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▲ Our pontoon boat anchored over one of the many shallow wrecks.



▲ Heiko Zuerker looks for 'the shot' on the bow of the Selvick.



▲ Lake Superior sunsets rarely disappoint.

The Shallow Wrecks of Munising

Article and images by Cal Kothrade

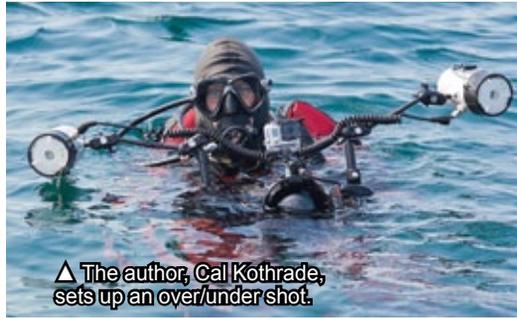
The term "wreck diving" carries with it connotations of deep, dark, cold diving, even to seasoned veterans of the sport, but the old adage is true, you don't have to be deep to be diving. And if you're not deep, there's a good chance it's not dark and cold either. There are literally hundreds of locations around the shores of the Great Lakes offering shallow wreck dives, where divers can take advantage of the warm water that hovers near the sun lit surface in mid to late summer. One such place is Munising, Michigan. Located on the southern shores of Lake Superior, Munising is a true gem of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The small town of about 2300 residents is nestled into the bottom of South Bay, and many of the star attraction shipwrecks here are protected by Grand Island, which often acts as a shield against the full force of Superior's northerly winds and waves. Knowledgeable dive charter services can be easily secured during the summer season for those desiring some 'zero effort' diving, but

if you are seeking slightly more adventure, and the freedom to dive at your own pace without the crowds, a pontoon boat rental is just the thing. Local proprietors Jim and Sharon Seaberg, own *Seaberg Pontoon Rentals*. They offer large, spacious, nicely appointed boats for half, full or multi day rental, allowing you the freedom of going where you want and when. The boats make great dive platforms, and have a boarding ladder on the back, making your water exit hassle free, just be sure to remove your tanks and weights before climbing aboard as the ladders are not designed to support divers and their gear. The boat's deck is low enough that gear can be pulled up by someone onboard. Their boats even have a pop-up privacy tent for changing and what they call a 'Yooper port-o-potty'.

My Milwaukee based dive club chose to combine our three day weekend of diving with camping, as we often do. *Munising's Tourist Park Campground* is just a mile or so west of downtown on highway M-28. The



▲ Free diver Reason Pylant glides to the surface from the Bermuda's hold.



▲ The author, Cal Kothrade, sets up an over/under shot.



▲ The starboard rail and stack of the Selvick.



▲ High tech and no tech, at the Bermuda's rudder.

park offers spots for tents, campers and RV's along the pristine sand beach where you can swim, snorkel, shore dive (to about 60 feet deep) or just hang out while beating the heat. Clean bathrooms and showers are on site, as is free WI-Fi, electricity, and water hook ups for campers. If camping isn't your speed, there are several lodging choices in and around town ranging from budget minded to quite nice! Our group consisted of seven divers, so we opted to rent two boats from the friendly folks at Seaberg, and kept them overnight with the intention of doing a morning dive the day of our departure. Mother Nature altered our final day plans though, kicking up some nautical conditions, and our last day rental was refunded to us without us asking. We beached the boats literally seventy-five feet from our campsite, making for hassle free loading and unloading of gear. The provided anchors were well placed on the shore to keep our rentals safe overnight.

Our first stop was the ever popular "Bermuda". The poster child wreck for the area, the *Bermuda* is visited several times daily during the summer months by glass

bottom boat tours, as it sits in only 30 feet of Murray Bay water, protected by Grand Island, and is easily visible with it's deck rising up to mere feet below the surface. She is a 130' long wooden schooner that sank in 1870. Due to its protected location, the wreck is remarkably intact, and provides penetration opportunities into her empty cargo holds. One member of our group enjoys free diving, and capitalized on the chance to play in the 69F degree sun drenched waters, darting in and out of the Bermuda's open cargo hatches like some sort of playful freshwater sea lion. After breaking for lunch, we headed over to the *Steven M. Selvick*, a 71' steel tug that was intentionally sunk off Trout Point in 1996 for the *Alger Underwater Preserve*. It lies in sixty feet of water, totally intact, currently hard over on her port side on a rocky bottom. I'm told the wreck has shifted it's position during harsh winter storm surge at least once since going to the bottom. It rises to within 30' of the surface and offers penetration opportunities, though a few of the openings are a bit on the tight side. The *Selvick* and the *Bermuda* are marked with buoys you can, and should tie up to, but some of the area's lesser visited

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and shallower wrecks are only marked with a small float often tied to a concrete block, and not always labeled as to which wreck it is. To dive these sites you will need to anchor into the bottom (off the wreck please), to keep from dragging the markers and missing the wreck all together. Our third dive Saturday was on a wooden vessel in about 20' of water, half a mile south of the *Selvick*. We thought it may be the *Herman H. Hettler*, but weren't sure. Diving without a guide can be great fun, especially when you don't know for sure what you are diving on! More discussion with the dive shop personnel in town might have solved the mystery, but where's the fun in that? We will research it on our own, using clues from the dive, like the steel rails on the bottom, and the entire port side sitting 100' off to the southeast

of the keelsons that two members of our group found after everyone else was done diving for the day.

There are more than thirty wrecks in the immediate vicinity, some shallow, some deep, and some currently buried under the ever shifting sands of Lake Superior's picturesque shoreline. With boat rentals, dive charter boat services, and dive shops for your fills and gear needs all right there, Munising is a fantastic dive destination for folks watching their budgets, or looking for a nearby place to enjoy a long weekend. Snorkeling, free diving or diving on some shallow, sunlit, warm water Great Lakes Wrecks is easy here in the Zebra Mussel free waters of late summer Lake Superior. ■



▲ The spectacular view of Miner's Castle, from high atop the cliffs.



▲ One of Seaberg's many rental pontoons, spacious and easy to dive from.



▲ The pilot house of the *Selvick* is easily explored.



▲ Diver Steven Wimer II prepares to roll in over the *Bermuda*.



▲ The purpose sunk 71' tug, Steven M. *Selvick*.



▲ Steven Wimer II at the bow of the sunlit *Bermuda*.



▲ Freediver Reason Pylant waiting for my cue to enter the *Bermuda*.