



The Journal of

VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK ASSOCIATION

Winter 2006/2007



Photo courtesy of Voyageurs National Park

Winter in Voyageurs National Park is a time for quiet and solitude, grand vistas across the ice and more subtle beauty. Whether you seek a comfortable resort with short forays into the frozen wilderness or a true arctic adventure, Voyageurs National Park is your winter destination.

Inside...

- ◆ Information for making the Park your winter vacation destination (page 3)
- ◆ Park designated critical Canada Lynx habitat (page 4)
- ◆ Update on National Park Service management policy revisions (page 5)
- ◆ Calendar of Park and VNPA events (page 8)

And much more!

**Annual Members
Meeting
January 27, 2007**

We hope to see you there!
See page 6 for details

2006 Reflections

The past year was marked with national media attention focused on the National Park Service (NPS). The media highlighted issues such as proposed detrimental revisions to NPS guiding policies, changes in leadership at the helm and chronic budget shortfalls threatening our national park resources. See page 5 for more about some of these issues.

Voyagers National Park managers and staff dedicated time this year to identifying how budget shortfalls will affect Voyageurs National Park and its core mission in the next five years. They identified challenges as well as opportunities, including the increasingly important role of partnerships and volunteers to meet Park goals for stewardship and visitor services.

Voyagers National Park Association is dedicated to working with the Park and its other partners to identify creative solutions to maintain the integrity of the Park and protect its resources in the face of these challenges. The next two articles highlight projects that VNPA accomplished in 2006; directly funding staff and volunteer training to maintain one of the Park's cultural icons and developing a partnership with the Park and one of its gateway communities to help maintain access to the Park's interior.

These projects were made possible through the support and dedication of our members and donors. We look forward to expanding on these partnerships in 2007.

Wishing you happy holidays,

Cory MacNulty
Executive Director

VNPA Sponsors Stone Wall Repair Workshop at Ellsworth Rock Gardens

By Mary Graves, Cultural Resources Specialist, Voyageurs National Park

Voyagers National Park Association contributed \$1,300 toward a stone wall repair workshop at the Ellsworth Rock Gardens in the Park July 17-21. Master stonemason Neil Ripplingale of the Dry Stone Conservancy of Kentucky provided hands-on training for Park staff and volunteers.

Nine participants repaired seventeen walls or sections of wall totaling approximately 600 linear feet. These repairs resulted in an immediate, dramatic difference in the visual quality of the gardens and restored structural stability where it had been compromised.

The stone walls are an essential feature of the gardens. Mr. Ellsworth mortared most sculptures in place but he used a traditional technique for the rock walls and dry-stacked them

without mortar. He constructed different types of walls—single or double boulder walls to edge a path, free-standing walls to define edges and flank paths, and curving retaining walls for flower beds. Most of the gray igneous retaining walls were topped with small pieces of contrasting white rock.

The majority of stone walls are sound and have good integrity but more than 20 walls or sections of wall need repair. The Park plans to host a second stone wall repair workshop in 2007, which should complete the major repairs of stone walls in the gardens.

Additional funding for the workshop came from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the NPS' Challenge Cost Share Program.



Park staff and volunteers learn techniques to repair the stone walls of Ellsworth Rock Gardens (Photo courtesy of VNP)

A Volunteer Year

During two weekends in May and September, **29 individuals volunteered 331 hours to clear 11 miles of hiking, skiing and snowshoeing trails in Voyageurs National Park.** Volunteers worked with four park service staff to clear brush and fallen trees from the Kab-Ash trail, the Blind Ash Bay Trail, the Sullivan Bay Snowshoe Trail and the Voyageurs Forest Overlook Trail.

The entire 26-mile Kab-Ash Trail is now safe and accessible for visitors to hike, ski and snowshoe, in large part due to this volunteer effort.



Volunteers Brian Hoskins and Rachel Geissing and VNP Education Specialist, Teri Tucker, clear brush from the Sullivan Bay Snowshoe Trail. (Photo by Peggy Franchot)

VNPA and partners will co-sponsor volunteer trail-clearing events again in 2007. Please contact the VNPA office at 612-333-5424 or vnpa@voyageurs.org if you are interested in volunteering.

