

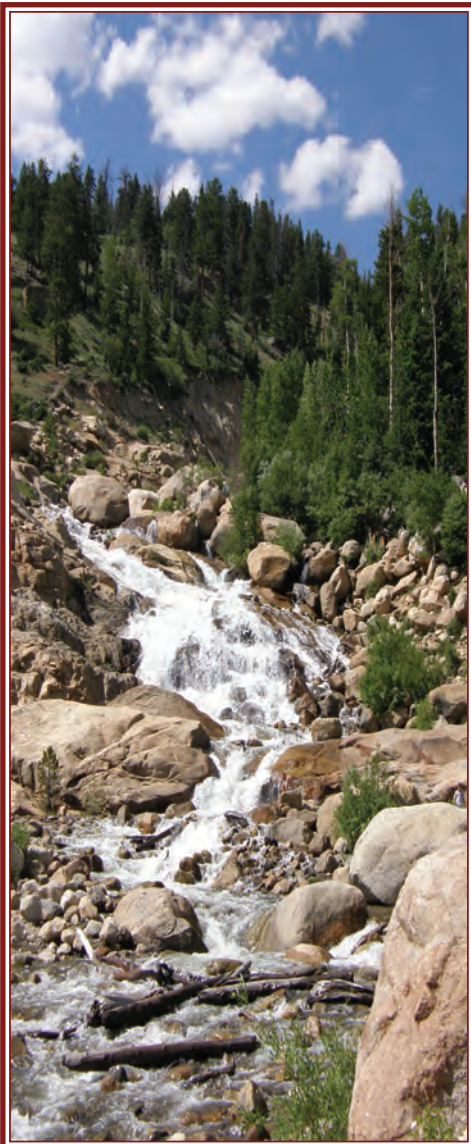


ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATURE ASSOCIATION

Summer 2011

\$2.00

QUARTERLY



QUIET VOICES

by C.W. Buchholtz

On a quiet day, the sound of voices can carry for a mile or more in the mountains. Silence, stillness, and tranquility are treasures we seek as we explore the wilderness. But sounds made by other humans—coming from trains, planes, or motorcycles—can strike a distant forest the way an annoying ring of a discourteous cell phone disrupts a concert.

Perhaps I was just having a bad day after a tough week of work. I had hiked quite a distance to find a peaceful place for contemplation. I'd tramped for a couple of hours up a trail and scrambled another half mile up a ridge to be away from people. Earlier in the week I had also received news of the death of an old friend. Hoping for the solace of open spaces, I felt I needed to think things over.

Now as I sat on a rocky outcrop, going through my mind was a song from the Sixties. "What the world needs now, is love, sweet love. It's the only thing that there's just too little of..." And singing it, over and over, was Jim Kanzler. For a short time he had been a crewman on my fire squad. The year was 1967 and that summer we worked for six straight weeks

fighting fires. If I recall correctly, Jim's father had committed suicide earlier that year. In the face of that tragedy, I can remember Jim's singing.

This week, another buddy from my fire days sent a letter with a clipping from a Montana newspaper. The clipping was Jim Kanzler's obituary. It told of his attendance at Montana State, his becoming a climbing guide in the Grand Tetons, and of his achievements as a mountaineer. But it also hinted at his lifelong troubles in coping with his father's loss, to say nothing of his younger brother's early demise in a 1969 avalanche. Here was the sad truth: At age 63, Jim, too, took his own life.

"Lord," came the song in my memory, "we don't need another mountain. There are mountains and hillsides enough to climb." (Now I recall other fire crew members chiming in.) "There are oceans and rivers enough to cross. Enough to last until the end of time." Then the refrain, "What the world needs..."

Those soulful voices, to be sure, were all in my head. Their sound did not echo through the forest. My memories of Jackie Deshannon's hit tune being mimicked by Kanzler and a

(Quiet Voices, continued on page 2)



Photo: Walt Kaesler

(Quiet Voices, cont.)

squad of Montana firefighters simply rolled through my brain. But that memory made me smile as I mourned Jim's passing.

What snapped me back from my mournful moment, however, was the sound of actual voices. Perhaps a half mile from where I sat came the chatter of two talkative hikers strolling down a trail, simply having fun. At first a surprise, almost annoying, their laughter drifted my way.

I went back to thinking about voices, the hikers I had just heard, the voice of memory, Jim's voice repeating that song. In the wilderness, there's the noise of nature and the noise we bring with us.

My mind drifted back to work. The voice of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association tends toward the quiet side, even muffled sometimes, like hikers on a faraway trail. As I've explained to people who've never heard of our organization, "We are quiet conservationists. We don't generate a lot of publicity. We're not flashy. We are rarely in the newspapers or on TV. We're behind the scenes, but we are doing great projects. Fixing trails. Saving historical structures. Connecting people with nature. I like to think that

being quiet is a sign that everyone here is hard at work."

Of course there may be a downside to being too quiet. This past week I attended a meeting in Washington, DC with Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. He explained that sometimes it's really important for people who love public lands to speak out about them. It's a laudatory thing, he argued, to raise money and fix trails and to buy land for parks and forests and wildlife refuges. But it is equally as important to let our members of Congress know how much these places mean to us as citizens. We need to raise our voices.

Exercising our voices in favor of conservation is not a familiar refrain in our mountains. We take protection of our public lands for granted. Even in Washington, DC, the politics of conservation rarely rates high on the legislative agenda. It pales in comparison to budgets and wars and the other stresses of government. But now, as Congress contemplates its budget woes, advised Salazar, parks and forests and refuges may not get the attention they deserve. Now is the time for quiet conservationists to raise their volume.

My morning in the mountains resulted in all these random thoughts.

Anyone reading this report might conclude that I need help, perhaps a therapist. "This guy's going nuts," they might suggest. "He's out there sitting near a cliff, contemplating a friend's death. Old songs are running through his head. His meanderings recall Secretary Salazar's pep rally for conservation. He whines about a couple of hikers making noise in the backcountry. This guy is off his rocker."

This observation could be correct. But once in a while each of us needs to find a place for peace and quiet. You will find few such spaces like that in Washington, DC. Indeed, I use a national park as my rocking chair. These mountains are my therapist. The poet wrote, "We don't need another mountain." But I don't agree. I'm certain that my friend Jim Kanzler, regardless of his troubles, would have raised his voice with me to say that we need mountains and wild spaces today as much as ever. Tomorrow and in the years to come we will need them even more.

Curt Buchholtz is the Executive Director of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association.

ANNOUNCING THE ANNUAL
 ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATURE ASSOCIATION

Membership Picnic

July 30, 2011

11:00 AM to 2:00 PM

at the Stanley Park Pavilion

Members \$10.00; Guests \$15.00

Kids 6-12 \$5; Kids 5 and under free!

11:00 - 12:00 Meet, greet and shop
 12:00 - 12:45 Picnic lunch
 12:45 - 2:00 Special Programs

Joining us this year for musical entertainment is Cowboy Brad Fitch.

Brad will perform original songs as well as many western and folk favorites, including songs from seminal Rocky Mountain songwriter John Denver.

Jubilations catering of Estes Park will provide a delicious barbeque lunch featuring burgers, hot dogs, and barbecued chicken breast. (All plates, utensils, and food will be compostable in order to make our event as green as possible.) Browse through the on-site RMNA bookstore where members receive a special 20% discount. Join us for this wonderful event!



