



VOYAGEUR TRAIL NEWS

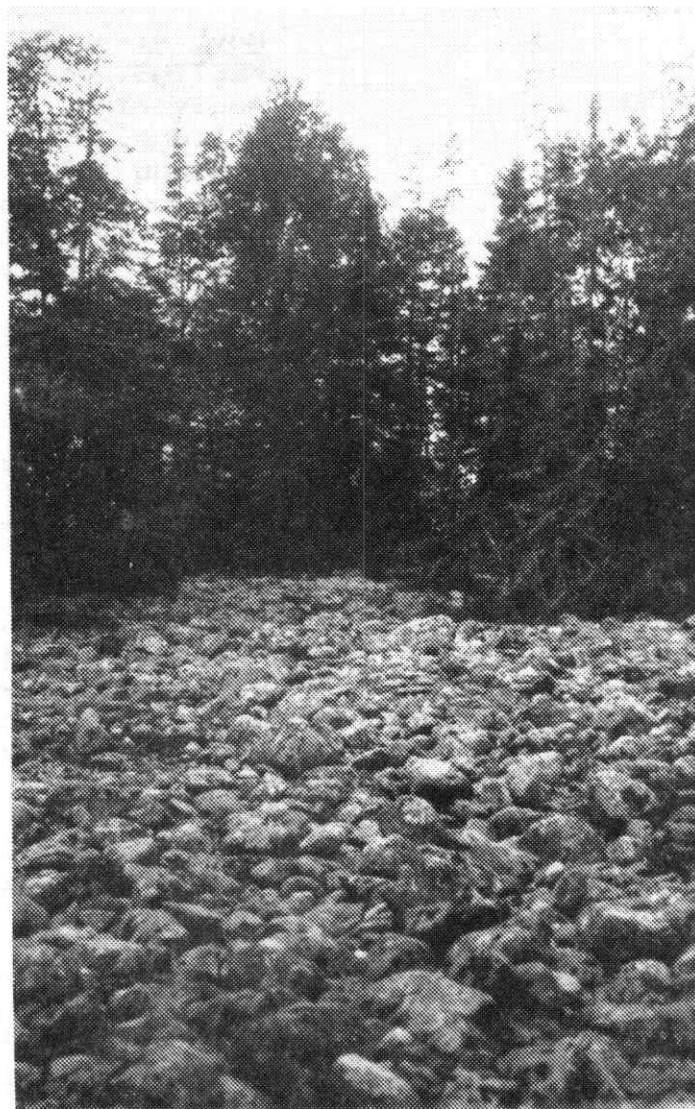
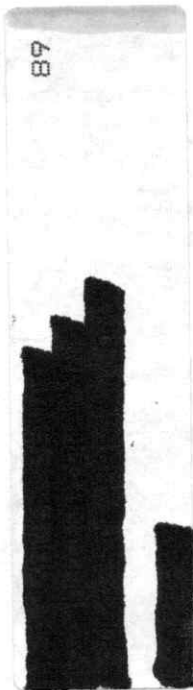
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No. 43

Editor : VIRVE SQUIRE

Autumn 1989



**Raised Cobble Beach
Above Lake Superior**

ON THIS ISSUE'S COVER:

Raised cobblestone beaches, remnants of Superior's ancient shoreline, are ideal places to search for the legendary "Pukaskwa Pits".

VTA EXECUTIVE

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Patrick Capper

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Virve Manniste-Squire
Jack Squire

***** ATTENTION ***
MEMBERSHIP**

Changes in fee structure for 1990: Single or family membership - \$10.00, students - \$5.00, VTA crests - \$2.00

The VTA asked for a federal grant to purchase a lightweight display board with updated maps. We were granted only a portion of the money we asked for and would have lost that had we not used our own funds to make up the shortfall. Consequently, our cash reserves are the lowest they have been in many years, and the money will not be enough to see us through the year. We have increased dues to more accurately reflect the

cost of mailing and printing the newsletter, our largest expenditures; but we would also appreciate any donations at this time, and since we are a registered charity, a receipt will be sent for income tax purposes.

