The Quetico Superior Foundation, established in 1946, encourages and supports the protection of the wilderness, cultural and historical resources of the Quetico-Superior canoe country and region.

www.wildernessnews.org
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LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Telling our story

Not long ago, I met with a potential new board member of the Quetico Superior Foundation. She told me that she’s received Wilderness News for a long time and has appreciated the great information and stories about the Quetico-Superior Region. But she has always wondered, what is the Quetico Superior Foundation?

Her question was timely. The Foundation has traditionally stayed behind the scenes as we fulfilled our mission to protect the wilderness character of Minnesota’s Border Lakes Canoe Country and Ontario’s Quetico Provincial Park. We wanted the focus to be on the news and stories of the region, through Wilderness News and the organizations we grant. But during the last few years, we’ve been making some changes.

We developed a Quetico Superior Foundation web site, and we began publishing Wilderness News Online to cover the timely news of the region. And, as we go forward, the printed edition of Wilderness News will focus more on historical, cultural and social stories of the region.

We also wanted to reach new generations—our organization is steeped in history and tradition, but the way people communicate has certainly changed. And last year, we embarked on a survey to learn more about you, our reader. As a result of that process, we realized there’s a new part of the equation to fulfilling our mission: working with you to spread the news and stories of the north, and to expand our ability to grant to organizations that promote its protection.

You’ll find more about our history and granting tradition in the newly redesigned pages that follow. We hope you’ll feel informed and inspired to share it with friends and family, and willing to support our efforts by giving a donation.

With support like yours, we can continue the tradition of Wilderness News and grow our granting program. We can continue preserving the wilderness country we hold so dear.

Sincerely,

Jim Wyman
Board President, Quetico Superior Foundation
Quetico Superior Foundation: Giving All Voices A Fair Hearing

By Alissa Johnson

When I was in high school—the mid-1990s—a debate arose over motorboat access to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). I went to a demonstration to keep motors out; it was a spring or summer day, and I remember the way the sun sparkled on Como Lake in St. Paul. I met Arctic explorer Ann Bancroft, and for the first time, I glimpsed the Boundary Waters as a political landscape. Until then, I knew it as the place I learned to paddle a canoe in a straight line, where at the age of 12, I took my first shaky steps with my dad’s wooden Chestnut on my shoulders. I’d never had the desire to leave a motorized wake across its lakes, and the idea of such a debate had never occurred to me.

It would take until my late 20s to fully grasp the region’s history as a political hotbed—a stage for a national debate about land use. On one of my first assignments for Wilderness News, I drove to Ely and met with Bill Rom. Rom had been named Canoe King of Ely by Argosy Magazine during the 1960s; he’d spent his life outfitting canoeists and championing the preservation of wilderness. But no one knew if he would speak to me. He was nearing 90, and his interest in recalling the past was unpredictable. I sat down in the dining room with his daughter and his wife, a pot of tea between us. Rom listened from his chair in the living room, and then, he made his way to the table. He was sharp and energetic, and for two hours, he gave me a true understanding of the passion behind the wilderness debate. During the 1970s, a time of struggle for the local economy, his vocal support of wilderness led locals—his own neighbors—to blockade his business. Their signs read, “Run the Bum Rom Out of Town.”

The passion grew out of a century-old debate over land management often invisible to today’s Boundary Waters visitors: national and public interests conflicted with local desires, resulting in fiery debates and feelings of helplessness. Over the years, Sigurd Olson was burned in effigy and at one point, the whole town of Ely was blockaded. The perception that political decisions were made in secret, in the middle of the night, didn’t help. During the 1960s, as the Wilderness Act of 1964 was signed into law, one Wilderness News reader called the debate Minnesota’s “wilderness problem.”

