



Heading Out from Bayfield 'Cross the Lake 2017

Story and photos by Larry Carpenter

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This is a tale of the trip my wife, Judy Taylor, and I make most summers aboard *Allegro*, our Mason 33. Our home port is Port Superior, just south of Bayfield WI. As we prepare and provision for our trip, we keep an eye on the forecast and look for a patch of settled weather for the crossing.

Nice weather window, so mid-afternoon, we headed out into the Apostle Islands. North of Oak Island looked good, so we dropped the hook, had a gin and tonic and dinner, set the alarm and climbed into the bunk.

When the alarm went off at Oh Dark Thirty, we hauled the anchor and worked our way through the dark black islands out onto the open lake. By dawn, we reached the shipping lanes and spotted a big freighter headed up and right in our way. We nudged the helm so we could pass behind her.

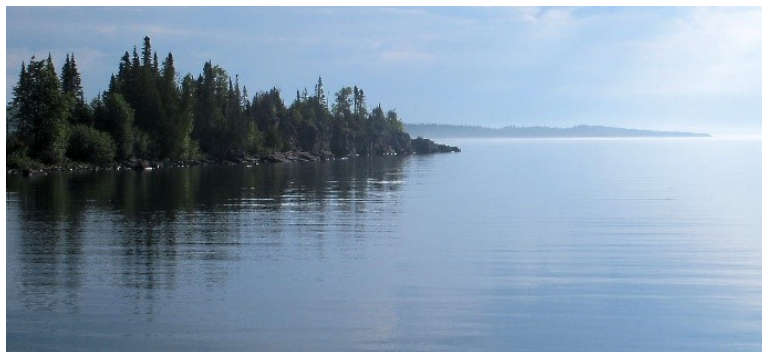


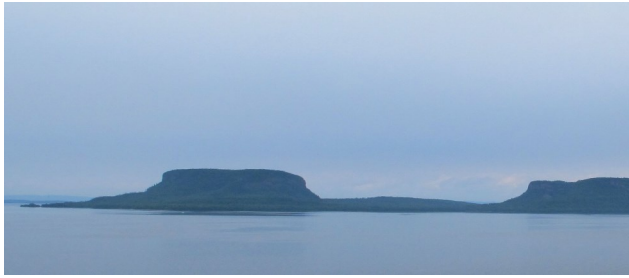
Around noon, the wind picked up from off our quarter, so we trimmed the sails to keep us heading north. We set a course toward Susie Island and sat back to watch the GPS count down.

Our settled weather was beginning to deteriorate as we watched a system move its way up the shore ahead of us. We got to Susie just before the thunder and set the anchor in the blinding rain. We hunkered down and felt the storm tear at us. In a couple hours, the storm had moved farther up the shore and we had a pleasant rest of the night.



In the morning, we had coffee in the cockpit as we watched two bears swim from shore to shore. We hauled the anchor, said goodbye to Susie and headed up the coast. The haunting shapes near Thunder Bay soon came into view: Pie Island, Thompson Island and the Sleeping Giant. We bypassed them and continued to our next anchorage.





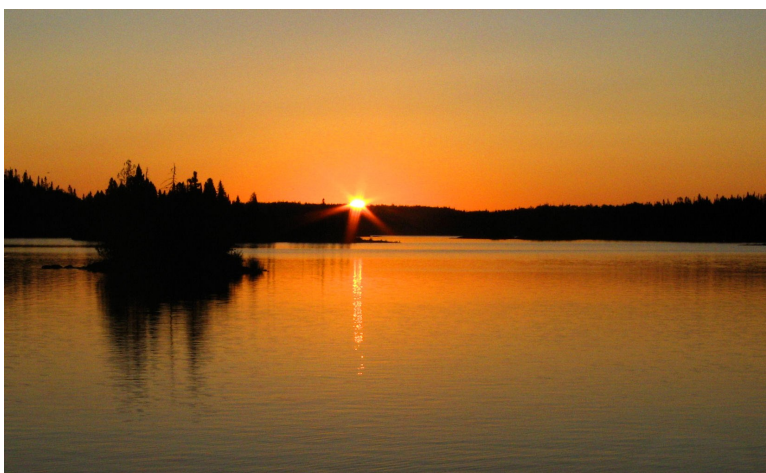
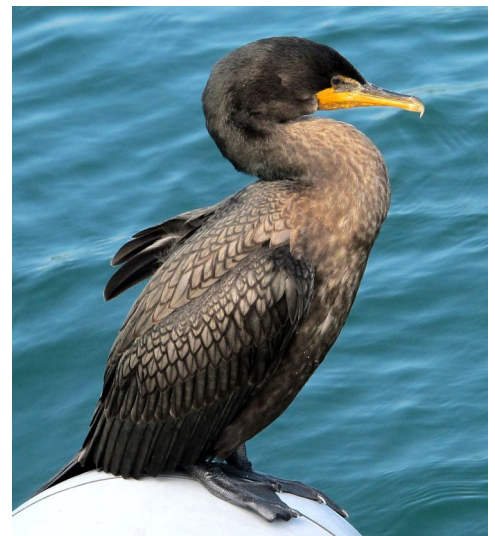
One of the most prominent formations is the Sleeping Giant, seen over Judy's shoulder. We dropped anchor next in Tee Harbor at the foot of the Sleeping Giant. One of the last sandy bottoms on our trip.

