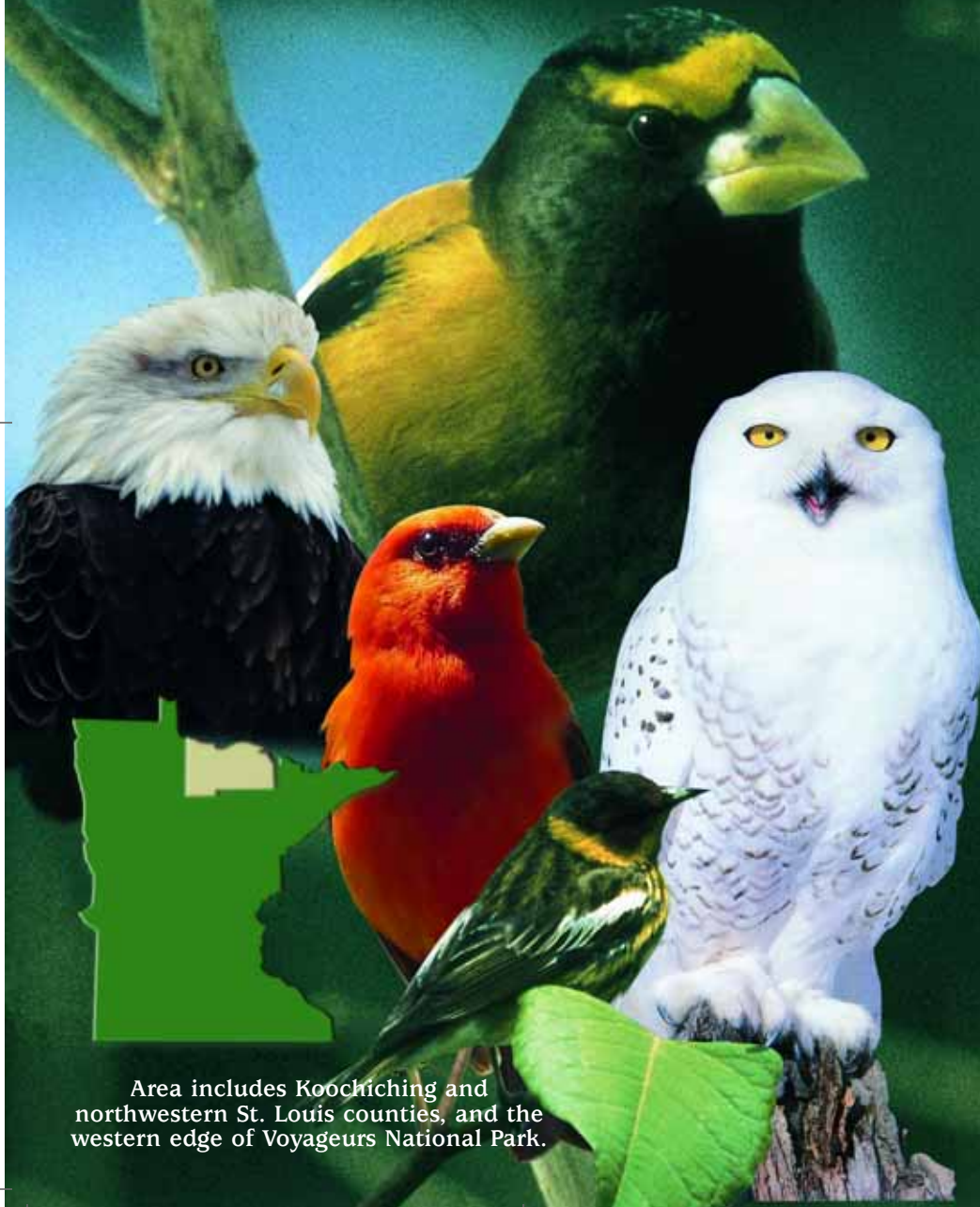


# Bogs to Rocks

BIRDING IN FAR NORTHERN MINNESOTA

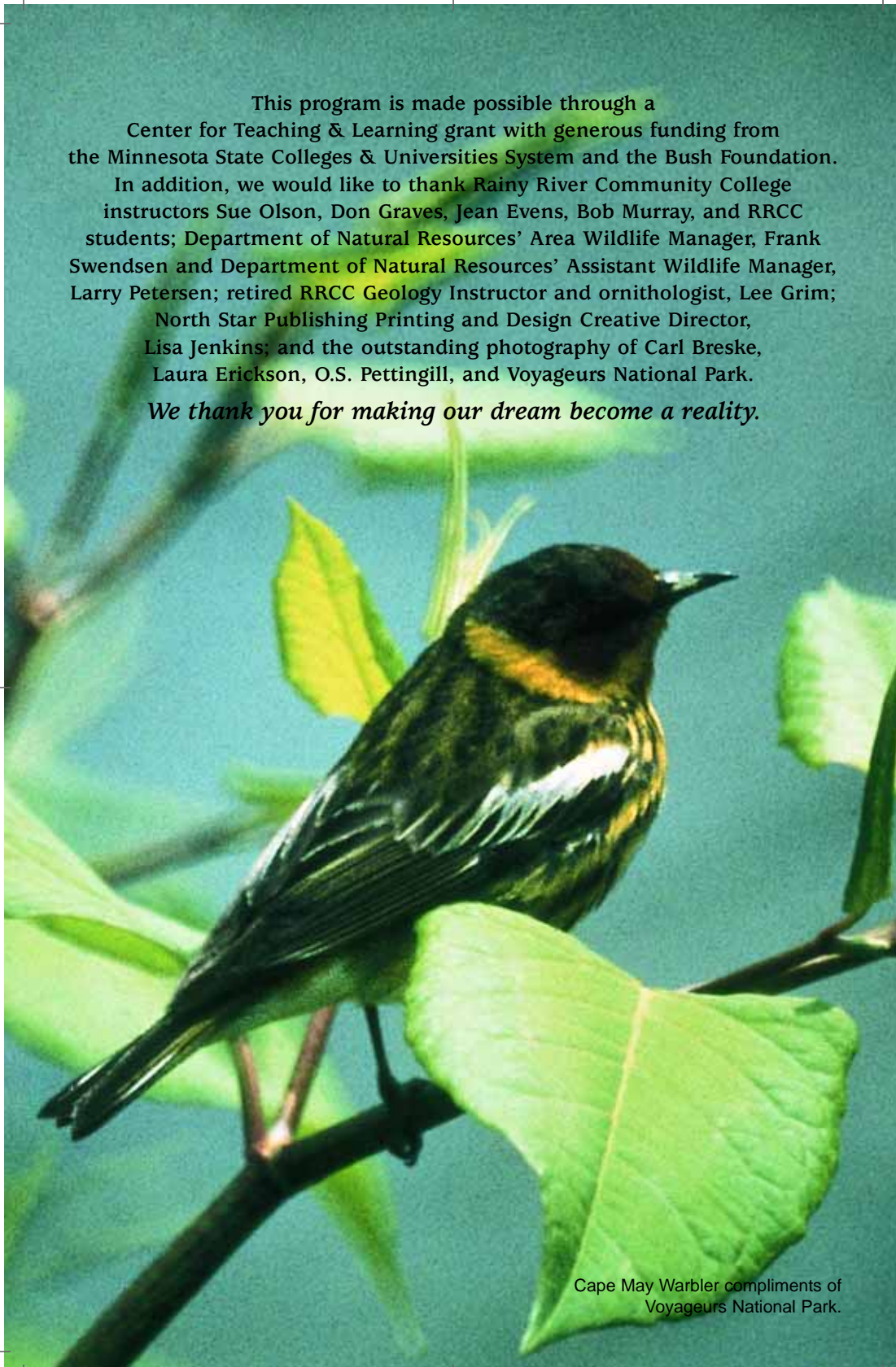


Area includes Koochiching and northwestern St. Louis counties, and the western edge of Voyageurs National Park.

This program is made possible through a  
Center for Teaching & Learning grant with generous funding from  
the Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System and the Bush Foundation.

In addition, we would like to thank Rainy River Community College  
instructors Sue Olson, Don Graves, Jean Evens, Bob Murray, and RRCC  
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Lisa Jenkins; and the outstanding photography of Carl Breske,  
Laura Erickson, O.S. Pettingill, and Voyageurs National Park.

*We thank you for making our dream become a reality.*



Cape May Warbler compliments of  
Voyageurs National Park.



# Bogs to Rocks

## Birding in Far Northern Minnesota

**Welcome to far northern Minnesota** and the *Bogs to Rocks* birding guide.

We hope to lead you to a diverse variety of habitats where you will have the possibility of seeing many of the over 300 bird species that either nest or migrate through the area. If you are looking specifically for nests, nearly 160 different species potentially nest here including 23 of the wood warblers.