Winter is Prime Time to Visit Voyageurs

Winter in Voyageurs National Park is a time for quiet and solitude, grand vistas across the ice and more subtle beauty. Whether you seek a comfortable resort with short forays into the frozen wilderness or a true arctic adventure, Voyageurs National Park is your winter destination.

Visitor Services: The Rainy Lake Visitor Center is the only Park visitor center open in the winter. Hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Skiing and snowshoeing: The Rainy Lake Visitor Center has adult skis for rent and snowshoes and children's skis for loan.

Groomed ski trails:

- * Black Bay Ski Trail – 6 miles
- * Tilson Creek Trail – 10 miles
- * Echo Bay Trail – 2.3 miles

Tracked snowshoe trails:

- * Oberholtzer Trail – 1 mile
- * Blind Ash Bay Trail – 2.5 miles
- * Sullivan Bay Trail – 1.5 miles

Ungroomed ski and snowshoe trails:

- * Kab-Ash Trail – 26 miles
- * Sullivan Bay Ski Trail – 2.5 miles

The Park is also a great place to backcountry ski and snowshoe over the ice or through the forest.

Backcountry camping: More than 200 individual campsites are ski, snowshoe or snowmobile accessible; campsites are not maintained in the winter. Visitors are encouraged to stay at designated sites to minimize impact on the Park's resources. Camping is free, but a self-registration overnight permit is required.

Wildlife tracking: Winter is a great time to see wildlife and their tracks: Lynx, wolves, otter, pine marten, snowshoe hare, deer, beaver, moose, and red fox call Voyageurs home.



Students from the Rainy River Community College Outdoor Leadership Program snowshoe on Kabetogama Lake (Photo by Don Graves)

Ice fishing: Minnesota fishing license and regulations apply in the Park.

Driving: The seven mile ice road from the Rainy Lake Visitor Center to Cranberry Bay on Rainy Lake usually opens in January and closes in late March.

Snowmobiling: There are 110 miles of groomed snowmobile trails over ice of the "big lakes" and overland portages around unsafe ice.

Weather: Snowfall in the Park ranges from 55 to 70 inches per year and temperatures vary widely so check the weather and arrive prepared.

Lodging: A listing of winter accommodations in Crane Lake, Ash River, Kabetogama and International Falls is available in the VNP newspaper online at www.nps.gov/voya/parknews/news/paper.htm.

Spiny Waterfleas Found in Namakan Lake

By Cheryl Lesser

Voyageurs National Park confirmed the presence of spiny waterflea (*Bythotrephes longimanus*) in Namakan Lake in October. Spiny waterflea is an extremely aggressive, non-native zooplankton that entered the Great Lakes ecosystem in 1982.

According to Chris Holbeck, Chief of Resource Management, there is strong evidence that large numbers of spiny waterfleas can disrupt the food chain at its base with potentially significant effects farther up the chain.

The species competes with native zooplankton and minnows for food. It has a sharp spine that makes it hard for small fish to eat, limiting the supply of potential predators.

It is believed that spiny waterflea originally arrived in the Great Lakes from Eurasia in the ballast water of cargo ships. Boaters and anglers have most likely spread them to inland waters since then. The waterflea was discovered in Rainy Lake last summer and in Lake Saganaga in 2003. In Ontario, its known range now includes more than 65 inland lakes and waterways.

Holbeck says that this winter Park staff and partners will develop a strategy to prevent the spread of spiny waterflea to uninfested waters, to research the effects of the introduction, and to educate the public in ways they can help in the fight against this aquatic nuisance species.



Spiny Waterflea (*Bythotrephes longimanus*) (Photo courtesy of J. Lindgren, MN DNR)



Canada Lynx photos courtesy of Natural Resources Research Institute, University of MN Duluth

Park Designated Critical Habitat for Canada Lynx

By Cheryl Lesser

On Nov. 9, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published a final rule designating 317 square miles in Voyageurs National Park as critical habitat for Canada lynx. The plan was prepared following a 2004 court order resulting from a lawsuit filed against the Service by the Defenders of Wildlife and other conservation groups for failure to designate Critical Habitat.

