

CAMP VAN VAC

A LAKESIDE RESORT

2714 Van Vac Lane
Ely, Minnesota 55731
218/365-3782

April 16, 2012

Dear Friends,

March came in as a spring lamb and went out like roast lamb when the area broke records with 70 degree temps. Then yesterday we got ice and six inches of snow. Darn! But as spring truly arrives, here's a fun thing: Now you can follow the progress of a Burntside loon as it returns from the coast of Florida. Loons that have been implanted with transmitters can be tracked by Googling USGS Loon Survey.



You can watch wolf pups on the prowl in Ely this summer.

Wolf Pups are Coming

This spring the International Wolf Center has added two small howlers to its educational programs in Ely. The gray wolf pups will be introduced in Center programs soon. For information about activities related to the pups, such as a Name the Pup contest, check the www.wolf.org site. Be sure to visit the Center in Ely this summer to watch these growlers grow.

Huck Finn wants to know...

Would you white wash a new fence, or paint it with vines, or stencil a flock of chickadees on it? Last fall we built retaining walls at the back of two Camp parking areas, and they are in need of art. Come up with a design and a cost for materials and labor, and by September 30 we'll choose a winner to do the work. The medium should be durable to last many seasons and be easy to touch up, and the design should fit Camp's wild, wild setting. Any ideas? Shoot Nancy a proposal.

Campers, let's get social

You can post your Camp vacation photos, share your Burntside highlights and see glorious sunsets on two Facebook group pages. From Facebook go to groups: "Camp Van Vac" or "Camp Van Vac is where it's at."

And from Camp's homepage at campvanvac.com, check out the "Photos and Comments" page for links to videos made by guests. They are, alternately, snappy, adventurous, time-lapsed and nostalgic.



The boathouse will get a facelift, or is that a rocklift, with a new stone crib on the deep end this spring. That will help keep the whole building from shifting when the ice crushes up against it in the spring. The ice went out on Burntside very gently and extra early this year, on March 28.

News you can use

- ❖ Boathouse repair, including a second rock crib under west end, is in the works for March. Bob Champa of Lakeside Services is in charge, and predicts the work will be done by the end of April.
- ❖ Work weekenders will be able to see the change to the boathouse when they come for the May 4-6 gala of leaf raking, wood splitting and cabin prep. Call if you're interested in joining us to stay free, eat yummy home-cooked meals and enjoy the camaraderie of some of the kindest folks on the planet. Bring a sleeping bag, work gloves, personal snacks and beverages and a few good jokes.
- ❖ Price news you've been (mostly) hoping for: The 2011 cabin rates are good for another year, but the daily docking fee for your boats will rise from \$3 to \$5 a day in 2012.
- ❖ Gift certificates are available in case you'd like to give a Camp stay to your favorite birthday person, newlyweds or friend. You pick the amount, and then select a photo certificate.

Chance of a lifetime:

See the first green-up after a raging wildfire

You can adventure forth on a unique, guided day-trip into the Boundary Waters that takes you along the edge of the 2011 fire zone.

You may remember last fall's Pagami Creek fire that burned more than 92,000 acres east and south of Ely, but only 10% of the BWCA Wilderness. For a look at the thunderous smoke clouds, a map of the fire's path and many dramatic fire-fighting photos, [Google Pagami Creek fire](#).

In cooperation with Camp Van Vac, Spirit of the Wilderness Outfitters is offering our guests a day-paddle out of Lake One, where you can see the fire-scarred woods begin to regenerate, spot a bald eagle nest and travel some areas that remained untouched by the fire. Two easy 1/8 mile portages, a trail snack and all of the needed gear make the day easy for groups of all ages. (See prices below)

Or, want an historic trip? Spend a day with a Spirit of the Wilderness guide on a paddle across Hegman Lake, with a 1/4 mile portage, and a view of ancient pictographs. You'll get up close to a bog full of pitcher plants and sundew, enjoy a snack and dip your toes into wilderness waters.

Both trips are available on Wednesdays from 9 am to 3 pm at a cost ranging from \$60 to \$70 per person, depending on the size of the group, with three to eight in a party. Children accompanied by an adult are welcome. Sign on when you get to Camp.

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers

If you're bringing your boat or canoe to Camp this summer, please pay attention to the new laws about removing any visible aquatic plants, zebra mussels and wild boar from your boat. Okay, the wild boar is unlikely, but the DNR wants you avoid transporting other invasive species, so drain your boat, live well and bait buckets when you leave one lake or river and head to another. Burntside now has spiny water fleas, so be sure to clean your fishing lines too, before leaving Camp. For more info on the law, checkout the DNR website.

Kids at Camp

It's always fun to read the cabin journals. Here's part of an entry that graphically paints what having the run of Camp was like for me at age 10 and is still true for a new generation of kiddos: "Fishing, hunting frogs, swimming, "hardcoring" on the rocks, and night games, new friends and independence to run free—what more can a boy accomplish in a week—oh yeah, saunas and jumping off the dock into the freezing cold lake in the dark—such a wonderful experience for increasing self esteem and strength. So proud of him."

Don't forget to make your mark in the cabin journal, like these Campers did

- ❖ The real purpose of this trip was to paddle a 1935 Old Town canoe to Listening Point. This canoe was purchased by Sig Olson for his guiding business, Border Lakes Outfitting. I acquired the canoe and restored it to its original glory to paddle again with Sig on Burntside.
- ❖ This year's helpful tip: According to Voltz (tech shop in Ely), if a cell phone, iPad or the like gets doused with water, DO NOT turn it on to see if it works. Rather, put it for couple of days in a bag of rice (to draw out the moisture). If you sense that we learned this lesson the hard way, you're right. 'Nuff said.
- ❖ How to make "no-mess, no-dishes" omelets. Use quart-sized freezer bags. Place an egg and whatever ingredients you want in the bag. Squish the bag. Label it with your name and place in boiling water for 10-20 minutes.
- ❖ And during the Pagami Creek Fire in August: Beautiful, beautiful weekend. Perfect 70's and 80's. Sun. Mostly calm waters. Fires are burning nearby, and from a canoe in the lake you can see big billowy smoke. Full moon last night and big bunch of wolves howled together nearby. We swear in the last three days the trees have become more golden, and it's easier to spot the bright red leaves hiding among the green. Is this the end of summer?



We hope you will come join us in spring, in fall and any time in summer, just for the fun of it!