This guide describes several specific driving routes that will bring you into the largest peatland bogs in the lower 48 states, next to lakes and rivers, through mixed agricultural lands with abandoned farm fields, into large tracts of diverse forested lands and onto the glacially scarred rock ridges along the Canadian border in and near Voyageurs National Park. Points of interests along these routes are also listed. Some of these roads do not provide any facilities and are very remote, so plan ahead when going into those places. There are thousands of acres of public lands throughout the area that are available for you to traverse. The routes we describe are only a sample of what is out there. If you like to explore, there is a lifetime of different places to go.

Spring, summer and fall offer the greatest opportunities to see birds because of the summer migrants. Some unusual and interesting birds you might see or hear during those seasons are: Spruce Grouse, Sandhill Crane, Northern Goshawk, Black-backed Woodpecker, Olive-sided or Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Winter Wren, Tennessee, Palm, Bay-breasted, Connecticut or Canada Warblers, Northern Waterthrush, and Indigo Bunting.

Winter can be a great time to come also, particularly if there is an influx of Great Gray, Boreal, Snowy or Hawk Owls. Other good winter species include: Red or White-winged Crossbills, Pine or Evening Grosbeaks, and Bohemian Waxwing.

There are a couple of mammals that you might see in your travels that you will also enjoy. There are good populations of both black bears and gray wolves throughout this area. Bears hibernate in the winter, so are only seen in other seasons.

Use the *Bogs to Rocks* birding guide as a starting point for a great birding adventure in far northern Minnesota. Feel free to contact personnel at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources wildlife offices in International Falls and Orr, Voyageurs National Park Headquarters in International Falls, or the International Falls Chamber of Commerce for more information on maps, lodging or any other questions. The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union website is the best source of information on bird ranges and distribution in this area and can be viewed at [www.moumn.org](http://www.moumn.org). For additional information, *Birds of Voyageurs National Park* bird guide produced by VNPA is distributed by The University of Minnesota Press and is available through most major bookstores.

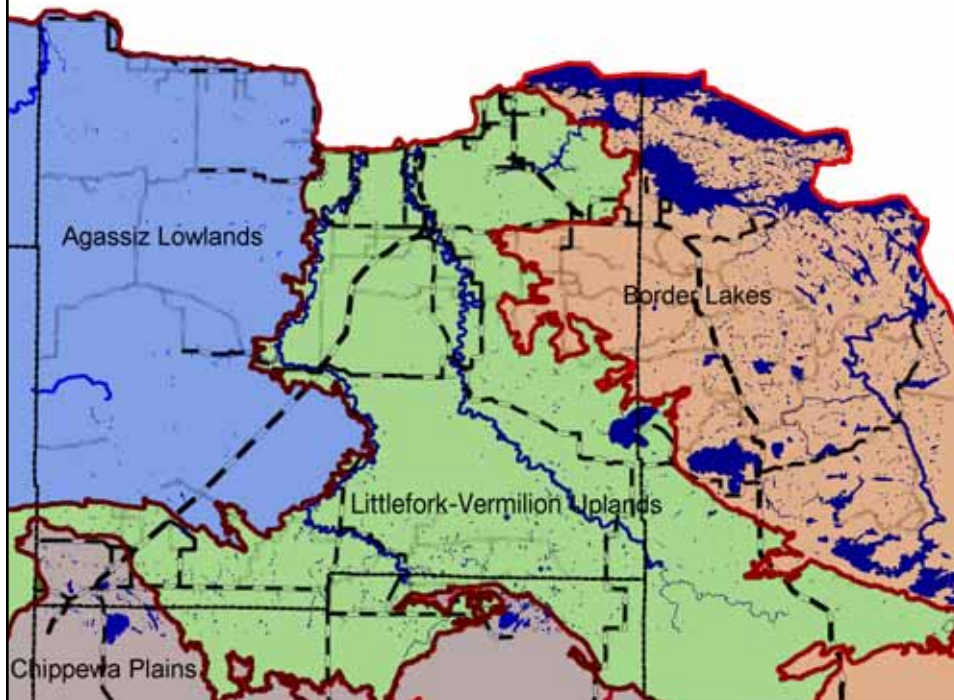
If you are in need of non-emergency assistance while "off-road", please contact the Koochiching County police department at 218-283-4416, or for an emergency dial 9-1-1. For forestry-related assistance call the Department of Natural Resources in International Falls at 218-286-3334; Big Falls 218-276-2237; Littlefork 218-278-6651; or Kabetogama 218-757-3489.