Above: Political cartoons characterized the debate surrounding the Boundary Waters Wilderness Act of 1978. Sen. Jim Oberstar (D) introduced the first bill in 1975, balancing protection with timber harvesting and motorized recreation. Rep. Don Fraser (D) introduced a competing bill that provided true wilderness status.
It was from this wilderness problem that the Quetico Superior Foundation emerged. In 1947, the very men who convinced Ernest Oberholtzer to lead the charge against the damming of the Quetico Superior region (see page 7), Charles S. Kelly, Frank B. Hubacheck and Frederick S. Winston envisioned an organization that advanced science and education in the region. In 1949, President Truman would issue an executive order prohibiting flights over Superior Roadless Area below 4,000 feet, eliminating fly-ins into this wilderness area. Prior to that decision, and in the years that followed, the group provided aid to the many groups influencing the region, including the U.S. Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, and what was then Minnesota’s Conservation Department. They even sponsored a movie about fly-ins into canoe country and funded additional studies to deepen these groups’ understanding of it.

And then, in 1964 the United States Congress passed the Wilderness Act. The bill included the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA), but not as a true wilderness. Congress declared that the new law could not modify provisions in the Shipstead-Nolan or Thye-Blatnick Acts, which restricted logging near shorelines, alternation of water levels and flights below 4,000 feet. The Acts allowed for some activities like timber harvesting; the BWCA was to be managed as a primitive area without “unnecessary restrictions” on these uses. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Review Committee was created to figure out what that meant.

During the same year, the Quetico Superior Foundation started Wilderness News. The reader who coined the phrase “wilderness problem” also asked, “But which side are you on? What are you trying to prove?” Frederick Winston, son of Frederick S. Winston, replied, “The Foundation’s immediate aim is to help this committee expedite its enormous task in any way we can… The only way to arrive at an equitable solution of any problem is first to listen to all facts and all opinions of all sides. This, at least, is what we are trying to prove.”

That sentiment has guided the Foundation ever since. During the 1980s, grants to the Project Environment Foundation aided the development of a management plan for the BWCAW (officially declared a wilderness in 1978). The foundation has given funds to study user demand, to writers preserving the region’s history and to groups connecting kids with wilderness. It has helped purchase land for preservation and helped groups that advance our understanding of the region through experience, science or education. All the while, it has published Wilderness News to catalog and spread the region’s stories—like Bill Rom’s.

Shortly after I wrote about Rom, he passed away. His daughter, Becky Rom, took over the preservation of his story, and I went on to write about other men central to the wilderness debate. But the story of the BWCAW—of wilderness in Minnesota and the people who seek to make a livelihood beside it—continues, as cell phone towers and mining abut its edge. The story is more complex than motors versus no motors, or the simplified understanding of one high school girl. The need for understanding and common ground is as great as it ever was, and it only takes a glance at the Foundation’s grant history to understand the role it seeks to fill.

So consider, if you will, a donation to Wilderness News. Your support will help the Foundation continue to tell the stories of the north and grow its granting program. Donate securely online, or use the envelope in this edition of Wilderness News. Thank you.
A Brief Glance at Quetico Superior Foundation Giving:

Quetico Superior Foundation grants have been supporting organizations committed to the Boundary Waters and Quetico-Superior region since the 1940s. The Foundation’s support has helped protect its wilderness character and generated a greater understanding of the region.

**Friends of the Boundary Waters**
A 2011 grant helped fund an economic analysis of the potential impact of a proposed sulfide mining operation in northeastern Minnesota.

**Voyageurs National Park Association**
A 2010 grant to support efforts to preserve the Namakan River from being dammed at the High Falls in Northern Ontario, Canada.

**Heart of the Continent Partnership**
Since 2007, the Foundation has supported the cross-border Partnership between the U.S. and Canada in its mission to build stronger economic, social and environmental connections between northern communities and their public lands.

**The Oberholtzer Foundation**
Since the 1970s, the Foundation has helped fund the preservation of Ober’s journals and correspondence, and maintain his residence on Mallard Island. Ober’s foundation invites artists, conservationists and members of the Ojibwe Nation to use the island each summer.

**Trust for Public Land**
Ongoing support has helped preserve many familiar landmarks, including land on Fall and Burntside Lakes, Wolf Island on Lake Vermillion and the Chainsaw Sisters’ property.

