

NORTHERN WAKE

FALL / WINTER 2021 | Voyageurs
Conservancy **V**

voyageurs.org



SUMMER AT VOYAGEURS | ZEBRA MUSSELS FOUND IN RAINY | FIELD FELLOWS PROGRAM LAUNCH

DEAR FRIENDS OF VOYAGEURS,

September and October are the perfect time to slow down and appreciate the transition of seasons. On the trails and shorelines, Voyageurs National Park is beginning to display hints of yellow and red. As we pack away our shorts, we look forward to our favorite fall activities—hiking, camping, and stargazing on these clear, cool nights. I hope you'll continue to get out there, explore your park, and introduce Voyageurs to friends and family.

This summer brought us challenging heatwaves, fires, low water levels, and the arrival of zebra mussels in Black Bay. We continue to collaborate with the National Park Service to respond and plan for an ever-changing future impacting the park's ecosystems. There is no better time to invest in future conservation leaders. Our Voyageurs Classroom Initiative will expand K-12 environmental education programs, both in the park and in the classroom, and provide opportunities for Field Fellows to gain career experience and provide valuable new perspectives on education, land management, preservation, recreation projects and more. The Conservancy will receive \$348,000 over three years from Minnesota's Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as seed funding to begin this effort to connect more children and youth to the park. We look forward to continuing to partner with our generous members to fund this next generation initiative.

Take care, stay healthy,
and play outside.

For our park



Christina Hausman Rhode
Executive Director



Eric Miller/NPCA



Eric Miller/NPCA



HIKING WITH A PURPOSE

Voyageurs Conservancy and NPS partnered with Women of the Water, a Crane Lake community boating club for a service project on Mukooda Lake. Volunteers built monofilament recycling stations that keep dangerous waste such as fishing line, hooks, and tackle off park shorelines. Fishing line is a high density plastic and requires a special recycling process. These stations protect the park's precious wildlife from ingesting waste and greatly improves the visitor experience. In 2020, Voyageurs Conservancy members helped establish the new 2.7-mile Mukooda Hiking Trail. A big thanks to REI Co-op and the National Park Foundation for their generous support towards the trail and to Women of the Water for helping with the ongoing stewardship of the site.

RAINY LAKE FISHING PIER GRAND OPENER

The Conservancy team had a fin-tastic time celebrating the grand opening of the Rainy Lake Fishing Pier. Young anglers reeled in prized catches, while rangers and community partners shared the unique ecology of Voyageurs National Park's lakes. The new Rainy Lake Fishing Pier was funded in partnership with the Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club and the Conservancy. This fully-accessible pier allows visitors of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities angling opportunities on the outstanding waters of Rainy Lake.

"THANK YOU TO ALL WHO ATTENDED THE EVENT AND A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK MAINTENANCE STAFF FOR THEIR HARD WORK ON THE PIER! THIS PIER IS AN IMPORTANT AND INTEGRAL RECREATION AREA FOR THE COMMUNITY OF INTERNATIONAL FALLS, RANIER, AND THE VISITING PUBLIC."

- VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK SUPERINTENDENT, BOB DEGROSS.

VOYAGEURS STAR PARTY

A family watches in awe as meteors soar across the Milky Way above. A child discovers Jupiter for the first time through a telescope. Visitors take in centuries of cultural stories mapped across a sea of constellations. Voyageurs National Park and the Conservancy celebrated their first summer as an International Dark Sky Park with a multi-day Voyageurs Star Party. The event included special Ranger activities, a Perseid Meteor Shower viewing with Astro Bob King, telescope and constellation tours, and more! The Conservancy and NPS will continue providing programs that connect the public to the magnificence of the night sky.

WETLAND RESTORATION EFFORTS STRENGTHEN CARBON-CAPTURING VEGETATION

Wetlands can store up to 50 times more carbon than rainforests; though wetlands cover only 3% of the planet, they store one-third of the world's total carbon. The Conservancy funded reseeding efforts to restore native vegetation along an additional 10 acres of previously cattail-invaded shoreline habitat. This summer, wetland restoration activities were focused in Olson, Cranberry, and Lost Bays. From marsh birds to northern pike, wetlands offer a biodiverse habitat for wildlife and have an extraordinary carbon-capturing ability. Special thanks to the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation Biodiversity Fund.

JUN FUJITA CABIN REHABILITATION

Youth crews from the Northern Bedrock Preservation Corps embarked on multi-day "hitches" to restore aspects of the historic Jun Fujita Cabin on Rainy Lake. This project introduced young adults to historic preservation and trade skills in the outstanding outdoor classroom of Voyageurs National Park. Funding support from the Conservancy and National Park Foundation helped the park to address major safety and structural concerns, ensuring the Jun Fujita cabin's legacy is preserved and shared with visitors.