## Four Unique Ecological Areas

*An Ecological Classification System (ECS) delineates unique land-based areas on their soils, geology, vegetation and other features. The area within this guide covers parts of four unique ecological areas known as subsections.*

*Each of these subsections will have certain birds that are strongly associated with the varied habitats unique to them.*






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## AGASSIZ LOWLANDS SUBSECTION

This subsection is characterized by large, flat peatlands interspersed with sandy upland ridges and islands. These peatlands are wet year around and contain forests of black spruce, tamarack and white cedar as well as open bog communities of sedge and brush. Upland sites are commonly vegetated by jack pine, aspen, and paper birch. The Big Fork and Rainy rivers are the largest rivers that run through this subsection.

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## BORDER LAKES SUBSECTION

This subsection starts just east of International Falls and includes Voyageurs National Park and continues east along the Canadian border to include the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). This area is dominated by rock ridges of glacially-eroded bedrock with many lakes and rivers throughout and contains forests of white, red and jack pine on the better-drained sand and gravel soils. Mixed forests of aspen, paper birch, white spruce and balsam fir can be found on the more poorly drained clay soils.

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## CHIPPEWA PLAINS SUBSECTION

There is only a small part of this subsection in southwestern Koochiching County. This is rolling country created by glacial activity with sandy loam soils. Aspen is the most common tree species. It is found in pure stands or in stands mixed with birch, maple, basswood, oak, white spruce, jack pine, or red pine. The public lands are forested, but much of the private land has been converted to agriculture.

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## LITTLEFORK-VERMILION UPLANDS SUBSECTION

The level to gently rolling topography of this subsection is framed by the Littlefork River to the west and the Vermilion River to the east. The upland soils are mostly clay with forests that are primarily aspen mixed with balsam fir and white spruce. The lowlands contain pockets of peatlands similar to the Agassiz Lowlands Subsection, but also some extensive black ash forests. This area also has some active agriculture combined with abandoned agricultural fields that add some habitats that would not be found in the natural forests.

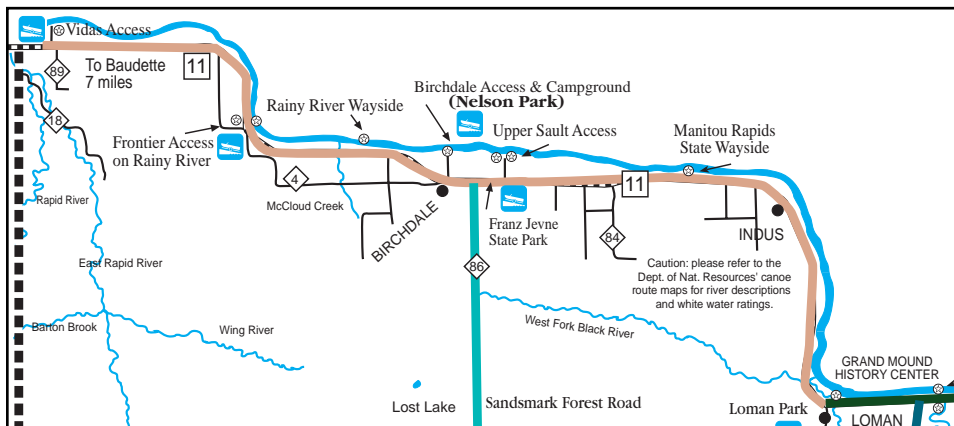


## Loops and Trails

**HIGHWAY 11 WEST:** Depart Loman and drive 40 miles west along the Rainy River on State Highway 11 to the west edge of Koochiching County. You will be about seven miles from Baudette at this point.

### Stops and Diversions:

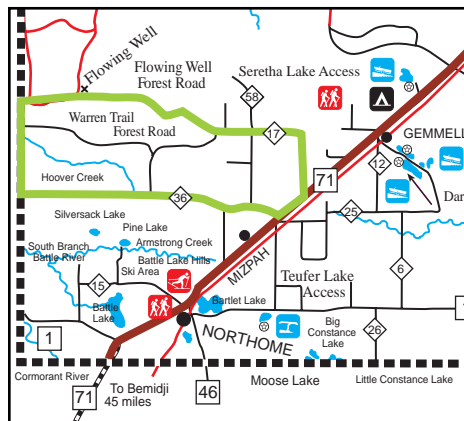
- Loman Park in the city of Loman on the Black River;
- Manitou Rapids State Wayside on the Rainy River;
- Franz Jevne State Park on the Rainy River;
- Upper Sault Access on the Rainy River;
- Birchdale Access and campground (Nelson Park) on the Rainy River;
- Rainy River Wayside;
- Frontier Access on the Rainy River;
- Vidas Access on the Rainy River.