~ RSVP by July 20 if you plan to attend ~
 If you need to cancel, please let us know.

Please make your reservation (and pay ahead) by calling 970-586-0108, or visit our website at rmna.org to make your reservation online.

We hope to see you there!

Cover photo credits

Cover photos (clockwise from lower left to upper right):

“Roaring River,” by RMNA Member Joan Nesselroad, Estes Park; “Paintbrush Extravaganza” by RMNA Lisa Thompson, Boulder, CO; “Twin Bear Cubs,” by RMNA Member Dick Orleans, Estes Park, CO. Please send photos or high resolution scans to nancy.wilson@rmna.org by September 1 for publication in the Autumn 2011 *Quarterly*.

Photos are always appreciated! Scenery, wildlife and wildflowers greatly enhance this publication so take a hike and carry your camera with you! Think simple and high contrast for best reproduction results. Thank You!

Ask Nancy

[RMNA Quarterly Editor Nancy Wilson will attempt to unearth answers to any questions asked by RMNA members and park visitors. If you are curious about something in or about the park, write: Nancy Wilson, RMNA, PO Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517. Or email her at nancy.wilson@rmna.org]

With lynx now reported in the park, how can we distinguish them from bobcats and is it possible to discern their tracks from a bobcat's? Two fail-safe ways to distinguish bobcat and Canada lynx...neither particularly easy if the observation is the usual 2 or 3 second look: 1. Bobcats' tail-tips are black only on top, light beneath. The lynx tail-tip is totally black (think “dipped in an inkwell”); 2. Bobcats have 6 mammaries, lynx have 4 (but be careful when counting!). Although the lynx's ear tufts are often noted, bobcats have them, too. Lynx feet appear oversized in relation to their body. Their tracks, greater than 3 1/2 inches, up to 4 1/2 or even 5 inches in diameter, are more likely to be confused with an adult female mountain lion rather than a bobcat, which are typically less than 3 inches. The studies of radio-collared lynx reintroduced to southwestern Colorado found them to use mostly the upper montane and subalpine areas. But since we seem to be experiencing an upward spike in bobcat numbers, “either-or” sightings in the lower elevations of the park would more likely be bobcat. We are interested in receiving reports of lynx sightings within the park, and the state Division of Wildlife has an on-line data collection form for lynx (and wolf, wolverine, river otter) thought to be seen anywhere in the state. Check out wildlife.state.co.us/WildlifeSpecies/—*RMNP Biologist Gary C. Miller*

Why doesn't the park use controlled burns on the west side of RMNP to reduce potential large scale fires that threaten the area from all the dead and standing trees that remain? We do have plans to implement fuels treatments on the west side, but the issue is environmental compliance. Our current Environmental Assessment (EA) does not allow for much in the way of prescribed burning on the west side of the park right now. We are in the process of writing a new EA which *will* allow prescribed burning. This EA is expected to be approved later this year, but even then, the planning process takes time. I would not expect to begin burning there for another full year or two. As of right now, however, there is no research that validates the assumption that beetle killed trees equals bigger wildfires. There are theories of differing timelines in relation to fire danger, such as that red needles are much more flammable, then when they fall off, fire danger goes down...then years later when trees fall and wood is on the ground fire danger may go up. Historic large fires in the area were usually preceded by years of drought, then hot/dry spells. If we have those conditions, forests are susceptible to burning, beetle or no beetles. Our plan to address this issue is to implement fuels mitigation on the park boundary, so that managing larger wildfires in the future may not place communities at as high of a risk.—*Mike Lewelling, RMNP Fire Management Officer*

Is there any information about why some trees are attacked by pine beetles and others, even those very close by, are exempt? Several factors may contribute to whether a mountain pine beetle attack will kill one tree and not an adjacent neighbor. A major defensive compound produced by trees is resin, and the amount of

(Pine Beetles, continued on page 15)

Park Employees Treated to Lodging Once Enjoyed by Park Guests

Historic Preservation Crews Restore Onahu Lodge

by Suzanne Silverthorn

From sunrise to sunset, views of the Kawuneeche Valley are as spectacular as ever from the Onahu Lodge's north facing windows. Moose, elk and other wildlife add to the majestic landscape on the park's west side. It's a treat once reserved for guests of the Onahu Ranch until it was acquired by the National Park Service in the late 1960s. Today, those rooms are being enjoyed once again following a four-year restoration of the main lodge building by the park's historic preservation crew. The lodge now houses seasonal park employees as it did before the building was condemned in 2005 following deterioration of the structure.

The two-story building was built in the 1940s and is located just west of the Green Mountain Trailhead, about four miles from the park's west side entry. It is the centerpiece of a small, wooded seasonal housing enclave that includes several rustic cabins that were once part of another nearby guest ranch. These days, park employees are living in a setting where more than 50 years ago guests paid up to \$90 per week to experience such a beautiful place.

The new summer residents of Onahu Lodge are also enjoying some of the original craftsmanship refurbished by the park crews, according to Historic Preservationist Bob Maitland, who



Preservation crew members take a break outside the historic Onahu Lodge last summer as the four-year renovation drew to a close. Not since the renovation of the McGraw Ranch Research Center in 2000 has the crew undertaken such a vast project within the park.



The dining room, which occupies one of the two hexagonal-shaped rooms within the building, has been restored to its original splendor, including the unusual floor which is made of log rounds encased in concrete. Guests of the Onahu Ranch enjoyed home-cooked meals here as part of their Western vacation. In a brochure from the 1950s, hosts Joe and Myrtle Bolder describe the dining room as "large and cheerful and the food is well planned and prepared, served family style in an attractive manner, for outdoor appetites."

supervised the \$300,000 renovation. He credits the skills of Chuck Tubb, a maintenance worker, who has been involved in every step of the restoration. Chuck talks with pride about the transformation and how rewarding it is to see the reaction from people who are seeing the property for the first time since it was closed. "The 'wow' we get is pretty amazing," he said.

The renovation includes five bedrooms, four bathrooms, a kitchen, plus two hexagonal-shaped rooms, originally used as a dining hall and a recreation room, which give the log-sided building its symmetrical shape. Yellow pine, much of it original, was retained throughout the interior of the 3,700 square foot structure to preserve its rustic ambiance. There are four stone fireplaces, two of which are found in the hexagonal rooms, the remaining ones grace the bedrooms upstairs. Eleven picture windows provide views of the Never Summer Range.



Very rarely does a project of this magnitude come along for the historic preservation crew, with its four full-time employees and three seasonal workers. "Most of what we do are deficiency-type projects such as window restoration and log work," says Bob, whose team is responsible for the upkeep of 132 historic buildings throughout the park, including the Holzwarth Historic District on the

west side and buildings in the Park Headquarters Historic District on the east side, such as Quarters 48 which currently houses the Rocky Mountain Nature Association. In fact, not since the renovation of the McGraw Ranch Research Center in 2000 has the crew undertaken such a vast project.

The Onahu Lodge restoration required that original windows, doors and frames be carefully rebuilt to preserve the building's historic integrity. Structural repairs were also necessary, as well as a new roof and the relocation of the water tank to improve the water pressure required to operate the new fire suppression system. In addition, a bedroom and bath were retrofitted to meet American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

The restoration also attracted interest from a National Park Service historic preservation mentor-trainee program which assisted in repairs to the dining room floor, an unusual design made of log rounds encased in concrete, similar to what was once found in the Bear Lake Lodge dining room in the 1920s. The project repairs required expertise in carpentry, painting and masonry to analyze original materials, and to work within historic preservation parameters.

