

# Anne Todesco anticipates the coming hunting season

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Another time when travelling late from Nipigon some wolves were spotted sitting on or standing upon the roadside snow banks at Cavers, as if watching traffic going by- the car lights made

their eyes shine so they were easy to spot.

What's missing from our area now are the caribou that used to live on the islands.

When I first came up to the

North Shore area of Lake Superior in the early '20s, caribou were quite plentiful. They were a popular game animal with the Americans. What a graceful moving animal, with their heads held high, supporting their beautiful rack of antlers.

Large boats or a tug would freight the victims of the hunters' rifles to harbours to be shipped home.

The boat decks looked as if they were loaded with antlers. As for enjoying a caribou steak, I was never fond of it as I thought it tasted mossy.

One year, one of these animals crossed from the mainland to Nicol Island via swimming across the harbour.

Many of the villagers lined the shore, some with binoculars to watch it crossing. Many of the fish boats were just entering the

harbour with their day's catch of trout, but the caribou appeared quite unconcerned by their arrival.

In 1915, times were hard because of the first World War. The snow was very deep that year. A herd of caribou started to migrate from the Pays Plat Lake area to cross to the islands but became stuck in the deep snow.

The Pays Plat and Rosspport homes had plenty of fresh meat for the winter as the story goes; about 30 of the animals were shot- wolves even got into the fray.

The humans salted, dried, cooked and froze the meat. Reports on this episode are in the District Officer's (forester) files.

Another story on the migration of caribou to the islands was when my brother was travelling east along the old highway route

at Sand Lake sometime in the '40s when he had to stop his car as a herd of caribou were crossing the road and milling about enroute crossing to the islands in Lake Superior.

In the 1860s, '70s and '80s surveyors and explorers hunted in the Rosspport and Pays Plat areas for fresh meat for the construction crews.

Two Fench chaps were sent to hunt for fresh meat on the island.

The went to Salter Island. The story goes that the two men became lost in a snowstorm; they came up and they lost their bearings and kept going about in circles until they realized that they were passing, while tracking caribou, a conspicuous rock was seen several times; hence, the original name for the island was Ve Island; later changed to Salter Island as the fish packers know as Salters.



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### Packing plant

There was a fish packing plant on the Northwest side of the island where the fish were packed in a brine of salty water in wooden kegs and barrels to be collected twice a year when schooners and sidewheelers were used to pick up the fish for eastern markets.

That was before the railroad was completed; then the fish would be packed in ice to keep them fresh- very little salted fish went to markets once the railroad was in operation.

One of the last salters was a man known as Chummy MacDonald. One of the points of this island, also the bay, are named after him- Chummy Point and Chummy's Bay.

In the late 1800s, explorers and surveyors stopped here to hunt caribou, deer, and moose salt or pickle it in brine to replenish their food supply.

Among the first white people to reach our shores were two Jesuit Priests, Fathers Charles Renault and Rev. Isaac Jacques who worked among the Indian and white settlers.

Many Rossportites hunted and trapped our animals down through the years in the area including the island.

An eccentric old trapper lived in here one fall and decided to winter on St. Ignace Island.

His name was Ecker and he cached his food in the trees that he had covered the base of the trunk with tin or zinc to keep animals from climbing the trees after his food packed in canvas bags.

He sealed in the front of a small cave to live in and used wood as fuel to keep warm.

We enjoyed his yarns about seeing wolverines, packs of wolves and a tame fox that would come to the cave looking for handouts.

He told of planes arriving from across the border and Canada hunting moose, deer or caribou out of season.

They only took the four quarters of the animals home, thus leaving liver, tongues; and I was told that caribou had been imported to the north end of Lake Nipigon but I just couldn't understand why as they were always there.

I cannot remember the time period this was done if a true story.

I understood that they were woodland Caribou.

I believe that an odd one or two are still spotted north of the railway or on an island.