The North Shore takes on a much different look when you cross from Minnesota into Canada. Haunting shapes carved by glaciers past.



We took the dinghy ashore for a hike and climbed to the top for spectacular views. We crossed over and had a view across Thunder Bay to the city of the same name. Back on the boat that evening, we saw the Porphyry Light blinking to the east, one of the still functioning lighthouses along the shore. Then, as the sun set in the west, we watched a full moon rising to the east.

In the morning, we rounded the Porphyry Light and turned north. We left Number 10 lighthouse to starboard and continued on to the beautiful Loon Harbor. We took a dinghy ride past rusting relics of the logging days through a narrow channel to a wilderness sauna tucked out of sight for a refreshing warm bath. Later, a cormorant perched on our dinghy and kept returning even though we repeatedly shooed him away. We rose early the next morning to a spectacular sunrise.



From Loon, we went past Otter Cove. It is a very sheltered anchorage boasting a great hike up past Otter Falls to the lake above that feeds the falls. We promised to stop there next time passing.



We continued on to Woodbine Harbor – another spectacular wilderness anchorage. It is marked by a prominent dome, which we spotted as the sun was low. We wound our way into the inner harbor and set our anchor. There is not a lot of swing room where we anchor, so it's nice to have lots of chain. In the morning, we watched a moose feeding on the bottom, and a couple of otters swam past the boat and climbed out on the shore near us before sliding back into the water.

The Canadian North Shore is a beautiful setting, boreal forest surrounded by black spruce and some tamarack, jack pine and birch. We hiked up to Kenny Lake with a couple of canoe paddles and used the old canoe parked there to paddle around the lake. We picked some raspberries. Rumor has it that Kenny is a good fishing lake.

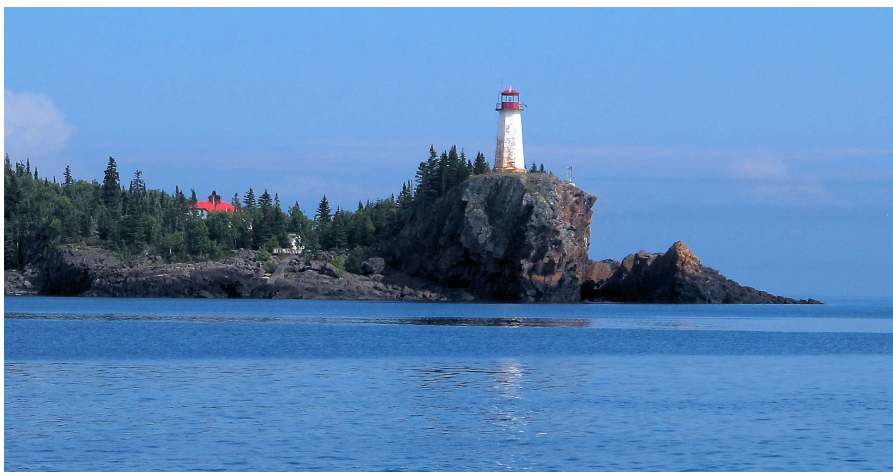
The next day we climbed the dome to a point where we could see Kenny Lake and a wonderful view of the entrance to Woodbine.