**Outdoor Experiential Learning**
The Foundation has a tradition of supporting organizations like Wilderness Inquiry, Camp Koochiching and YMCA Camps, Warren, Menogyn, and Widjiwagan so younger people experience the Quetico-Superior region.

Visit [www.queticosuperior.org](http://www.queticosuperior.org) to view more Quetico Superior Foundation grant activity.

**On the Cover:**
To launch the new look of *Wilderness News*, we found inspiration in this photograph by Nick Graham, captured along the Border Route Hiking Trail overlooking Rose Lake.

When were you first inspired by canoe country? Share a photo that captures your connection to wilderness on our Facebook page. http://www.facebook.com/WildernessNews
“It was still a place of rare delight—a region apart from the modern world, where man could enjoy the profusion of nature as completely as in the days of Columbus. There was nothing wilder in the jungles of Brazil or the heart of Africa. It was not a somber forest, but a forest threaded with sparkling waterways, flooded with sunshine and peopled with all its ancient creatures.”

—Ernest Oberholtzer, 1929 American Forests
“I have never had a car or driver but have lived on a big wide-open stage and seen a whole pioneer period pass—probably the last.”  
– Ober, 1957

As a Harvard graduate, Ernest C. Oberholtzer wanted to write. At the age of 25, he paddled 3,000 miles in the Rainy Lake Watershed in one summer, selling his notes and photographs to the Canadian Northern Railroad. Three years later, in 1912, he paddled to Hudson Bay and back, thinking he would write about his trip and it would become his legacy.

But in 1925, lumberman Edward Backus proposed building seven dams on the international border. The dams would have raised water levels 80 feet, submerging Lac la Croix’s islands. At Basswood Falls, the water would have been so high there would be no waterfall. The plan didn’t sit well with Ober (as Oberholtzer was called). He testified before the International Joint Commission, the Canadian and American review body considering Backus’ proposal. With his friend, attorney Sewell Tyng, Ober filed a brief arguing that power development was not the region’s only asset. The men had an alternate plan based on the belief that the public’s interest in the land lay in canoe trips and building summer homes.

“When you destroy the beauty of that region, you destroy its utility,” Ober said.

A New Voice
Ober’s vision came at a time when much of the public conscience was still rooted in development. President Theodore Roosevelt established the Superior National Forest in 1909, and in 1922, Forest Service ranger Arthur Carhart proposed the first management plan based on recreation. But the power of development and Backus’ influence were so widespread that a group of Minneapolis men met in secret to strategize opposition to Backus. A dozen strong, they convened in a basement until they learned of Ober’s idea—an international peace park. They...
saw in Ober the public face of a campaign to preserve the watershed. Three men in particular convinced Ober to lead an organization they would call the Quetico Superior Council: Charles S. Kelly, Frank B. Hubacheck and Frederick S. Winston. Ober was reluctant at best; he believed it would be a “thankless job with some danger of failure.”

But the Minneapolis men were persuasive, and in 1927, Ober began traveling to Washington D.C. and Canada to develop his plan and lobby for its creation. He divided the watershed into three zones: a primitive inner zone; a middle zone open to camps and trails; and a perimeter open to railways, highways, private homes, resorts and businesses compatible with wilderness. Ober believed recreation and modern forestry could work together, leaving shorelines intact and restricting logging to areas the public never saw.

“Destroy the beauty of the visible shores and islands of these lakes and rivers and you destroy the whole charm and pleasurable utility of the region for the public,” Ober wrote to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

But Ober did more than meet with politicians and public officials; he reached out to citizen groups like the Izaak Walton League and even many women’s groups forming at the time. He persuaded the latter to write and call their representatives, and whenever possible, brought decision makers to Rainy Lake, hosting them at his Mallard Island home and taking them on canoe trips. With the backing of the Council, he brought a new voice to the debate over the north country.

