



Rocky  
Mountain  
Conservancy

# QUARTERLY

Spring 2016

## DONATING TO NATIONAL PARKS: THE CONUNDRUM

by Charley Money

*“Why would anyone donate to support the national parks? Aren’t parks already managed by the government?”*  
*“Don’t we Americans already support the parks through our taxes?”*

These questions invariably come up in conversation with peers in other types of nonprofit organizations. And I have to admit that, at first, their questions made sense. As a country, we have elected to set aside lands for public use and delegate the protection of those lands to government agencies. Isn’t that enough?

Well, if we were talking about an interstate highway or the federal gold reserve, philanthropic support would not likely be a factor. However, giving is very personal. It requires a stimulus that compels us to act. While a highway may get us from point A to point B, and we may appreciate the convenience, the road itself does not earn our devotion. And Fort Knox might afford comfort to some by its existence, but you are not likely to be welcomed within its walls. So what is it about parks that makes them different?

First, let’s explore what people *do* support with their charitable contributions. The top recipients of charitable contributions are churches, educational institutions, and health and human services, then come the arts and the environment. Most individual

donations go to local organizations or institutions that are well-known to the donor. By a wide margin, people want to give to those things that mean the most to them, whether it is their beliefs, their community or the hospital where their children were born.

Just like these cherished things, national parks serve each of us personally and fit uniquely into our individual values. Parks exist for us to enjoy, to absorb what is most meaningful to us, and to explore until our curiosity is sated, or, at least, until the next visit. They become “our” place, taking on qualities we associate with our most cherished possessions. Is it any wonder that we might question whether we would want their care left completely to an “agency”?

Don’t get me wrong. You won’t find a more dedicated, caring and skilled workforce than that of our National Park Service, who, for the last 100 years, has protected the special places that represent both our history as well as our hopes for the future. Far from a faceless bureaucracy, individuals working in the parks educate our children, protect the wildlife and repair the roads and trails, not just as a job, but as a vocation to serve. So, again, if the National Park Service is so great and doing so much, why do the parks need our help?

The simple answer is: because we love them. And we are willing

*(Nat’l Park Donations continued on page 2)*





Photo: Jim Louk

to shoulder the responsibility that comes with that love. We want to make sure our favorite trail is protected from erosion; that there is a place where our aged parent can walk with dignity; where the view that first brought our families together in wonder remains unaltered by human trace; and that there will be someone to share and interpret this miraculous world and present a Junior Ranger badge to our children, grandchildren or even our great, great, great grandchildren.

And parks need us. To give, whether it be of our time, our voice, or our hard-earned dollars, is payment on an insurance plan for our parks and for future generations. Our generosity supplements declining and redirected federal budgets so that trails, roads and facilities are maintained; it ensures that the campground ranger programs we loved as children will be part of our children's park experience; and it continues the tradition of "paying it forward" as an example for the next generation of park supporters.

And we often hear from donors that they want *even more* from their parks. In addition to maintaining all that the parks currently offer (and keeping the trash picked up), they want them financially and physically accessible, not just for themselves,

but for all. They have seen and felt the impact of open vistas and endless trails on the human spirit and see the need for that reflected in their fellow citizens. They want programs that the government alone cannot offer, programs that reach into dense urban communities and into populations that haven't yet experienced the joy of free-running streams and mountain sunsets.

Just as democracy does not live up to its name without open avenues to participate in the process, parks and other public lands will not remain "public" unless they serve all the people and enjoy universal support.

Just as democracy does not live up to its name without open avenues to participate in the process, parks and other public lands will not remain "public" unless

they serve all the people and enjoy universal support.

And now, here's the pitch: If you want to make that difference, join us or another nonprofit organization that supports your favorite park, forest or refuge. We, and organizations like us, are your bridge to involvement, to innovative programs and to fulfillment our collective responsibility to create new park lovers for the future. Whether you want to protect more land, build more trails, preserve more historic structures or create more opportunities for youth, we can do it together.

*Charley Money is the executive director of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy.*

### Save the Date!

## Richard Schmid: A Retrospective Exhibition

### A Fine Art Show to Benefit the Rocky Mountain Conservancy

In 1998, Richard Schmid won the \$100,000 prize in the Arts for the Parks Competition for his painting, "Rocky Mountain Stream, Rocky Mountain National Park." For this fundraising event, Richard graciously produced a limited edition signed print of this piece with proceeds to benefit the Rocky Mountain Conservancy's campaign.

This show will be cohosted by West Wind Fine Art and Gallery 1261, both in Denver, and held at Gallery 1261 at 1261 Delaware Street in Denver.

#### Fine Art show:

September 24 – October 1, 2016 at 1261 Delaware St., Denver, CO 80203.

- September 24, 6:00 – 9:00 pm  
Opening & Artist's Reception  
*Open to the public*

#### Fundraising event:

- September 24  
12:00 – 4:30 pm  
at the Colorado History Center,  
1200 Broadway,  
Denver, CO 80203



In addition to honoring Richard, this event will be a fundraising event for the Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Cascade Cottages campaign.





## Join the Conservancy Team! Adopt a duck and win a trip to Ireland!

(or Disneyland, Mexico or San Francisco!

Estes Park Duck Race gives all but  
\$1 of your donation to the charity  
of your choice. (Pick us! Pick us!)

Dreaming of a trip to Southern Ireland? An adventure to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico? Or a getaway weekend to San Francisco, New Orleans or Disneyland? This year's much-anticipated Estes Park Duck Race, organized by the Estes Park Rotary Club, is on May 7. Each duck you adopt gives you a chance to win one of the major prizes — trips including airfare and accommodations for two, valued over \$11,000.

The entry process is simple. You adopt a duck (or a flock of ducks) for a fee of \$20 each (\$21 for each online adoption) and select the Rocky Mountain Conservancy as your charity (hint, hint). The Conservancy will then receive 95% of your adoption fee as a tax-deductible gift. The more adoptions we sell, the more money we raise for the park! What a great way to donate to the Conservancy **and** have a chance to win a great prize, maybe even the vacation of a lifetime!

To learn more, see the complete prize list, and enter, visit: [www.epduckrace.org](http://www.epduckrace.org) (and be sure to select the Rocky Mountain Conservancy!).

