

SPRING 2021

# NORTHERN WAKE

VOYAGEURS CONSERVANCY'S NEWSLETTER

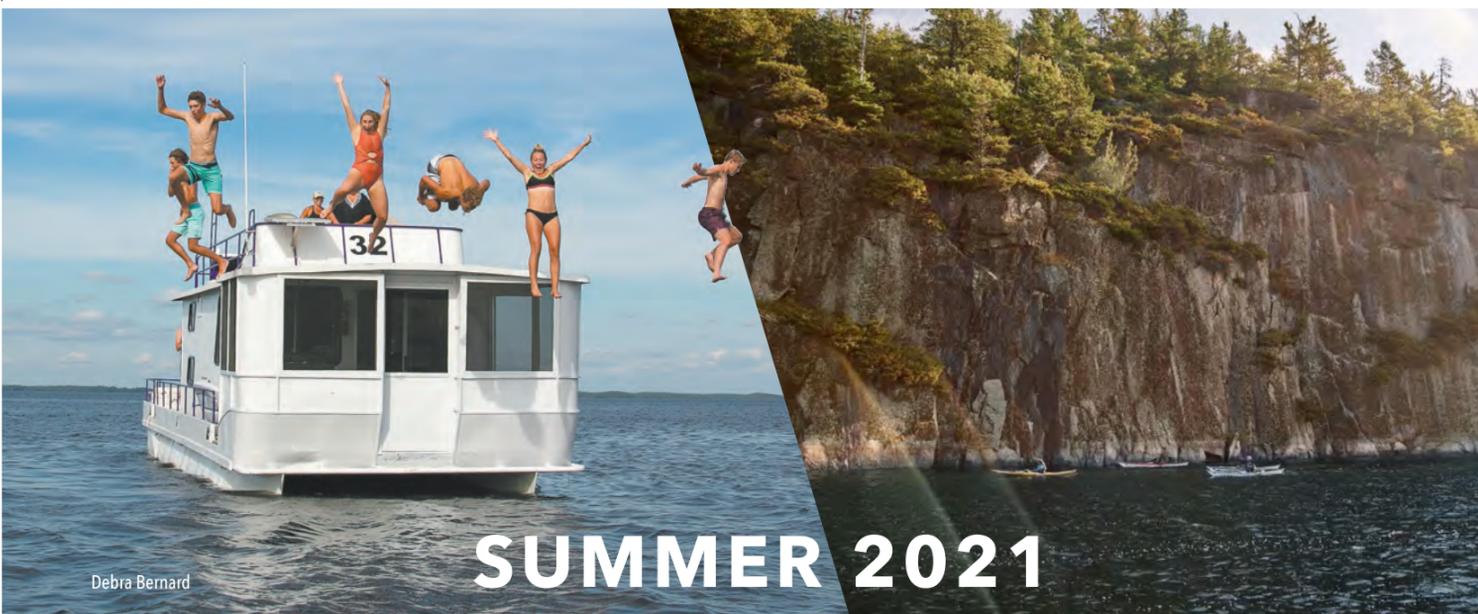


EXPLORE IT. SHARE IT. KEEP IT WILD. LEARN MORE AT [VOYAGEURS.ORG](https://www.voyageurs.org)

Mandy Fuller



The Voyageurs Conservancy is the official nonprofit partner of Minnesota's Voyageurs National Park. In partnership with the National Park Service, the Conservancy works to preserve the wild character and unique experience of Voyageurs by funding projects and programs that will sustain it for generations to come.



Debra Bernard

# SUMMER 2021

## PARK PROGRAMS & FACILITIES

Voyageurs experienced monumental visitation numbers in 2020 and that trend is expected to continue with the public seeking nature and outdoor recreation more than ever. Park campsite reservations, lodging, and houseboat accommodations are filling up for the 2021 season at record pace.

For the most up-to-date information on park operations this summer, please visit [nps.gov/voya](https://www.nps.gov/voya) and [voyageurs.org/visitorinfo](https://www.voyageurs.org/visitorinfo).

