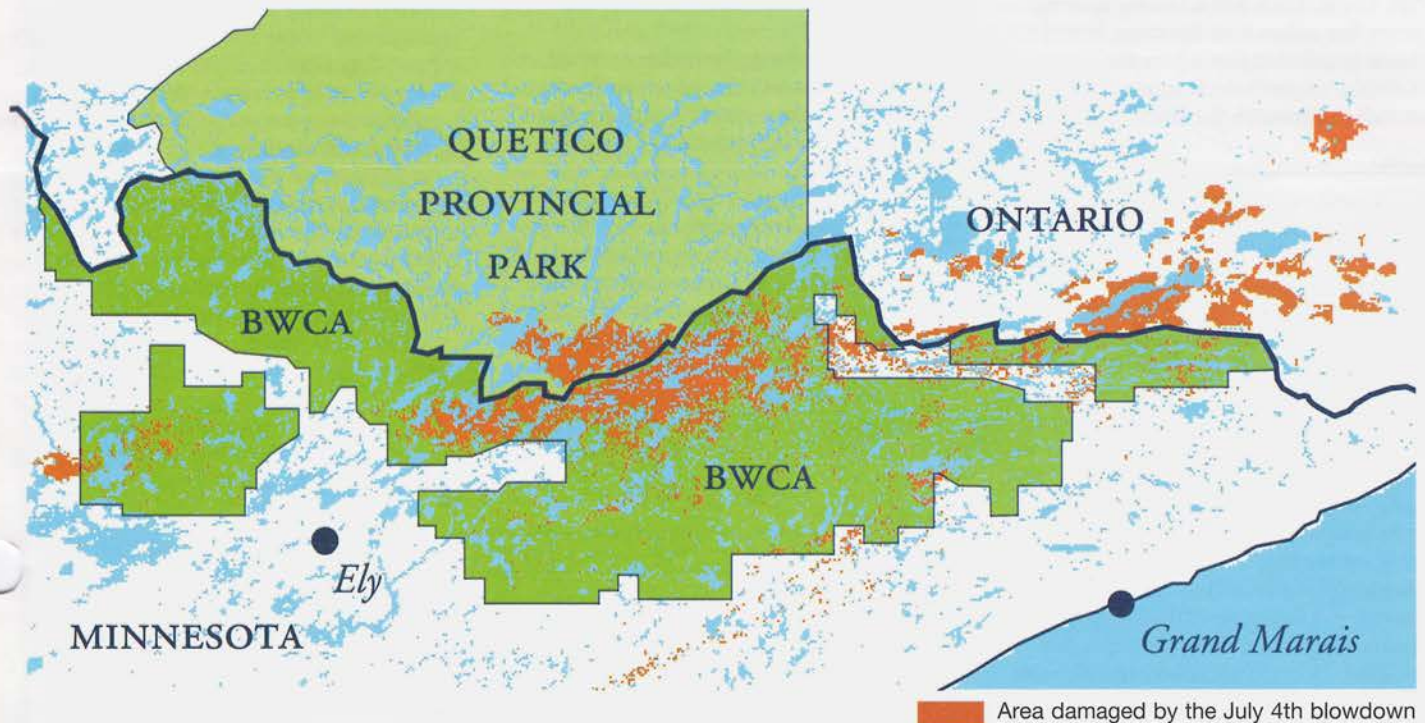




FROM THE QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION • SUMMER 2000



HOW WILL THE FOREST RESPOND?

The wide line of intense thunder storms which swept through the BWCA with winds of over 80 miles per hour, termed a "derecho" by meteorologists, left destruction affecting more than 400,000 acres of timber in a path stretching 30 miles from just northeast of Ely, Minnesota, along the international border to the end of the Gunflint Trail.

It's a credit to the state and U.S. Forest Service that within days after the storm crews cleared downed trees and the debris from 1,520 campsites, 551 portages, and more than 100 miles of hiking trails.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service have held timber sales to clean up more than 4,000 acres of downed trees on government lands outside of the BWCA.

Logging continues to reduce fuel which will endanger cabins and resorts along the Gunflint Trail.