**Victories Versus a Vision**

During the late 1920s and 1930s, Ober and the Council helped pass legislation key in ending Backus’ plan. In 1930, the Shipstead-Newton-Nolan Act prohibited homesteading, the alteration of water levels, and logging within 400 feet of shorelines. It was perhaps Ober’s greatest contribution to the cause. In 1933, Minnesota extended similar protections to state lands. In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the President’s Quetico-Superior Committee—one was an original member. And in 1936, he helped found the Wilderness Society. His work unarguably laid the foundation for protecting the border lakes region. But for Ober, legislation was merely “a protective measure, primarily aimed at the Backus Project.” He still pursued his larger vision: a formal treaty creating an international peace park.

It was a political and often tiring fight. Time and again, Ober’s journal entries and letters to friends showed frustration and a desire to walk away. He wanted to return to Rainy Lake, paddling and spending time with the Ojibwe. He still wanted to write. But time and again, particularly through the support of long-time friend and financial supporter Frances Andrews, he reentered the debate. At one point, he is known to have said, “Common sense counsels me to drop the whole struggle… Common sense is a very small part of my make-up.”

During the late 1940s, however, Ober yielded the spotlight to Sigurd Olson. Public discourse had shifted from the broader vision of a peace park to details like fly-ins. Olsen and the Council helped pass legislation that prevented flights below 4,000 feet, but for Ober efforts that helped canoeists and recreationists often overlooked the needs of the native population. He returned to Mallard Island to preserve the Ojibwe culture, returning to the spotlight only on occasion. In 1955, he, Olsen, Kelly and Hubacheck (the Minneapolis men) hosted an international meeting to revive international treaty negotiations. In 1960, the United States and Canada exchanged letters declaring their intent to protect the region’s wilderness character and establishing an international advisory committee.

Ober’s vision of an international park never fully came to pass, and he died at 93, just one year short of the creation of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. But his vision fueled a century of public debate and wilderness protection, and it

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The Shipstead-Nolan Act was a measure of national significance. It was the first statute in which Congress explicitly ordered federal land to be retained in its wilderness state, a precedent “giving legislative sanction to a new conception of land service, for the purpose of preserving the inspirational, spiritual, and recreational potentialities of [national forest] lands.”
One hundred years ago, Ernest Oberholtzer and Billy Magee, his Ojibwe canoeing partner and friend, paddled and portaged over 2,000 miles through rugged and unmapped far north territory, from late June to early November 1912. Two men in one canoe, they traveled from The Pas, Manitoba, north to Pelican Narrows, on north to Reindeer Lake then Kasmere Lake and up into Nueltin Lake. At the north end of Nueltin, they paddled off the map, and then finding the Thlewiaza River as they’d hoped, they explored eastward and, by September 12th, arrived at Hudson Bay.

At Hudson Bay, Ober and Billy made their way to Churchill with the help of Bite, an Inuit man, and his family. They then travelled south on Hudson Bay to York Factory. In October, they paddled the Hayes River upstream, arriving at Norway House, Manitoba on October 13th. Their final goal—to paddle the length of Lake Winnipeg—to Gimle was completed on November 5th.

Their canoe journey, while it went off the known map, put Ober “on the map” as an explorer and later a leader in the growing movement to preserve wilderness. It also cemented his life-long friendship with Ojibwe man Billy Magee.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of their journey. Wilderness News will chronicle more in the Summer and Fall issues.
Gray Hairs:  
Saving a Place for Youth in the Great Outdoors

By Cliff Jacobson, Wilderness Guide & Outdoor Writer

Last year, I presented a program for the Minnesota Canoe Association. About 150 people attended. With the exception of six teenage girls—who were there to show slides of their trip in the Boundary Waters—everyone (including me) had gray hair. Murmurs of “look at all the gray beards” bounced around the room.

Gray is now largely the hair color of those who enjoy the Boundary Waters Canoe Area each summer. When, in 1968, at the age of 28, I made my first trip into this region, most of the paddlers were not much older than me. Now, the average age is close to fifty. Where have all the young people gone?