Subject to change, visitor centers will be open at 25% capacity with masks required. Limited-capacity boat tours will be offered at the Rainy Lake Visitor Center beginning June 23 through August 25. Boat tours will not be offered at the Kabetogama Lake Visitor Center this summer. Reserve your tour at [www.recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov).

Additional outdoor ranger programs, including night sky programs, will be offered, with a full schedule at [nps.gov/voya](https://www.nps.gov/voya).

## CHECK OUT VOYAGEURS.ORG/EVENTS FOR THE LATEST CONSERVANCY EVENTS & PROGRAMS

The Voyageurs Conservancy is developing safe and engaging ways to connect individuals and families to Voyageurs National Park. The Conservancy will be offering outdoor, socially distanced events at the park, as well as virtual learning opportunities. Check the website and sign up for our e-newsletter to learn more.

## 2021 PHOTO CONTEST

The annual Voyageurs Photo Contest opens in June! Submit your photos and favorite Voyageurs memories to earn exclusive prizes, and help protect and support your national park. Learn how to enter and find more information at [voyageurs.org/photocontest](https://www.voyageurs.org/photocontest).



Ryan Hunter

## VOYAGEURS SPRING THAW RAISES FUNDS FOR VOYAGEURS CONSERVATION & EDUCATION

Thank you to everyone who was able to join the Voyageurs Spring Thaw! Together on April 8, we (virtually) celebrated the park's Dark Sky Park certification and raised funds for environmental education, land and water conservation projects, trail work, and more.

Our generous Conservancy community - over 300 households from over 30 states and Canada - helped us raise \$50,000 to sustain priority projects at Voyageurs National Park. Thank you to everyone who purchased a Park Pack, participated in our silent auction, donated, or purchased a bottle of Voyageurs Five Grain Whiskey from our partner Tattersall Distilling. In addition to Tattersall Distilling we would like to thank our other lead park champion sponsors REI, Delta Dental of Minnesota, Room & Board, Bizal Built, Fredrikson and Byron P.A., Miir, David & Debra Strike, Janette Sweasy, and Caroline Pflueger.



If you missed the live program with Diana Pierce and special speakers Dr. Kevin Hainline and Dr. Anton Treuer, we encourage you to watch the recording at [voyageurs.org/springthaw](https://www.voyageurs.org/springthaw)

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The changing world around us has given us time to reflect on the work we do in partnership with the National Park Service and our member community. To reflect our expanding vision and commitment to the park, we underwent a major rebranding effort in 2020 to become the Voyageurs Conservancy. This change helps us grow our collective of park advocates. Now, more than ever, we must engage new voices, new visitors, and the next generation in the stewardship of our lands and waters to ensure a vibrant and sustainable National Park.

This year brought unique challenges as we navigated a global pandemic and, as a result, unmatched visitation numbers. Our community stepped in as a dynamic and forward-thinking organization, responding to the ever changing needs of our park. Through virtual programs, the Conservancy connected individuals and families across the nation to Voyageurs National Park. Members of the Voyageurs Conservancy helped support environmental education, dark sky preservation, land and water conservation, and more. Additionally, the Conservancy worked internally to evaluate how our organization can better promote equity and inclusion within our staff, leadership, and volunteers. It is our responsibility to promote equity in opportunity and access to nature, learning, and enjoyment in Voyageurs National Park. In turn, we will continue to build authentic relationships and an inclusive community. We have a long way to go, but are committed to the work and the journey. Thank you for your continued support as we listen, learn, act in innovative ways, and partner with new communities.

*May the waters, skies, and forests of Voyageurs bring you joy this summer!*

Thank you,

Christina Hausman Rhode  
Executive Director  
Voyageurs Conservancy



Larry Sang Jr.

## LETTER FROM VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK SUPERINTENDENT

We've heard it often over the last year, but I will state it again... What an unprecedented time. At the park, our goal has been to assure the health and safety of our team, neighbors, and visitors. We did a pretty good job, even with a large increase in visitation. We expect this trend to continue as more families and individuals find solace in our natural spaces this summer. In turn, the National Park Service will continue to prioritize the health and safety of our communities. As pandemic and vaccination trends allow, we plan to increase our visitor access to public facilities by reopening visitor centers, providing services at the Kettle Falls Hotel, and offering limited tour boat opportunities.

