

HURON ISLANDS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The Huron Islands National Wildlife Refuge consists of eight islands lying 3 miles off the south shore of Lake Superior along Michigan's Upper Peninsula in Marquette County. The islands total 147 acres and are formed by pink and gray granite upthrusts which bear remarkably prominent evidence of glacial action. The rocks rise some 200 feet above the lake, forming steep and very attractive cliffs on the south, while the northern shore exposes rounded glacier and wave-worn rock surfaces. One-third of the area of the islands is barren or lichen-covered rock which frequently shows deep glacial grooving. The remainder of the surface is covered with trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants.

White and red pine, balsam fir, white birch, white cedar, and a variety of other tree species grow in the rock crevices where soil has accumulated. These trees show the ravages of wind, ice, and sleet, and as a result they often persist on precarious sites, forming a landscape of gnarled, picturesque forms standing above the rocks.

The herring gull is the most numerous wildlife species on the Huron Islands and nests on the barren rock islands at the eastern extremity of the group. The birds must be protected from molestation during the nesting and brooding seasons. Other species of wildlife found on the islands are the snowshoe hare, whitefooted deer mouse, raven, bluejay, brown thrasher, and many other small perching birds.

The Huron Islands are a considerable distance from access points, and favorable weather must prevail for sailing to and landing upon these rugged islands. They present rugged, pristine beauty in an isolated setting, with the wild south shore of Lake Superior and the nearby Huron Mountains as superb wilderness companions.

Of the 147 acres involved in the refuge, the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has primary jurisdiction over 22 acres. The remainder of the land is held in primary jurisdiction by other agencies, with the Bureau having only secondary jurisdiction.

The second largest of the islands, Huron Island, is under the primary jurisdiction of the Coast Guard, which maintains a manned station, lighthouse, and boathouse at widely separated points. These installations are connected by footpaths. With the development of automatic navigational-aid devices, it will eventually be possible for the Coast Guard to abandon these installations, at which time these developments should be removed.

Though the Coast Guard does not foresee this action in the immediate future, they have stated that they anticipate no "physical changes in our establishment that might alter existing conditions on the island." Under these circumstances the installations can be classified as nonconforming administrative developments and do not conflict with designation of the islands as wilderness.

The larger East Huron Island is under the primary jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, for whom the island is a potential source of rock to be quarried for cover stone in harbor breakwater repairs. The corps has stated that "Removal of stone from the island is not anticipated in the foreseeable future. In fact, it is very possible that no quarrying will be conducted on this island during the next 20 years or longer."