- Dieter Ropke, Treasurer

*** UPCOMING EVENTS ***

Nov. 4: V.T.A. ANNUAL MEETING, 1:30 P.M., Main Auditorium, Algoma University College. Short business meeting followed by a slide show on Michipicoten Island. A short hike to follow, weather and time permitting.

SAULTEAUX SECTION:

Nov. 18: "Gales of November Hike" - Leisurely hike to Red Rock area. Meet Market Mall 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch and dress in layers. V. Squire leader.

Dec. 31: "New Year's Eve on Snowshoe" - Explore the Mile Hill area. Meet K-Mart 10:00 a.m. Bill Robinson leader. Snowshoes only please.

Jan. 13: Ski (bushwack???) north of Gros Cap. Meet 10:00 a.m. Market Mall. S. Taylor leader.

Jan. 28: Explore the canyons north of Nettleton Lake with Tom Allinson. Meet Market Mall 10:00 a.m.

MICHIPICOTEN SECTION:

Scheduled ski outings in Jan. and Feb. For more information, call Peter Stinnissen 856-4270 or Dorothy Fillion 856-2226.

TRAIL MIX

After last summer's scorching heat, the hiking schedule was pared down somewhat this year, but the outings were enjoyable.

The Annual Mother's Day hike was successful once again this year, as hikers and bikers, young and old, enjoyed hot dogs and fruit punch under pleasant skies. Thanks to Horst Wetzl and Lise Reid for hosting this annual event.

In June, seventeen hikers drove to the Orphan Lake Trail to view some of Lake Superior's most panoramic vistas, only to hike through an entire day of not so panoramic but ever so famous Lake Superior fog. Despite the fog, the beautiful trail provided 11 km of pleasant hiking with no regrets from any participants.

Four hardy hikers braved the trails once again, backpacking the Casque Isle Section of the Voyageur Trail Labour Day weekend. Fabulous weather and good company made this a memorable outing that many were sorry to have missed. Patrick Capper will let us know what we missed as he writes of their experiences next newsletter.

Tom Allinson and Roddie Larsen completed their kilometres for the Hike Ontario Heart Valve Hike-a-Thon. Congratulations to Tom who won an award for pledges collected.

M. Wittman, formerly of Elliot Lake who has moved to Hope, B.C. for health reasons writes: "There's a time for

meeting and a time for parting.' I will always remember the happy hours I've enjoyed with some of the Soo members on the Trail. Bon Voyage. Happy Trails."

P. Stinnissen reports that the Michipicoten Section, in cooperation with the MNR and local Rod and Gun clubs, had a successful caribou transplant from the Slate Islands to Michipicoten Island.

Steve Taylor, as he pours over books and articles, attends meetings and conferences, searching for the juiciest tidbits on hiking, wishes to report that: In preparation for the upcoming Rolling Stones Tour, Mick Jagger worked out by backpacking in Wales. Even rock stars go hiking!!

MICHIPICOTEN ISLAND

reader; that fist of rock rising from the depths of Lake Superior had always exerted a powerful attraction. So when, in the depths of winter, the Voyageur Trail Club newsletter proposed a summer trip to Michipicoten Island, I was the first to call. Here was a chance that did not often come one's way!

In bygone years, what feet had stepped forth on its shores? There had not been that many before us! For centuries the island had been avoided by the native peoples, because it "floated, sometimes near, according to the winds that pushed it and drove it in all directions". The myth is obviously a result of the lake mists and the perils of Superior navigation.

Historic accounts document mining, commercial fishing and transportation uses. In the nineteenth century, an ill-fated copper mine was located on its western shore, connected by a cart track to Quebec Harbour. Although some of the buildings remain at the harbour and are now part of the commercial fishing camp, no sign could be found of the path across the island.

We left Wawa on Friday evening about 6:00 p.m. Horst Andersen's fishing tug had been scrubbed clean, and the lake was amazingly calm. The trip, however, scheduled to take three hours, took six. The tug did not move quickly over its 42 mile trip, but given the water temperature and depth of Superior, I was much more interested in safety! We plowed steadily forward, to be dumped after midnight at Ferroclad's fishing station, located at Quebec harbour, and set up camp in total darkness.