In 2020, overnight camping reservations increased by close to 40%. Due to its expansive waters and isolated campsites, people recognized Voyageurs National Park as a refuge to recreate in the outdoors while social distancing. With the increased visitation, we also saw more human-caused impacts on park resources. As park stewards, our main philosophy should be, "leave no trace." In essence, leave the place better than you found it so the next visitors can enjoy the same untouched beauty. I'm confident we can all do better this year.

As always, I want to thank the members of the Voyageurs Conservancy for their dedicated support. Through your generous

assistance and cooperation, we achieved Dark Sky Park certification in December 2020. Our partners Quetico Provincial Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness also achieved dark sky area recognition. Due to this collaborative effort, Voyageurs is now a part of one of the largest dark sky regions in the world. This has been an outstanding opportunity for us to share with the world one of our spectacular resources - an unhindered natural night sky. The Voyageurs Conservancy was essential in obtaining this certification by funding park lighting modifications and hosting public education programs required for the application.

Additionally, the pandemic required us to rapidly evolve our education programming. To connect people to the park we offered remote distance learning opportunities in cooperation with the Conservancy, even serving students out of state for the first time. Many of these students may never visit the park, but now through distance learning, they have a better appreciation and understanding of why Voyageurs is protected for everyone. With the Conservancy's support, several historic preservation and trail maintenance projects will be completed by working with youth organizations this summer. These projects provide a platform for young adults to be exposed to conservation careers, an experience that could have a major impact on their relationship with public lands.

It is an unprecedented time. During times like this one thing is clear for many, nature provides us solace, escape, and a place to decompress. I hope you continue to find that escape at Voyageurs National Park.

Bob DeGross  
Superintendent  
Voyageurs National Park



## YOUR GIFTS AT WORK IN 2020

# LOVE YOUR PARK

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Conservancy produced Park-it-at-Home resources and virtual programs to connect individuals and families to Voyageurs during the pandemic. This included the Night Sky Explorer educational series which drew over 820 live attendees from across the nation and its recordings received hundreds of additional views.

### STEWARDSHIP & LEAVE NO TRACE

The Conservancy created a 'How to Camp in Voyageurs' video. This video educates campers on proper Leave No Trace principles and reduces their human impact. The video has already been viewed over 2,000 times, helping to protect the precious flora and fauna of the park as visitation rises.

Jonathan Bayer

## KEEPING VOYAGEURS WILD

### VOYAGEURS WOLF PROJECT

The Conservancy provided grant support to the Voyageurs Wolf Project which continues to study the summer predation and reproductive habits of wolves in the Greater Voyageurs Ecosystem. The Voyageurs Wolf Project released groundbreaking, nationally-recognized publications including novel research on how wolves alter wetlands.

### INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PARK CERTIFICATION

In December 2020, Voyageurs National Park obtained the prestigious International Dark Sky Park certification from the International Dark-Sky Association. The Conservancy was a critical partner in making this a reality. They funded data collection, lighting fixture improvements to minimize excess light pollution, and necessary education programs that continue to pay dividends.

### PROTECTING 16 ACRES

Through the assistance of the Voyageurs Conservancy, the National Park Service added two parcels of land to Voyageurs National Park totaling 16 acres in 2020. The sites are located on Rainy Lake and Sand Point Lake. This land will serve as protected habitat for wolves, black bear, moose, otter and eagles. Support for these projects was made possible by the Wallace C. Dayton Voyageurs National Park Legacy Fund and the National Park Foundation.

### WETLAND RESTORATION

Voyageurs National Park, the Conservancy, and many other partners launched a 10-year plan in 2016 to restore cattail-invaded wetlands. In 2020, the project restored approximately 25 acres of wetlands through the removal of invasive cattails and reseeded efforts. This important project is increasing biodiverse habitats for wild rice, marsh birds, native fish, and more.