Other than clearing portages and campsites in the BWCA, no fuel control efforts have begun. Prescribed burns in the BWCA await completion of an environmental impact statement scheduled for the spring 2001. Depending upon weather conditions, prescribed burning will begin in the fall of 2001. The U.S. Forest Service is proposing to burn 47,000 to 81,000 acres in a patchwork pattern over a 6-year time period, representing 13 to 22 percent of the BWCA blow down acreage.

Likelihood of a Forest Fire Conflagration

Forest experts interviewed in late July on a Minnesota Public Radio program aired from Ely, Minnesota, raised the issue of the possibility of a high intensity fire. Trees were snapped off or blown over on top of one another, creating piles of trees nearly 20 feet deep in some parts. The fuel is not flat on the ground, absorbing

moisture. It is piled across the land where sun and wind will dry it more quickly than if it were lying flat. Fires which occur in slash generally burn hotter and can be more dangerous than fires which reach across standing timber.

The condition of blown down timber which now exists in the BWCA and surrounding area can create a type of fire which experts fear the most: the plume-dominated fire. Such a fire burns so hot that it creates its own environment by drawing in fresh air from the perimeter of the fire. Indrafts feed a plume or central column of super heated air which rises to form a cloud 30,000 ft. high. The cloud can produce powerful down drafts that send "fire brands" or burning embers up to 5 miles away in all directions, starting new fires on all sides.

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A guest on the Ely program, Professor Lee Frelich, a University of Minnesota entomology researcher who specializes in forest issues, offered his view that risk of a huge fire which could burn across the entire BWCA and a portion of Quetico Provincial Park in a single fire catastrophe has a low likelihood, perhaps 10% to 20%. Rather than one fire, Professor Frelich believes the BWCA will experience a great number individual fires of varying intensities over the next 10 years which will have an important impact but will not consume the wilderness in one enormous sweep. He observed that the Yellowstone Park fire in 1988 was a rapidly moving crown fire rather than the more feared plume-dominated fire where the amount of smoke might make it impossible for aircraft to approach the fire to drop water.

When Fires Arrive

The jack straw nature of the blowdown means that ground crews will need to cut their way into an area to fight fires and will therefore have only one escape route if the fire changes course. It appears unlikely that ground crews could safely fight a forest fire in the BWCA blowdown. Most fires will have to be fought by helicopters or water-scooping aircraft.

Paul Tine, a fire-fuels specialist for the U.S. Forest Service in Grand Rapids, MN, has estimated that it may be three years from now when the trees and debris have more thoroughly dried out that the highest likelihood of fire will develop. The Forest Service is looking at a 10-year window of significantly higher fire risk, though it could be 15 or 20 years before new trees grow large enough to reduce fire risk.

Grand Rapids Hearing

On July 7th, about 400 citizens turned out for a hearing in Grand Rapids scheduled by Minnesota Senator Rod Grams to address concerns about the critical fire hazard developing in and around the BWCA. Some residents expressed frustration over the planned delay to the fall 2001 in initiating prescribed burns in the BWCA. Quetico Provincial Park is planning to begin an important prescribed burn this fall in the Knife, Emerald and Polaris lakes area.

Gerald Rose, head of Minnesota's DNR Forestry Division, testified that overly detailed and time consuming regulations often limit the ability of the Forest Service to coordinate activities with other agencies. He said that the growing volume of agency rules and directives often paralyze the Forest Service in a minefield of bureaucracy. The Forest Service suffered criticism from a number of participants over the two-year time frame for completion of environmental studies before prescribed burning can begin in the

BWCA. A Forest Service spokesman responded that the Forest Service has devoted its limited resources to areas outside the wilderness, especially along the Gunflint Trail which presents a greater risk to public safety and property than does the threat of fire in the BWCA.

U.S. Forest Service Assessment

A report titled "BWCAW Public Scoping Package" issued by the U.S. Forest Service March 27, 2000 advised, "fire suppression created a condition where a vast area of older forest was highly susceptible to wind damage, and was a major factor in how the July 4th blowdown occurred on the landscape."

