1-1-1915

A Superior Vacation

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In the extreme northeastern corner of Minnesota, a trifle over one hundred miles north of Duluth, lies the Superior National Forest, a million and a quarter acres of the "Land of the Sky-Blue Waters." The area is a northland wilderness, still unmarred by civilization's improvements.

Noted for its beautiful lakes connected by rivers that give opportunity for ideal canoe trips, the Superior offers great attraction to the tourist. Many of the canoe routes have been mapped and the portages marked, making travel less difficult for the man who cares to journey through the maze of northern waterways.

For the expert canoe man there is "white water" in plenty, routes that test the mettle of the cleverest. For the novice there are whole trips that may be made without encountering a rapids, or trips where rapids are avoided by portaging.

On all mapped routes the portages are plainly marked and kept clear of brush by the United States Forest Service. On routes not within the Superior Forest, the portages are posted and cleared by the Minnesota State Service.

Nearly all of the Superior National Forest is included in a mammoth game preserve, not a park, but a great natural area set apart by the state for the protection of the native animals.

The animals of the Superior are in no way domesticated as are those of some of our national parks, notably Yellowstone. They live as they and their ancestors have always lived, suspicious and afraid of man—ready to be off at the first sign of his presence. The animal life of the Superior indeed adds much to the keen enjoyment of a summer vacation spent there.

In the southern part of the forest, there is a canoe route, not marked on most tourist maps and on that account not greatly traveled. It is known as the South Kawishiwi-Isabelle route. Probably not more than a dozen canoes travel it in a year. On that account it is particularly well stocked with native animals.

A party from the University of Minnesota, headed by Dr.
Johnson of the Zoology Department, has selected this route for the past three or four years as a spot best adapted to their work, that of capturing specimens of northern animals, making pictures and records for future generations. During the past two years they have secured many excellent specimens and pictures including a number of motion picture films of swimming moose, deer and bears.

The South Kawishiwi-Isabelle trip is best started thirteen miles south of Ely, Minn., headquarters of the Superior National Forest, at a point known as the "Halfway" on the Stoney road and Kawishiwi or Birch River. The trip may be made safely without a guide, though for those not familiar with woods life a guide is advisable. That he will furnish the necessary canoes and camp equipment is a point in his favor.

The route follows the South Kawishiwi to Lake Garbo, across this lake to Bald Eagle Lake, thence up the Isabelle River through Rice and Isabelle Lakes to Parent River and Parent Lake. The return trip made over the same route will make a total distance of about 75 miles. If desired the trip may be continued northward from Parent Lake and the return trip made by way of Lakes Alice and Insula and the North Kawishiwi River to White Iron Lake—approximately a one hundred mile trip.

The country traversed is a wilderness. Therein lies its attraction. Its beaver dammed streams are still stocked with a natural abundance of fish, which may be had in plenty for a half hour's trolling from the canoe. At unexpected places a deer meets you with wide eyes inquiry or your canoe glides silently onto that giant member of the deer family, the moose, feeding on the aquatic grasses of a lake shore. He watches your coming with sullen astonishment, then with his powerful swinging stride crashes away through the brush.

As you round a point in some winding stream you catch the splash of a lone bank beaver as he dives out of sight—or a glimpse of a mink or fisher gliding to cover.

Now and then on the portage you narrowly avoid stumbling over a stupid porcupine who, with waddling haste and much wheezing manages to climb the nearest tree. A partridge whirs away through the woods or a "spruce-hen," as is her habit, poses on a low branch, as motionless as a mounted specimen.
No. 1—Young Bull Moose, Superior National Forest.
No. 2—Speared on the Isabelle River.
No. 3—Still going Strong after a half mile swim.
In the early summer bears are frequently met with, ambling along the banks of a stream. Sometimes a she-bear followed by her cubs, two rolling, rollicking balls of black brown fur.

On very rare occasions a caribou may be seen but this is doubtful. A few individuals have been reported recently and on but one district of the forest.

The moose is the "king of the North-woods" and the most interesting animal on the Superior. Hunting him with either gun or kodak is real sport. The kodak furnishes as much down-right enjoyment as the gun and its use is not limited by game laws.

During the "fly season," June until nearly August, the moose seeks the water. He feeds there on the grasses under the surface and is protected by the water from flies and mosquitoes. Not infrequently his entire body is submerged and when his head goes down for grass he is completely hidden. It is during this season that the snapping of moose pictures is possible.

To get a good picture with the ordinary kodak it is necessary to get within at least thirty feet of the animal. This is not always an easy matter. The pictures accompanying this article are the result of snaps made under circumstances of luck and hard paddling, more than studied stalking methods. They were taken during patrol trips from a canoe without a blind. The moose were approached by paddling only when their heads were under water. By creeping between the moose and the shore they were forced to swim to open water where they were "run down." A moose can swim almost as swiftly as two men can paddle. Each of these pictures was snapped in the heat of a race.

We saw many fine bulls with wide-spread antlers, but they were too wary to be stalked with an open canoe. Since our time was not our own we had no opportunity to build brush blinds and lost what promised to be fine pictures. By covering a canoe with brush and going cautiously "up-wind" toward the moose a surprisingly close position can be obtained.

Hunting moose with a kodak is an unusual addition to a summer's vacation. Hundreds of tourists spend their summers in the north simply for the benefits of the cool, clear air, for the excellent fishing and the never ending grandeur of the scenery. It is an ideal playground for the city tired family.
While the Federal and State Forest Services have done much to make travel easy for the vacationist, they ask nothing in return, place no restrictions on your actions except that you must use care with fire in the woods and leave your camp site in suitable condition for the next occupants.

A week, a month, or a summer spent on the Superior National Forest will long be remembered as a perfect vacation. If it is spent in the moose country, on the Kawishiwi-Isabelle route so much the better and truly a "superior" vacation.