Having a partner like the Voyageurs Conservancy is huge. They raise money, it's well spent. Whether it's working on trails, introducing kids to the park, they're at the forefront. But the park needs care... All visitors need to become the partner of the Voyageurs Conservancy and help support their efforts for years to come.

Bill Dougherty,  
Rainy Lake Houseboats owner,  
Voyageurs Conservancy  
member



## NEXT GENERATION

### VOYAGEURS CLASSROOM INITIATIVE

Cuts to the park's environmental education program presented the opportunity for the Conservancy to step in and support the park with youth education in a much expanded way. Though the pandemic greatly limited youth trips to the park, the Conservancy shared education resources with teachers and families and developed both prerecorded and live virtual education programs to connect young explorers to the park's ecosystems. These efforts reached over 2,000 children. To expand this work even further, starting in 2021, VC was recommended for \$348,000 in funding over three years from the Minnesota Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund for the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative.

### FIELD FELLOWS PROGRAM LAUNCHES

The Voyageurs Field Fellows program offers stipend-paid internship opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to develop professional experience in Voyageurs National Park. The Conservancy welcomed its first Environmental Education Field Fellow in 2020 who enhanced National Park Teen Ambassador programming and developed new distance learning dark sky curriculum.



It's really vital for National Park Service sites, like Voyageurs National Park, to have such a strong partnership with their nonprofit partner. The VC, they're really vital in helping me do my job. They're helping me get funds that we need to get kids in the park and to get connected to youth in different communities in northern Minnesota and even beyond.

Melissa Panter,  
Voyageurs National Park  
Interpretive Ranger



### YOUTH CORPS HELP BUILD NEW TRAIL

The Voyageurs Conservancy sponsored two Student Conservation Association (SCA) young adults crews. SCA members learned trail-building and conservation skills within the park's boreal landscapes, while adding 2.7 miles to the Mukooda Hiking Trail. This new loop trail, accessed from Sand Point Lake, weaves through a variety of landscapes including dense pine forests, rocky ridgelines, and alongside pristine waterways.

2020

16 Acres of land protected

25 Acres of wetlands restored

915 Virtual programs attendees

2,050 Summer campsite reservations  
(40% increase from 2019)

2,116 Students served through the  
Voyageurs Classroom Initiative

7,286 Feet of new trail built

263,091 Park visitors

Voyageurs Conservancy's 2020  
Annual Report available online:  
[Voyageurs.org/2020](https://www.voyageurs.org/2020)

Bruce McKee

*Awe-Inspiring:*

# FAMILY REFLECTS ON TRIP TO VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK

**by Ellery McCardle,**  
*Voyageurs Conservancy member and volunteer*

Mark and Robin Oram love to be outside with their kids. The more remote, the better. So, in August of 2018, they drove from their home, near Peoria, Illinois, to Voyageurs National Park.

The family spent one week on a houseboat and enjoyed fishing, hiking, campfires, taking photos of the wildlife, like loons and deer, and enjoying time away from a smartphone. They took in as much quiet time as they could.

For their kids, Basil and Oliver, the park allowed them to let their imaginations run wild.

"They learned how to roast marshmallows and mastered the

art of S'more making. They were endlessly entertained making boats out of logs and leaves and racing them in the wind. We kayaked to various small islands (some just a rock or two) and the kids pretended to conquer new worlds," says Robin Oram.

The Orams took hundreds of photos on their trip. This year, the Orams were among a few winners in this year's Voyageurs Conservancy Photo Contest, after submitting a photo of their son Basil proudly holding up a fish that they had just caught. Moments like that are exactly why this family supports Voyageurs Conservancy.

"It's an area we want to see preserved and hopefully preserve it for future generations so that

our kids can look back and say 'Oh I went there as a kid, I want to go back,' and have it be just as pristine and wonderful as it is," says Robin Oram.

The family is no stranger to the National Park System. Every summer, they visit a different park. They've visited Arches and Canyonlands in Utah, Olympic in Washington and Isle Royale in Michigan. Voyageurs ranks in their top two.