The 28th Annual Duck Race continues a tradition started in 1989, with a fabulous track record of returning more than \$2 million to Estes Park charities and groups. We thank the Estes Park Rotary Club for their ongoing support of our organization and our community.

[www.epduckrace.org](http://www.epduckrace.org)

### Cover photo credits

(Upper): "Winter Ballet on Lake Helene" by Lisa Foster, Estes Park, CO; (Lower) "Chasm Lake Cirque" by Mike Lukens, Estes Park, CO

Please send high-resolution images to [nancy.wilson@RMConservancy.org](mailto:nancy.wilson@RMConservancy.org) by June 1 for publication in the 2016 Summer *Quarterly*.

Photos are always appreciated! Scenery, wildlife and wildflowers greatly enhance this publication, so get out there and take a hike! *Thank You!*

## Ask Nancy

*Quarterly* Editor Nancy Wilson attempts to unearth answers to any questions asked by Conservancy members and park visitors. If you are curious about something in or about the park, email [nancy.wilson@rmconservancy.org](mailto:nancy.wilson@rmconservancy.org) or write: Nancy Wilson, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, PO Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517.

**How do birds mate?** In birds, the excretory and reproductive systems (of both male and female) terminate in a single structure called the cloaca. The cloaca is an opening located beneath the tail, where the undertail covert feathers occur. In the vast majority of species (exceptions explained below), transfer of male sperm to the female is accomplished by direct contact of the two individuals' cloacas (euphemistically, a "cloacal kiss"). Typically the female crouches low, facing away from the male, moves her tail feathers (rectrices) to one side and elevates her rear. The male mounts the female's back (called "treading"), moves his rectrices to the opposite side of the female's and lowers his rear so that his cloaca directly contacts hers. Copulation is usually complete in just a couple of seconds or less (although I once observed a wild turkey copulation that was close to five minutes!). Now, the exception. Most notably in the duck and ostrich families, there is a structure attached to the lower wall of a male's cloaca that extends and is inserted into a female's cloaca during copulation — yes, a penis. Unlike mammals, this avian intromittent structure is designed to carry the sperm externally along the penis — an external groove, and often a spiral shape facilitates delivery of the sperm into the female's cloaca. One of my ornithology textbooks states that about 3% of bird species, generally in the more primitive families, have this appurtenance. — *Retired RMNP Wildlife Biologist*

**Where are the weather stations in the park? I ask because the weather reports from RMNP are very different from those in Estes Park and Glen Haven.** The park gets its weather forecasts from the National Weather Service that are modelled from weather stations in the area, such as Grand Lake and Boulder. In addition, there are several SNOTEL sites which monitor snow depth and some weather data in the park. They can be accessed at [www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snow/snow\\_map.html](http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snow/snow_map.html). The park has various other small-scale weather stations utilized by park management and some researchers, but these data does not go into public weather forecasts. Weather.com is a private organization that likely uses NOAA, National Weather Service data as a base, but customizes its own modeling for its users. On the weather.gov site, you can click specific spots on the map. It is interesting to see how the weather forecast changes across the elevational gradient (and east and west sides) of the park. And again this is the result of computer modeling; your actual-experienced weather may vary. — *RMNP Ecologist Paul McLaughlin*

**What is the status of the bark beetle epidemic in Rocky?** More than twenty bark beetle species of the *Ips* genera and approximately ten bark beetle species of the *Dendroctonus* genera are native and endemic to the Southern Rocky Mountains. The mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) has become the most well-known bark beetle because of its recent epidemic infestations throughout the Rocky Mountains from Canada to Mexico. The population density of bark beetles fluctuates in response to forest dynamics, including tree species diversity, density, drought, fire and other forest health factors largely driven by environmental conditions. Presently, mountain pine beetle populations have decreased to much lower levels throughout

(Bark Beetle Status continued on page 5)

# The Ripple Effects of Fish Stocking in Rocky

by Mary Ann Franke



Starting up the Lawn Lake trail with 8,000 fish bound for the high country lakes  
Photo: NPS

*Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; show him how to catch fish, and he'll put fish in lakes that don't already have them.*

This could have been the motto across the West as wilderness areas began being used for recreation in the 19th century. While nearly all of the high-elevation lakes in western states were originally fishless, eventually nearly half of them contained fish. Stocking programs became so popular that rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), which are native only to the Pacific Northwest, can now be caught in all 50 states.

## Plant a Fish, Catch a Fisherman

In 1886, two decades before Rocky Mountain National Park was established, the State of Colorado put 20,000 brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) into the North St. Vrain Creek. Stocking of Grand Lake began 10 years later with "8 cans" of rainbow trout. By then, tourism had become so economically important that the Colorado State Fish Commissioner claimed, "Fifty thousand young trout ought to go into [Estes Park] every year. Even if every fish planted at such points as these is caught each year, it will pay the State to keep on putting them in." Local civic-minded organizations constructed fish hatcheries on Fall River in 1907 and at Grand Lake in 1908.

With 156 lakes and more than 400 miles of streams, the park might

appear to have abundant fish habitat. However, waterfalls and other barriers to upstream migration means that nearly all of those lakes and most of those stream miles were fishless prior to stocking. The only trout believed to be native to the area are the cutthroat trout species that were present in some lower elevation waters before stocking began.

But the goal of the Estes Park Fish and Game Association, which formed in 1921 to determine which waters and what species of trout were to be

The only trout believed to be native to [Rocky] are the cutthroat trout species that were present in some lower elevation waters before stocking began.

used, was to stock at least one fishless water in the park every year. Fish were carried on mules as far as possible, then transferred to specially designed backpacks. The National Park Service supported the effort by obtaining fish and eggs from federal and state agencies and providing rangers to assist with the stocking. When the stockers found Chiquita Lake covered with four

feet of ice in May, 1925, they valiantly chopped through it to stock the fish.

In 1933, the NPS Wildlife Division recommended the reduction of non-native species in the parks and acknowledged that recreational fishing was an exception to NPS policies that generally prohibited the removal of native plants and animals. Yet the Park Service continued to believe that the "benefit to man



Fish to be planted in milk cans for transport, 1932

Photo: NPS



[of recreational fishing] overrules the disadvantages which are incidentally incurred.” In a policy statement issued three years later, NPS Director Arno Cammerer announced that “in waters where exotic species are best suited to the environment and have proven of higher value for fishing purposes than native species, plantings of exotics may be continued.”

