

## Sugarloaf Cove

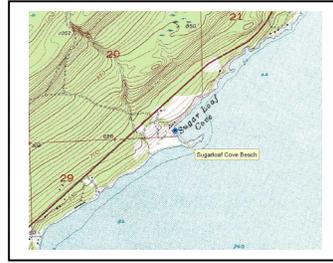
*“To inspire the preservation and restoration of the North Shore’s unique environment through education and exemplary stewardship.”*



Many of us are familiar with the big names in Minnesota environmental education centers, such as, Wolf Ridge, Eagle Bluff, and of course Audubon Center of the North Woods. Each program was started by people who had the idea of improving knowledge and sense of wonder of a place. This profile will look at a program that is still relatively new but one that nicely brings together stewardship, restoration, and human and natural history of a special place along Lake Superior’s North Shore.

Sugarloaf Cove is a 35-acre site located 73 miles north of Duluth that is owned by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Sugarloaf Cove Interpretive Center Association. The site is maintained by Sugarloaf: The North Shore Stewardship Association, which is a non-profit, membership-based organization mirroring the goals of the site. The overseeing goal of Sugarloaf Cove is to help people learn about the natural and human history of the North Shore. More specific goals of the program include interpretation and education, preservation and restoration, and stewardship and protection. The site includes a one-mile interpretive trail, log interpretive center, and stunningly unique natural surroundings.

Sugarloaf Cove has both a very distinctive human and natural history. From 1941 until 1971 Sugarloaf Cove was known as “Sugarloaf Landing” and was owned by Consolidated Paper Incorporated. The company used Sugarloaf Landing as a pulpwood landing to store wood for transportation across Lake Superior to Ashland, Wisconsin. Trees that were harvested in the winter were brought to the site to be stored in huge stacks. During the spring and summer months the trees were passed down a chute directly into Lake Superior. The natural cove along with a large floating boom held the logs in place until they were ready to be towed across the lake by tug boat. This operation required the company to clear large areas of forest, fill in a wetland area with gravel, and build fourteen structures including homes, garages, office, maintenance, and storage areas. Consolidated Paper left the site in 1971 when railroad became a better method of transportation for the harvested trees. They removed most of the buildings and planted pine and spruce in some of the open areas. Exotic species filled in the rest. In 1985, Consolidated Paper donated 61 acres of the site to the Nature Conservancy, which in 1987, sold 34 acres to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. In 1992, the Sugarloaf Cove Interpretive Association (SICA) was formed and the Minnesota DNR designated 3.5 acres of the site as a State Scientific and Natural Area; 6.7 acres were added under this designation in 1996. A hiking trail was established in 1995, the last Consolidated Paper building was removed from the site in 1999, and the interpretive center built in 2000. This history is important in understanding the mission of Sugarloaf Cove.

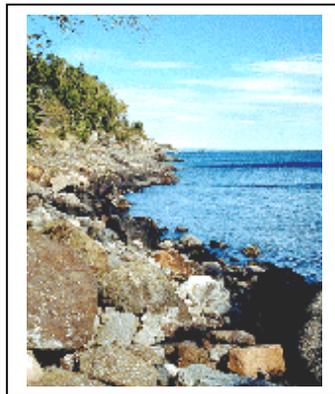


The 10.2 acres of Sugarloaf Cove included in the State Scientific and Natural Area designation were protected because of the unique geology and microclimate of the site. Geological features including basalt lava flows, pipe amygdules, pahoehoe, beach cobbles and boulders, a variety of rocks from Pleistocene ice sheets, and a tombolo are unique to the site. The threatened and rare Hudson Bay Eyebright (flower) can also be found here. In the early 1990's a huge restoration project began on the site to try to return it to its natural state. Exotic species were replaced with native varieties, the wetland was restored, and the old roads removed. The entire effort involved specialized contractors as well as the labor of many local people.

The current programs offered by Sugarloaf Cove are limited compared to larger environmental education programs but the scope and potential for this new resource is huge. Sugarloaf offers interpretive programs at the cove and in the surrounding areas. One of the programs offered are monthly North Shore Naturalist Workshops, which are held the second Saturday of the month. November's workshop included a "deer season safe hike," with a local naturalist. The cove also offers programs for area schools. Using restoration at the Cove as an example, Sugarloaf Cove is also working closely with local landowners to educate them in restoration, maintenance, and management of their own lake shore land in the spirit of keeping the North Shore naturally pristine. The Sugarloaf

Cove Interpretation Association has also recently opened an Interpretive Center at the mouth of the Lester River in Duluth to educate people about the human and natural history of Lake Superior's North Shore.

Sugarloaf Cove is a fascinating place to study the natural history of Lake Superior including 1.1 billion years of geologic time. The site offers the opportunity to explore the cultural history side of the Lake Superior region by learning about north woods logging operations. Sugarloaf Cove also provides the perfect opportunity to investigate management and restoration practices that transformed a heavily used industrial site to one of the most beautiful places on the North Shore.



## References

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