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On Isle Royale, Lake Superior

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On Isle Royale, Lake Superior

We arrive by boat, the island-earth
far, free, isolate—back
among loon and fox,
spruce, hawk, and hare;
among pairs of wood ducks.
We startle moose bedded
on cowslips and oily mud;
they clatter off through wet

shin-tangle—soft-eyed and sad.
We ascend the island's spine,
spread out along the trail, each
climbing at his own pace.

I reach the rocky summit, catch
my breath, stop
to let the sea breeze cool,
then dry my face.

Wind on the cheeks.

Rocks. Trees. Contact!

Thoreau on Katahdin, 1846.

172 years later, only the gear differs.

Far below, cold blue water laps
the familiar shore. I count the days left:
loon, fox, spruce, hawk, hare,
moose, their bones almost gone

by wolves we never see.
Here I find cranny blueberries—
so tiny, so sweet!—growing
among the misty rocks.

Russ Capaldi

RUSS CAPALDI'S poems have appeared in *Rosebud* and *Dunes Review* and his essays in *Traverse—Northern Michigan's Magazine*. He lives with his wife in northern Michigan, where he makes his living as a carpenter and cabinetmaker. He and his wife enjoy hiking, camping, skiing, and snowshoeing just a few miles from the North Country Trail.