The Civilian Conservation Corps, which was active in the park from 1933 to 1942, helped with the fish stocking and constructed substantial fish rearing ponds at Endovalley, Horseshoe Park, Hollowell Park and along the East Inlet of Grand Lake.

### Putting Ecology Ahead of Recreation

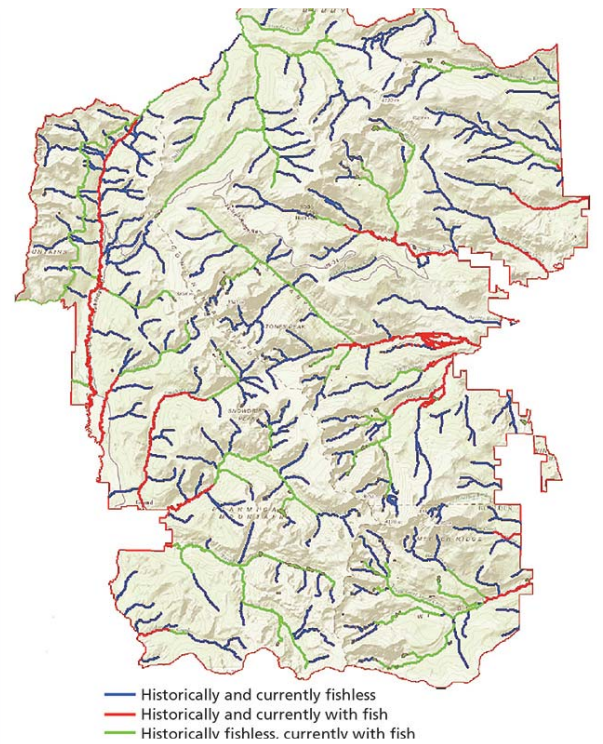
By the 1960s, however, the Park Service was beginning to more consistently value the ecological integrity of the parks over recreational activities for park visitors. In 1968, after 27 million fish had been added to the waters of Rocky Mountain National Park, fish stocking for recreational purposes came to an end. Six of the 56 lakes that contained introduced fish populations subsequently reverted to their original fishless status. But introduced fish populations remain present in about one-third of the park’s lakes and many of its stream miles, and most of those fish are nonnative species — Eastern brook trout, rainbow trout, brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) and Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii bouvieri*).

### Environment Effects of Stocked Lakes

The introduction of a fish species to a lake or stream alters the local food webs, including the phytoplankton, zooplankton, benthic invertebrate communities and birds. In addition, the stocking of fish in park streams that were already occupied by native fish diminished the native populations through competition for food and interbreeding. This results in the replacement of genetically pure fish with hybrid species.

A study of 12 lakes in Wild Basin from 2009 to 2012 by Thomas Mabon Detmer and James McCutchan, Jr. of the University of Colorado, found that, compared to lakes without fish, the presence of fish reduces the abundance of aquatic insects and zooplankton and the mean and maximum size of invertebrates; it also significantly reduces the transport of zooplankton available to food webs in streams below the lake by nearly 80%.

The subspecies or lineages of the park’s native cutthroat trout are more genetically diverse than was initially recognized back when they were divided geographically into “Colorado River cutthroat trout” and “green-back cutthroat trout.” Today, park



RMNP fish status map

Courtesy of the NPS

staff is working with collaborators to evaluate the abundance and genetic assignment of the park’s cutthroat trout populations. Based on the most recent analyses, no populations of the cutthroat trout native to the east side of the park remain; but four relatively pure (<20% mixed heritage) populations of the cutthroat trout native to the west side of the park are still present there.

Mary Ann Franke has been an NPS writer-editor at Yellowstone National Park and served as a volunteer at the McGraw Ranch Research Station.

### (Bark Beetle Status continued from page 3)

Colorado’s forests. While bark beetles might be declining, recently throughout Colorado we have observed population increases in Douglas-fir beetles (*Dendroctonus pseudotsugae*), Spruce beetles (*Dendroctonus rufipennis*), and Western balsam bark beetles (*Dryocoetes confusus*) in various conifer tree species like spruce, Douglas fir and subalpine fir. Defoliators such as Tussock moths (*Dasychira grisefacta*)

and spruce budworms (*Choristoneura occidentalis*) routinely stress mixed conifer forests in localized populations. Additionally, non-native insects such as the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) have become a significant concern in urban forests found in Front Range communities. Along with disease and fire, forest insects can affect forest age, density, composition and structure. Insects provide food

and habitat for other wildlife, increase structural diversity of forests, and are important forest recyclers. A wide variety of forest insect populations will continue to thrive where the right combination of environmental and forest conditions favor a particular species’ survival and reproduction. — RMNP Resources Management Specialist John Mack





# The National Park Service: Celebrating 100 Years of Stories and Stewardship

by RMNP Park Ranger, Interpreter  
Barbara Scott

On January 26, 1915, Rocky Mountain National Park was established. It joined a handful of other national parks and monuments, such as Yellowstone, Mount Rainier and Mesa Verde. These parks were established with good intent, but lacked any real coordination or organization for their protection.

Just over a year later, on August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the act creating the National Park Service. The mission of this agency created under the Department of the Interior was clearly stated:

*“...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”*

Originally charged with the management of 31 national parks and monuments, the National Park Service now oversees 407 units, and this mission continues guide

park sites as they seek to balance visitor enjoyment with preservation and stewardship.

This charge has only grown more challenging over the years as the nation’s population has continued to grow and new obstacles to preservation have developed. Climate change, overcrowding, habitat fragmentation, modern-day relevance, development pressure and invasive species all clamor for top billing as the greatest threat to our nation’s heritage sites.

Even after 100 years, the National Park Service continues to face these challenges head-on. These sites preserve our nation’s most precious memories and resources for future generations. They tell stories about how life was and how life is. They tell stories about survival and stories of triumph and defeat. They tell the stories that make our country unique. And today, these stories play an important role in the lives of millions of visitors, with their impact continuing into the 21st century.

As the National Park Service heads into its second century, these valuable stories are what give credence to the idea that national parks really are America’s best idea. Join us in celebrating 100 years of stewardship and be a part of this special year.

## NPS Centennial Events in Rocky

### 100 Images for 100 Years

April 16 – 24, 2016

Beaver Meadows Visitor Center; Free  
Celebrate National Park Week and the National Park Service Centennial with 100 beautiful photographs picked from our Rocky Mountain National Park Instagram account.