**FLOWING WELL LOOP:** Start at the town of Mizpah and drive 10 miles west on Koochiching County Road 36 to the intersection with Beltrami County Road 107. Turn right on this gravel road and go 3.5 miles to the junction with the Flowing Well Forest Road. Turn right and travel about 10 miles to the intersection with Koochiching County Road 17, which is tar. Turn right and drive 3 miles to the intersection with Koochiching County Road 36, turn left and drive 1 mile back to Mizpah.

### Stops and Diversions:

- Historic flowing well has been flowing since the early 1900s.



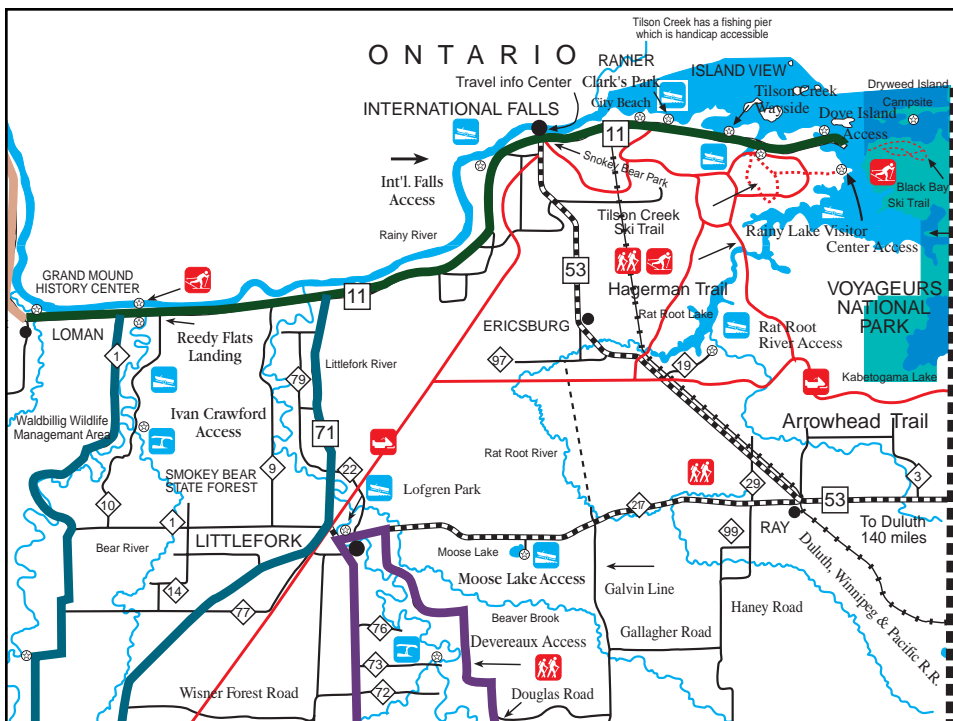


### HIGHWAY 11 EAST:

Starting at Loman on State Highway 11 travel east 20 miles to International Falls. Continue 10 miles east to the intersection with Koochiching County Road 96. Turn right and travel 2 miles to the Voyageurs National Park Rainy Lake Visitor Center with a public access to the lake.

#### *Stops and Diversions:*

- Loman Park in the city of Loman on the Black River;
- Grand Mound History Center Walking Trail at the confluence of the Big Fork and Rainy rivers;
- Kuttles Access on the Rainy River;
- Oberholzer Hiking Trail at Visitor Center;
- Travel to the end of State Highway 11 on Dove Island;
- Public boat access to Rainy Lake at Dove Island;
- Public boat access to Rainy Lake at Tilson Bay;
- Tilson Bay Hiking Trail on north side of highway;
- Tilson Bay Cross Country Ski Trail on south side of highway;
- Frank Bohman Memorial Access to Rainy Lake;
- Public boat access and public docks on Rainy Lake and Rainy River in the city of Ranier;
- Pat Roche Memorial Access on Rainy River;
- Bike/hiking trail from International Falls to nearly the end of Highway 11 east.

