

# OUTDOORS

## CALL OF THE WILD

The Journal welcomes ideas for stories about people in our community who have a unique hunting, fishing or outdoors tale.  
**Call the Journal at 285-7411**

# White spruce a Koochiching County champion

BY DANA E SCHAFFER

White spruce, scientific name *Picea glauca*, is one of the trees that many people refer to as a pine tree.

Although spruce trees are from the same genetic family as pines, they are distinct and separate in many ways. The only close relative to the white spruce in Minnesota is the black spruce. White spruce can be found growing naturally in the northern two-thirds of the state. They grow in a wide range of conditions from wet to dry sites and soils, and open to closed canopy conditions. They are also relatively common as a planted species due to the fact that they can handle the compact soil conditions caused by growing grass.

In Koochiching County, it is common to see white spruce growing with aspen. White spruce look like Christmas trees as they are generally pyramidal in shape. This shape helps them deal with snow weight in the winter.

The leaves are needles that stay on year round and are blue green in color. Needles are 3/8 inch to ¾ inch long, and usually four-sided so they will roll if you move them back and forth

between your fingers. When broken or crushed they have a distinct spruce smell — a different smell than balsam fir, a tree you may confuse it with. Twigs will have no hairs present (black spruce has small orange hairs) and the needles will go all the way around. Cones are one inch to two inches long and tan in color. The bark is grey and becomes flaky as the tree gets larger. If you scrape a small amount of surface bark off, white spruce is generally a light pink hue underneath (black spruce is often yellow).

One thing to note is that white and black spruces have been known to hybridize which produces a tree that won't follow the characteristics of either species.

These trees provide thermal cover for deer, moose, grouse, rabbits and other species during the winter. Squirrels and mice eat the seeds from the cones. Birds use white spruce for nesting, roosting, and perching.

The main uses people get from this tree are aesthetics, fiber for paper, and lumber for construction, musical instruments, and paddles. The only major pest is the spruce budworm which comes around cyclically. However, white

spruce are likely to survive an outbreak of this native insect which provides food for many animals. White spruce planted in yards are susceptible to many diseases and pests due to the added stress of their living conditions. More information about spruce yard tree problems can be found at [http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/backyard/treecare/forest\\_health/whitespruce-diagnosis.pdf](http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/backyard/treecare/forest_health/whitespruce-diagnosis.pdf).

With few major pests and diseases, white spruce can live quite a long time. Trees found above the Arctic Circle can be nearly 1,000 years old. The white spruce in Koochiching County can get large. In fact, the state record tree is found here. The tree was remeasured just this fall and is 130 feet tall, has a 30-foot crown spread, and a circumference of 126 inches. Measurements of state record trees can be found at [http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/trees\\_shrubs/bigtree/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/trees_shrubs/bigtree/index.html).

So keep your eyes open next time you are out in the woods; perhaps the next champion white spruce is out there.

*Schafer is a forester with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in Littlefork.*



DNR forester Kirby Osvold poses with the state record white spruce.

## TRAIL REPORTS

**IVSC**

The International Voyageurs Snowmobile Club maintains 134 miles of groomed trails in the International Falls and Rainy Lake area of Borderland. The following report was posted on the club's website at <http://www.ridetheborder.com/>.

"Trails are still in great shape and with snow in the forecast it can only get better. Remember all trails lead to the Thunderbird Lodge for the IVSC annual radar run for Cancer Walk. (Saturday from 1-4) It's for a very worthy cause so we hope to see you there."

**VNP**

Riders can experience the ease of snowmobiling on

groomed surfaces at Voyageurs National Park, thanks in part to Voyageurs National Park's gateway community snowmobile clubs: International Voyageurs, Ash River-Kabetogama Snowdrifters, and Voyageur Trail Society.

One of the groomed trails take visitors to a scenic rock formation, Grassy Bay Cliffs. Located on Sand Point Lake between the communities of Ash River and Crane Lake, Grassy Bay received its name from being a portage that was most likely used during the fur trade. The portage was a short cut between Sand Point Lake and Namakan Lake, and its earliest map reference was in 1913 on the International Joint Commission map.

Unique geologic outcrops,

such as Grassy Bay Cliffs, are one of the reasons Voyageurs National Park was established. Visitors to this area of the park can see an outcrop of the Lac La Croix biotite granite, the same rocks that make up much of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. While the geologic story of the park dates back 2.8 billion years and shows a variety of different geologic features, this outcrop shows some of the "younger" rocks of the park, "only" 2.6 billion years old. This rock outcrop reaches more than 80-feet high.

Below is this week's winter trail conditions report, which is also posted at [www.nps.gov/voya](http://www.nps.gov/voya).