Woodbine is noted for excellent examples of basalt columns which formed during the cooling of lava. They form hexagonal structures. We took the dinghy to the entrance where there are columns in every stage of erosion.

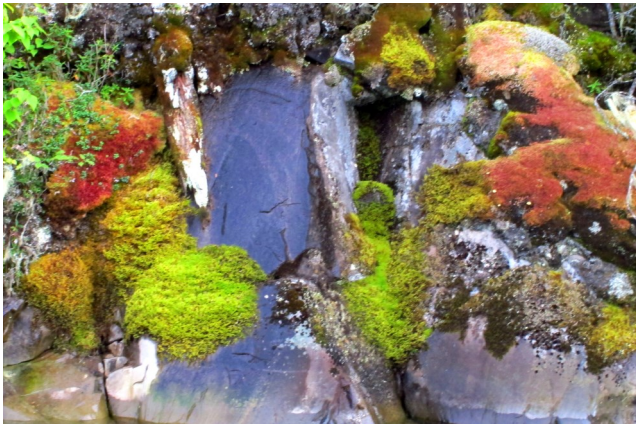
One more night, then we hauled the anchor.



We passed Battle Island with its light rising 117 feet above the lake. Then we passed the town of Rossport. This is one of the very few towns along the shore that is accessible from the water. It has a dock with water and pump-out available. For the last several years, they have been unable to sell gas or diesel fuels because of environmental issues. It is usually possible to get a ride to Pays Plat to get fuel in jerry cans. A lovely place to get a meal is the Serendipity Gardens.



We decided to make a short one-night stop to visit one of the most beautiful displays of mosses and lichens in the area, Boat Harbor in Wilson Island. We took the dinghy past the south-facing entrance wall with blue tinted rock wall covered with mosses in reds, greens and yellows with feathery lichens hanging down.



From Boat Harbor, we continued on to the Slate Islands. Entering the Slates is like sailing into a fjord. The archipelago was formed by a meteor strike and consists of two main islands, five minor islands and many more islets. We squeezed through a narrow channel, rocks on both sides, and into Pike's Bay, where we set our anchor.

From the anchorage, we explored the archipelago by dinghy. The Slates have been home to a large herd of woodland caribou. There is a meadow near an old burned-out barge which is quite close to the anchorage. Caribou regularly come out to graze there. We went ashore and awaited their arrival—and were not disappointed. The caribou keep the grass very short on the meadow. Hares are also very common.



All along the north shore are reminders of the logging industry: rusting machinery, burned out barges, steel rings in the rocks for lines and cables, piles of rusting tin cans from logging camps. All being slowly taken over by the natural beauty of the boreal forest, preserved in the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area. The NMCA is the largest freshwater marine conservation area in the world and is administered by Parks Canada. The Slate Islands are administered as an Ontario Provincial Park and are a popular destination for kayakers.

Other wildlife in the Slates include mergansers, beavers, otters and much more. However, when the lake froze completely in 2014, wolves were able to cross the ice to the slates and some of the caribou also left. By 2017, there were no caribou left in the Slates.

We took the dinghy to the end of Pike's Bay and went ashore. It was a short climb up to King Lake. We were able to walk around the lake in a couple of hours. Along the way we came across the partial skeleton of a caribou. The blue gentians were budding and blooming much of the way around.



All too soon, our journey along the North Shore was done for the season. Time to look back to where we had started. We headed down the shore, past Isle Royale and once again out onto the open lake. After a long day's sail, we spotted the Apostle Islands—headed back to Bayfield 'cross the lake—and the end of our summer cruise.

Larry Carpenter and his wife, Judy Taylor, cruise the Canadian North Shore most summers for several weeks aboard their Mason 33, *Allegro*. There is always a guitar and flute aboard and frequently music coming from the cockpit at anchor. They also attend the Red Rock Folk Festival every August.



Another exploring expedition took us to an old abandoned mine shaft hidden along the shore of Mortimer Island.

The Slates were our turnaround point. As we headed back to the west, we made a stop in Old Man's Pocket in Vein Island. There are many places to explore from here. Harry Island is a popular stop for kayakers. There is a wilderness cabin hidden on Harry. We frequently see and hear loons, and sometimes during the right season, a pair will have its young in tow. We have seen moose in the shallows at the end of the anchorage.