### National Park Week - Free Admission!

April 16 – 24, 2016

During National Park Week, April 16 – 24, all national parks offer FREE ADMISSION. National Park Week is America’s biggest celebration of our national heritage. It’s about making great connections, exploring amazing places, discovering open spaces, enjoying affordable vacations, and enhancing America’s best idea... our national parks!

### Centennial Student Art Exhibit

May 22 – June 19, 2016

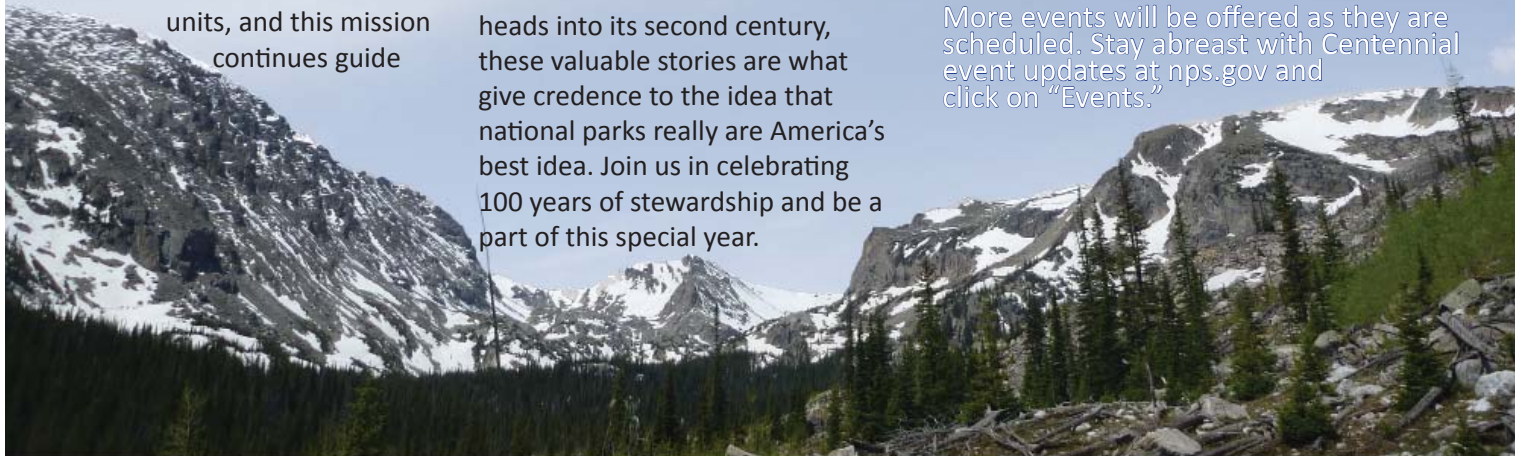
Fall River Visitor Center; Free  
Students from across Colorado were asked to envision their favorite national park in the next 100 years and capture that in various art mediums. The winners of this contest sponsored by the Estes Institute will be exhibited in the downstairs lobby of the Fall River Visitor Center. Come by and see the creativity of these amazing students!

### Centennial Student Art Contest Reception

June 11, 2016

Fall River Visitor Center; Free  
Prizes will be awarded to the winners of the Estes Institute Centennial Student Art Contest at this fun event. There will be food, drink, special speakers and inspiring young artists!

More events will be offered as they are scheduled. Stay abreast with Centennial event updates at [nps.gov](http://nps.gov) and click on “Events.”





## Colorado National Parks Film Premiers This Spring: Proceeds Benefit the Conservancy

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy is pleased to announce a beautiful new film showcasing the national parks of Colorado. Created by Great Divide Pictures of Denver, CO, this local film company has been making history — natural, cultural, and military — come alive for more than 20 years. They've produced award-winning historical programs and natural history films for Discovery Channel, History Channel, Home and Garden TV and the National Park Service.

Their newest cinematic journey profiles Rocky Mountain National Park, Mesa Verde National Park, Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, and Colorado National Monument. The film provides a unique perspective of Colorado's National Parks through stunning filmography and unique aerial footage. The film was premiered on March 30, with proceeds from the event going to the



Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Best Use Fund. The film will also be aired on PBS beginning in April.

View the film preview at:  
[www.greatdividepictures.com](http://www.greatdividepictures.com)

