

# Where EXACTLY Can You Find a Moose in Cook County?

By Tom Spence, Local Photographer

The most frequently asked question I get as a photographer is: "Where do you find the moose?" I'm pretty guarded about where I find moose in Cook County. It's not that I don't want you to find a moose – I do! I just don't believe it is good for the moose to announce their exact location.

The moose are already in trouble in Minnesota. The population has been in decline since the mid to late 2000s. In 2006, there was an estimated 8,840 moose counted during the winter count. In 2018, there were only 3000. Parasites like winter ticks and brainworm are two factors in the decline of the moose population. Researchers have also seen a lot of wolf-killed moose, though many of those likely had underlying health issues which weakened them and made them an easier target. Researchers say the decline has plateaued, but only time will tell if these magnificent mammals will survive in the woods of Minnesota.

Since news of their decline, I've tried to photograph moose every chance I get. Over the years, I've had countless sightings. Some last only seconds, but sometimes I am fortunate to watch the moose for as long as two hours before they move on.

## **So, where exactly do I see moose in Cook County?**

The Bay in Tofte – yes, Bluefin Bay!

The Highest Moose in Cook County: Eagle Mountain, Minnesota's highest point

Moose Birth Island – BWCA

Fore!! Or one at least at Superior National Golf Course

On the County Line – near Caribou River

City Moose in Grand Marais

Tofte Town Park – just last Spring

Winter Moose? Yep – Bull Moose in Superior National Forest last February

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Read the full blog to learn details of each sighting and see amazing moose images at [thomasjspenceimages.com](http://thomasjspenceimages.com), click on Oct. 14, 2018 blog post.*

All photos by Tom Spence





Dear Guests,

In so many ways, 2018 has been a year to remember. We've enjoyed great weather through each of the seasons, embarked on exciting new initiatives to address our staffing challenges in Cook County, and had the pleasure of welcoming so many guests – both familiar faces and newfound friends.

We feel blessed that so many of you have chosen to spend time with us at our beloved Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts, and look forward to helping you create special vacation memories long into the New Year.

As a token of our appreciation and a celebration of the majestic beauty of Lake Superior's North Shore, please enjoy the enclosed complimentary 24th annual Bluefin Bay Calendar. We hope it inspires happy memories of time spent in our area's breathtaking wilderness. We also hope you'll find our Winter 2018-19 Fishwrapper a helpful tool in planning your next getaway. Winter is truly celebrated here! If you have not joined us as a winter guest – come see why.

From all of us at Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts,  
  
Happy Holidays & Best Wishes in the New Year!

Sincerely,  
Mark Jury, General Manager

## Cabin Fever? We've got the Cure!

When the first snowflakes begin to blanket the ground around the Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts, it's the start of a whole new season of outdoor adventure. We make it easy to get out and enjoy as many activities as you can pack in a day.

Check out some of our most popular winter activities here, and visit the resort activities calendar at [BluefinBay.com](http://BluefinBay.com) for a detailed schedule.

- **DOWNHILL SKIING & SNOWBOARDING:** Lutsen Mountains – the biggest, tallest and best downhill ski resort in the Midwest – boasts breathtaking views of Lake Superior and 95 runs over 1,000 skiable acres. The high speed Gondola gets you more time and a better experience on the slopes at Lutsen Mountains. Take advantage of complimentary shuttles to & from the ski hill. Book a Ski & Stay Package at [Lutsen.com](http://Lutsen.com) or [bluefinbay.com](http://bluefinbay.com).
- **SNOWSHOEING:** Winter hiking at its best. Explore our world-class regional trail system on our complimentary snowshoes. Or, sign up for one of our free guided tours.
- **CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING:** If cross-country is more your style, explore the area trails on our complimentary ski equipment. Or, join one of our guided excursions to experience some of the area's best trails.
- **ICE SKATING:** Our onsite rinks at Bluefin Bay and Surfside provide the perfect backdrop for leisure skating or a friendly hockey game. Complimentary ice skates, hockey net and equipment are available. End your skating time at one of our evening bonfires complete with smores!
- **NORTH SHORE WINERY SHUTTLES:** If trying a new wine is more your idea of an adventure, hop on a complimentary shuttle and head to Lutsen for a tour and tasting at North Shore Winery. Shuttles available daily when the winery is open.
- **MUSIC AT THE BLUEFIN GRILLE:** Looking for a little night life? Join us for live music by the fireplace every Monday and Friday, January through March. We'll also have live music on Wednesday and Friday over the December holiday.