"The dark skies were amazing. We started taking pictures at night," says Mark Oram.

The family hopes to return to the park soon, to take in more of the dark skies, and hundreds more pictures, too.



Colin Willemsen



Mark Oram

## SHARING THE WILDERNESS ABOVE OUR HEADS

### VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: "ASTRO" BOB KING

You could say volunteer Bob King has had an astronomical effect on the Conservancy and Voyageurs National Park. "Astro" Bob volunteers with the Conservancy by hosting free Night Sky Explorer webinars. These bi-weekly programs teach individuals and families basic astronomy and skywatching skills, helping viewers experience the magnificence of our night skies from their own backyards.

However, Bob's work had an even greater impact on Voyageurs National Park. To achieve International Dark Sky Park certification, the park was required to host dark sky public education events. Through the Night Sky Explorer webinars, the Conservancy was able to fulfill this important component and help secure the certification for Voyageurs National Park. We cannot thank

Bob King enough for sharing his talents and knowledge with the Conservancy community to support dark sky preservation.

"I love the night sky (daytime too!) so the Night Sky Explorer program offers a wonderful opportunity to help others better appreciate what's over our heads. The sky is as precious and important as any wilderness on Earth and equally worthy of protection. Even simple measures like turning off unnecessary outdoor lighting can help preserve starry skies. Becoming more familiar with the stars helps us make another connection with the natural world. The more we know nature, the better we know ourselves," - Bob King

Bob King is an amateur astronomer, author, and passionate educator. He served as a photographer and photo editor at the Duluth NewsTribune for 39 years and taught at the UMD planetarium. Learn more and watch his previous Night Sky Explorer webinars at [www.voyageurs.org/nightskyexplorer](http://www.voyageurs.org/nightskyexplorer).





Five of the park's 26 interior lakes support cold water fish species with three supporting Lake Trout *Salvelinus namaycush*. In this photo, Minnesota DNR staff use a helicopter to access Little Trout Lake to stock the lake.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT:  
**LUCIA WATSON**  
Voyageurs Conservancy Member  
& Award-Winning Chef

Having spent all of my summers at our family cabin on Rainy Lake, I can safely say that I love Voyageurs. My father used to want to get to our island home just as soon as the ice went out. I remember more than once the cold sound of crushing ice as our boat made its way through the bay to the island, probably one day earlier than we should have been there! Some of our family traditions included (and still include) picking blueberries, excursions to Kettle Falls, stargazing from the canoe at night, hiking the Cruiser Lake Trail, and of course a lot of fishing for walleye.

It can't be a coincidence that one of the most esteemed fish of the culinary world - the venerable walleye - happens to be caught in some of the most beautiful places in the world, and there is no place more beautiful than Voyageurs National Park. The quiet, meditative endeavor of walleye fishing is so rewarding in itself. It seems complete when sitting on the shore of a northern lake, listening to spring loons, with smells of the campfire and the rustle of wind in the pines, while eating a well prepared fresh walleye.

This menu was created so a majority of the preparation can be done in advance to maximize fishing and relaxing time. However, don't restrict this recipe to solely outdoor cooking. Though the ambiance may not be the same, this is delicious at your dining room table too!

*About Lucia Watson:* Lucia is the author of *Cooking Freshwater Fish* and a co-author of *Savoring the Seasons of the Northern Heartland* with writer Beth Dooley. Lucia was knighted by the French Government in recognition of her work in agriculture and cooking. Now retired, Lucia serves on the board of the Nature Conservancy and The Raptor Center and is a Voyageurs Conservancy member and partner.



Dan Foster

## SHORE LUNCH WALLEYE WITH TARTAR SAUCE & OVERNIGHT COLESLAW

Assemble the ingredients the night before and pack into a cooler with your cold beverages.

### SEASONED FLOUR MIX FOR ABOUT 4 FILETS

- 1 cup all purpose flour
- About 1 teaspoon each salt and pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- Pinch cayenne

Combine all ingredients into a zip lock bag.