Given its comprehensive scope and attention to detail, the Onahu Lodge restoration exemplifies the park's mission to preserve important historic structures that help tell the park's story. In this case, from 1908 to the early 1970s, guest ranches in Rocky Mountain National Park marked a time in history when travelers from across the country came to experience pristine mountains and warm Western hospitality. The legacy includes Camp Wheeler (Phantom Valley Ranch), Holzwarth's Trout Lodge (Neversummer Ranch), Green Mountain Ranch, Kawuneeche Ranch and Onahu Ranch.

Onahu Lodge History

According to records from the RMNP archives, the history of Onahu Lodge can be traced back to owners Merle and Mable Hall when the property was being used as a ranch in the 1930s, possibly dating back to the turn of the century. The ranch got its name from nearby Onahu Creek, a tributary of the North Fork of the Colorado River.

In 1939, attempts by the Park Service to purchase the property were unsuccessful and the land was sold to the Sargents in 1940 for use as a cattle and horse ranch. The Colorado Dude and Guest Ranch Association listed the 160-acre property as Colorado's newest dude ranch in a 1947 brochure, announcing the addition of a "new lodge, beautifully finished, and all modern accommodations." Activities included "outdoor beefsteak fries, riding, fishing or just plain sitting." The ranch also had six modern guest cabins with indoor bathrooms.

The ranch was sold to Joe and Myrtle Bloder in the early 1950s. In a 1955 brochure listing, the Bloders wrote, "For a most enjoyable, long-to-be-remembered western vacation, spend yours at Onahu Ranch, located in scenic Rocky Mountain National Park, the wonderland of Colorado." Rates were \$70 to \$90 weekly, including horses. The property was purchased by the Park Service in the 1960s to be used for seasonal housing. The buildings were determined to be



Horseback riding was the featured attraction for guests of Onahu Ranch during the 1950s where guided trail rides for all ages and abilities were offered. Onahu also sponsored a Sunday rodeo in which cowboys from the surrounding ranches competed in various events to entertain the visitors. Square dancing, campfire singalongs, card games and horseshoes were also enjoyed, reminiscent of simpler times. Postcard from the collection of Bobbie Heisterkamp, Estes Park.



The main lodge structure features eleven mammoth picture windows that look out across the meadows to a wonderful panorama of mountains against the sky in nearly every direction.

eligible for the National Register during a field study in 1997. Mold and water damage forced the closure of the main lodge in 2005 which was followed by a decision to restore the property beginning in 2007.

Suzanne Silverthorn is a frequent contributor to the Quarterly. She's a part-time resident of Grand Lake and serves full-time as the Community Information Officer for the Town of Vail.

Saving Bits of History

The Rocky Mountain Nature Association's Historical Preservation Fund has already saved a number of important park structures. Starting with the restoration of the Moraine Park Museum and the Shadow Mountain Lookout, several dozen structures have now been preserved.

Most important, buildings at the McGraw Ranch, the Holzwarth Ranch, and the William Allen White site have not only been saved, but also put to good use.

We enjoy telling people about Quarters 48, in particular, because it was an historical building in the park headquarters compound. Severely damaged by fire, it sat vacant for six years. The Park Service offered the building to RMNA, provided we fix it up. In short order donors provided the \$145,000 needed to restore the structure. And it's been our main office ever since. Please stop by anytime. It's our favorite story of "adaptive reuse" of a historic structure.

When people ask us which historic preservation project do we like the most, we always say, "The next one!"

—RMNA Executive Director Curt Buchholtz, RMNP Fund

The Place of Technology in Wilderness: Young People Debate



Andrea Schneider

For those of us who enjoy hiking, it's a familiar scene: "Hey, guess where I am!" shouts an excited hiker into their cell phone. It may be on the summit of Longs Peak or while enjoying the view from Emerald Lake, but chances are, you, or someone you know, has made a call from the wild. I've got nothing against a hiker sharing their enthusiasm with someone from the top of a mountain, but this

example prompts me to consider the place of technology in nature.

Today's society is over-stimulated; growing increasingly dependent on devices such as cell phones, smart phones, GPS units, iPods, and iPads. All of these devices have their place and can help educate and connect us. Lots of phone applications are available to help identify alpine flowers or birdsongs or take us on a virtual tour. A smart phone could let our friends on Facebook know that we made it to the top of Flattop Mountain. A GPS could show us a shortcut back to the trailhead. But is all this necessary? At what point does technology stop enhancing and start detracting from our experience in nature?

For me, if a device is not related to safety (i.e. GPS, SPOT phone, or cell phone), I leave it at home. Even the devices I do bring are turned off unless they are needed in an emergency. Many people, me included, spend time in nature to refresh themselves and take a break from constantly being plugged in. Personally, I would rather do some preparation and study before a trip so I can fully immerse myself in the experience once I arrive. I don't want the answers to my flower questions handed to me on a little screen—and my friends don't need to know the exact minute I summit Flattop Mountain. I prefer to embrace the adventure that nature offers and all the dangers and joys that come with it.

Kurt Repanshek, the founder of and a regular columnist for the *National Parks Traveler* website asks the key question: "...are we losing sight of what it means to not just be self-sufficient, but also to be able to enjoy and relish in nature on nature's terms without training wheels?"

Technological devices can definitely aid us in our pursuits of nature, but they can also hinder us, making us overly dependent on technology and distracting us from the actual experience of being outdoors. But whether you're leaving everything with a battery at home, or you're taking a whole family of devices on the trail, there are really no right or wrong answers to the questions posed here. They're just to make you think. When it comes to technology in nature, ask yourself: How will this device affect my experience and the experiences of those around me? When will I use it and how? And finally, is this device really necessary? Ponder this on your next hike up Longs Peak, to Emerald Lake, or elsewhere!

Andrea Schneider is the former Development Associate for RMNA, and also a former ACC Crew Leader and Crew Member.

Geoffrey King



Human advances in technology over the past ten years have changed the nature of the world we live in. Cell phones, computers, GPS units, iPods, iPads, and countless other electronics are a part of our world. The question of how technology influences a culture of conservation and the enjoyment of our environment therefore becomes important. As someone who shares a strong interest in both the enjoyment of our natural world and technological advancement, this question has figured prominently in my life. I have found that while tension may exist between these two objectives the integration of technological tools into nature is inevitable and must be managed in a responsible manner.

There are so many possible ways that this technology, with all its bells and whistles, can be useful for enjoying and preserving the natural world. An app or virtual tool can provide access to people that might not otherwise make a trip to Rocky Mountain National Park. It offers educational programs, such as seminars, to increase peoples' awareness and appreciation of the environment. Perhaps there could be an app that would also alert people to opportunities to donate to support a national park. Certainly some of us use nature as a way to escape from the technology that exists in our society. Ignoring the growing trend towards increased integration of technology seems irresponsible, and a wasted opportunity, for those of us who care the most about our National Parks.