## For the Love of the Skinny Ski

### We've got Nordic skiing at its best!

It's a bold assertion, but we have the best and most groomed Cross Country Ski Trails in North America, right here in Cook County – 400 km! So if you love to stride, kick, push, glide or skate on pristine trails amidst breathtaking scenery, there simply is no better place.

The entire Cook County Cross Country Ski Trail System offers 10 distinct trail systems, but our favorite is right in Bluefin Bay's backyard – The Sugarbush Ski System. Explore [visitcookcounty.com/adventures/cross-country-skiing](http://visitcookcounty.com/adventures/cross-country-skiing) to download trail maps.

#### Our favorite: The Sugarbush Trail

The Sugarbush Ski System gives skiers of all abilities some of the best cross-country skiing in the Midwest. With more than 70 km of trails situated an average of 1,000 feet above sea level, this system provides skiers a variety of terrain from very easy (perfect for first-timers) to some of the most challenging and rugged trails in the Midwest. All of the Sugarbush trails have been widened and flattened to allow for Snow-Cat grooming, resulting in smoother, flatter terrain for both classic and skate skiing.

#### Join us for a guided ski

At Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts, we offer full cross country outfitting for all ages, as well as guided ski excursions with a resort guide. In the heart of winter, we offer several guided XC skiing and/or snowshoeing outings each day. Have your own skis? Stop by our recreation center and take advantage of our waxing station. New to cross country skiing? Join us for a guided ski with an expert guide and make it a fun outing for everyone. Check the resort activities schedule at [bluefinbay.com](http://bluefinbay.com) for a specific schedule.



## Winter Hiking on Snowshoes

If winter hiking is more your style, you're in luck. The North Shore gets more snow than almost anywhere in MN because of the lake effect. Here are some of our favorite trails in the snowy North Woods. Explore these routes on one of our guided adventures or grab a map at Guest Services and head out on your own.

#### Oberg Mountain:

This moderately challenging loop takes snowshoers around the top of Oberg Mountain to view many breathtaking vistas overlooking Lake Superior, Oberg Lake and the surrounding Sawtooth Mountains.

#### Leveaux Mountain:

With stunning views of the Sawtooth Mountains and the Onion River Valley, the moderately climbing 3.3 mile Leveaux Mountain trail offers unparalleled solitude and wilderness.

#### Britton Peak:

Start at the base of Britton Peak and hike eastward through the rolling hillside. If you're feeling brave, take the short – yet steep – trek up to the top of the peak!

#### Carlton Peak:

Though getting to the top of Carlton Peak on snowshoes can be quite a challenge, winter ascents are still doable (and rewarding!). Even if you opt out of a summit, the trail still provides excellent snowshoeing.



# Staffing Up: How Bluefin Bay is Meeting the Labor Shortage Head-on

## Innovative Cook County programs recruit Puerto Rican workers and aspiring culinary professionals

In a single weekend visit, a guest could interact with more than 20 Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts staff members. During that same visit, more than 100 other employees may be working behind the scenes to keep our one-of-a-kind destination running smoothly. But what happens when one, two, or even a dozen of those critical jobs goes unfilled?

Unfortunately, that's not just a hypothetical question. At various times during the last year, Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts faced nearly a dozen job vacancies. It's the same situation at businesses and resorts throughout the area. Local demographics are shifting from working age families to retirees and vacation home owners. Unemployment is approaching record lows. Competition for international worker visas is fiercer than ever. Combined, these factors are creating a national labor shortage that is hitting rural tourism destinations like ours especially hard.

That's why a group of community leaders, including Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts' owner Dennis Rysdahl, came together last year to form the Cook County Workforce Solutions group to develop more creative ways to fill staff shortages. "The team needed to find an innovative solution that wouldn't just be a short-term fix," says Eric Witzig, HR Director for the Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts. "What they came up with will not only fill much needed positions, but strengthen the overall Bluefin and Cook County communities."



## From the kitchens of Puerto Rico to the Bluefin Grille

Four seasons vs year-round summer. Lakeside vs sea shore. Shorts and tshirt vs full body snowsuit. The differences between the North Shore and Puerto Rico are pretty big.

"I had heard a lot about the Minnesota weather, especially the winter and the cold," says Luis Cortes, a recent Puerto Rico transplant and Bluefin Grille's new Executive Chef. "But Bluefin Bay is a real family atmosphere. Both the staff and the guests have been so friendly and welcoming."