The older, denser forest has resulted in an increased infestation of spruce budworm. A massive spruce budworm epidemic that started in the mid-1950's has killed balsam fir and white spruce throughout the wilderness. The budworm affected areas were especially at risk during the blowdown. The report further states, "fires can be expected to burn at a higher and more prolonged intensity than has occurred in the past. Fire sizes in the

blowdown fuels could be 10 to 15 times larger than the fire size prior to the blowdown. There is the possibility that a fire burning under influence of high winds from a passing cold front could result in a very large fire, greater than the 500,000 acres, covering much of the blowdown and surrounding areas. More likely, however, is an intermediate scenario where several moderate-sized fires and many smaller ones occur, with various intensities and at various places throughout the blowdown over a period of several years."

Noted forester and environmentalist, Bud Heinselman, warned in the 1970's of the need to allow fire to have a role in management of the BWCA forests. Fire suppression in most of the last century has allowed trees to become older, larger, and weaker and more susceptible to damage by high-level winds.

In the last two decades the U.S. Forest Service has planned to introduce fire and to encourage the role of fire in the BWCA. Because of weather conditions, funding and other problems, little in the way of fire encouragement has occurred.

QUETICO PARK PLANS PRESCRIBED BURNING IN SEPTEMBER

On April 1, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources instituted a Restricted Fire Zone (RFZ) for the southeast portion of Quetico Provincial Park until October 31st. The Restricted Fire Zone stretches from Prairie Portage at Basswood Lake on the international border east to Saganaga Lake. The area is bounded to the north to include all of Carp Lake, Emerald Lake, the Man Chain of Lakes, Littlerock Lake, Amik Lake, Plough Lake, and all of Ottertrack Lake. The area covers about 27,000 acres. Park visitors must carry and use a portable camp stove for all cooking while traveling in this area.

Quetico Provincial Park will initiate a travel restriction from mid to late September in the southern region of the park in the area of

Knife, Emerald and Polaris lakes. The park administration is planning a prescribed burn to reduce fire hazard in this area. Visitors wishing to travel near this area should call the park 24-hour information line (807) 597-4602 in advance of their trip. Travelers can also refer to the park web site for fire information:

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/affmb/Fire/fire.htm>

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY'S CONSERVATION INITIATIVE IN THE LAKE SUPERIOR HIGHLANDS

The Nature Conservancy, an international, non-profit membership organization was founded in 1951 and incorporated in Washington, D.C. The organization's mission is to preserve plants, animals, and natural communities that represent, the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. The Conservancy employs a unique, science-based approach to conservation through which it identifies lands that shelter the best examples of natural communities and species, protects habitats and natural systems through outright acquisition, and assists government and other conservation organizations with similar land preservation efforts; and manages important natural areas. The Conservancy searches for tangible and long-lasting solutions to conservation problems.