Growing up in the Internet age, living through the rapid change of technology has shaped who I am today. I am in the first generation to live with cell phones. I watched them grow from thick, candy bar-like Nokia's to the incredibly more advanced iPhone. No doubt, the capability of these devices would seem like magic to someone growing up in the early part of the 20th century. This technology, however, can be used responsibly or irresponsibly. I have friends who have some of the worst iPhone etiquette imaginable, who spend most of their time texting, web browsing, or playing games rather than appreciating the people around them. While this technology is good and is here to stay, proper habits and etiquette are imperative, both in society and in our natural areas, so that humans are managing the technology – not the other way around.

Geoff King is a recent former Olson Family Fellow through RMNA.

Have an opinion on this subject? Want to weigh in? Send it to nancy.wilson@rmna.org and include a picture of you, if you want! Send no more than 500 words and we'll print what we can!

Summer Member Hikes!

Join Membership Manager Curtis Carman for RMNA Member hikes in Rocky Mountain National Park throughout the year!

Outings explore a different site in the park each month and participants discuss current RMNA projects, park management issues and park natural history. This free hiking series is limited to 15 people per hike.

Summer Schedule

July 15 - Fern Falls

August 26 - Colorado River Trail
to Lulu City

September 30 - Elk Viewing in
Moraine Park

To sign up for a hike, call Curtis Carman at (970) 586-0108 or email him at curtis.carman@rmna.org.

New RMNA Publication Highlights Activities in the Kawuneeche Valley

The Rocky Mountain Nature Association is proud to present its newest publication, *The Best of the Kawuneeche Valley*, published in June of 2011.

The book is the second in a series of park regional publications to be published that now includes *The Best of Bear Lake Country*, published in 2009. These books highlight various park regions' special places, their lakes, waterfalls, peaks, passes, wildlife, plant life and rich human history by featuring each site and offering the "Inside Scoop" gleaned from park ranger-naturalists who know the areas best.

In this new book about the park's west side, hikers will appreciate the insights about such destinations as Lone Pine Lake, Lake Nanita, Mount Ida and La Poudre Pass. Winter enthusiasts can learn about options for skiing and accessible winter sites. Families will enjoy the options for easier hikes, such as Coyote Valley and Adams Falls, as well as the human history story found at the Holzwarth Historic Site.

Written by John Gunn, a veteran author of numerous park publications, *The Best of the Kawuneeche Valley* is the perfect primer for anyone seeking to explore the park's wild, wonderful west side in hiking boots, on skis or on snowshoes. Order by phone at 800-816-7662, or purchase at any park visitor center bookstore. Available online soon! Softcover, 24 pages. \$5.95 plus shipping.



Park Puzzler

by RMNA Member Joel Kaplow

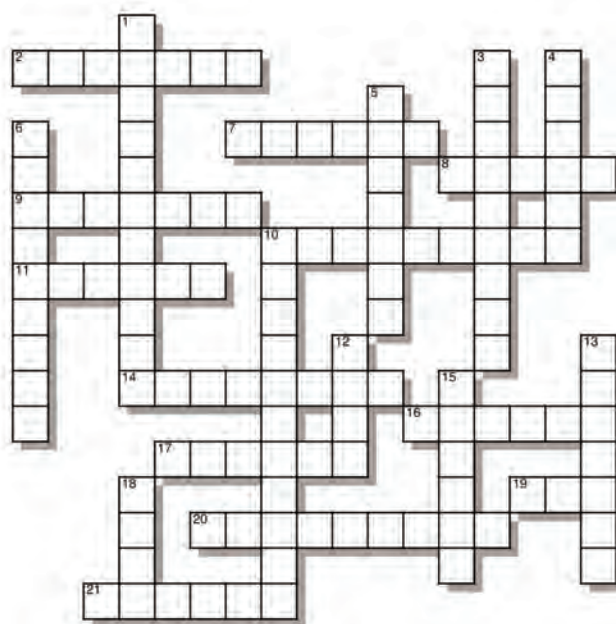
ACROSS

- There is a lake and waterfall in Wild Basin, and a mountain and pass in the Never Summer Range named for this, lightning's rumble.
- The Park's yellow-bellied ___ hibernates for up to eight months while living off its stored fat, and emerges in the spring at about half its summer weight.
- The large, rounded mountain forming Grand Lake's picturesque backdrop to the east was named for Reverend William Bayard ___.
- A warm, dry downslope wind flowing west-to-east over mountains in western North America is called a ___, named by the Chehalis Indians of the Pacific Northwest. Its meaning is "snow-eater."
- Can you name the life zone found in the Park between 9,000 and 11,400 feet?
- Rachel Carson's landmark book of 1962, "___ Spring," is considered to be the catalyst of the environmental movement, exposing DDT as the killer of birds.
- This blue tundra flower, whose name is synonymous with "aviator" likes to grow in disturbed soil. Its less-than-appealing scent gave rise to its nickname: skunkweed. (2 wds.)
- The Park's ___ flower, an early bloomer with grey-blue fuzzy petals, is considered by some to be the first sign of spring.
- Tatra National Park, RMNP's sister park, straddles the border between Slovakia and what other European country?
- Members of several ___ species frequent the Park, including flammulated, northern pygmy, long-eared and boreal.
- What's another name for one of RMNP's resident rodents, the red squirrel?
- It looks cute and cuddly to the unwary, but the Park's carnivorous pine ___ can flip a porcupine over and tear into its belly in seconds.

DOWN

- The beautiful ___ Wilderness is RMNP's neighbor immediately south of the border. (2 wds.)
- A new volunteer group called the "Tundra ___" helps keep folks informed and in line along Trail Ridge Road.
- While strolling through the Park one day you notice that the trees have disappeared and there's tundra everywhere, you're breathing hard, and your altimeter says you're above 11,400 feet. You're not in the Twilight Zone, but in this one, which comprises about one-third of RMNP.
- The lowest life zone in RMNP lies below 9,000 feet. What is it?

- This RMNP mountain, covered by a jumble of dead trees killed in an 1872 fire, resembled a giant version of pick-up sticks to its namer, Park Superintendent Roger Toll.
- Here's a toughie: The 9-Across "eats" some snow by melting it, but it also converts some directly into water vapor, bypassing the liquid stage. What's this process called?
- "Krummholz" vegetation is found in the ecotone, or transition zone, between RMNP's 10-Across and 4-Down life zones. It is German for "twisted ___."
- The ___ is the name of the sharp, craggy high points on Lumpy Ridge.
- Due to the fierce winds found near treeline, some trees will not grow branches on their windward side. This asymmetry results in a flaglike appearance for these ___ trees.
- The diminutive ___ of RMNP gathers vegetation and piles the "haystacks" under rocks to eat during the winter, as it doesn't hibernate. Flowering alpine avens contains a chemical that acts as a natural preservative for the haystacks.





The Land Above the Trees: An Exotic Wonderland of Extremes



Yellow-bellied Marmot

Photo: Dick Coe

by Leanne Benton

Many years ago, my family and I hiked up Longs Peak on a sparkling midsummer day. We rested on the summit, enjoying our accomplishment and the views, when nearby a hiking group of teenage girls gathered in a circle, arms entwined and began to sing. *High on this mountain, the clouds down below, I'm feeling so strong and alive. From this rocky perch I'll continue to search for the wind and the snow and the sky.* Those familiar lyrics from Dan Fogelberg's song

Netherlands resonated that day like they never had before. Standing atop the park's highest mountain with views in all directions of tundra, rock, snow and sky, my imagination soared with the lyrics and I felt like I wanted to remain forever. Yet, even though it was just

morning, clouds were already forming to the west and the wind was brisk – telling us that it was time to descend and reminding me that we are but temporary visitors to the alpine.