After catching and cleaning your fish, dredge each filet in the flour mixture, gently shaking off any extra. Place in a hot skillet with a generous coating of oil or bacon fat. Cook over medium high heat for about 3-4 minutes per side. Serve with the following tartar sauce and coleslaw.

### EASY TARTAR SAUCE

Combine:

- 1 c. mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp. sweet gherkin pickles, chopped
- 1 tbsp. capers
- 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tsp. fresh tarragon, chopped (or 1/2 tsp. dried)
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients, then taste and adjust seasoning.

### OVERNIGHT COLESLAW DRESSING:

- 1 bay leaf
- 3/4 c. red wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Dash of Tabasco
- Salt and pepper to taste

Place the above ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and allow the liquid to cool. Strain then whisk in:

- 2 tbsp. caraway seed, toasted
- 1 tbsp. honey
- 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

### TOSS DRESSING WITH:

- 1/2 head red or green cabbage, or a combination, thinly sliced
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 grated carrot

Marinate overnight.

Scott Mason



## State of the Park: STRENGTHENING OUR INTERIOR LAKES

by: Laura Beck, Outreach Coordinator

Each of Voyageurs National Park's 30 lakes has its own unique character, but have you gotten to know some of the unique characters that call these lakes home? One of Voyageurs' 26 interior lakes (smaller lakes upstream of Rainy, Kabetogama, Namakan, or Sand Point lakes) will be getting a boost in their cold water-loving residents.

Tucked just east of the Grassy Bay Cliffs, the Lake Trout of Little Trout Lake are working hard to keep their population going against pressures from the climate and their neighbors. Lake Trout depend on a band of cold, highly-oxygenated water called an oxythermal habitat layer. This layer naturally fluctuates throughout the year - widest in northern Minnesota's long, cold winter months, and narrowing through spring and summer. Think about swimming in the lake and how deep you have to swim to hit the cold spot in June compared to August - this cold zone is where Lake Trout thrive.

With summer weather getting warmer and lasting longer, that oxythermal layer is at risk of becoming increasingly narrow, and even disappearing altogether. The park's aquatic ecology team and others monitor this coldwater habitat to help fisheries managers understand current conditions and climate stress that may affect these populations. The good news is that predictive models indicate Little Trout Lake's coldwater habitat is likely to persist longer than that of most lakes in Minnesota<sup>1</sup>, indicating that habitat suitable for Lake Trout to establish a population will likely be present. This makes Little Trout Lake one of only three interior lakes in Voyageurs and about 100 lakes in Minnesota that support Lake Trout.

Yet the native Lake Trout population has declined in Little Trout Lake, perhaps due to competition from other hungry predators such as Walleye and Smallmouth Bass. These species are adapted to warmer waters and have more room to roam and



find food. Aquatic Ecologist Ryan Maki describes the lake as a two-story fishery - the cold, Lake Trout-filled zone below, and the warmer zone inhabited by other species above.

Fisheries Biologists and Resource Managers from the National Park Service and Department of Natural Resources are working together to monitor these Lake Trout and allow them to reestablish a self-sustaining population. Since recent surveys have shown that the native Lake Trout population in Little Trout Lake has declined and is likely no longer present, park and DNR staff are working to reestablish Lake Trout using a stock that the DNR has available in one of their fish hatcheries, with the hope of developing a strong, sustainable population.

In the late 2000s, a DNR study in Mukooda Lake found that the well-adapted, genetically unique native Lake Trout were maintaining a population on their own without stocked fish contributing to reproduction. By preserving water quality and preventing the introduction of invasive species, NPS and DNR staff hope a similarly hardy population will establish itself in Little Trout Lake. Teams will continue monitoring efforts and

design management strategies based on how the population continues to adapt to changing conditions.

As we continue to learn more about our coldwater fish friends, it is up to us to help maintain a healthy habitat for Lake Trout and all the critters and plants that call Voyageurs home. Jaime LeDuc, Aquatic Biological Science Technician at Voyageurs, reminds us that there are actions we can take that will keep Voyageurs' water healthy. LeDuc says, "I think we can meet the needs of both humans and wildlife if our freshwater ecosystems are carefully managed and protected."