Luis can list off a host of things he loves so far about being on Minnesota's North Shore, particularly the outdoor recreational opportunities and how close you are to nature, and the amazing schools. "I got the chance to tour the Grand Marais schools recently and was so impressed. The quality of education we can give our children is a real asset to Puerto Ricans coming here," Luis said.

Prior to joining Bluefin Grille in July of 2018, Luis honed his culinary skills in fine restaurants throughout Puerto Rico, including Italian, French and international cuisines. His experience spans from the kitchens of the Ritz Carlton in San Juan to instructing culinary arts classrooms to opening his own local restaurant and beyond. The Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts is thrilled to welcome Luis to the Bluefin Grille.





Meet our new Puerto Rican staff (from left to right): Gitzel Rodriguez, Rafael Nieves, Donnelly Perez and Luis Cortes.

### Puerto Rico Recruitment Efforts

If sufficient staff can't be found locally and international visas are increasingly difficult to come by, area leaders were forced to think more creatively. The answer? Puerto Rico. As American citizens, Puerto Ricans don't require visas. And with the devastation of Hurricane Maria, many are displaced and actively seeking employment.

"We currently have five staffers from Puerto Rico, hired prior to starting this recruiting program," says Witzig. "All of them—including Luis Cortes, our new Bluefin Grille Executive Chef—are outstanding employees who enrich the Bluefin Bay family. We're all really excited for the possibilities this program provides."

Building on work completed during a trip to Puerto Rico this past summer, the Cook County Workforce Solutions team is actively working with the Puerto Rico Department of Labor to formalize recruitment efforts.

### North Shore Culinary School

While shortages are occurring throughout the service and tourism industries, they're particularly pronounced in Cook County restaurants. Additionally, several prominent Twin Cities culinary programs have closed in recent years, causing the talent pool to dwindle even further. The answer? Create a culinary program right here in Cook County.

Based in the new, cutting edge culinary kitchen at the Grand Marais High School, North Shore Culinary will provide an affordable, accredited culinary program run by Hibbing Community College. "This is really a phenomenal program for both the students and businesses," says Mary Somnis, director of the Cook County Economic Development Authority. "It will create a workforce to help solve the needs of our resorts and restaurants while creating a career path for the students."

Put together, these innovative new programs will help us recruit more talented, highly trained and long-term employees to the Bluefin Bay family. So that we all can continue to provide you, our valued guests, with the responsive, professional service and warm hospitality you expect.

## Great Waves, *Great People*

We're thrilled to provide our guests with warm and friendly hospitality, something we couldn't do without an exceptional staff. Here are some of the faces behind the great service at the Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts.



**Mark Jury**  
General Manager

**Hometown:** Bloomington, MN

**How long have you worked for Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts?** 1.5 years

**What's your favorite thing about BBFR?** Lake Superior has always been

my favorite thing – the sound of the waves, the size and majesty of the Lake makes you realize just how small you are in the grand scheme of life. But, it is truly the staff that makes this an extra special place!

**Do you have a favorite spot or activity at BBFR or in the area that you enjoy on your time off?** I love staring out of the dock at White Pine Lake on Honeymoon Trail. It's such a beautiful lake. The drive can be exciting as well – we saw a black bear on our last drive.

**What's one thing you want BBFR guests to know about you?** Having been a guest at Bluefin Bay for 26 years and working in the hotel industry for 30+ years, I'm still pinching myself that I could combine the two into my DREAM JOB!



**Jillian Kratt**  
Housekeeping Manager

**Hometown:** Duluth, MN

**How long have you worked for Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts?** 1.5 years

**What makes Bluefin Bay Family of**

**Resorts a special place?** My favorite thing about Bluefin Bay is the people. Our staff members come from near and far, and in the end we're like family. We work hard together to ensure we're providing the best service possible, and we have fun doing it!

**Do you have a favorite spot or activity at BBFR or in the area that you enjoy on your time off?** I love taking off into the woods for a nice hike after work. With all the different trails, I can either choose to unwind or get a good workout in.

**What's one thing you want BBFR guests to know about you?** I love to sing. You can usually find me in the main Laundry room singing away with my staff.



Photo by Tom Spence



# The Way We See It

The Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts and the surrounding area are bursting with winter adventure and breathtaking sights. Here are some favorites from those in the know – the Bluefin Bay team.