## Park Puzzler

by RM Conservancy Member Joel Kaplow

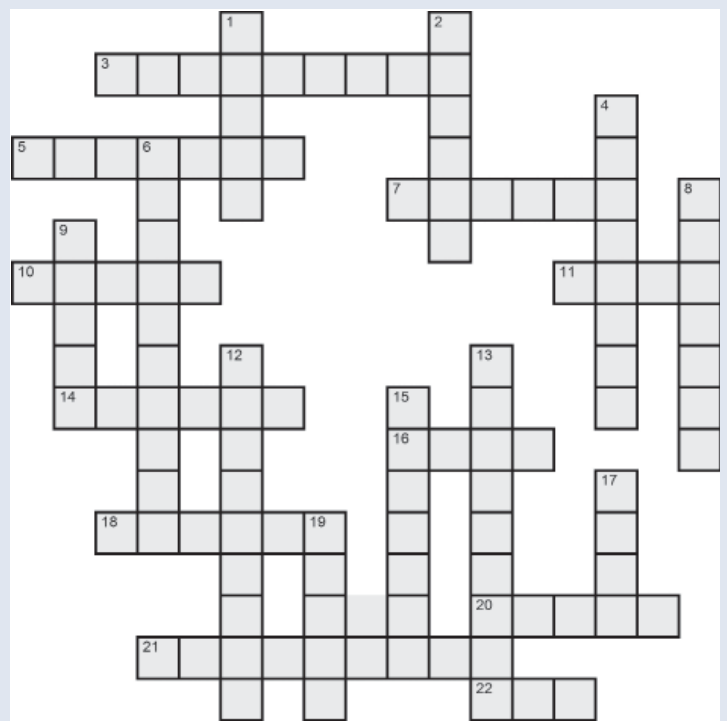
### Across

- With fungi, most of the organism is out of sight either below ground or within decaying matter. Only the fruiting bodies are visible. What are they called?
- Rocky's little pocket gopher isn't called such because of its diminutiveness. It has cheek \_\_\_ to carry food to its burrow.
- One of the 13-Down found in RMNP is mistletoe. It can cause trees to have unsightly, misshapen branch clusters known whimsically as witches' \_\_\_.
- Treeline is mainly determined by temperature. Trees generally will not grow in areas where the average annual temperature is below \_\_\_ degrees F., so the land above this "line" will be devoid of them.
- On July 15, 1982, the \_\_\_ Lake earthen dam, below Mummy Mountain, failed. The resulting flood took three lives and inundated Estes Park. This prompted the Park Service to dismantle the dams at Pear, Sandbeach and Bluebird lakes.
- What is the Russian word that means "land with no trees"?
- There is a wonderful group of citizen scientists who volunteer to help RMNP professionals every year. They assist with park studies from A to Z, taking samples, counts, surveys, etc., among other activities. They are proud to be known as the \_\_\_ Herd.
- All of the aspen trees in a grove can be considered a single, large organism. One tree can send out horizontal roots, and suckers pop up from them. These suckers grow into new trees, and are \_\_\_ of the original tree.
- No doubt with the help of RMNP's 100th anniversary celebration last year, the attendance record was shattered, and Rocky was the \_\_\_-most visited national park in the country, up from its norm of number five.
- However, no other U.S. national park even comes close in attendance to Great Smoky Mountains NP, with double the visitors of the second-most visited, Grand Canyon NP. GS-MNP straddles a shared state line, with about half in North Carolina, the other half in \_\_\_.
- Above treeline are are found vast areas of angular boulders, seemingly tossed about by the slow process of frost heave. The German term for these tracts is felsenmeer, meaning "\_\_\_ of rocks."

### Down

- For 2015, the National Park Service reported a new attendance record for all 59 parks combined, with over \_\_\_ hundred million visitors.
- When meltwater flows beneath a glacier as a stream going through an ice tunnel, it can plug itself up with silt, gravel, rocks and other detritus. When the glacier retreats, it will leave these giant snakelike ridges — casts of the tunnels — behind. What are these features called?
- The most common mushroom-poisoning in the world is caused by Amanita phalloides, aka death cap, which is found in Europe and on both U.S. coasts. Its less-poisonous cousin, Amanita \_\_\_, is commonly found in Rocky. If you see a gorgeous red mushroom with white dots, enjoy, but don't touch!
- Perhaps the national park attendance record from last year will be surpassed again, as this year the National Park Service celebrates its \_\_\_ anniversary.

- Ponderosa pines are common in Rocky in the montane life zone, preferring sunny areas like south-facing slopes. Its bark smells like butterscotch to some folks, but others swear it's more like \_\_\_.
- California and Alaska are tied for bragging rights for state having the most number of national parks. How many does each state have?
- If you think RMNP is big at 415 square miles, try looking at Yellowstone, with 3,400. If you think that's big, consider the largest national park in the U.S., Wrangell-St. Elias at 13,000. But the largest national park in the world is Northeast \_\_\_ National Park at 375,000 square miles, and no, that's not a typo! It occupies about 45% of the world's largest island, but gets only about 500 visitors a year.
- Some organisms in both the animal and plant kingdoms survive by taking nourishment directly from other living organisms, commonly deleteriously affecting the health of their hosts, which can even result in death. One example is cited in 7-Across. What is the term for these "moochers"?
- Most fungi are saprophytic; they live by using powerful \_\_\_ to decompose organic matter. Unfortunately, eating the wrong ones can cause severe damage to the liver and kidneys.
- Rocky's attendance surpassed \_\_\_ million last year for the first time.
- How many of the 10 largest national parks in the U.S. are claimed by Alaska?





*Joanne Helmuth, Miho Horikoshi and Lisa Foster enjoy high country skating on Blue Lake (11,140 feet), 11 miles round trip.  
Photo Angie Bryant*

# High Country Ice Skating An Adventure Extraordinaire

by Lisa Foster

When I was a young girl, my father would get together with the neighbors, each of them brandishing their garden hoses at the first frost to fill a little hollow with water. The Montana winter would quickly freeze it into solid ice; and when it did, we would don our shiny ice skates, twirling and spinning around the man-made pond with glee and delight. I felt just like Hans Brinker, the fictional teenage Dutch boy who skated on the canals in Holland. It is one of my earliest and fondest childhood memories.

Time marched on, and so did I. I forgot all about ice skating and became passionate about other pursuits. When my daughter was born in 2009, I began packing her up in a child carrier and taking her to many of the alpine lakes in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). It was my way of sharing my love of nature with my baby. By the time she started walking we had inherited a pair of double-runner skates that strap onto boots. When winter arrived, I would fas-

ten those metal runners on her and she would merrily shuffle across the frozen lakes in the wind. She loved it. As she grew, it quickly became apparent that she would outgrow the strap-on skates and need a pair of single-blade skates. So I got myself a pair too, and voilà — we had a new and exciting way to engage with our national park and allow to enjoy our little slice of heaven even more.

Alpine ice skating may not sound enticing to some people—and I'll admit, you've got to want it. First, you must brave the winter by snowshoeing or skiing to an alpine lake. In RMNP this can be as benign as a four-mile round trip hike, or as daunting as a twenty-mile round trip hike. Once you get to the lake, it's cold, it's often windy, and the ice is inconsistent -- bumpy, cracked and variable. You've got to embrace the wind and deal with numb fingers as you lace up your skates. But the quality of the experience is the key -- it's about feeling the wind and the sun on your face. It's about sharing a unique experience with others. It's about getting

outside to exercise and looking at the landscape in a different way.

And it's a huge motivator for children. If you're looking for a way to stimulate your child to experience the outdoors in winter — when it's more cozy to stay inside and play Xbox — high country ice skating just might be the ticket.



*Six-year-old Ellie Kostadinov skates on Mills Lake (9,940 feet), 5.4 miles round trip.  
Photo: Lisa Foster*



But don't let the kids have all the fun; skating on RMNP's beautiful alpine lakes is exhilarating for adults too! And what better way to pretend you're a kid again than to lace metal blades on your feet and go careening across a pocked and bumpy frozen surface while the wind howls and the sun shines down?