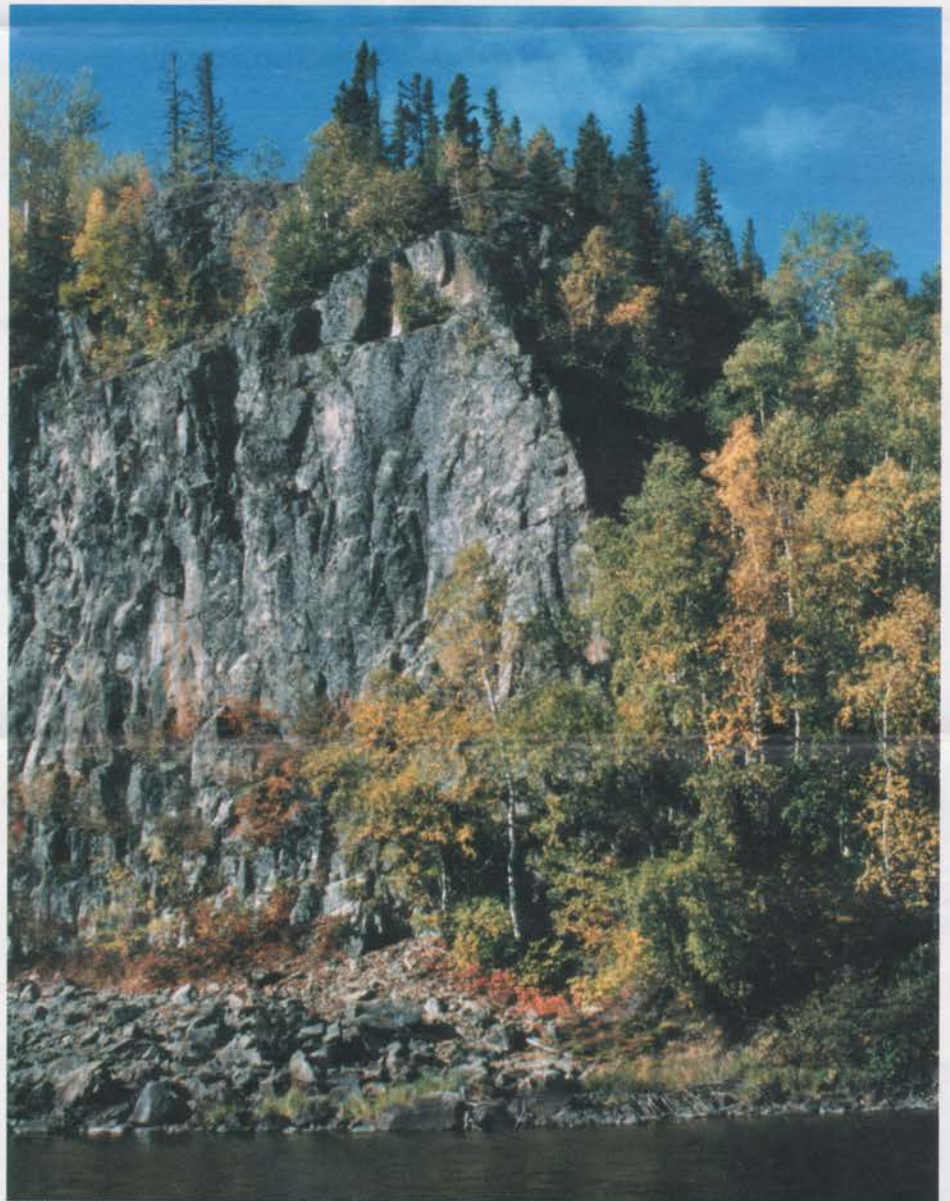
Since its inception in 1958, The Nature Conservancy of Minnesota ("Minnesota Chapter") has protected approximately 326,000 acres of critical natural areas through fee title acquisition (it currently owns and manages 51 preserves), voluntary agreements using the Minnesota Registry of Natural Areas program, conservation easements, and by supporting public designation of land as Scientific and Natural Areas, State Parks or Wildlife Management Areas. Its work is enhanced through our ongoing partnership with state and federal agencies, particularly the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

In the past decade the Conservancy has shifted its focus from acquiring and protecting isolated tracts of land to focusing on land within broader landscapes and ecoregions. This shift in conservation strategy has had a significant impact on how the Conservancy works in communities where it owns and manages land. The Conservancy realizes that in order to ensure long term protection it is necessary to work more closely with people who live in close proximity to and are economically dependent upon the land. Thus, The Conservancy implements "community-based conservation" initiatives—defined as projects where on-the-ground Conservancy practitioners work in partnership with key stakeholders to develop and carry out solutions to abate threats to biological diversity. The success of community-based conservation rests on a holistic approach bringing together ecological, economic and community interests.