Steve Windels, terrestrial ecologist at Voyageurs National Park, says a winter study planned previously will try to determine how many lynx live in the Park or migrate from Canada, and whether they are reproducing.

From 2000 to November 2006, the Minnesota DNR has verified more than 60 lynx sightings, mostly in Northeastern Minnesota. Some scientists say that about 200 lynx live in the state.

The original USFWS proposal included 18,031 square miles of land in Minnesota, Maine and the Rocky Mountains, but the final plan designates only 1,841 square miles, including 1,389 square miles in Glacier National Park, Montana, and 135 square miles in North Cascades National Park, Washington, in

addition to the area in Voyageurs.

The decision exempts private, state, county and tribal lands from the Critical Habitat designation as well as other federal lands where lynx recovery plans already are in place, such as national forests.

Wildlife advocates said that the USFWS plan fails to satisfy the January 2004 court order that requires lynx to get critical habitat designation, and some said they'll fight the rule in the newly elected Congress and in court.

Meanwhile, other groups have sued the State of Minnesota in recent months to stop some trapping practices in Minnesota, saying that the state has done little or nothing to stop accidental trapping of federally protected animals.



Revised National Park Service Policies Maintain High Conservation Standards

By Greg Seitz

In October 2005, major changes to the National Park Service Management Policies were proposed by the Department of the Interior.

The changes would have emphasized recreation over conservation, a major reversal of the underlying philosophy that has defined the National Parks since their inception.

Voyageurs National Park Association opposed the rewrites and submitted a letter to the National Park Service describing VNPA's stance and urging the Department of the Interior to abandon the rewrite effort.

As VNPA stated in its letter, "We are concerned that proposed revisions and redefined terminology used throughout the 2006 draft weaken protections for air quality, natural soundscapes, scenic views, and natural resources by allowing or even encouraging new and existing uses that may cause impacts short of impairment."

Not only were the revisions bad policy, but the rewrite process, which is normally done every 10 years, had already been completed in 2001. The process seemed to VNPA and many other observers to be rushed, politically motivated, and focused on addressing the concerns of special interest groups.

Fortunately, VNPA and all those who opposed the proposed changes (including many VNPA members who were among the 45,000 people who submitted comments during the public comment period) were successful in our efforts.

The Management Policies that were ultimately finalized on August 31 are very similar to the principles that have guided the Parks and the Park

Service for many decades. Once again, all decisions regarding current use must be weighed against conservation for future generations, an important and threatened distinction.

Once again, all decisions regarding current use must be weighed against conservation for future generations, an important and threatened distinction.

Specifically, the final policies reaffirm conservation as the primary mission of the National Park Service and natural sounds as a protected resource in the parks, and offer improved guidance for superintendents to determine if, when, and how new cell towers are sited in national parks.

VNPA's letter is available on our Web site at www.voyageurs.org. The final 2006 Management Policies is available on the NPS Web site at nps.gov/policy/MP2006.pdf.



New Leadership has National Park Advocates Optimistic

This summer saw significant changes at the top of the chain-of-command that governs the National Park Service. Dirk Kempthorne was confirmed as Secretary of the Interior on May 26 and Mary Bomar was confirmed as director of the National Park Service on September 5. Many National Park advocates saw the appointments, particularly Bomar, as a positive step.

The National Parks Conservation Association said in a statement following Bomar's confirmation: "She is a career park professional with proven leadership and invaluable on-the-ground experience ensuring that America's landscapes are protected and their diverse, inspiring stories are shared with generations of visitors."

The Coalition of NPS Retirees said in a letter to Bomar, "We are encouraged by the nomination of a career professional from within the National Park Service and we believe this will be a tremendous morale booster for the beleaguered employees of the NPS."

Bomar most recently served as Regional Director of the Park Service's Northeast Region. Prior to that post, she was superintendent of Independence National Historical Park.

Secretary Kempthorne previously served as Governor of Idaho. He has earned praise for spending time this summer listening to citizens and fostering a spirit of collaboration among public land stakeholders. He also supported the revised NPS management policies that maintain the emphasis on conservation.