To technology, mostly. Today’s kids would rather play on their computer than go outside. Few have ever gone canoeing, fewer still have camped out-of-sight of an RV. They have no use for wilderness. Richard Louv, addresses this concern in his book, Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder. Louv makes the case that kids are so consumed by TV and video games that they have lost their connection to the natural world—they see no value in wild places and therefore, no reason to preserve them. I taught eighth grade environmental science for 30 years and I can say he is right on target.

What isn’t right is society’s view that kids must be flooded with (mostly useless) information and tested frequently to ascertain their knowledge of it. The result is that teachers have no time for social or environmental concerns. They must teach to tests that are designed by those who don’t hike, camp or canoe or give a wit about wilderness. Teachers who do take their students outdoors without meeting the “approved government objective”, are asking for trouble. If it’s not in the state-approved curriculum—or more accurately, “not on the test”—it’s not acceptable. Even nature centers are not immune from regulation. Where once they could present a variety of interesting topics, they, like teachers, must now key into the “approved curriculum”.

Field trips? What are they? Or rather, what were they? Schools no longer have money for away-from-school activities. Field trips now are largely self-funded, meaning the kids—not the school—pays for the bus ride. Admittedly, a few (very few) teachers defy the odds and meticulously collect bus fare—usually two to five dollars per head. Some kids pay, some don’t. Caring administrators often look the other way. Ultimately, teachers tire of the extra work and the field trips just go away.

When I taught environmental science at Hastings Middle School (I retired in 2001), I offered free after school canoe trips on the nearby Mississippi River. We went twice a week when the weather was good, and always had a full house. But now, with today’s ludicrous demands on teachers, I’d have no time for it.

When snow covered the ground I took each of my classes on a half-day snowshoe hike. The kids would ask: “Mr. J, what do we have to write down?”

“Nothing!”

“But what do we have to know for the test?”

“Won’t be on a test!”

“Yeah, great, but then, why we goin’?”

“Just for fun and to learn to love wild places. Is that okay?”

“Yeah, man, way cool!”

Get the point? Too bad our politicians don’t.

The result is that we’re raising a generation of youngsters who love malls more than trees. And unless we change our educational expectations, and quickly, I fear that we will continue to lose more wilderness and more of our sanity.
Wilderness is many different things to many different people; it can be a grocery store or a sanctuary, a playground or a classroom. It can be all of the above or something completely different. I have made the canoe country wilderness my office by turning passion into profession and working as a seasonal guide for YMCA Camp Menogyn.

My “work week” begins when two large coach buses turn north off the Gunflint Trail and come rumbling down our narrow gravel road. They come to a grinding halt amidst swirling clouds of dust, and a steady stream of 12 to 17 year olds cascade down the steps into the boreal forest. It’s late June, and we’re standing on the shore of West Bearskin Lake. First impressions are being made as cell phone screens read, “no service” and eyes turn upward and outward. Beyond the familiar settings of city, family, and friends emotions vary and are reflected in their questions,

“Are we going to catch fish?”
“Are we going to have fires?”
“Are we going to go swimming?”
“Yes, yes, and yes,” I tell them.

This is more their trip than it is mine; their chance to take a piece of charcoal or a set of watercolors to the wilderness canvas and sketch their dreams, desires, and necessities on it. I will tell them as much as I can about the flora and fauna or natural history of the region and I’ll suggest places to fish or ways of making their canoe track straight, but
ultimately I’m just a facilitator. It’s up to them to discover and digest the canoe country character.

For the next week, two weeks, or 50 days these kids will live and work together as they travel through wild places. From the Superior Hiking Trail to Northern Alaska and the Quetico-Superior region to the Northwest Territories they’ll experience the real world as only a fraction of today’s population has. They’ll learn as much about navigating with a map and compass as they will about themselves. The kids I take on trips and make carry heavy packs and paddle into headwinds are tomorrow’s lawyers and politicians; tomorrow’s business owners and land holders; anglers and hunters; conservationists and developers.