Nearly one-third of Rocky Mountain National Park is alpine tundra, a fascinating treeless expanse of tiny plants that carpet the park's mountain summits and ridges. It is a land of extremes. The views are huge, yet the plants and animals are so very small. Gentle summer days can rapidly become windy and stormy and delicate alpine flowers may be blanketed

by July snows. In her book *Song of the Alpine*, alpine ecologist Joyce Gellhorn describes the alpine climate as the most severe anywhere on earth. The combination of frigid cold, harsh winds, deep snows, brilliant ultra-violet light, and rugged terrain create an environment where only specialized plants and animals live. It is too harsh for trees. It is too harsh for humans to live year-round.

The word tundra comes from *tundar*, a Russian or Lappish word that means, "land of no trees." Originally the term was applied to arctic tundra, but scientists found that similar plants and animals lived in high mountains, giving rise to the term alpine tundra. In tundra ecosystems, trees are limited primarily by cold temperatures. A universal climate constraint on trees is that they cannot survive where the mean (average) temperature during the warmest summer month is below approximately 49° F. Temperatures colder than this translate into a growing season that is too short for trees to repair from the previous winter, grow larger, and prepare for the upcoming winter. Near treeline, trees grow very slowly in twisted stunted shapes.

Winter is never far away in the alpine. Spring usually arrives in June and by August autumn golds and maroons color the tundra. The growing season is a brief but glorious six to twelve weeks in length. Under such conditions, each alpine plant and animal has special adaptations and strategies for survival.

The most common plant adaptation is height – or, rather, to be short. Most alpine plants are only a couple of inches tall. Living close to the ground enables them to thrive in a warm layer of air that can be



Elephantella
Photo: Linda Wold



Alpine forget-me-nots

Although hardy, tiny alpine plants are surprisingly fragile under human traffic. Continuous foot traffic may kill alpine plants, leaving a scar that can take decades to regrow. *Helpful Tip: To protect alpine tundra, stay on trails where they are provided. In locations away from Tundra Protection Areas where you are permitted to walk on the tundra, walk spread out rather than single-file and step on rocks and gravel when possible.*

30° warmer near the surface, and much less windy. While some plants may only produce two to four new leaves each year, about 90% of their growth is invisible underground as an extensive root system anchoring them against the wind, seeking water, and providing energy storage over winter. Many plants form tight cushion shapes, streamlined to let wind flow over them. Many sport hairs on their stems and leaves to reflect harmful UV light and protect tissues against drying winds.

During the short growing season, the tundra bursts into color as alpine plants hurry to flower and produce seed before winter returns. Yellow alpine avens, alpine sunflowers, drabas, and wallflowers mix with blue alpine forget-me-nots, sky pilots and chiming bells, pink moss champions, and white alpine sandworts and bistorts to form a brilliant mosaic.

Summer is a time of activity for alpine animals. For most animals, courtship and raising young occurs early in the season, and preparing for winter occupies the remainder of the short summer. Marmots emerge from hibernation in May, mate and give birth to their young about a month later. The rest of the season is spent eating, sleeping, and basking on rocks, all essential activities for accumulating nearly half their body weight in fat before hibernation in October. Pikas, tiny relatives of the rabbit, remain active all year but live under snow covered talus piles during the winter. From summer green-up in July until the snow buries the tundra in October, pikas are busy gathering and drying vegetation,



Kings crown, chiming bells and alpine avens are among the kaleidoscope of colors to be visually consumed on the tundra.

Photo: Nancy Wilson

then storing it under the talus to feed from for the next nine to ten months.

Numerous insect species, including butterflies, bees, ants, and grasshoppers live here, spending the winter dormant in leaf debris or underground holes. Several bird species – American pipit, horned lark, rosy finch, white crowned sparrow, and ptarmigan – nest in the tundra. All but the ptarmigan migrate to warmer locations at lower elevations or to the south by late summer. The ptarmigan, a hen-sized, grouse-like bird, remains on the tundra during the winter, growing white feathers which insulate and serve as camouflage. Bighorn sheep are the only large mammal to remain in the alpine during winter. The sheep's four-chambered stomach enables it to digest dry tundra plants while a dense fur coat provides insulation, and flexible skid-resistant hooves allows it to climb rocky cliffs.

Other residents are migratory. Elk move up to the tundra in summer to escape the heat and the insects and to feed on the nutritious alpine plants. Coyotes, bears and mountain lions migrate up to hunt prey such as marmots, ground squirrels, pikas, young elk and birds. The only year-round predator is the weasel, which grows white fur for winter, and tirelessly hunts for mice and other small animals during the winter to avoid starvation.

Rocky Mountain National Park contains some of the most accessible alpine tundra in the country. When Trail Ridge Road is open, generally from late May to mid-October, visitors can drive up to this “land above the trees.” Hiking trails lead to alpine summits. But even during the summer, it is important to be prepared with layered clothing, water, sunscreen and sunglasses. Always remember: the weather can change rapidly and dramatically. Afternoon thunderstorms are common and snowstorms can temporarily close Trail Ridge Road any month of the year.

As my family and I hastily made our descent off of Longs Peak, the thunderstorm moved in as we neared treeline. A single sharp crack of thunder

caused us to pick up our pace. Below treeline, the rain began. We donned our ponchos and kept moving. Soon hail was bouncing all around. Drenched, but happy we arrived back at the trailhead and our awaiting car.

Images of that day remain with me now – the brilliance of the stars as we climbed upward in the pre-dawn darkness, the sunrise over Twin Sisters peaks, marmots basking on rocks in morning light, the kaleidoscope colors of alpine flowers, a pair of ptarmigan below Granite Pass, a family of young weasels bounding through the Boulderfield, the high-pitched squeaks of pikas in the talus, and the gathering clouds and afternoon downpour. The alpine world had revealed so many facets of itself – its beauty, its amazing life forms, and of course, a hint of its signature weather extremes.

Leanne Benton is an Interpretive Park Ranger in Rocky Mountain National Park.



Photo: Linda Wold

Pika

Scientists are concerned that changing climate conditions may impact alpine ecosystems. Warmer temperatures, and additional factors such as nitrogen deposition in the park, may favor grasses over wildflower species and ultimately allow tree species to migrate uphill. Heat sensitive animals such as pikas and ptarmigan may lose suitable habitat. The park recently established a GLORIA (Global Research Initiative in Alpine Environments) site, part of an international program to monitor soil temperatures and vegetation changes in alpine areas worldwide. The park is also hosting research to document current baseline pika populations which can be monitored for future changes.

A WINTER ACQUANT OF LONGS

by Jim Detterline

It seemed like a good idea at the time...Longs Peak with Lisa. Winter's long, icy grip was loosening up in the High Peaks, or at least the weather forecast for April 2, 2011 sounded like it was.

The winter of 2010-2011 had been long and bitter, accompanied by never-ending gale force winds since October. I had been blown off of the peak numerous times, sometimes solo and sometimes with good climbing partners. Just after Christmas I had

over-stretched my right hip while skiing deep powder down the old phone line. I took a hiatus of three months, confining myself to technical ice climbs with short approaches. Now, with my hip feeling much better, I couldn't stay away from Longs Peak any longer.