From The Archives

Ten years ago, in the March 1996 VNPA newsletter, the new bike trail between Ranier and the Rainy Lake Visitor Center was announced. The eight mile trail, considered one of the most scenic in Minnesota, was a combination of on-road and paved off-road sections. The trail was the result of a 16-member planning committee that worked with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The committee included VNPA.

In August 2005, \$540,000 was appropriated to construct a paved off-road section of the trail connecting Highway 11 and the Rainy Lake Visitor Center. Currently, trail users reach the Visitor Center by sharing a narrow, winding road with motorists. Upon completion of this segment, there will be a safe trail for bicyclists, rollerbladers and walkers from International Falls to the Visitor Center. Learn more about the planning process by visiting parkplanning.nps.gov/voya.

VNPA 2007 Annual Member Meeting

Saturday, January 27, 2007

1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

REI Meeting Room
750 W. American Blvd.
Bloomington, MN

1:00 "Curiosity powered travel in Voyageurs National Park: A sustainable, low impact vision for eco-conscious visitors" by Chris Hemstad, Boreal Explorations EcoAdventures

2:00 Social and refreshments

2:30 Members Meeting: Provide your input on officer and board elections and find out how you can get more involved in VNPA's exciting plans for 2007

Everyone is welcome. Invite a friend!

For more information, directions and to RSVP by January 22, 2007, call the VNPA office at 612-333-5424 or e-mail us at vnpa@voyageurs.org.

Join us as Chris Hemstad, founder of Boreal Explorations EcoAdventures (BEEA) takes us on a scenic tour of Voyageurs National Park to glimpse its great natural beauty. The ancient echoes of a dynamic geological past provide a dramatic setting in which to discover the present-day wonders of a wild and watery landscape set upon the littoral roots of Precambrian mountains and primeval oceans. Visitors to the Park will find a four season wilderness paradise of interconnected waterways and island archipelagos rich in wildlife and wreathed in a diverse cultural history.

Chris is an experienced scientist, wilderness guide and educator. He founded BEEA to provide ecological expedition tours in the Voyageurs National Park area that promote environmental conservation and education while at the same time contribute to the economic sustainability and growth of the region. Go to www.borealexplorations.com to start planning your next adventure in Voyageurs National Park with BEEA.

News from Friends of Voyageurs National Park

Friends of VNP Receive Award

The National Association for Interpretation Region 5 has recognized the Friends of Voyageurs National Park with an award for Excellence in Interpretive Support. In the application for the award, Kathleen Przybylski, VNP Chief of Interpretation noted, "For over ten years the Friends of VNP have repeatedly demonstrated that they recognize the value of interpretation."

Volunteers

Friends of VNP and VNPA members along with other volunteers gave a total of 12,000 hours of volunteer service to VNP during fiscal year



The volunteer crew that replaced snowshoe bindings. (Photo courtesy of VNP)

2006. Recently at the Rainy Lake Visitor Center, a group of Friends and Volunteers of VNP replaced snowshoe bindings with new user-friendly bindings to enhance the

popular snowshoe loan program. To volunteer at VNP just contact the Volunteer coordinator, Teri Tucker at VNP Headquarters. Phone: 218-283-9821.

Summer Programs

Park staff report that visitor center visitation was equal to last year, and once again the "Children's Activity Tables" were a popular stop for younger visitors. Attendance at the ten programs in the summer special speaker series held at the Woodenfrog Campground Refectory exceeded expectations with a total of 432 attendees.

VNPA Launches New Web Site

VNPA launched its updated Web site this fall with new design and content. Visit www.voyageurs.org to learn more about Voyageurs National Park Association and Voyageurs National Park. Beautiful images of the Park will draw you in and current information about upcoming events, the latest policy issues affecting the Park, and resources to plan your next trip to Voyageurs will keep you coming back time and again.

The Web site was created and launched by three VNPA volunteers. VNPA board member Kevin Johnston of I-KJ Creative Services designed the Web site, Michael Banker, former communications intern, developed the site content, and VNPA board member Greg Seitz launched the site and updates it regularly.

New Web Site Feature: DonateNow

Visitors to the VNPA Web site can now donate online, instantly, using the new DonateNow button.