Ficke, A.D., C.A. Myrick, and L.J. Hansen. 2007. Potential impacts of global climate change on freshwater fisheries. Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries. 17:581-613.

## KEEPING OUR LAKES HEALTHY

- Use environmentally friendly and biodegradable soaps and cleaning products when out in the park and at home.
- Do not overfish. Remember to follow Minnesota State fishing laws and guidelines and Voyageurs National Park regulations on interior lakes.
- Diligently clean any lake/boat/fishing gear and follow local regulations to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.
- Reduce fossil fuel and electricity use to lessen carbon emissions into the atmosphere.
- Reduce single-use plastics - microplastics very often end up in waterways.
- Consider how water drains off your land and if any products like fertilizer or gasoline could be leaching into the groundwater.

# VOYAGEURS AND THE MUKOODA UNDERWORLD

by: Erik Ditzler, National Park Service

Many people come to Voyageurs National Park to explore some of the most beautiful lakes in the United States and find peace in the boreal forests of Northern Minnesota. Others may be looking for recreation or wildlife viewing. Camping, fishing, boating, and hiking are all popular reasons to come to this remote and wild location on America's northern border. Whatever the reason, solitude and privacy are high on many people's lists in a place like Voyageurs.

During the Prohibition era (1920-1933), this place attracted visitors of a different sort all together. The passage of the eighteenth amendment outlawed the sale of alcohol in the United States, but the demand only increased, leading to a boom in organized crime in larger cities centered around the distilling, transportation, and sale of illegal booze. The illegal trade became known as bootlegging and Minneapolis and St Paul were not immune. Soon, there were gangsters, bosses, and two-bit hoods looking for hide-outs where they could get away from prying eyes in the cities and do a little bit of recreating themselves.

One Minnesota mobster that found privacy, and opportunity on these lakes was Thomas Filben. He was known as the "Slot Machine King of Minnesota", and his "one armed bandits" had an important role to play during Prohibition. Because bars and saloons were shut down, a new sort of establishment was coming into its own. Speakeasys were so named because patrons were expected to speak quietly about such places in public, in the hopes that police would

not become aware of them. Since they sold alcohol illegally, they needed to explain their ill-gotten revenue. Cash slot machines could help do that, and more. Filben laundered all sorts of dirty cash through his slot empire and became a prominent banker to the underworld. Cash stolen in brazen bank robberies would be turned over to him, reported as slot machine revenue, and put back into circulation. In fact, it was noted at the 1933 Minnesota Bankers Association annual conference that 21% of all bank holdups in 1932 took place in the state. Filben and his operation was at the heart of it all.

Through his lucrative slot machine business Filben fostered close connections with some of the most infamous gangsters of the day. He was associated with the likes of "Babyface Nelson" and "Shotgun George Ziegler"- one of Al Capone's hitmen. With friends like those...who needs enemies! His most notorious friend, however, was certainly the bank robber, murderer, and two-time prison escapee John Dillinger. When Dillinger or his gang needed to ditch a car, Filben was their guy to sell them a new one. Filben was even suspected to be personally involved in several St Paul murders.

Gangsters like Filben made their fortunes in the cities, but they still craved solitude and privacy at places like Mukooda Lake. He purchased a cabin from another outlaw who was serving time for mail theft on the east end of the lake which would come to be known as "the St. Paul Club". Filben had used the cabin on vacations with his wife, but also brought his girlfriend to the property. His partner



Thomas Filben (right)

NPS photo

Tom Brown, who happened to be a St. Paul police detective and later Chief of Police, also had a cabin nearby. They would offer the remote cabin to outlaws that needed a safe hide out - for a price. This north woods protection racket provided Filben and Brown a large degree of influence over the twin cities underworld.

This was still a very remote area in those days. Automobiles were just starting to allow for travel to places like Voyageurs, although most of the roads to get here were unpaved. To get to his cabin, Filben and his guests would drive to a fishing lodge on Crane Lake where they would then take a boat. It was a thirty-five-mile trip by water, another overland portage, then a second five mile boat journey to Mukooda Lake (then named Trout Lake). The journey was half the charm of the place. How could the FBI possibly raid the cabin without first being noticed?