RMNP is one of the premier areas in Colorado to skate on alpine lakes. Why? Well, in case you hadn't noticed, Estes Park is a windy place. The wind blows. And it blows. And it blows and it blows and blows. Most people find it difficult to tolerate the wind, much less to like the wind. But without these high winds, our alpine lakes would be buried under snow all winter long. When the wind picks up, it carries the snow away, leaving beautiful, unobstructed alpine ice — just perfect for some not-so-perfect alpine skating!

What do I mean by perfectly "not-so-perfect"? There's no Zamboni (one of those innovative ice resurfacers used at indoor ice arenas) out there. The ice changes daily, and there are many variables to consider — bumps, cracks, dips, rocks, stumps, slush, snow and more. Ultimately, it's not as much about high-quality ice skating as it is about a unique experience that helps to further build a relationship with nature.

And this intriguing activity gives even more people a reason to visit this beautiful national park in the winter.

*Lisa Foster is author of Rocky Mountain National Park: The Complete Hiking Guide and is a seasoned climber, hiker and outdoor enthusiast*

## Coyote Valley Trail Repaired on Park's West Side

In 2015 and 2016, the RMNP Trail Crew worked on the Coyote Valley Accessible Trail. This is an ADA accessible trail originally funded through donations to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy back in 1993. Due to spring runoff the last two years, the trail was badly in need of repair to keep it up to standard.

Heavy machinery was used to transport and fill the trail while crew members fine-tuned the tread with hand tools. This project lasted six weeks. Approximately 140 cubic yards of crusher fines and 10 yards of rock subbase were added to the trail to bring it up to a desired grade.

In addition, 80 linear feet of the treated-log retaining structures were replaced. A 2,650 square foot section of the trail was removed, as it was not sustainable in its current alignment. This area, and areas along the trail, were rehabbed by recontouring the area to its natural condition and importing topsoil.

## Are you ready to dazzle your friends and family with photos of your impressive ice skating feats? Here's what you need to know for a fun-filled and safe adventure!



*Angie Bryant laces up her skates on Lake Haiyaha (10,220 feet), 6.6 miles round-trip.*  
Photo: Lisa Foster



Bring an extra-large pack. Ice skates are bulky and don't fit easily into carrying pouches. Do yourself a favor and get a pair of hard plastic skate guards so that the metal blades don't poke a hole in your favorite backpack.



Bring a shovel. On the odd occasion that it's snowed recently in RMNP and the typical high winds haven't yet started to blow, a shovel makes it possible to clear a section of ice for skating.



Bring plenty of warm clothing. Even though you'll probably be sweating on the hike to the lake, by the time you fiddle your skates onto your feet (brrrr....cold hands!), you'll glide out onto the windy lake and cool down. Dress warmly!



Bring your skates on all of your winter hikes! It's like bringing a fishing pole in the summer. It's always good to be prepared should you come across an alpine lake in good condition.



Be cautious about ice quality and thickness. My rule of thumb is the ice on alpine lakes in RMNP is generally safe from mid-December to mid-March. However, never step onto an alpine lake unless you're sure it's safe. According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (and they know ice...and ice fishing!), ice should be at least 4 inches thick for any activity on foot. Personally, I prefer the ice to be around a foot thick. But remember, many factors other than thickness can cause ice to be unsafe: temperature, currents, snow cover, elevation, wind and air pockets all affect the stability of ice. Keep in mind that ice is seldom a uniform thickness over a single body of water. It can be two feet thick in one section and an inch thick a few feet away. It's up to each individual to be familiar with ice safety and make educated decisions about his or her personal well-being. Always be cautious: If you are unsure if the ice is safe, stay off it. Don't take any chances. A fall into a frozen lake in RMNP can result in serious injury and possible death. You must analyze the ice each and every time.

*So get out there, be safe and have fun! See you on the ice!*

## A Past Conservancy Project Update





## Rocky Superintendent Vaughn Baker Retires

2002 – 2015

During his tenure at Rocky, Vaughn led park staff through numerous high-profile fires, a massive beetle outbreak and the ramifications of hazardous trees in campgrounds, trailhead parking areas and along roadways. He also guided the park through the response and recovery during the devastating flood event in 2013. And, most tragically, following the untimely death of park ranger Jeff Christensen during a backcountry patrol in 2005, he took an active role in revising backcountry travel protocols for the park, especially with regard to communications.

Vaughn also was involved in the completion of the new Hidden Valley facilities and the construction of the Lumpy Ridge Trailhead. He also managed the \$60 million the park received from the Federal Lands Highway Program received for major reconstruction on Bear Lake Road and Trail Ridge Road. Also under Vaughn's watch, after more than 30 years with recommended wilderness status, 95% of Rocky Mountain National Park became officially designated wilderness in 2009.

Vaughn exemplified conservation leadership in the National Park Service at Rocky, including the unprecedented development of a Nitrogen Deposition Reduction Plan to protect air quality related values in the park in cooperation with the State of Colorado Public Health and Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency. He also is credited with the completion and implementation of the Elk and Vegetation Management Plan.

The Centennial Celebration was icing on the cake for Superintendent Vaughn Baker's illustrious career. Vaughn had been Rocky's Superintendent for thirteen years, and, following forty-two years of public service, he quietly retired in Estes Park in late September.

Ben Bobowski, Chief of Resource Stewardship at Rocky Mountain National Park for the past eight years, has been acting superintendent until a new park superintendent is selected.

# RMNP 2015 Highlights

by RMNP Public Information Specialist  
Kyle Patterson

This last year, 2015, was a momentous year at Rocky Mountain National Park! More than 200 events highlighted the park's Centennial Celebration year, emphasizing what has made Rocky beloved by so many during the past 100 years.

Art displays, painting events, Night Sky presentations, birthday parties, Junior Ranger sing-alongs, special ranger programs, museum exhibits, parades, festivals and much, much more provided plenty of opportunities for surrounding communities and visitors to the park to be part of the fun.

To conclude the year-long celebration, more than 1,600 people attended the official Rededication Ceremony on September 4, at Glacier Basin Campground. The Estes Park Woman's Club reprised their historic role as hostesses for the event, serving birthday cake and cookies to event attendees.

Entertainment was provided by Cowboy Brad Fitch who performed the official Centennial song *Rocky's a Park For All*. As at the 1915 celebration, 30 students from the Estes Park schools reenacted their historic role by singing *America the Beautiful*. Special remarks were made by Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, Senator Mark Udall, Senator Cory Gardner, Director of the National Park Service Jon Jarvis, National Park Foundation President Will Shafroth, and, of course, "Enos Mills". Park Superintendent Vaughn Baker was the master of ceremonies. All attendees of the event were sworn in by Director Jarvis

as future stewards of Rocky Mountain National Park, ensuring another one hundred years of protection and enjoyment.