KETTLE FALLS OVERLOOK COMPLETED

With funding support from the Conservancy, National Park Service staff removed 2,800 square feet of deteriorated wood at the Kettle Falls Overlook. This summer, the new fully-accessible overlook was completed and includes an environmentally-friendly design and revitalized educational signage. The new overlook protects nearby archaeological sites and ensures all visitors can appreciate the location where Native peoples gathered, hunted, and speared sturgeon at the falls, voyageurs paddled and portaged through, and prospectors traveled to on their way to the Rainy Lake gold mines.

SUMMER AT THE PARK

MEET REECE BANTA AQUATICS & FISHERIES FIELD FELLOW

Hiking to a remote lake and landing a muskie in Voyageurs National Park is a seasoned angler's dream. For Reece Banta, backcountry fishing is part of her summer job. Reece put her love of fishing, ecology, and the outdoors to work, joining as the Voyagers Conservancy's first Aquatics Field Fellow.

A recent environmental chemistry graduate from the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse, Reece was looking for field experience to apply her studies when she discovered the Aquatic Ecology & Fisheries Field Fellowship. Reece secured the fellowship and joined the park's Aquatic Ecology team to assess the health of Voyageurs' waters. Reece's summer was filled with enriching experiences in resource monitoring, aquatic invasive species prevention, and outreach.

"I easily met my professional goals for the season. A majority of the work was water quality sampling, which excited me originally when I saw the advertisement for the position. I'm able to add many brand-new experiences to my resume including fish tagging, cyanotoxin work, vegetation mapping, and dragonfly larvae sampling,"

Reece's fellowship also included critical work with Voyageurs National Park's muskies. Little Shoepack Lake's muskie population has caught the Aquatic Ecology team's attention, as they learn more about this potentially genetically distinct population. By tagging, taking scale samples, and measuring Little Shoepack's muskies, the Aquatics team is providing crucial insight into the health and dynamics of the population. Banta recounts, "I have really enjoyed the muskie study because I love to fish. I was finally able to land my own muskie, tag it, collect all the measurements, and then release it!"

Reece's tangible skills helped her land a position in an analytical lab in northern Wisconsin performing metals work and water testing. Her experience at Voyageurs this summer paves the way for future Field Fellows to gain valuable, hands-on ecology experience in a field often left inaccessible to many.

"The Field Fellowship was a very positive experience for me on many levels. Professionally, it was a great way to build my resume and gain lots of hands-on experience from people who have been in the Park Service for decades. Voyageurs National Park is a very special place." - Reece Banta.

ABOUT VOYAGEURS FIELD FELLOWS

THE CONSERVANCY'S EMERGING VOYAGEURS FIELD FELLOWS PROGRAM SEEKS TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK. THE FELLOWSHIP OFFERS STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES A STIPEND-PAID INTERNSHIP TO ENGAGE IN REAL WORLD, HANDS-ON WORK IN AREAS SUCH AS PRESERVATION, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND MORE.



STATE OF THE PARK:

ZEBRA MUSSELS, AN AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES WITH DESTRUCTIVE ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS, HAVE BEEN DETECTED IN RAINY LAKE

Stretching miles across the Minnesotan and Canadian border, Rainy Lake is known for its spectacular recreation and angling opportunities. Serving as a major gateway to Voyageurs National Park, approximately one-third of the lake falls within the park's borders. Rainy Lake's outstanding waters are now threatened by an unwelcome visitor.

Regarded as one of the most destructive aquatic invasive species, zebra mussels have been confirmed in Black Bay of Rainy Lake, just outside of the Voyageurs National Park's boundary. Zebra mussel larvae (known as "veligers") were identified in four out of the five water samples taken by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in July 2021. The presence of larvae in samples suggests zebra mussels are reproducing - threatening the delicate ecosystems of Voyageurs National Park's interconnected lakes.

As the park's partner, the Voyageurs Conservancy is collaborating with the National Park Service (NPS) to prevent the spread of this destructive species and will continue to keep members informed on actions we can all take to protect the health of our aquatic ecosystems and native fish.

ZEBRA MUSSELS: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

WHY DOES IT MATTER IF ZEBRA MUSSELS SPREAD THROUGHOUT VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK?

These invasive species eliminate native mollusks and reduce available food for native fish. This could have a significant impact on some of Voyageurs National Park's most beloved fish, including walleye. A study conducted by the University of Minnesota, Minnesota DNR, and Voyageurs National Park found that first-year walleye were smaller in Minnesota lakes infested with zebra mussels and spiny water fleas - both of which have been found in Rainy Lake. This can lead to lower survival rates for walleye and may reduce populations overall.

Zebra mussels also cause major economic damage estimated at over one billion dollars per year in North America. They clog water intakes and can reduce waterfront property values. The sharp shells of zebra mussels can be a danger when swimmers cut their feet on shells.