As remote as the Filben cabin was, guests found a comfortable retreat. It was extravagantly furnished, and even featured a player piano that was painstakingly transported through the woods and across the lakes.

Few people came to this place, but that didn't mean you would never see another soul. Local residents reported seeing gangsters in the woods "hunting with Tommy guns". A game warden encountered two known bank robbers out hunting deer. These residents knew the type of people who came here to lay low. At least one of them was even hired as a lookout, warning of any car or boat that approached the cabin.

Although the "St Paul Club" is no longer standing, it was quite impressive in its day. It was a 28' x 49'

two-story structure constructed with balloon framing and designed with horizontal log siding, large windows, and a wrap-around porch supported on heavy posts. A notable feature of the cabin was the substantial stone and masonry "basement", an aboveground, bunker-like room. The main floor consisted of a kitchen, great room with a brick fireplace, a washroom, and a room that served as a pantry or storage space. An open staircase led to the second floor, which was one large space with no defined rooms.

Filben retired from his many criminal enterprises and moved away from Minnesota as a wealthy man. He sold the "St Paul Club" on Mukooda Lake and settled in Palm Springs, California before the FBI could pin him with anything that would stick. The cabin changed hands a few times, eventually ending up within the boundaries of Voyageurs National Park. By the 1980s, it was in a dilapidated state and was mostly removed, although it's foundations still remain. Visitors may find it's ruins while exploring, but don't expect to meet any outlaws.

It is important to preserve and protect cultural landscapes. Through historic preservation, we look at history in different ways, ask questions of the past, and learn new things about our history and ourselves. Historic preservation is an important way for us to transmit our understanding of the past to future generations, even when we are considering outlaws, or negative historical themes. Voyageurs National Park maintains these resources in the hopes that future generations will be able to learn something positive from the past.



Lace-up your hiking boots, the new Mukooda Hiking Trail is complete! The Voyageurs Conservancy provided funding for two young adult crews that contributed 2,058 service hours. These crews, alongside a dedicated National Park Service team, completed the trail late in 2020 adding the only hiking trail east of Ash River in the park! This project increases recreation access for thousands of park visitors who love exploring the Crane and Sand Point Lakes area. As you explore the Mukooda Hiking Trail, we hope you enjoy the dense pine forests and rocky ridgelines that make Voyageurs National Park so unique. Thank you to our members, the National Park Foundation, and REI Co-op for their generous support of this project.



Filben cabin

NPS photo



144 Glenwood Ave, Suite 120  
 Minneapolis, MN 55405  
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 Twin Cities, MN  
 Permit No. XXXX

Name First Last  
 12345 Anywhere Street NW  
 City, MN 55555



**VOYAGEURS NEEDS FRIENDS YEAR-ROUND  
 BECOME A SUSTAINING MEMBER**

For as little as \$10 a month, you can make a significant impact in caring for Voyageurs. Your gift supports land and water conservation, environmental education, recreation and visitor experience projects, and more. And, your monthly sustaining support will help us be more flexible when immediate park needs arise.

[Voyageurs.org/join](https://voyageurs.org/join)

**STAY CONNECTED**

Sign up to receive our monthly e-newsletter, become a member, and view upcoming events at [Voyageurs.org](https://voyageurs.org)

Follow [@VoyageursConservancy](https://www.facebook.com/VoyageursConservancy) on Facebook and Instagram; [@VNPConservancy](https://twitter.com/VNPConservancy) on Twitter



**SHOP TO SUPPORT  
 VOYAGEURS**

Show your love for Voyageurs with our new apparel and shop to support page. We highlight several small businesses that are donating a percentage of their proceeds to the Conservancy, as well as our own new t-shirts and sweatshirts. More designs coming later this year!

[Voyageurs.org/shop](https://voyageurs.org/shop)



Top: [@themjsafari](https://twitter.com/themjsafari)  
 Bottom: Steve Brown, 2020 Photo Contest, First Place in Wildlife & Scenery Category