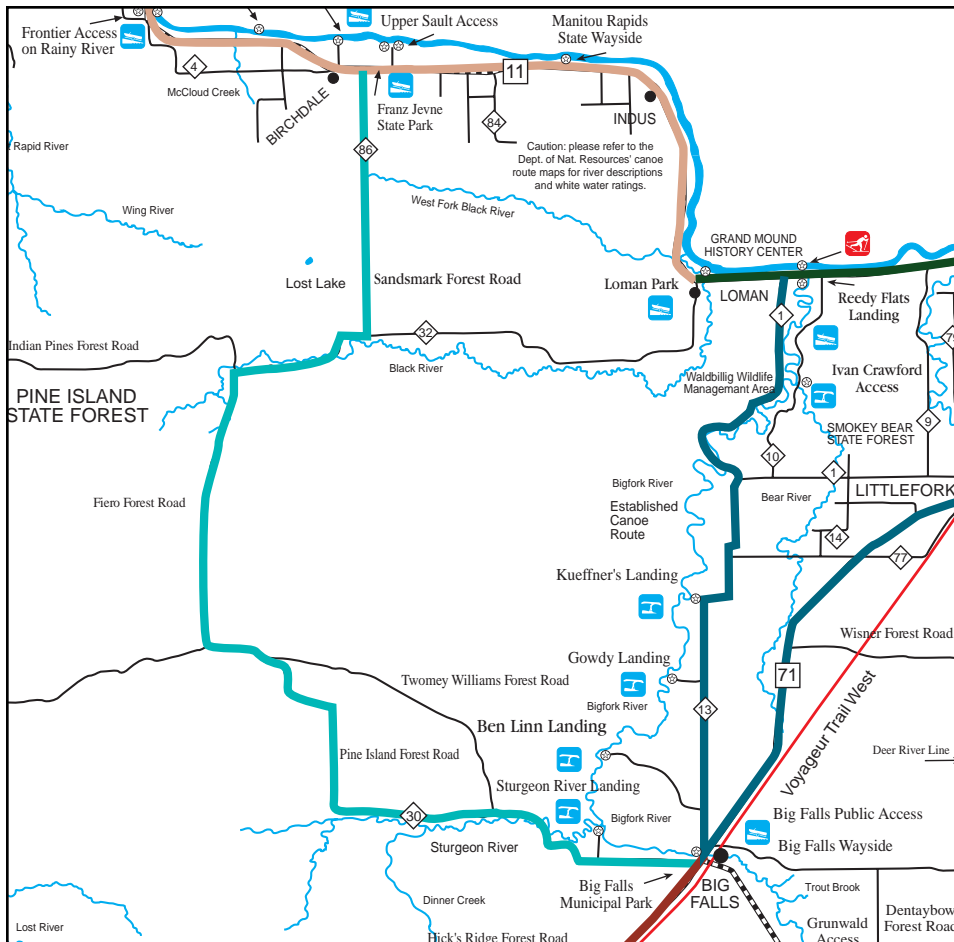




**BOG TRAIL:** Depart from Big Falls and head west for 15 miles on Koochiching County Road 30, a tar road, to the intersection with the Pine Island Forest Road. Turn right on this gravel road and follow it north and west for about 10 miles to the intersection with the Fiero Forest Road. Turn right and follow this for about 11 miles to the intersection with the Indian Pines Forest Road. Turn right and follow this road, which changes to a county road for six miles, to the intersection with the Sandsmark Forest Road. Turn left and follow this gravel road 10 miles north to the intersection with State Highway 11. At this point you will be one mile east of Birchdale.

#### **Stops and Diversions:**

There are no specific stops along this route. This 52-mile route is remote with no facilities. Once you leave Big Falls, you will not see a gas station or store until you get to Birchdale. The road travels through a large peatland and can be a little rough at times.





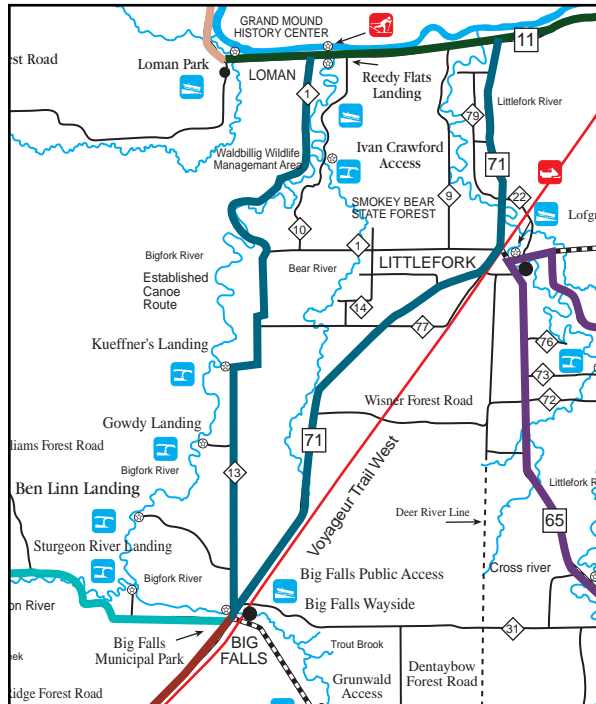


### NORTH BIG FALLS LOOP:

Start at the intersection of State Highways 11 and 71, and head south on Highway 71 for 27 miles toward Big Falls. Just north of Big Falls turn right on Koochiching County Road 13 and head back north for about 14 miles. Most of this is gravel. When you intersect State Highway 1, which is tar, turn left and follow it west and north to State Hwy 11.

