

HOLLY WILD:
Packing for the
PORKIES!



Lori Taylor



Bear Track Press
Pinckney, MI



1. UNION BAY CAMPGROUND
2. SUMMIT PEAK
3. LAKE OF THE CLOUDS
4. ARTIST CABIN
5. PRESQUE ISLE RIVER
6. MANABEZHO FALLS
7. BIG CARP RIVER TRAIL (ESCARPMENT)
8. NONESUCH

What is this place, this wilderness?

Who are these Wild people? How do they live?

I shall have to befriend them. Get to know them. Win their trust.

Shall I trade with them for information and goods? Establish communication and friendship? Do these wild folk of Michigan's

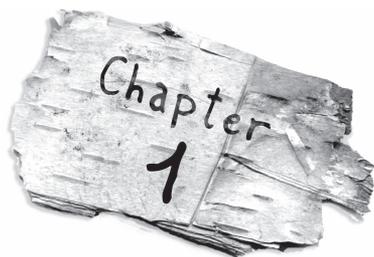
Upper Peninsula know of such things as mega malls, the internet or cell phones? From family photos I've seen they have the look of a wandering wolf at midnight, a porcupine in a poplar pondering the dusk, a lone loon wailing on a lake in a thrashing storm. Who are these forgotten clans of a forgotten tribe?

They are—the Yoopers.

Holly H. Wild



Team Wild GeEKS



DAY 1 (SUNDAY)

DESTINATION: PORCUPINE MOUNTAINS

WILDERNESS STATE PARK

Her cries of pain pierced the still morning air, cries seldom heard by modern day human ears, cries like that of a birthing moose or a dying elk.

“No!” pleaded Gram as she fondly patted Bessie’s rust-colored sides. “Not now, old girl, come on!” Bessie heaved and wheezed.

“Lord a’mighty, Kitty, she’s on her last legs.” Gram was sweating in the August heat.

“At least we aren’t out in the middle of nowhere yet. See if you can get her down this next road,” encouraged Aunt Kitty. She wore a look of growing concern and Hunter, her drool machine basset hound, whined softly, understanding the gravity of the situation.

“It’s serious,” I whispered to my Team. They looked at me. I shook my head slowly. It didn’t look good.

My Team, twins Tierra and Sierra Hills, are my best friends and GeEKS (Geo-Explorer Kids). Tierra, or “T”, is the artist/secretary while her twin Sierra, or “Sie”, is our vice-president/researcher/photographer. And I, Holly H. Wild, am the president of the GeEKs and all around explorer. I am the one

who gets dirty. I am the one who reports my gross and unusual nature clue finds to the Team and they research and record it. I am the one who usually gets myself into weird trouble times ten. And they are usually the ones who get me out.

“How much longer does she have, Gram?” I shut my eyes. I did not want to think about this unexpected turn of events. Aunt Kitty was on her phone speaking in hushed tones. We were so close to the U.P. and yet so far.

Since leaving Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore this morning, we had endured countless Hunter breaks and educational lectures from my nature-crazy Aunt Kitty. We passed cornfields, orchards, and giant windmills scraping the sky. And here we were, mere minutes from the Mackinac Bridge and trouble was already upon us!

Aunt Kitty pointed for Gram to turn onto Trails End Road. How fitting a name.

“Gang, our Porcupine Mountain Wilderness State Park adventure is taking a slight detour,” Gram yelled to us in the back seat. Hunter found a suitcase handle to snack on in the rear of the van.

We turned down the fateful road and drove past a sign that read “Wilderness State Park”, where a family posed for photos. I sighed with relief—wilderness. For a moment, I thought we’d be stuck in some noisy hotel in Mackinaw City, jam-packed with tourists and sightseers.

“Come on girl,” Gram coaxed. “Just a little further. Then you can rest.” Bessie quivered and quaked, saying her goodbyes. She made a soft sputtering sound and finished with a deep hacking cough, the kind that usually hits Gram early in the morning. Then she was silent.

“Well, we made it—almost,” said Aunt Kitty. She snapped her phone shut, unbuckled, and jumped out to go find a

park ranger.

“Glad this didn’t happen on the bridge,” said Gram. We all got out and looked at Bessie. The 15-year-old rusted out mom-van was more than a friend—she was family. But she had officially expired, ceased to be.

Gram gave a whistle as she inspected Bessie’s underbelly. “Her carriage bolts rusted clean through. She coulda dropped her engine on the highway in who-knows-where,” Gram said. “You got us here safely, Bess. You done good—real good.”

“But wait—now what, Gram?” I asked. “What about the U.P., our vacation, Aunt Kitty’s meeting?”

“Don’t you worry, Holly,” winked Gram. “It’s all under control. Help will be here soon.”

Our ultimate destination is the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park. Our purpose is two-fold: Aunt Kitty was called to a meeting, and weird luck has it that my Team’s mother, Misty Hills, is there for her artist-in-residence stay.

Finally, a State Park ranger in a forest-green uniform zipped up in his forest-green golf cart and loaded up our gear. The van had not made it as far as a campsite. Gram spoke with him briefly then waved for the Team and I to start walking and follow them through the towering pine trees.

“We’ll have to be brave and rough it,” I said to the Team, “out here in the Wilderness, waiting for a ride to the Upper Peninsula.”

To me, the U.P. has always been that magical land of moose and wolf, where lumberjacks and miners dance with bears and sing into the night. It was the home of my Wild kinfolk and the birthplace of my Wild cousin (once removed) Pauline Bunyan.



During one of Aunt Kitty's lectures I had found a chewed up copy of a book under my seat that talked about the early explorers of Michigan. The book was really thick so I skipped over the parts with lots of words and went to the cool parts that mentioned birch-bark canoes, furs, beaver pelts and Indians.

With my Wild camping experience back at Sleeping Bear Dunes being cut short, I had been looking forward to a real rough and rugged adventure. Now I was overcome with excitement to explore the unknown, untamed U.P. and camp under the stars in the wilderness.

Most explorers had some kind of delay in their journey, so I was trying to take ours in stride and fought off stomach-grabbing panic. I did not want to have our trip of a lifetime into the wild reaches of Michigan canceled.

T and Sie knew all about my relatives who explored the New World. Great, great, great Aunt Daisy Crocket Wild, who wrassled a bear and saved her famous brother, and Aunt Jenny Appleseed, who wandered the Ohio Valley. But it was my Wild cousin Pauline Bunyan, our very own "Yoooper", (a name for someone raised in the U.P. of Michigan), who I was curious about now.



Like Pauline, I wanted to venture into the unknown and explore its rocky depths, to wander the forested places where my Wild relatives had trod. I had already wrassled a caiman on Beaver Island and danced with bear cubs in Sleeping Bear Dunes. What great mysterious adventure awaited me in the Porkies?

One of the other beasts I've faced is Ivy Buckthorn. Ivy is the biggest, loudest, meanest spoiled brat at Hayfields Elementary