back upon. However, it was a little less in the sailing line than hoped for, due to winds either dead astern on the way out or dead on the nose

on the return across Lake Superior--decidedly not any boat's best points of sail.

All the prime points of interest were taken in, including overnight stops at the ranger station at Windigo, McCargoe Cove, Rock Harbor and Chippewa Bay. We visited Rock Harbor, the largest hub of activity on the island where a restaurant and well stocked store contained all the amenities that were so looked forward to after days of stomping about the shore. We hiked the wilderness trails including a visit to the forest ranger tower located on the top of the ridge which transverse Isle Royale.

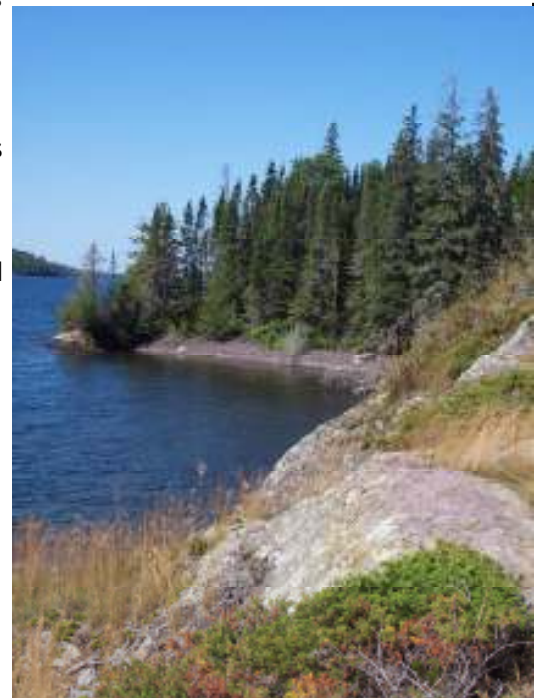
We spent our 4 days on the island exploring old lighthouses, abandoned fishing camps and even visited with "Mr Moose", a retired professor and researcher from Michigan Tech University. He is a well known and published expert who had a lot to say about the ongoing struggle between the local wolf and moose population. After a dozen hikes through leafy tree-canopied trails, padding through the soft needled floor of a pine forest on neighboring Wright Island to the aroma of musky conifers was a real treat.

Wildlife was plentiful with a scruffy red fox strolling through the Rock Harbor facility, nonchalantly ogling the human interlopers. While stopped at a deserted fishing house on our last day on the island, we spotted a number of moose swimming within 100 yards of the dock. The loons were also congregating within 100 feet of our boats.

For some, a "dip a day" meant swimming in Lake Superior. The "dip" was as expected, a bit chilly, but a positively refreshing experience after hiking trails up and down the hills to ranger towers and abandoned mines. (I almost said sauna-like, but that wouldn't be quite true.) A few brave souls portaged and kayaked through 15 knot winds across Lake Siskiwit to Ryan Island, the largest island in the largest lake within the largest island in the largest lake in the world. Say that real fast three times!

One of the highlights was the stop at Belle Isle where Dale's great aunt had been the hostess at the exclusive resort that was booming in the 20's and 30's. It's amazing that in spite of our concerted effort to locate artifacts and remains of the resort, so little was left by the Park Service who had the facility removed a long time ago. From the pictures Dale had of the resort and the remaining cement footings, he was able to take pictures of himself in the exact places where his great aunt had stood so many years ago!

One highlight was the trip to and from Isle Royale across Superior in the middle of the night. There's something primeval about standing a trick from midnight to 4 bells in the middle watch, that's 2AM for you lubbers. Keeping a weather eye for the commercial traffic with little more than a million stars and the glow of the radar to see your companions by is an experience we will always remember.



After the return crossing, an evening on Madeline Island seemed just the thing. We started in LaPointe at Tom's Burn Down Bar. Inspired by the refreshments and the local talent, the crew decided to return to ship and showcase their own musical efforts. After some additional "liquid courage", the guitars came out and so did some long dormant voices raising--well, you get the idea. Well, nobody got hurt and nobody was arrested for disturbing the peace. And even the guys enjoyed the peach/mango mojitos!

We left Washburn, many of us, strangers to each other. We returned a week later as comrades who succeeded in sharing experiences of which many can only dream. It is the simple things in life: basking on docks in the northern sun, dipping in Lake Superior, singing songs under the red lights, eating simply prepared meals, casually sharing our life stories and learning something about

a piece of wilderness called Isle Royale far across the big water called Gitchee Gumme. There were no ordeals to endure nor attitudes to conquer. Even when the wind was uncooperative, there existed between the crew a spirit of adventure. And, we all have forever treasured memories of our trip in the wilderness to Isle Royale.

Submitted by Joyce Hennes and Kevin Crothers