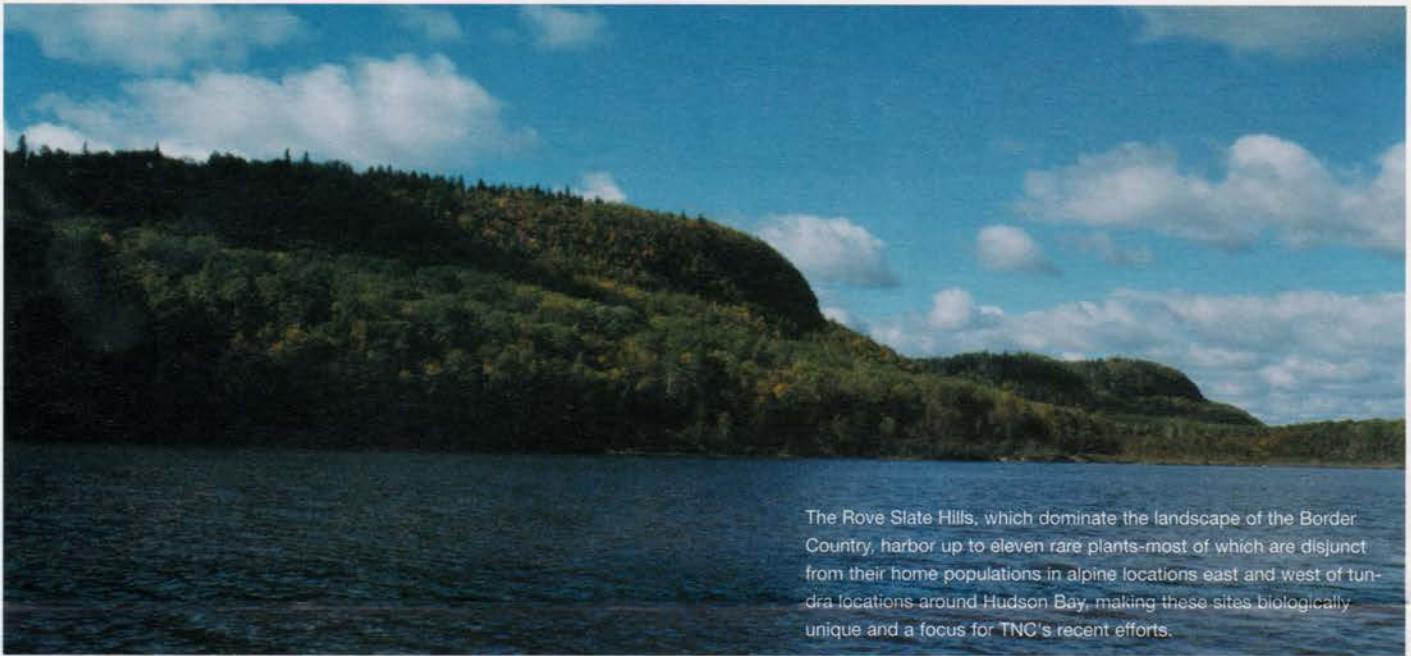
The Lake Superior Highlands (more popularly known as the "North Shore") is one of six landscapes in Minnesota where The Nature Conservancy has established a successful community-based conservation program. This beautiful and unique region is part of a vast forested landscape that stretches from Duluth, Minnesota, beyond the Canadian border. It provides habitat for northern plants and wildlife and contains streams and wetlands in a landscape not found elsewhere in the continental United States. In the past three decades,

The Nature Conservancy has protected more than 23,000 acres in northeast Minnesota. In 1998, The Conservancy established the Northeast Minnesota program office in Duluth to build and support its efforts on the North Shore and throughout the Arrowhead.

Through the support of The Quetico-Superior Foundation and others, The Conservancy has been able to provide leadership on important conservation concerns facing the region—a region of individuals, organizations and local governments often



The Nature Conservancy is working with the owners of the South Fowl Cliffs, part of the Rove Slate Hills and Pigeon River landscapes, to protect this refuge of biodiversity.