Neither could Lisa Foster. The lauded author of *Rocky Mountain National Park: The Complete Hiking Guide* also had been on hiatus from Longs Peak, tending to her one and a half-year-old daughter Ellie, and husband Alex, yet she always had a special place in her heart for Longs Peak. Lisa had climbed Longs Peak numerous times, via numerous technical routes including the Diamond, and in every season of the year.

We planned our return to Longs Peak for Saturday April 2. The weather was predicted to be warm and calm, a rare break between winter storms. However, the next blizzard was due for late in the day. It would be a narrow window of opportunity.

We left the Longs Peak Trailhead at 7:30 a.m. For winter season attempts there is no sense in setting out at the recommended summer starting time of 3 a.m., as there is little hazard of thunderstorms. Also, the storm from the previous day needed the night to clear itself out. So, we started out on this lovely clear and calm morning, with the best



Jim Detterline and Lisa Foster

part of the day ahead of us.

The Longs Peak Trail was packed from the hordes of winter hikers and snowshoers who had pounded it into ice for the two and a half miles sheltered by the trees. We didn't even remove our snowshoes from our packs, and Lisa and I moved up quickly to the Alpen Brook Bridge.

Winter travel is best accomplished by following drainages, especially in those transition areas like the krummholz of Longs Peak between the bridge and the Battle Mountain junction. The wind blows snow from the alpine zone into this area like a catchment basin, trapping the deep snow in the short trees. It dramatically affects both visibility and the following of your own tracks back to the protection of the forest. Staying in the drainage allows you to be sure of your position, even during the worst whiteout.

Few people had tracked and packed this area, yet it was sufficiently solid to hike without snowshoes. The roar of the

Alpen Brook beneath the ice was loud, and one spot had opened up to provide a small hole of rushing water. Years ago, I had fallen through an area of thin coverage and into the icy stream to my hips. I quickly rolled out of the hole and then stood up in the bitterly cold dry air. The water of the stream flash froze on the outside of my waterproof pants and plastic double boots without penetrating deeper into my layers of clothing. I beat the

thin sheet of ice off my lower body with a ski pole and continued on to the summit anyway.

Today, Lisa got a boot wet but her feet remained dry. We continued on towards the red alpenglow shape of Longs Peak and her court of lesser mountains. It was so bizarre to experience such a calm and beautiful day given this winter's history, yet it was cold enough to force us to put on our next layers while stopped at Battle Mountain Junction.

There were two other cars parked at the

Longs Peak Trailhead when we started up, but we saw no one above treeline, a contrast to summer's continuous long line of hikers making the pilgrimage to the summit from the Fourth of July to Labor Day. Nor were there any fresh tracks from this point on. The snow had been packed by the wind into a rippled slope of firm snow. The snowshoes stayed on our backpacks as we continued up the drainage to the left of Jim's Grove, and then beyond up the rocky east slope of Mt. Lady Washington.

Then things started to change. It became more breezy and the temperature began to drop. A few small puffs of white cloud now appeared, shooting over the top of Longs Peak at high velocity. These changes crept up on us bit by bit, subtle yet obvious. The storm was not supposed to set in until after dark. With blind faith in the weather lady and the innate stubbornness of old mountaineers, we continued our push towards the summit.

At the base of the old Cables Route on the North Face (actually the east side of the north ridge) of Longs Peak, we stopped to don crampons, harnesses, helmets and a skinny rope. I started up first to lead the mixed pitch of rock and ice. The steep dihedral was only partially plastered with ice, a crumbly layer of tsastrugi that didn't give a whole lot of confidence for our ice axe and crampon placements. Five of the seven old 1925 bolts were visible through the thin

As we gathered our equipment on the belay ledge, we heard a horrible rumbling from the Keyhole formation. It was the wind. The upper peak was now enveloped in a rapidly growing gale.

cover, but only three of these were useful to me. In over twenty years of winter climbing on Longs Peak, I had never seen the snow cover this thin. I clipped one of the bolts partway up the dihedral, and continued up into the sluice-like area above. My worn-out crampon points got little purchase on the thin crumbly ice. If I kicked too hard, the ice broke out and left only tiny crystals for the steels nubbins to claw against. Near the overlap I set my only cam, a spring-loaded device that spread out its four grooved heads to lock itself into the icy crack, as protection to clip my rope into. With a tenuous move up and left to a small ledge, I exited the dihedral. I ignored the last bent bolt as I moved over the last steep section to the most commonly used belay ledge with bolt number five.

I called "on belay" to Lisa as I guarded the progress of her end of the rope through the big metal eight ring attached to my harness. Lisa carefully worked her way up the slick dihedral, her skill and years of experience overcoming the difficulties of the technical terrain. Yet even Lisa was surprised at the level of difficulty encountered today.

As we gathered our equipment on the belay ledge, we heard a horrible rumbling from the Keyhole formation. It was the wind. The upper peak was now enveloped in a rapidly growing gale. We were glad that we had decided against ascending the Keyhole Route. Certainly we would've been forced to turn around. On the Cables Route, at least we were afforded some protection from the prevailing westerly winds by the geographical orientation of the protective ridge. Yet strong gusts were still reaching us, causing us to stop and plunge our axe shafts deep into the snow pack to avoid being blown off and over the top of the Diamond as we traversed the snowfields of the upper mountain towards the summit. The wind-crusting snow seemed stable, yet we had to be careful, as the layers could pull apart from each other and

avalanche us towards the deep void. We were glad to reach the final approach of low angled rock scramble to the summit.

Just below the summit, in a slight gully-like depression, I saw something the likes of which I had never seen in the high mountains. A strong whirlwind about 100 feet high blew off the summit and down this depression. It was an anti-cyclonic wind with the appearance of a small tornado. Perhaps it was a microburst like the sudden extreme wind that I once experienced at the Longs Peak parking lot that affected a very small area and blew out the windows on just one car. This much I do know about the Longs Peak "tornado": it was brown with airborne gravel and rocks the size of plums, and it was within 50 feet of us. I yelled for Lisa to take cover as I also ducked behind a small boulder for protection. To get hit with one of those rocks could mean certain death. Fortunately, the Longs Peak "tornado" did not come over us, but instead continued down the depression where it disappeared over the Diamond with its load of rocks.

Lisa and I pulled up onto the flat summit directly at the highpoint, a five foot boulder that stood towering above the vast peneplain. The winds were gusting over 75 miles per hour. As I was photographing Lisa sitting on the summit boulder, a huge gust came up that flattened me out and made Lisa grab onto the rock to prevent being tossed down on her head. We knew that we had to leave as soon as possible, but there was one more little chore to be done.

We opened up the summit register to sign in and check the passage of winter climbers. We were stunned to see that we were only the second party of the year to have signed in. Furthermore, there had been only one party entered per month for December and November. Not everyone signs the register in winter but most do. I had thought that this winter had perhaps been windier and colder



The old cable route now navigated technically, with ropes.

than others, but I had dismissed this as a warp of weakness on my part. Now we both knew that our perceptions were true.