Throughout the year, people shared their love of Rocky Mountain National Park in person with park staff and through social media with stories, photographs and personal recollections. The Centennial Celebration was an amazing, once-in-a-lifetime occasion to pause and reflect on the sense of connection that so many people have had to a place like Rocky during its one hundred year history.

In 2015, the park once again received record visitation with 4.1 million visitors, which was a 21% increase over the previous year's record. Park shuttle bus riders increased 24%, and, overall, Rocky was the third-most visited national park in the country.

This year, the National Park Service turns 100 years old! Each National Park Service site protects very special aspects of our national heritage and Rocky will be honoring the National Park Service's centennial with special programs and activities. The celebration of national parks continues!

With such a significant increase in visitation over the past three years, park staff will be busy addressing challenges and opportunities related to operational capacity, visitor and staff safety, resource protection and the overall visitor experience, ensuring that Rocky is protected for future generations. Join us in caring for this brilliant jewel in the crown of the national park system!





## LOOKING FORWARD TO THE 2016 CONSERVATION CORPS SEASON

In 2016, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy – Conservation Corps looks forward to hosting thirty-six youth serving on six crews throughout Rocky Mountain National Park and the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests. These crews will tackle projects related to disaster recovery, wilderness access, riparian restoration, off-highway vehicle trail use and historic preservation.

In Rocky Mountain National Park, the Corps will support two crews. One will continue to work on the east side of the park with the trails and resource management teams. They will work extensively on constructing a boardwalk at Lily Lake to help mitigate future damage to the riparian zone. The second crew will be working on the west side of RMNP, assisting with historic preservation work in the Kawuneeche Valley. The Conservancy is excited to be able to support the park's rich history and the preservation of the park's cultural resources.

Beyond the boundaries of Rocky Mountain National Park, the Conservancy anticipates providing four crews

to the Boulder, Canyon Lakes and Sulphur Ranger Districts in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests. These crews will work in areas as remote as the Rawah Wilderness, restoring trail surfaces and ensuring safe trail access for wilderness visitors in areas such as the Big Thompson, Cache le Poudre and St. Vrain watersheds, rebuilding recreation areas affected by fires and flood. On the west side of the Continental Divide, a crew will help reconnect sections of the 3,100 mile

Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and reroute popular multi-use trails to protect sensitive areas. In addition to the on-the-ground work, the Conservancy is delighted to develop the next generation of public land stewards through programs facilitating job-skill development, leadership training and career development activities.

*For more information about this program, visit our website at [RMConservancy.org](http://RMConservancy.org).*



*The 2015 Conservation Corps crew members on the summit of Longs Peak.*

## RMNP License Plate Debuts in Colorado

If you register your vehicles in Colorado, show your support for the park with a colorful Rocky Mountain National Park License Plate! Featuring a majestic bull elk under a starry night with alpine sunflowers, this specialty plate is our newest fundraising effort with 100% of the required \$30 donation going to park programs.

This exciting program has raised more than \$34,000 since it launched on January 1, 2016, with 1,153 plates certified. We need to distribute at least 3,000 plates each year to keep this design in production. That's a challenge to us all. Spread the news!

Tell your friends! Don't wait until your plates expire. You can even prorate your annual vehicle registration with your local Department of Motor Vehicles so you can get your RMNP license plate sooner.

To get a set of these exceptional plates, visit our website at [RMConservancy.org](http://RMConservancy.org) and make a minimum \$30 donation to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy's License Plate Fund. After a qualifying donation is received, a license plate certificate will be mailed to you. Present this certificate to your local county motor vehicle office where you will be assessed a \$50,



one-time specialty license plate fee, in addition to other standard registration fees. Plates are printed on demand and will be mailed directly to you, conveniently eliminating the need for a second visit to your county motor vehicle office.

License plate donations cannot be combined with gifts to other funds, prior donations or Conservancy membership dues.

**Get yours today at  
[RMConservancy.org](http://RMConservancy.org)**

# Cascade Cottages Property Acquired for Permanent Protection in Rocky Mountain National Park



Concluding a one-year fundraising effort, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) announced that they have purchased the largest remaining privately held property within Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP).

As most of you know, several years ago, the landowners of this park in-holding on the east side of RMNP honored the wishes of their grandfather by offering to sell the property to Rocky Mountain National Park before placing it on the open market. The National Park Service identified this acquisition as the park's highest priority and enlisted the assistance of the Conservancy and TPL in making it the signature project of Rocky Mountain National Park's centennial in 2015.

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy partnered closely with TPL in the acquisition of Cascade Cottages. TPL has a long,

successful history of placing lands of high ecological or historic value into the public domain. TPL negotiated a fair market price for the property with the landowners, secured the purchase, and will hold the property until it can be conveyed to the National Park Service.

The purchase cost was \$3.4 million. Of this, the Conservancy raised nearly \$1.75 million from individual donors and foundations. Also assisting with this effort, the Larimer County Open Lands Program offered a challenge grant of \$50,000 to the Estes Valley Land Trust (EVLTL) and the Town of Estes Park to provide a collective donation of \$100,000 to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy for the purchase of the property. EVLTL and Estes Park both readily accepted this challenge.

In late February, 2016, the NPS Washington, D.C. office, recognizing the importance of this acquisition to the NPS Centennial, identified funds that could be used as a possible match to those raised by the Conservancy. Based on that information, TPL agreed to move forward with the purchase, acquiring the property in late March. TPL will secure the remainder of the funds from the National Park Service when it transfers ownership to Rocky Mountain National Park.

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy proudly thanks its donors and members, project partners and the community, for making possible the permanent protection of this very significant property.

*Hooray!!*

## Conservancy Annual Appeal Wrap-up

**Total raised: \$380,538**

**Total gifts: 1,237**

We are pleased to announce that, thanks to you, our Friends and Donors, we had one of the strongest and most successful Annual Appeals in the Conservancy's history. With more than 1,237 donations totaling more than \$380,538, this generosity will provide significant and tangible support to Rocky Mountain National Park. Thank you!