The way in which we treat wilderness is dictated by how we perceive wilderness, and how we perceive wilderness is dictated by how we experience it. I do what I can to showcase the best of what’s out there, but ultimately it’s up to the individuals who step off that bus and into the fresh air of the canoe country wilderness to determine its value and role for the youngsters who come after them.
“I find that I come to the wilderness in times of personal turmoil. The irony of this is impressive: when I need to be empowered to continue, I pit myself against nature’s greatest powers and hope to make it out alive. Because I arrive in forests and mountains in such strife, my experience with nature is tied directly to a fight against an enemy that I can rarely identify. Having the wilderness to pound my boots into or water to shove with my paddle provides me a visceral relief from common struggles. I do not intend to have such a pugnacious relationship with the natural world; in fact, I view my little conflict as harmonic. If I did not have the woods, I would not be the person I am today. If the woods did not have advocates like me, they might not exist. Sometimes, I am rewarded for my work. The clouds clear and warm sun beats down on my shivering body; I round a bend and see a moose; the view from the pass is far better than I could imagine. These moments give me smiles and memories and profile pictures. I am thankful for them in a unique way. But what brings me back to the wilderness over and over is the constant challenge it is willing to give. The opportunity to prove myself in the wide-open wilderness is one I shall rarely deny.”

- Matthew McIntosh

Editor’s note: Matt, a senior in high school, is planning a 45-day backpacking trip in Gates of the Arctic National Park, Alaska this summer with a group of peers from Camp Menogyn. Wilderness News wishes Matt and his group many adventurous rewards in their quest, and a safe journey.

YMCA Camp Menogyn located a literal stones throw away from the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, is a year-round wilderness tripping camp whose mission is to provide transformational wilderness experiences. Summer time trips include backpacking, canoeing, and rock climbing and are open to teenagers between the ages of 12 and 18. Once the lakes freeze and snow falls, canoes are traded in for dog sleds and hiking boots for snow shoes. Opportunities also exist for group retreats and trips.

**Menogyn** (min-o-jin) from the Ojibwe language means “To grow fully.”

Camp Menogyn is part of The YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities. For more information visit: www.campmenogyn.org
Discovering the Birds of the Boundary Waters
By Julie Neitzel Carr

Trekking the Boundary Waters, my portages followed a predictable path; I would double-check the distance on my map, hoist up a heavy Duluth pack, or if it was my turn, the canoe, grab the remaining miscellaneous gear (fishing rods, life jackets, paddles), take a deep breath and with my head down, push forward. I would count my number of steps, trying to estimate how many rods I’d hiked and how many remained. If it was a portage where I’d have to double back I would keep an eye out for landmarks that would remind me how far I’ve come, or need to go. I sang songs, recited poems and sometimes mindlessly counted. If I did observe anything it was scat on the trail. I would wonder if there are bears or wolves watching me pass and I would worry that they might think that I was a weak link in the circle of life. I would shudder and move forward step-by-step, anxious for the next lake to show itself. The goal: to take this heavy load off my shoulders and get back on the water.

But not anymore, that mode of wilderness travel ended last spring. A June experience has changed me. I discovered the birds of the BWCA. It happened when I enrolled in a field class, Bird Ecology of the Northern Forest.

Before this class, my reports of the wildlife would include moose, loons, beavers, river otters and bald eagles all of which I saw while gliding across lakes in my canoe. I would even evaluate my trips based on whether or not I saw a moose. What I never did was give much attention to the lives playing out above me in the forest canopy. The class changed my perspective and broadened it forever. Instead of focusing on the water and the ground, we spent the weekend looking up and listening to the songs, calls, and chirps of the birds that I discovered surrounded us. We learned about the migrations, habitats, mating rituals, feeding behaviors and flight patterns of the warblers, waxwings and vireos. I learned that Sawbill Lake is named for the Common Merganser also known as the Sawbill due to the shape of its beak, and we saw many of them. I got so busy studying the birds that I forgot about the wolves and bears and, more than that, learning about bird ecology changed my attitude. I feel less fearful, more confident and respectful.