## Favorite Winter Activity: Moose Watching!

At sunset, take Temperance Road up from Hwy 61 to the end and turn left on the Six Hundred Rd – drive a moderate speed and keep your eyes peeled. At the end of the Six Hundred Rd, turn right and you are a half mile from the Trussell Inn. Stop in for a beer and a burger and take in the unique, interesting and fun history. Be sure to give the bartender a hard time!

**Recommended by Shirley Heinzen, Guest Services**

## Favorite Winter Adventure: XC Skiing in BWCAW

My all-time favorite adventure was a XC ski across Sawbill Lake to Alton Lake in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). We skied across Sawbill on fresh snow with no signs of human life, but plenty of signs of wildlife – the tracks of deer, snowshoe rabbits and otters. We journeyed across Alton to our favorite campsite, started a small campfire and cooked up one of the best batch of macaroni and cheese we’ve ever had! The hot chocolate was pretty exceptional too!

**Recommended by Eric Witzig, Human Resources**

## Favorite Spa Experience: Craniosacral Massage (Skiers Relief)

After a long day of beating myself up on the moguls of Lutsen Mountains or XC skiing in the woods, I know my body needs to be realigned so I can do it again tomorrow! A craniosacral massage from Waves of Superior Spa is just what I need to adjust my neck and spine and get me back into equilibrium. It’s a relaxing experience, while addressing old and nagging injuries and stress-related blockages. I’m always amazed at how it affects my posture and allows the stress to melt away!

**Recommended by Eric Frost, Real Estate Sales**



## Give the gift of Bluefin Bay

This holiday give a gift that will keep on giving long after it is unwrapped — the gift of a lakeside vacation getaway to the Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts. Gift cards can be purchased in any dollar amount and used for lodging, restaurants, gift shops and the Waves of Superior Spa. Gift cards are mailed within a few days of placing your order and each card comes in special packaging with a place for a personal message — all making your job of giving even easier.

**Call 1-800-BLUEFIN (258-3346) or 218-663-7296 locally to order your gift cards today.**

## HOT WINTER DEALS

Connect with us for more on Bluefin Bay events and specials:



**800.BLUEFIN (258-3346)**

### Gales of December

Valid through Dec. 24, 2018

Get a front row seat to nature's most spectacular show — the Gales of November and December. Stay three nights and receive one midweek night completely FREE! Guests must stay four nights over the Thanksgiving holiday to qualify.

### January 3 for 2 Special

Valid Jan. 1 – Jan. 31, 2019

Stay three nights and receive one midweek night completely FREE!

### Winter 4 for 3 Special

Valid Feb. 1 – March 25, 2019, excluding President's Weekend (Feb. 16-18)

Stay four nights and receive one midweek night completely FREE!

### March Weekends at Midweek Rates

Valid March 4-20, 2019

Stay three nights or more and receive weekends at midweek rates. A savings of up to 30%.

### Extended Stay Special

Valid all year. Enjoy this progressive savings deal — the longer you stay the more you save.

- Stay 4 nights and receive 10% off
- Stay 5 nights and receive 15% off
- Stay 6 nights and receive 20% off
- Stay 7 nights and receive 25% off

### Romance and Honeymoon Packages

Crashing waves, a moonlit lake, romantic suites: no wonder Bluefin Bay is consistently named Minnesota's "Most Romantic Resort." For the ultimate romantic winter getaway, check out our Honeymoon and Romantic Retreat packages at [bluefinbay.com/offers](http://bluefinbay.com/offers) or ask your reservationist for details.

### Spa Packages

It doesn't get much better than combining a stay at the Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts with the relaxation of Waves of Superior Spa. Our Couples Spa Package includes two or more nights in a Grand Superior Master Suite, a 60-minute side-by-side massage and endless winter romance. Visit [bluefinbay.com/offers](http://bluefinbay.com/offers) or ask your reservationist for details.

### Internet Savings Deal

Book your stay at [bluefinbay.com](http://bluefinbay.com) and receive discounted lodging rates on stays of two nights or longer. Good for online reservations only and some date restrictions apply. Cannot be combined with other offers.

### Ski & Stay Packages

For those who love to ski and stay at the Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts, we offer packages combining discounted lodging and lift tickets to Lutsen Mountains ski resort. Visit [bluefinbay.com/offers](http://bluefinbay.com/offers) and click on Ski & Stay Packages. Or ask your reservationist for details.