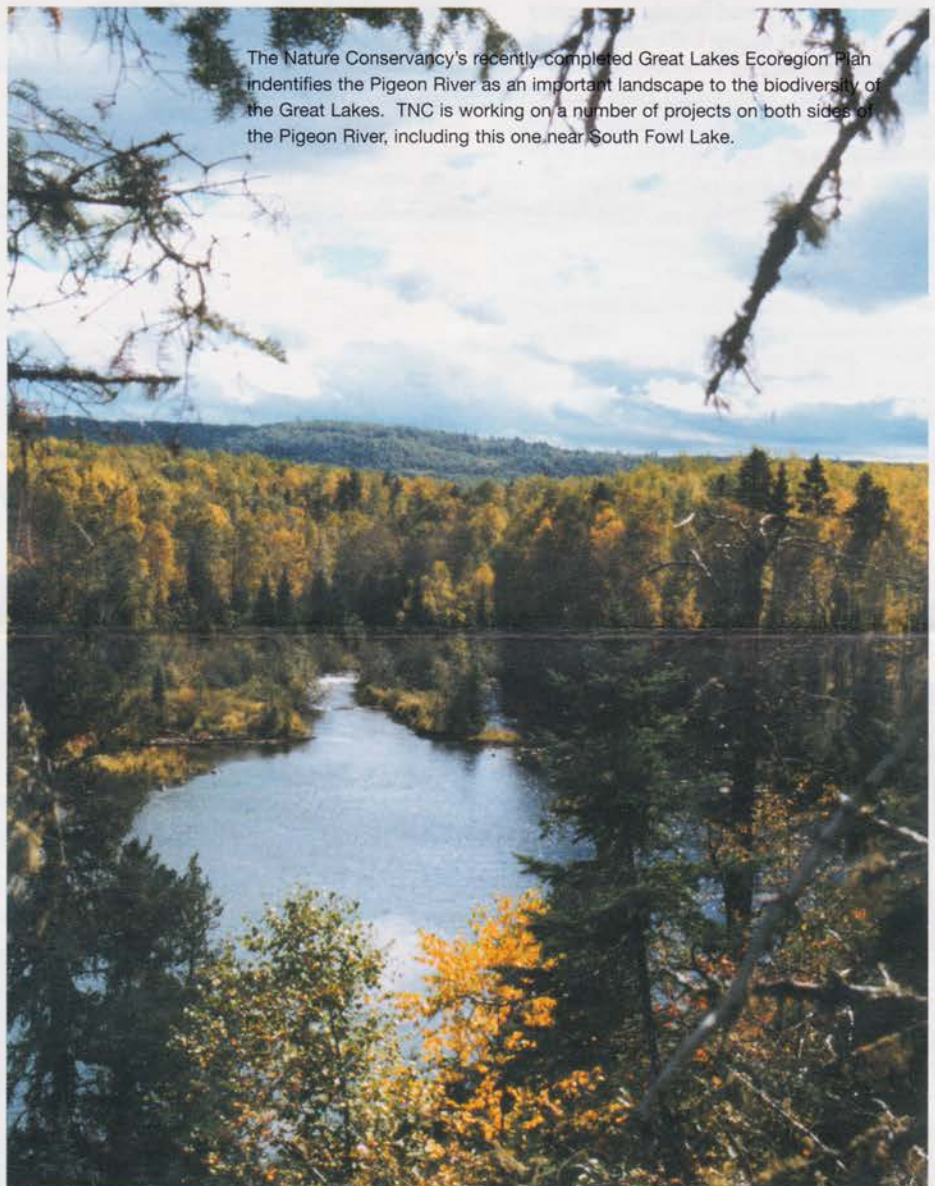


The Rove Slate Hills, which dominate the landscape of the Border Country, harbor up to eleven rare plants-most of which are disjunct from their home populations in alpine locations east and west of tundra locations around Hudson Bay, making these sites biologically unique and a focus for TNC's recent efforts.

divided over how to best use its natural resources. The Nature Conservancy's non-confrontational approach to land conservation provides a fresh voice and vision that reconciles economic need with sustainability. In the coming year, The Nature Conservancy of Minnesota will further develop and strengthen its community-based conservation program in the Lake Superior Highlands with the purpose of accomplishing the following goals:

1. Act as a resource for public and private land owners to incorporate biological considerations in forest land management;
2. Pursue protection of remaining private lands along the Pigeon River;
3. Stabilize the landscape by working to protect identified portfolio sites from over development and habitat fragmentation;
4. Develop new partnerships for sustainable forestry and conservation of important sites;
5. Identify portfolio sites in the Superior Mixed Forest to complete the process of setting The Nature Conservancy's conservation agenda for the Minnesota North Woods.

In July, 2000, The Conservancy acquired nearly 2,000 acres of old growth northern hardwood forest near Finland, MN. This purchase will help The Conservancy and area partners such as Lake County develop a coordinated approach to land management in a biologically significant landscape.



The Nature Conservancy's recently completed Great Lakes Ecoregion Plan identifies the Pigeon River as an important landscape to the biodiversity of the Great Lakes. TNC is working on a number of projects on both sides of the Pigeon River, including this one near South Fowl Lake.



TOWARD MAGNETIC NORTH

In the summer and fall of 1912, a short, slight Iowan with a bad heart and an experienced Ojibwe canoeman carried out what Canadian historian R.H. Cockburn has called "one of the most commendable canoe voyages in history." In this era before the Kevlar canoe, easy radio communication, the GPS, and the rescue helicopter, Ernest Carl Oberholtzer and Billy Magee traveled alone and unsupported in their eighteen foot Chestnut Guide Special across wild, empty, and largely unmapped country, from the Rainy Lake watershed to Nueltin Lake, Hudson Bay, and return, including a cold, hair-raising final paddle down the length of Lake Winnipeg in early November.

