

**Memorial Day 2010 weekend a few SKOACers headed for the Border to work on our international relations and to make a visit to the Sauna Islands, just off the rocky bluffs of beautiful Ontario.** The Sauna Islands are the unofficial but aptly named archipelago known for the wood burning saunas that were volunteer built and maintained on many (though fewer in the past few years) of the islands. For more info on the area see [http://www.skoac.org/ARTICLES/sauna\\_info.shtml](http://www.skoac.org/ARTICLES/sauna_info.shtml)

Our main port of call, Thompson Island is 8 miles from the mainland. Four wayfaring paddlers - Chris E. (the Elfman), Ron O (Mr. Surly), Jill W (Ms. Master Chef) and Sherri K (Neeka) arrived at Thompson on calm waters by mid-day Friday. Wray Bay is a protected bay that easily accommodates the power boats and sailboats that also frequent the area from marinas in nearby Thunder Bay. The sauna is well-kept but the tent pad sites are limited so we opted for the opposing bay, \_\_\_\_\_ bay, just a short hike from the sauna area and shorter paddle around the point. This bay offers two established tent pads and plenty of space for non-established campsites. The amazing cobblestone beach proved a good choice with unobstructed views of Isle Royale 18 miles to the east. We spent a lovely evening in quietude around the campfire and enjoyed the full moon well into the night.

On Saturday, we took to the water for a circumnavigation of Thompson Island. This was an approx. 14 mile paddle. The western shoreline offers great views of sheer bluffs and Pie Island. There is one bay along this side that offers a protected spot for lunch or a comfort break. We took a short lunch break on one of the other smaller island near the southern tip of Thompson. As the wind had picked up and was coming from the north, we had a bit of slog to paddle the eastern shoreline back to camp.

By late afternoon, the second wave of SKOAC paddlers had arrived. Brock H.(The Skipper), Rick W.(Gilligan), Bill N. (Fluffy), and Claire P. (\_\_\_\_\_). In no time the sauna was fired up and all were imbibing while sharing the stories of forgotten passports and feline ailments. There might be a country song in the offing with this kind of a plot.

Sunday was a bright sunshine filled day. Sunday also served up north to northwest winds coming in at 15-20 knots. The weather forecast indicated seas building to 3-5 footers by mid-afternoon. Our party set out to explore nearby Pie Island but quickly learned the mid-afternoon forecast had arrived by mid-morning. We paddled for an hour in strong headwinds and managed to put only a mile under our boats. In the lee side of ----- Island, The Skipper encouraged the group to make a collective choice to return to camp. The surf back to Thompson only took 15 minutes and was a heck of a lot more fun than the previous hours worth of work. A short paddling day made for a great opportunity to explore the volunteer created and maintained trail that climbs the bluffs and circles the top of the island. Many great lookouts provide excellent views of Thunder Bay, Pie Island, and Isle Royale. The flora and fauna strewn trail is like strolling through a scene from Lord of the Rings. Old Man's Beard drapes the many cedar trees along the path. More laughs around the campfire, sauna time, and expounding on the lyrics of the "My Cat's Ass" song rounded out a spectacular day.

Monday meant a return to Canada. After a shaky but somehow convincing story to the Border Patrol about passports that were circling the globe, we returned to Minnesota. For more on the antics of how Newman's passport had more fun without him, contact him directly. The Gunflint Tavern in Grand Marais served up lunch and brews as we recounted our paddling feats and woes. Another great SKOAC trip for the annals!