This is an important step in VNPA's five-year technology update. Gregg Rutter, membership and development director, said, "We are very excited because it offers a safe and easy way for our current supporters to contribute to our work and gives us the ability to reach new supporters in a low-cost way." The organization is also now able to automatically process monthly and quarterly gifts, allowing members to support VNPA in an easier and more efficient fashion that fits with their own budget.

The DonateNow feature is made possible through Groundspring.org, a non-profit foundation created by the Tides Foundation. All donations are processed by Groundspring.org using secure technology developed for e-commerce to ensure that donors' information is kept private and secure.

Be sure to visit the VNPA Web site at www.voyageurs.org.

The Newsletter Needs You!

Volunteers are needed to contribute articles to the VNPA newsletter or serve on its editorial committee. This is a great opportunity to help the organization (and see your name in print!).

We are looking for Park memories, articles about the natural or cultural history of the Park, and your creative ideas. Please call the office at 612-333-5424 or e-mail vnpa@voyageurs.org if you want to help.

Additional Volunteer Opportunities:

- ◆ Newsletter layout
- ◆ Policy research
- ◆ Membership development
- ◆ Financial management
- ◆ Communications
- ◆ Event planning
- ◆ Trip organizing

Membership Form

Yes! Count me in as a Voyageurs National Park Association annual member!

Basic Member Levels:

Senior / Student \$24 / year Individual \$36 / year Family \$5 / month or \$60 / year

Donor Member Levels:

Loon \$10/mo or \$120/yr Moose \$25/mo or \$300/yr Bear \$50/mo or \$600/yr Wolf \$100/mo or \$1,200/yr

I would like to make an additional year end contribution in the amount of \$_____.

I would like to support VNPA at the Leadership Level of \$2,500 or more. Please contact me.

Name(s) _____ E-mail Address _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone: Home (____)____-____ Work (____)____-____ Cell (____)____-____

Please charge my Visa Mastercard # _____-____-____-____ Security code _____ Exp. ____/____

I would like to be billed monthly quarterly annually for my membership.

My check is enclosed, made payable to "VNPA" My company will match my gift

Thank you! Your contribution is tax deductible. Please send to: VNPA, 126 N. Third St., Suite 400, Minneapolis, MN 55401

Voyageurs National Park Association

Protecting and promoting the
natural, recreational and
historic resources of
Voyageurs National Park

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Calendar of Winter 2007 Events:

Jan. 27 VNPA Annual Member Meeting
1:00 to 4:00 p.m., REI Meeting Room, Bloomington, MN
Featuring "Curiosity powered travel in Voyageurs National Park," presented by
Chris Hemstad. Open to VNPA members and the public. See page 6 for details.

Feb. 1 First Thursday Soup Supper at Backus
4:00 to 7:30 p.m., Backus Community Center, International Falls, MN
Soup and cookies sponsored by VNPA, VNP Employees Association, Friends of
VNP and the Lake States Interpretive Association. Proceeds benefit the Backus
Center.

Feb. 10 Bird Brains
1:00 to 2:30 p.m., Orr Travel Information Center, Orr, MN
An afternoon of fun and learning about some of the smartest birds around.

Feb. 11 Growing Up at Kettle Falls
2:00 to 4:00 p.m., Voyageurs National Park
Local resident and VNP Guide Mike Williams shares stories about growing up in
the Park at Kettle Falls.

Feb. 17 Night Light Snowshoe Hike
6:00 to 8:00 p.m., Oberholtzer Trail, Voyageurs National Park
Snowshoes provided, bring headlamp. Afterwards enjoy a warm fire and hot cider
with friends.

Feb. 25 Family Ski Outing
2:00 to 4:00 p.m., Rainy Lake Visitor Center, Voyageurs National Park
Free skis, poles and boots available, please call ahead (218-286-5258).

Jan. 20, Jan. 27, Feb. 3, Feb. 24 Ranger Guided Snowshoe Trips
Voyageurs National Park
Explore the winter woods of the Park by snowshoe. Free snowshoes available,
please call ahead. For times and locations, visit the Park's Web site
(www.nps.gov/voya) or call 218-286-5258



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