A classroom in the great north woods is a unique experience. It’s alive. After our breakfasts we would pack up and head out in field either by foot or canoe. Sue Plankis, one of our two instructors, wanted to observe a specific area, which has been designated by the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas as a priority block. Our sightings of evidence of nesting and breeding birds would be entered into the 5-year study. Our quest took us through the women’s chain. This time on the portages, I took my time. I looked up instead of at the ground. Instead of singing to myself, I listened to the songs of birds, stopping often to listen, really listen. Our guides helped us differentiate and soon we knew the distinctive calls of the Chestnut-sided Warbler, the Northern Waterthrush and the ubiquitous White-throated Sparrow. I flushed a Ruffed Grouse from the brush and upon further exploring we found its nest. Another amazing moment was the observation of the uncommon Black-backed Woodpecker. Not only did we observe this bird, we also learned its distinctive feeding behavior of flaking bark in its search for insects. On the way back to camp, a Merganser swooped down in front of my canoe close enough to touch; the Sawbills had become my friends.

We spent the evening fireside with our cocoa discussing the birds we saw during the day, who was in the lead for spotting AND correctly identifying the most birds (our final grade depended on this - not really, class atmosphere was casual and friendly, but we teased a lot). We looked at our field guides and listened on the ipod to different bird calls that helped us remember the
distinct calls of the birds we had observed that day. In the midst of our discussion we heard some of the wild warblers answer back to our recordings. That would never happen in a mortar and brick classroom!

Later in the summer I returned to the BWCA with my husband and children and discovered that my greater appreciation for the life and sounds of the forest canopy had persisted. I now hear individual songs instead of random chirps and tweets. I know to look deeper on the limbs and to identify different species by their flight pattern or feather markings. Although I pack ultralight I will never travel the Boundary Waters again without my bird guide. I’ve also concluded that what my co-instructor in the bird ecology class, Rob Kesselring, said is true: that preservation of the wilderness depends on knowledge and experience, “You’ve got to know it and to live it!” Discovering the birds of the northern forest has enriched my wilderness experience and has drawn me closer to nature, which is really my purpose of going to the BWCA.

One last nature note: At the conclusion of our June class while coming out of the BWCA at Sawbill Campground we overheard campers complaining about the beep, beep, beep, of trucks backing up during the night. Those were not trucks! They were the breeding calls of Saw-whet Owls. I never would have known this prior to the class and I will be forever richer for that knowledge.

Uncommon Seminars LLC leads classes every summer in the BWCA e-mail info@uncommonseminars.com for more information.

“Discovering the birds of the northern forest has enriched my wilderness experience and has drawn me closer to nature, which is really my purpose of going to the BWCA.”
ONLINE UPDATES

Check out Wilderness News Online for ongoing news coverage of the Quetico-Superior region, including updates to stories you’ve read here.

What’s New Online:

• Isle Royale National Park officials worry that wolves may become extinct on the island—only one of the nine remaining wolves is female.

• Deer grazing habits are taking their toll on White Pine and White Cedar.

• An appeals court is expected to rule on the AT&T cell tower in the next two months.

While you’re there, subscribe for regular updates by email or RSS.

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Wilderness guide, Erik Simula, with his birch bark canoe on Caribou Lake, photo by Layne Kennedy.
Yes, I support The Quetico Superior Foundation

**Wilderness News** Support objective coverage of the news and issues in the Quetico-Superior Region. Consider a $25 donation to support news coverage and reporting, printing and mailing, and online delivery costs.

**Initiatives and Grants** Support the initiatives and grants of the Quetico Superior Foundation. Past recipients include Friends of the Boundary Waters, Wilderness Inquiry, Heart of the Continent Partnership, Voyageurs National Park Association, The Trust for Public Land, The Oberholtzer Foundation, Outdoor Experiential Learning programs, and more.

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