The climb is never completed until you see the soap run between your toes in the shower. The descent, with its easier direction in the path of least resistance, should be less strenuous and complicated than the ascent. Today it was not. The winds continued to increase in intensity and frequency, roaring at us with a most horrible noise. It was all that we could do to keep our movements confined to the steps that we had

kicked on the north face. Lisa began the rappels first when we got back to the dihedral area. With my hood tucked firmly around my helmet, I began to get cold hands in working the rope through the rappel anchors. Eventually we were finally free of the upper mountain.



As we worked our way across the non-technical snow-covered rocks of the Boulder Field, the storm followed us, driving snow with the wind. We regressed to an ape-like posture in our resistance to remain upright as we walked down hill. My ski poles aided me in staying on my feet in a number of instances where the winds

pushed me hard enough to have knocked me over. This downhill fight made us weary beyond belief. We were both sore, particularly in leg and back muscles, just from trying to remain upright. The wind also hastened our dehydration and hunger.

Eleven and a half hours after starting our journey, we returned to the Longs Peak parking lot, weary yet happy. It was a good day; no one had gotten hurt. And Longs Peak had continued to challenge us in different ways with every ascent.

Jim Detterline is a former Longs Peak Ranger in Rocky Mountain National Park. He's climbed this iconic peak 362 times - and counting!





by Gary C. Miller

At first blush, is there anything more oxymoronic than attempting to “manage” Rocky Mountain National Park’s wildlife? Isn’t Rocky where we expect to see the natural world operate ... well ... naturally? A place where wild things exist free from human interventions, including “management?”

For the most part, park biologists hold fast to that philosophy. But, because many things we humans do, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, *do* “intervene” with wildlife and their life processes, we take steps to offset those effects to provide millions of park visitors the experience of the closest possible approximation of naturalness to our wild systems. In other words, we “manage.”

Minimal Intervention - A pair of falcons scan the cliffs of Lumpy Ridge looking for a good nesting site, or eyrie. They see a perfect combination of safety from predators and a nearby prey source (e.g., cliff-nesting white-throated swifts). Below them, recreation-seeking humans have a different view – an ideal physically challenging climb on a warm spring day.

Very few climbers would ever intentionally interfere with nesting falcons. But climbers sometimes disturb the falcons during nesting, or as they brood (if cold) or shade (if hot) their young. And it’s possible that climbers could disrupt the reproduction of the birds’ prey, which may result in slim pickings for the falcons in future years. All this could mean jeopardizing the huge investment these birds have made in energy as well as compromising their future efforts dedicated to replacing themselves with a new generation of falcons.

In this case, the park’s management practice, which often focus more on people management than wildlife management, is to annually close to human intrusions large segments of Lumpy Ridge beginning about March 1, and enforce these closures with climbing rangers. In addition, with the invaluable assistance of park volunteers, we spend hours and hours monitoring the falcons’ reproductive progress from afar, eyeballs screwed to the spotting scope. We also monitor

closed areas that are not being used by birds of prey and rescind those closures where human disturbance should not cause a problem. Happily, the support this minimalist management approach has garnered from many members of the climbing community has been gratifying.

Besides raptors, park wildlife biologists monitor boreal toads, bighorn sheep, winter elk herds, and follow up and maintain databases on reports of various species of concern such as wolverine, lynx, river otter, gray wolf and moose on the east side of the park.

Moderate Intervention – A puma kills an elk next to a popular trail. Do we remove the carcass so park visitors won’t be disturbed? Nope. The sight and smell of predation is part of the naturalness visitors must accept when visiting Rocky. However, as managers, we may move it a short distance away from the trail so the puma can continue to visit the carcass periodically for several days to feed undisturbed. The puma will still find its food and the risk of a hiker and puma surprising one another is minimized.

Pumas are most active during hours of darkness and typically avoid people, so human-puma encounters are rare. Still, visitor protection rangers will post signs at trailheads and junctions alerting visitors to puma activity in the area and reinforcing the safety messages of how to behave in puma country. Our interpretive, information and backcountry office staff also weigh in to further convey those safety messages to visitors, such as: Don’t hike alone; carry a staff; keep children CLOSE! (Check out the guidelines in the park newspaper or the website for more information).

Other moderate interventions we or visitor protection rangers undertake include: hazing (adversive conditioning) bears away from campgrounds or picnic areas to prevent them from becoming habituated to humans or seeking unnatural human food, and moving road-killed carcasses away from roadways to avoid attracting scavengers to a dangerous situation.

Intensive Intervention – Rocky’s Elk and Vegetation Management program is the most obvious example of this level of park wildlife management. Lethally removing elk to help

hold the winter population to a sustainable range of 600 to 800 (131 have been removed during the past 3 years) and erecting elk exclosures to allow the recovery of over-browsed, poorly-reproducing willow and aspen communities are the largest-scale direct management interventions conducted in the park. These actions are taken to offset human negative influence from the past, including a reduction in the suite of natural predators, and land-use changes that have reduced the availability of historical elk ranges outside the park.

Other management activities associated with the program include intensive vegetation monitoring to assess how well the program’s fundamental objective – bringing elk, willows, aspen, and associated species such as beaver and riparian birds back into a more natural balance – is working. The thousands of vegetation measurements we take each year will also alert us to when the vegetation has rebounded to a point at which we can move or remove the exclosures. (For more detail see www.nps.gov/romo/parkmgmt/elkvegetation.htm).

Other examples of intensive intervention that park biologists undertake at times include the capture and removal of non-native species (e.g. wandering mountain goats), the capture and removal of human-habituated wildlife that endangers public safety (garbage bears) and the re-introduction of boreal toads to sites free of chytrid fungus (the agent most responsible for the precipitous decline of this species throughout the west, most likely proliferating as a result of climate change or pollutants).

By and large, the park’s wildlife continues to exist wild and free from human intervention, including the activities of wildlife

biologists. Management that does occur ranges from the benign to intensive, and is focused toward maintaining or restoring naturalness to biological systems consistent with human enjoyment and the effects of human activities outside the park. The degree to which we conduct “hands-on” interventions generally is reflective of the level of human influences on natural systems and is carried out to offset those influences. In the words of the National Park Service mission, this is one way we intend to keep the park “unimpaired for future generations.”

RMNA Member Gary C. Miller is an RMNP Wildlife Biologist in the Natural Resources Management Branch.

At first blush, is there anything more oxymoronic than attempting to “manage” Rocky Mountain National Park’s wildlife?

2011 American Conservation Corps Crew Hits the Ground Running



2011 American Conservation Crew Members: Bottom Row, left to right: Drew Ley, Brad Nuse, Gabby Bailado, Christine Bauer, Kari Lanphier, Lindsay Anderson, Aprill Bodlak, Adam Blatt. Middle Row: Jake Hargis, Kathleen Torso, Anna Murray, Elizabeth Smith, Emelia Lewis, Lanaia Carveth. Top Row: Connor Lockwood, James Wilkerson, Brian Case, Troy Raisanen, Daniel Peter, Walker Furpahs, Andrew Morris, Sarah Hakkenberg, Brian Inglis. Not pictured: Kelley Ferguson.