Quebec Harbour was formerly known as Refuge Harbour, emphasizing the fact that this island has one of the better natural harbours on this part of Lake Superior. Lighthouses have been maintained here since the 1800's, and a visit to Davieaux Light was to be one of the highlights of our trip. Two known shipwrecks are located on the west end of the island, and Quebec Harbour is dotted with three wrecks of fishing tugs which long ago caught fire at dockside and were scuttled close to the far shore. But out of any death comes new life; the skeletal remains of one wreck had been used for a beaver lodge, the ship's ribs providing an

excellent foundation.

Lack of human contact has resulted in a variety of wildlife. Beaver are populous, and every few years a group of Native Canadians from James Bay journeys south to trap them. Wolves are conspicuously absent, no doubt because of the lack of a large mammal prey species. Historic reports indicate that woodland caribou, which once inhabited the island, were extirpated by overhunting in the 1800's. In 1981, an adult male was observed on the island, although it is not known how it migrated from the mainland. This occurrence, combined with the knowledge of its historic presence, led to a program to reintroduce woodland caribou to the island, and initial results have been extremely good. Although we did not have any sightings, tracks and droppings indicated the presence of a number of the animals.

Among our many rich memories of the weekend, our visit to the lighthouse at Davieaux Island stands out. This year is unfortunately the last for the lighthouse; in 1990 the keepers will be replaced with an automatic light. Indeed, in 1990, only two manned lights will be left along the entire length of Superior. The buildings and light were immaculate, bespeaking the pride of the keepers. It seems illogical that such facilities are to be destroyed, with such a waste of capital. For example, the walkway connecting boathouse and residence was built less than a decade ago, and is known as the "million dollar sidewalk". Sand and gravel were helicoptered from farther

down the shoreline of Michipicoten! The keepers were generous with their friendship, sharing with us their memories, the fruits of their rockhounding, and their beer. That evening, they joined us at our campfire.

The geology of Davieaux was fascinating. I had expected the rounded Shield formations of the North Shore but instead saw the ancient lava bedrocks of volcanic eruptions. The vegetation was a tangled and stunted krummholtz, the product of the lashing storms of Superior. On the south shore the rock was bare, apparently inimitable to life; however on closer examination, the vivid colours of the wildflowers such as the blue of the harebell exploded from the sheltering crevices.

The hike to the interior to find the remains of the native trapping camp on Channel Lake was a challenge. The trail through the lush vegetation was often difficult to follow, and only Peter Stinissen's experience got us there, but when we arrived, the water was warm and refreshing on a hot humid day. Would my friends from the south ever believe that I had gone swimming in the middle of Lake Superior?

Other memorable moments include rockhounding at Agate Island (the mystical attraction of semi-precious stones), the beach at West Sand Bay (a beautiful camping spot in calm weather, with its length of sweeping shoreline and infinite solitude), and the four delicious lake trout Donny brought over for dinner when he found out that none of us were fishermen. And I

thought I was going to be roughing it!

On the return trip, we saw the Great Blue Heron colony on Hope Island. As we sat in our boat peering at them, the herons, perched high on their huge nests, peered down at us. We were obviously "the stranger in a strange land"! The return home to Wawa on Sunday evening, after a hot still day, with the intensely red ball of the sun dropping below the horizon and the taste of Horst's smoked whitefish (shared generously with the encircling seagulls) marked the end of our trip.

Especially, I remember the friendliness and the love of the natural world of the Trail Club members from Wawa: Peter and Kris, Phil and Dorothy, Paul and Mary, Carl, Adam, Agnes and Louisa.

Any visitors to Michipicoten Island have to be aware of the isolation, difficulties of lake travel, and the need for self-sufficiency. It is not a trip to be taken lightly; but to me, it was a special trip, once more confirming my love of Superior Country. I shall return again to "The Haunted Shore".
- Ross McLean,
Guelph, Ont.

THE ONTARIO HIKING CONFERENCE REVISITED

The Third Ontario Hiking Conference took place May 20-22 this year on the University of Western Ontario campus in London, Ont. Several members of the Voyageur Trail Association attended, participating in the various workshops and hikes and conversing with fellow hikers from elsewhere in the