#### *Stops and Diversions:*

- Kueffner's Access on the Big Fork River;
- Gowdy Landing on the Big Fork River;
- Ben Linn Landing on the Big Fork River;
- Big Falls Municipal Park on the Big Fork River;
- Waldbillig State Wildlife Management Area on the Big Fork River.

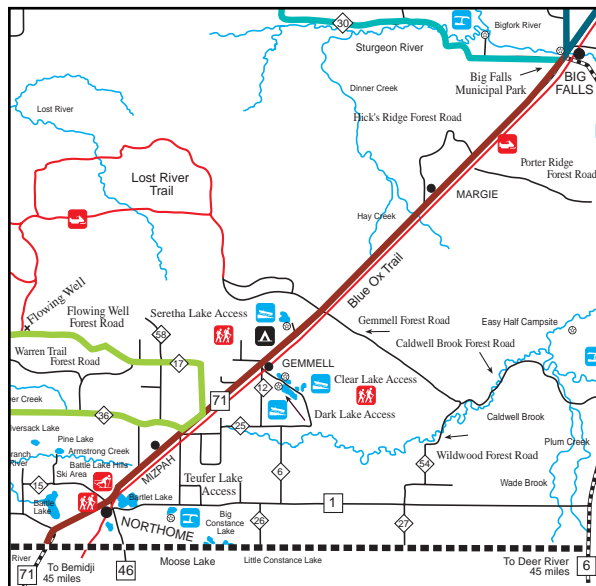


### SOUTH BIG FALLS TRAIL:

Leave Big Falls and travel 34 miles southwest on State Highway 71 to the intersection with State Highway 1, which is 3 miles southwest of Northome.

#### *Stops and Diversions:*

- Public boat access at Seretha Lake;
- Public boat accesses at Clear and Dark lakes;
- City park in Northome on Bartlett Lake;
- Koochiching County hiking and cross-country ski trail near Battle Lake;
- Public boat access at Battle Lake.





### ASH RIVER TRAIL:

Start at the intersection of State Highway 53 and St. Louis County Road 129. Follow this tar county road for 10 miles until it ends at Sullivan Bay on Lake Kabetogama.

#### Stops and Diversions:

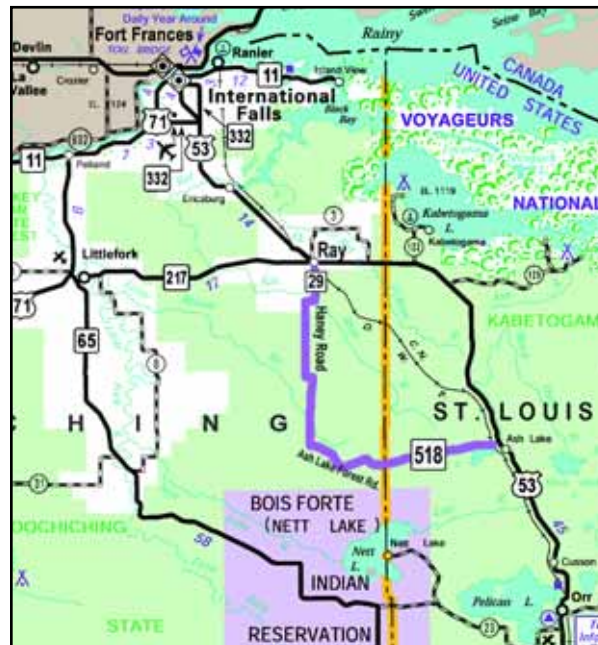
- Public boat access on Sullivan Bay;
- Side trip to Voyageurs National Park (VNP) Visitor Center and public boat access;
- VNP hiking trails and overlooks – maps available at visitor center. For locations, visit web site: [www.nps.gov/voyal](http://www.nps.gov/voyal)

### ASH LAKE/HANEY

**ROAD TRAIL:** Leave State Highway 53 just north of Ash Lake and go west on St. Louis County 518, a gravel road. Travel 8 miles until the road changes to the Ash Lake Forest Road in Koochiching County. This road continues westerly about 5 miles and the name changes to the Haney Road. Follow this west about 2 miles and then it turns north and traverses another 10 miles and changes to Koochiching County Road 29, a tar road. Follow this road about 5 miles back to State Highway 53 and you will be about 15 miles from International Falls.