In the hundred and forty-four days of this epic journey, Oberholtzer recorded the

landscapes, people, and vanishing lifeways in maps and journal, but also in astonishing black and white photography.

In later life, Ernest Oberholtzer would become a notable environmental activist, a founding member of the Quetico-Superior Council and the Wilderness Society. Without his lobbying efforts, Quetico Provincial Park, Voyageurs National Park, and the BWCA would not exist as they do today. But he never forgot this northern journey of his early manhood, which became in many ways a spiritual backdrop to his later life.

At last, over seventy of the photographs from this journey, with brief accompanying excerpts from Ober's journal, have been reproduced in *Toward The Magnetic North, the Oberholtzer-Magee 1912*

Canoe Journey to Hudson Bay, a "coffee table" book, which is also a historical document of a lost time and place.

Ober's legacy is illuminated in brief essays by photographer and archivist Ray Anderson; historian R.H. Cockburn; Ojibwe scholar and translator David Treuer; Ober's friends Bob Hilke and Robin Monahan; and businessman John Wadsworth, who was sufficiently moved by the venture itself as well as the content and the quality of the photographs, as to underwrite this project.

Toward The Magnetic North and limited edition prints from the book will be available in October.

MOTORS REALLY DO MATTER

In September, a pair of canoers who traveled the South Fowl, North Fowl, Moose Lake and Mountain Lake route, and eventually into Clearwater Lake, concluded that motors really do matter. Land on the Canadian side of this chain is protected by Canadian Land Protection, but motors are allowed. For the most part, the U.S. side on the south lies within the BWCA. The lakes have high shorelines and offer perhaps the most spectacular country in the BWCA. Moose Lake and Mountain Lake are east-west axis lakes which are long and deep. They provide fine habitat for lake trout.

The second night of the trip the canoers camped at a charming campsite on the BWCA shore. On the north shore of the lake a fishing camp brought a number of boats, perhaps six, to the Canadian side for lake trout and walleye fishing. The mid-September day was sunny, warm and nearly windless. Mountain Lake was gorgeous, but low noise of the trolling motors carried with remarkable volume across two miles of the lake. Motor noise diminished the enjoyment of the perfect afternoon for the canoers at their campsite. The engines spoke in a muffled throbbing which was constant for perhaps 5 hours. The canoers were thoroughly persuaded that motors, even small motors, do make a difference in the back country.

THE BORDER ROUTE TRAIL

TRAIL GUIDE AND MAP

The *Border Route Trail* guide and map has been published by the Minnesota Rovers Outing Club.

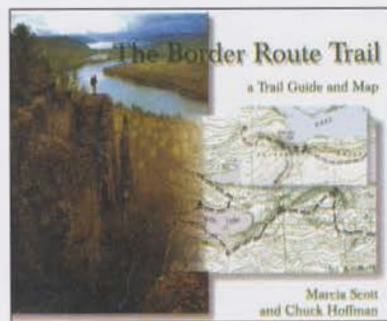
The 46-page guide was written by volunteers Marsha Scott and Chuck Hoffman. The 75-mile Border Route foot trail stretches from a point west of Gunflint Lake near Magnetic Rock to the point where it meets the Grand Portage Trail at Fort Charlotte above Grand Portage.

The work to reopen the trail which had not been maintained for 20 years began Memorial Day weekend in 1971 and continued more than 25 years.

Ed Solstad, one of those who envisioned the potential of the trail in 1970 writes: "We envisioned a trail that would

provide a unique perspective. One that would combine the intimacy of the deep woods with panoramic views of lakes and valleys. A trail that would give people a greater appreciation of what the Upper Midwest has to offer. And a trail that would, hopefully, inspire future generations to protect its primitive nature."

The middle portion of the trail, the BWCA section, is the most primitive. The area around Rose Lake with high cliffs and Portage Falls has generally been the most popular area for backpacking on the entire route. The book can be obtained from outdoor stores or by contacting Minnesota Rovers, P.O. Box 14133, Dinkytown Station, Minneapolis, MN 55414



The new book *The Border Route Trail* by Marsha Scott and Chuck Hoffman

Wilderness News

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