Because pictures speak so much more loudly than words, we are including this handy chart to depict the breakdown of all those gifts.

By far, the most gifts were designated for Best Use, making those funds available where and when they are most needed. Ultimately, use of these most flexible gifts is designated by the park and by the Conservancy's Board of Direc-

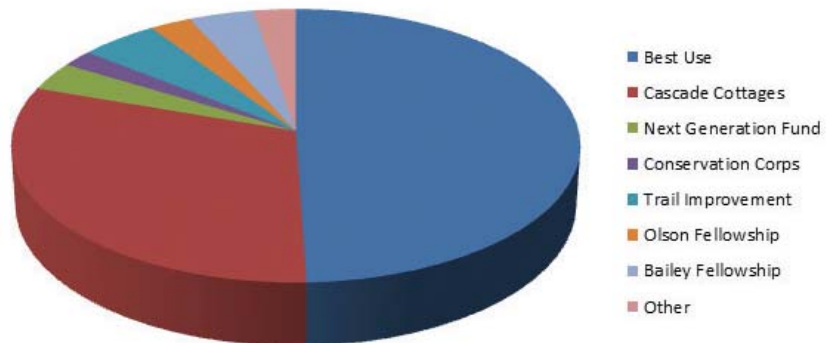
tors; the money could support anything from youth education to land protection to land acquisition.

Our next-highest fundraising priority, the Cascade Cottages Centennial Campaign, also was a favorite.

Gifts to the Next Generation Fund, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Conservation Corps, and the Trail Improvement Fund rounded out much

of the remainder of the annual appeal gifts. Donations for these programs and projects are always greatly needed and will be put to very good use.

Again, we thank you for your generous support. You have set us up to have a fantastically productive year doing good work for these important public lands. We'll keep you posted on the difference you make.







# Rocky Mountain Conservancy

*The Rocky Mountain Conservancy expresses special thanks to the following people for their donations toward projects in Rocky Mountain National Park:*

December 14, 2015 – March 16, 2016  
550 gifts ~ total donations \$664,298

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# Rocky Mountain Conservancy

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*It's that time of year again! Mountain bluebirds, like many other birds, are cavity nesters.*

*Photo: Conservancy Member Jim Ward*

## Nature Notes

Erratic weather so far this spring on the east side of the park. As of late March, spring storms are threatening, interspersed with periods of unseasonably warm and balmy temperatures. Enough such that the aspen trees are releasing their catkins in more protected areas as a precursor to the budding leaves — eek! Luckily, if the first leaves are subject to freezing temperatures and die, a secondary, smaller, vestigial leaf will emerge....RMNP Woodworker **Cory Johnson** was skiing on Flattop Mountain in mid-February when he saw a ptarmigan sitting on the snow up the trail. As he watched it, this alpine bird started shaking its body, burrowing and sinking into the snow, lower and lower until its head disappeared beneath the crust.....A bobcat provided dinner entertainment for Park Ranger, Interpretation, **Kathy Brazelton** and retired RMNP Wildlife Biologist **Gary Miller** recently. As they watched, the bobcat detected, stalked, caught and consumed a very fat vole. What they found notable was that the distance from the point the bobcat first clearly detected the tasty morsel to the point of the carnage measured 30 yards. What good hearing!....Conservancy Member **Walt Kaessler** spotted a coyote in Upper Beaver Meadows, below Deer Ridge, with a deer leg in its mouth. He then saw a group of five coyotes near a carcass in the meadow. One dodged in and grabbed a bite and ran, while the others were coming and going. What appeared to be an alpha female came and sat near the carcass surveying the scene.....Conservancy Development Assistant **Victoria Alexander** and **Cory** (above) were hiking up Old Man Mountain in Estes Park in mid-February where they noticed drag lines in the trail. On one side of the trail they found the remains of a deer leg and part of a spine with blood and tissue still clinging to the bone. On the other side of the trail lay a separated head, with the top of the jaw in one area and the bottom in another. Most interesting was a tree about seven feet from the trail with low-hung branches. Under it was an obvious stash area, where duff and needles were piled up in a heap to cover a kill. Here, also, was evidence of the kill site, including claw marks in the trunk of the tree where the cat had climbed it, and where it was clear that a lion had leapt from its hiding place in the tree, pounced on the unsuspecting deer and killed it at the base of the tree.....Almost as

a sidenote to this excitement, Victoria also reported seeing mountain lion scat on her driveway in the High Drive area of Estes Park.....*Quarterly* editor **Nancy Wilson** observed three bull elk that had penned themselves in a private corral just outside the park in early winter. Two of them were sparring with a fair amount of gusto, considering the the time of year, with the third watching and getting increasingly more agitated. Eventually, the third tried to break in to the fight, deflating the momentum and distracting the elk from their endeavors. All involved returned to very domestically munching on hay they found in the corral.....Conservancy Director of Donor Relations **Julie Klett** reported the first bluebird sighting on February 23, 2016. It was a sighting of two of them, fluffed out, seemingly in agitation at the abundance of snow in their summer paradise.....Julie also was treated to a flyby of a bald eagle with a fish head in its beak, swooping by her house.....Estes Park resident and Conservancy member **Jaylene Howard** sat looking out her kitchen window near MacGregor Ranch midday in September, when she spotted two fat, fuzzy, furry kittens running up the MacGregor Ranch yard, near the Gem Lake Trailhead. Trying to identify them, she noticed the long curly tails, buffy gray fur, white bellies, and dark patches on end of the tails. They were bigger than a domestic cat by far — easily as big as coyote, but without the snout, and definitely not bobcats as evidenced by the length of their adolescent tails. She watched them jumping up trying to catch a hawk that was tormenting them, leaping in the air, reaching out and up with their fat front paws. The hawk swooped down on them, flying over them and calling, warning all the animals nearby that mountain lions were coming, then swooping down again on the befuddled kitties for good measure. Eventually, the mountain lion youngsters stopped their chase and moved down the hill toward Devil's Gulch Road.....RMNP Education Technician **Christie Wilkins** found herself climbing a tree to escape a very curious mule deer.....Summertime is coming, that very fleeting season in the high country. Start planning your visit to Rocky today!



*What an amazing series of pictures of an elk giving birth in the spring in RMNP. Who doesn't love a happy ending? Thanks to Conservancy member Gregory Boll of Davenport, IA, for sharing this rare glimpse of nature in action!*