**Snowmobile trails**

- International Falls to Kettle Falls (Purple Trail) – open, staked, and groomed
- Rainy Lake/Black Bay to Kabetogama Lake to Ash River (Green Trail) – open, staked, and groomed
- Ash River to Crane Lake

- (Green Trail) – open, staked, and groomed
- Chain of Lakes (Dashed Black Trail) – open, staked, and groomed
- Ash River to Kettle Falls (Yellow Trail) – open, staked, and groomed
- East Namakan Lake to Sand Point Lake (Blue Trail) – open, staked, and groomed

**Ice roads**

- Rainy Lake Ice Road – open around Dryweed Island
- Kab — Ash Ice Road – open

**Ski trails**

- Echo Bay Ski Trail – open, packed, and tracked
- Black Bay Ski Trail – open, packed, and tracked
- Tilson Connector Trail – open, packed, and tracked
- Kab-Ash Trail – open
- Snowshoe trails
- Black Bay Beaver Pond Trail – open
- Blind Ash Bay Trail – open
- Oberholtzer Trail – open
- Sullivan Bay Trail – open

## Winter severity index reaches 108

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The winter severity index for the International Falls area was 108 on Wednesday, reports Larry Petersen, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources area wildlife manager.

The WSI was 65 last year at this date, and 20 two years ago.

The average WSI for this date is about 67, according to Petersen. During Borderland's harshest winter in the mid 1990, the WSI was 124 on this date.

The snow depth is around 18-24 inches in the International Falls

vicinity. The deeper snow can be found south and east of here.

The winter severity index is a standardized number the DNR uses when considering impacts of the winter on deer. It is calculated using temperature and snow depth in the period from Nov. 1 through April 30 or whenever winter ends. Every day the daily low temperature is zero or below is one point, and every day the snow depth is 15 inches or deeper in an open aspen woods is one point. The points are added each week until winter ends.

Warren Bahr would like to invite all friends and family to enjoy the wedding of

Hollie Bahr and Skip Ohlquist.

4:00pm Sat, Feb 22  
at the Evangelical Covenant Church  
1631 1st Ave. E.

All details can be found at  
[www.theknot.com/wedding/hollie-and-skip](http://www.theknot.com/wedding/hollie-and-skip)

RAINY LAKE SPORTFISHING CLUB'S

29<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FAMILY ICE FISHING DERBY & RAFFLE

Saturday, February 22nd • 1-4pm  
SAND BAY AREA - MAIN ENTRANCE: RAINY LAKE MARINE

YOU MUST HAVE \$10.00 RAFFLE TICKET TO ENTER DERBY AREA.  
Children under 16 will receive a FREE Hot Dog ticket, must be accompanied by an adult to get the hot dog.

All proceeds go toward the improvement of local fisheries, scholarships and kid's fishing pond. 2013 Licenses VALID for this Event. No lines in the water until 1:00 p.m.! Bring your auger... help a neighbor!

**CASH PRIZES**  
\$10 Raffle Ticket Required  
1st - \$5,000  
2nd - \$2,000, 3rd - \$1,000 plus Many More!

**NOTICE: RULES FOR 2014**

- All fish must be caught in the derby area.
- 4 different fish Categories: Walleye/Sauger, Burbot, Northern & Alternative Species
- Each fish category will have a 1, 2, 3 placing.
- Fish prizes donated by: Hardees, Farmers Insurance - Ronna Mackay, Loons Nest, Rainy Lake One Stop, Rainy Lake Spirits, Sportsmens Service

- You may enter 1 fish per category, at which time you will receive a ticket. After the derby is completed, a random drawing will be held for all tickets given out.

**SLOT SIZE ENFORCED**  
★ Remember that you may not keep walleyes in Rainy Lake 17" to 28" and they will not be accepted for the Draw!

Need not be present to win prizes.  
License # 36010

**LIONS CLUB FOOD WAGON WILL BE SERVING ALL DAY**

**\$10.00 RAFFLE TICKETS AVAILABLE AT:**  
• Outdoorsman's Headquarters • Sportsmens Service • Loons Nest  
• Rainy Lake 1 Stop • Forestland • Randy's • Mels Corner Service - Littlefork  
Promersbergers Corner - Big Falls & Various Locations throughout Borderland

Patty O' Porter

IS BACK AND PLAYING EVERY SUNDAY FROM 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm

**BORDER BAR PIZZA PARLOR**  
283-2222 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. & 5<sup>th</sup> St. • I. Falls  
Mon-Thur 11:30am-10pm • Fri & Sat 11:30am-11pm • Sun 11:30am-9pm

St. Thomas Parish

**RAISE THE ROOF RAFFLE**

2 - \$1,000 Prizes

\$10/ticket

Only 1,000 Tickets Available

Drawing will take place Saturday, March 1 9:00pm, Aquinas Hall

Tickets available at the Parish Office, Forestland Sales & Service and Espresso Lane.  
Proceeds from this raffle will assist with the costs of Parish roof repairs.

**Tickets donated by TruStar Federal Credit Union**  
Need not be present to win.  
Winner responsible for any applicable taxes or fees.  
Must be 18 or older to participate.  
St. Thomas Aquinas Church  
Gambling License #01336

[www.ifallsjournal.com](http://www.ifallsjournal.com)

Happy Birthday Mom

2/18/25 - 1/31/12

Love and Miss You  
The Kids and Grandkids

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I have been serving the International Falls area with professional tax preparation, consulting, and payroll tax assistance, for over 20 years.

  
Hours: Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 6:00 pm  
Saturday 9:00 am to 12:00 pm  
Other times are available by appointment.