WHAT IS CURRENTLY BEING DONE TO ADDRESS THIS INVASIVE SPECIES?

Due to Rainy Lake's shared borders, multiple agencies including the NPS, Minnesota DNR, Canadian government, Koochiching and North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa are working to address and prevent the spread of zebra mussels. NPS staff will adjust operations and equipment use, including inspecting all water-based infrastructure (buoys, removable docks, chains) in all park lakes. NPS watercraft operating in Rainy Lake will be decontaminated before entering any uninfested lake.

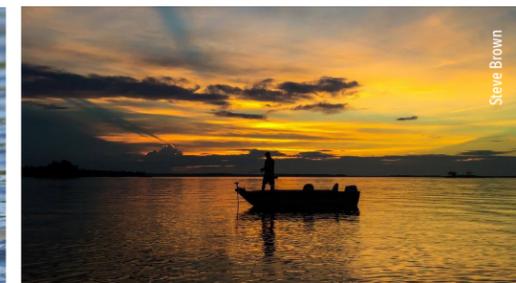
This winter, the park and Conservancy will plan zebra mussel response strategies for the 2022 summer season. Decontamination station use will increase at visitor center boat launches and direct travel between lakes on watercraft may be impacted. The NPS and Conservancy will continue to provide updates on ways visitors will be asked to play a role in preventing further spread.

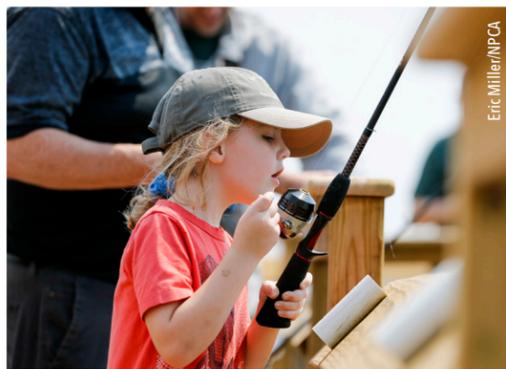
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO RESPOND QUICKLY TO THE ZEBRA MUSSEL INVASION?

Zebra mussels have not been detected in Kabetogama, Namakan, and Sand Point Lakes. However, zebra mussels could be spread to any of these interconnected lakes, allowing them to spread quickly throughout the interconnected waterways of Voyageurs National Park. Delaying infestation in the surrounding major lakes and interior lakes (smaller lakes primarily located within the Kabetogama Peninsula) is key in managing and protecting our aquatic ecosystems.

"Delaying the infestation of new lakes as long as possible is of great importance. There are always new technologies and control systems to combat this invasive species in development. By slowing this spread to other lakes, we could prevent irreversible harm."
- Ryan Maki, Voyageurs National Park Aquatic Ecologist

To learn more, visit voyageurs.org/zebramussels





MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: ROGER WILLIAMS

By Ellery McCardle, Voyageurs Conservancy member and volunteer

Many people have experienced the wonder of Voyageurs National Park throughout its 45-year history, but few have experienced what it took for it to reach such a status. One person who is an exception is Roger Williams, a Minnesotan who holds a vital piece of the park's history that few have ever seen. Donning a dark brown cover, he still has his copy of the proposal for Voyageurs National Park, an administrative report that Williams helped to prepare in 1967 while working at the Minnesota Department of Conservation. *"It was probably the most exciting part of my career back then,"* said Williams.

Williams was asked alongside then-colleague Willard West to write a summary about the National Park Service proposal that was later to become Voyageurs National Park. There was to be no recommendations for or against having a park, rather, the report was meant to be unbiased and given to Governor Harold LeVander, who Williams described as being undecided about whether or not he would support the push for a national park in the state.

For six months, Williams traveled north numerous times in all kinds of weather to gain personal knowledge of the park's resources, along with hearing the opinions of local residents and businesses. In the report, Williams used his background as a landscape architect to draw some of the geographical maps. He also helped research and write the arguments for and against establishing a park, and he helped explain the potential impacts of a park on the natural resources and local economy.

The National Park Service loved the report, and it provided Governor LeVander with useful information. But getting everyone on board with supporting the establishment of a National Park wasn't easy. Williams explained that they needed then-Congressman John Blatnik to support it, and to get that support, he wanted to see an official master plan from the National Park Service.

Meantime, supporters and non-supporters had fierce debates over the potential impacts to the timber and resort industries near International Falls. Other locals held issue with the State of Minnesota's proposed expansion of park boundaries to include Crane Lake.

"It was a deep-seated issue up there," said Williams. During years of debate, Williams became a liaison between state and federal agencies and citizen communities. He explained that at the time, there was a feeling that if Minnesota didn't gain a National Park in those years, that it may never happen at all.