#### Stops and Diversions:

- Public Access to Ash Lake.



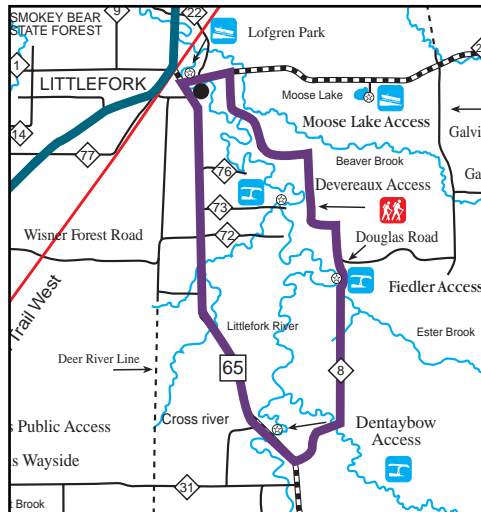


### LITTLEFORK RIVER LOOP:

Start just east of Littlefork at the intersection of State Highway 217 and Koochiching County Road 8. Travel south on County Road 8 for 19 miles until you intersect State Highway 65, then turn right and travel 13 miles back to Littlefork. The entire drive is tar roads.

#### Stops and Diversions:

- Littlefork River State Wildlife Management Area adjacent to the Littlefork River;
- Fiedler Access on the Littlefork River;
- Dentaybow Access on the Littlefork River;
- Devereaux Access on the Littlefork River;
- Lofgren Park on the Littlefork River in the city of Littlefork.

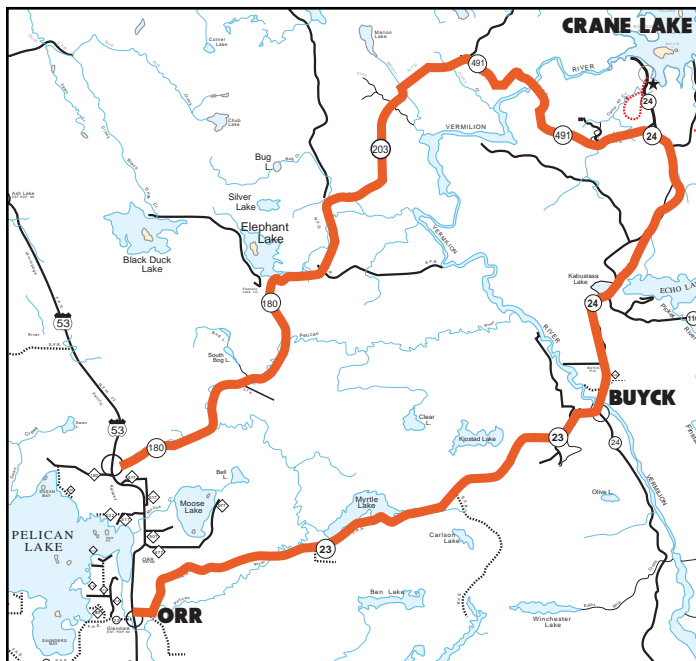


**ORR/CUSSON LOOP:** Depart Orr from State Highway 53 and travel east on St. Louis County Road 23 to Buyck. This is about 13 miles of tar. At Buyck you will intersect St. Louis County Road 24 and continue east and north on tar road 9 miles to Superior National Forest Road 491. Turn left on this gravel road and travel about 9 miles to the

intersection with Superior National Forest Road 203. Turn left and follow this about 10 miles until you intersect St. Louis County Road 180 at Elephant Lake. Turn left and follow this gravel road about 8 miles back to Highway 53 at Cusson.

#### Stops and Diversions:

- Orr Bog Walk at Visitor Center just south of town;
- Public Dock on Pelican Lake just on north side of Orr;
- Vermilion River Gorge;
- Crane Lake Hiking Trail.



*The wilderness is calling...come listen, look and liberate your soul with the beauty of far northern Minnesota.*



For information on birding in this area contact Don Graves at [dgraves@rccc.mnscu.edu](mailto:dgraves@rccc.mnscu.edu) or call 218-285-2232.

[www.rccc.mnscu.edu](http://www.rccc.mnscu.edu) • [www.rainylake.org](http://www.rainylake.org)

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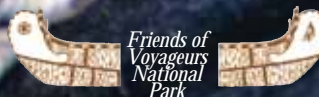
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