"It was hectic. Lots of public hearings and lots of discussion," said Williams. *"It was quite challenging, but I got to work with wonderful people."* He added that he gained a respect for citizens on both sides of the debate, who felt so passionately one way or the other.

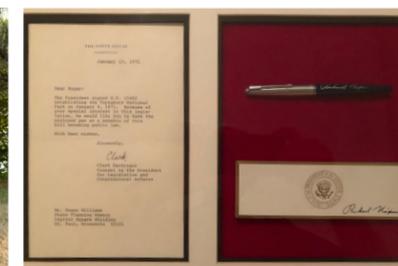
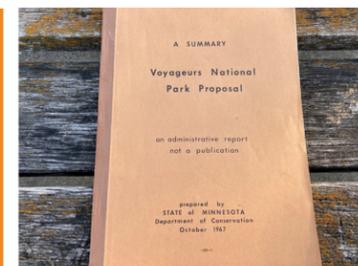
STATE GRANT MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR VOYAGEURS CONSERVANCY TO LAUNCH ITS GREATEST OUTDOOR CLASSROOM AT VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK.

VOYAGEURS CLASSROOM INITIATIVE

From navigating the winding waterways to observing delicate wildlife along trails, National Parks are our most treasured classrooms. However, the Voyageurs Conservancy noticed a concerning trend unfolding within the park's education programs. Federal budget cuts and hiring challenges significantly decreased the park's ability to provide education programs, field trips, and opportunities for youth and families to learn in their national park. Soon, these vital programs would cease to exist.

To address this critical need, the Conservancy launched the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative. This joint initiative with the National Park Service includes a suite of educational programs in Voyageurs National Park for children, college students, and families. The Conservancy is proud to announce it received funding from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund for the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. As a result, K-12 students will embark on park field trips; college students will receive hands-on, paid internships; virtual classroom visits will reach youth throughout the country; and families will experience enriching community programs.

This state funding will help jumpstart and operate this program over the next three years. In strong partnership, the Conservancy and NPS will continue the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative for future decades. Becoming a member of the Voyageurs Conservancy ensures the sustainable future for these education programs. We're looking for long-term partners to help us grow the next generation of public land stewards; please consider joining us in this important initiative. In a world of increasing technology - our expansive waterways and forests, rocky shorelines, and magnificent wildlife remain our greatest teachers.



"No one could ever say there wasn't enough debate about the park," he said. After years of waiting, and a nudge to the National Park service to publish its official plan, Congressman Blatnik agreed to support a park and on January 8, 1971, President Richard Nixon signed into law the establishment of Voyageurs National Park. Williams still has a pen that the President used during the signing.

Overall, looking back on that time in his life, Williams believes the creation of Voyageurs National Park was for the good of the state. *"I think economically the park has been a stabilizing influence for International Falls. I think it has gained acceptance locally and I think it's become known nationally as a different kind of park and it fulfilled a niche,"* he said, explaining the uniqueness of Voyageurs' lands, waters and history.

However, Williams, a member of Voyageurs Conservancy, is concerned about the park being "loved to death" with an influx of visitors like at other National Park sites around the country. That is quite the contrast to when he first started making trips to the remote area in the 1960's. Through all of this time, the park has endured and continues to thrive as a unique water-based U.S. National Park, and it was people like Roger Williams who helped put it on the map. *"I did my part and many other people did their part, and if we all hadn't done our parts there wouldn't be a park,"* he said.



Voyageurs Conservancy
PO Box 50631
Minneapolis, MN 55405
contact@voyageurs.org

 @VoyageursConservancy
 @VoyageursConservancy
 @VNPConservancy

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Front Cover Photo by Noah Lang Photography (@noahawaii)

BE OUR BEDROCK

Sustaining members are the bedrock of our work. Through monthly giving, you help us save time and invest more dollars in Voyageurs National Park. For just \$10 a month, you can help us restore biodiverse habitat, preserve our starry skies, and support the next generation of park stewards. If you want to be a leader for Voyageurs, become an Evergreen Sustainer at:

[VOYAGEURS.ORG/SUSTAINER](https://voyageurs.org/sustainer)

SHOP WITH PURPOSE

Support Voyageurs and prepare for the holiday season! Shop Conservancy apparel and several small businesses that support Minnesota's national park at:

[VOYAGEURS.ORG/SHOP](https://voyageurs.org/shop)

SAVE THE DATE

The Voyageurs Conservancy's work is sustained by a community of park stewards like you who ensure 218,000 acres of wild beauty exist for generations. Will you join our effort? Please remember Voyageurs this Give to the Max Day on November 18. Your gift can help us unlock over \$100,000 in prize grants for vital conservation, recreation, and education programs. Make an impact at:

[GIVEMN.ORG/VOYAGEURS](https://givemn.org/voyageurs)

Tom Gable



TO THE
give **MAX**  Voyageurs
Conservancy **v**

Nov. 18, 2021