Meet Julie Klett, RMNA Development Associate



Julie Klett joined us in April and brings with her a wealth of diverse experience in the nonprofit and corporate arenas. Most recently she was communications director at New Hampshire Audubon and also working freelance, doing everything from writing to print and web design and media relations. Julie will be working on a variety of development tasks including database management, donor cultivation (she prefers the term “friendraising”), foundation and corporate relations, grant writing, planned giving, and memorial gifts and opportunities. “I have been hiking, backpacking and photographing RMNP for nearly 20 years,” said Klett. “I am pleased and proud to be a part of the RMNA team and contributing to all it does to preserve and improve the Park. I look forward to meeting and working with our dedicated members and supporters.”

Haiyaha/Alberta Falls Trail Project: Work Summer #3 in Progress

Rocky Mountain National Park’s North District Trail Crew, led by Doug Parker, is scheduled to be working full time on this important reconstruction effort, started the week of June 20.

Parker and his six-person crew will be addressing trail deficiencies, including constructing causeways through wet areas, removing protruding rocks and boulders, and building some rock “paver” or “riprap” sections of elevated rock walking surfaces.

The National Park Service trail crew will be assisted throughout the summer by this year’s American Conservation Corps. Additionally, one day each week an 11-member team of the Larimer County Youth Conservation Corps will join in this effort.

Work is expected to continue through September 30, weather permitting. It is likely a fourth summer’s effort will be required to finish this \$470,588 project. At this time, \$128,557 still needs to be raised for the final push in 2012.

New Field Seminars Bus Coming Soon!

Thanks to the family of our long-time Board Member Walt Emery and several dozen generous donors, our Rocky Mountain Field Seminars Program will soon have a 14-passenger bus.

The concept of the Field Seminar bus is as shown. Its final details, including color, size, or shape – even the lettering on its side – has yet to be decided. In the next few months we’ll find a bus meeting our specifications.

Long dreamed about, this Field Seminars bus will provide carpooling to our field classes, giving instructors and participants a comfortable “classroom on wheels” in which groups can be together for added benefits. The bus will also help us expand our kids’ programs.

As many people know, Walt Emery’s family created a legacy in the history of the National Park System when Walt’s father, Roe Emery, introduced the famous red colored jammer buses in Glacier National Park in 1912. In the early 1920s the Emerys started the Rocky Mountain Transportation Company in Estes Park, using similar buses to carry visitors across Fall River Pass.

In addition to the Emery Family, special gifts were received from Anonymous, Marvin and Hannah Woolf, and several dozen other supporters to meet the project budget of \$64,975.

It is expected that the Field Seminars Bus may have to be custom built. We hope to have it in service by this coming September. Stay tuned!





The Rocky Mountain National Park Fund

expresses special thanks to the following people for their donations to RMNP projects:

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**SPECIAL PROJECTS
& PROGRAMS**

Barbara Linville Estate, Geneva, IL
Graig and Janet McHendrie, Palo Alto, CA
Mary Lynn Oliver, Wichita, KS:
In Memory of Howard Burkhart
Dr. and Mrs. John Christiano, Jupiter, FL:
**In Memory of John Christiano and
In Honor of Marilyn Hubbard**

Memorial Bench,

All in Memory of Gregory (Greg) Hansen
Nina Anderson, Marquette, NE
The Brian Bacon Family, Thornton, CO
Mr. and Mrs. Curt Barner, Thornton, CO
Mr. and Mrs. Roy Brinkley, San Diego, CA
Ms. Susan Brinkley, San Diego, CA
Mr. & Mrs. Ken Clemens, Westminster, CO
Friends from Hunters Glen,
Westminster, CO
Mandi and Debbie Gaudian, Thornton, CO
Julie Grasser and Friends, Thornton, CO
Stephanie Greene, Rachel Raymond, and
Lynne Werde, Thornton, CO
Carl and Barbara Hansen, Thornton, CO
Ms. Gaylynn Jameson, Westminster, CO
Sharon Johnson, Fort Collins, CO
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The Russ Kosmicki Family, St. Paul, NE
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Ms. Laura Malsom, Thornton, CO
Mr. and Mrs. Tom Mersch, Aurora, NE
Ms. Doris Plummer, Central City, NE
The Fish and the Frog Rooms at Riverdale
Elementary, Thornton, CO
The Scott Varvir Family, Thornton, CO
Ms. Karen Weber, Thornton, CO
Mr. and Mrs. Randy Weiche, Thornton, CO
The Craig Wilkening Family, Thornton, CO
Mrs. Melinda Younger, Thornton, CO

Quick Fix Science

(Actually, a thinly disguised
Ask Nancy Question....)

**What made moose start crossing the
Continental Divide in the first place if this
natural barrier has prevented them in the past?**

Moose are wide ranging wanderers and the Continental Divide is not, in fact, a natural barrier. Elk and deer commonly cross back and forth over the Divide, so it's no surprise that moose would as well. Moose are not considered to be native to Colorado — in the late 1800s and early 1900s only an occasional moose wandered into Colorado, probably from Utah and Wyoming. They were introduced in 1978 and 1979 in the North Park area. They started moving into the Colorado River District in 1980 but were only observed during the summer months. It wasn't until the winter of 1985-86 that moose were observed in the Kawuneeche Valley and then considered to be year round residents.

Starting at about the summer of 1985 moose were occasionally observed on the alpine tundra near Timber Lake, around the Mount Ida Ridge area and in the upper Hague Creek and Cache La Poudre area. The Hague/Cache La Poudre is on the eastside of the Continental Divide. During this time they were also observed in the upper reaches of the East and North Inlet on the westside.

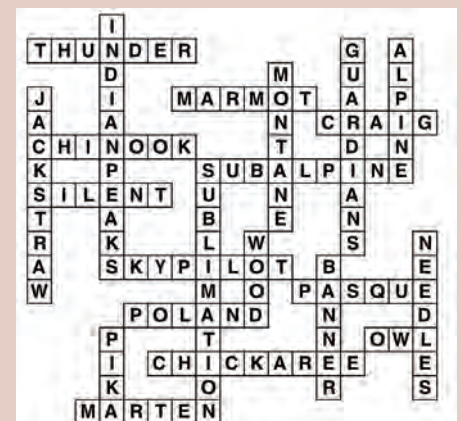
It was not until October 1988 that moose were observed on somewhat of a regular basis into the further reaches of the eastside of the park. The first observations were in the Wild Basin area. They were also observed the following summer in the North Fork area. In 2011 we now have year round moose on both sides of the park with regular observations for the eastside in the Bear Lake/Glacier Gorge/Glacier Creek corridor, Wild Basin and North Fork. We even had a moose drop by headquarters one year wandering through the housing and utility area.—*Resources Management Specialist Jeff Connor.*



Photo: Jon Clarke

(Pine Beetles, cont. from page 3)

resin produced by each tree often varies within a grove of trees. Resin is the gooey substance that comes out of trees when they are wounded and contains several chemicals toxic to the mountain pine beetle. The tree's ability to produce resin is one of the primary means of defending itself. The beetles battle through the resin to gain access to its food source, the phloem layer, under the bark. Some scientific studies have shown that trees that produced more resin deterred beetles better than trees with less resin, and yet other studies have not been able to replicate this finding. Since mountain pine beetles carry a suite of fungi, yeast, and bacteria, which act in concert with the beetle mining the tree's phloem to kill the tree, the individual tree's ability to defend itself against the blue stain fungi vectored by the mountain pine beetle may be just as important as keeping the beetle out. Another factor in tree defense may be genetic variation within pine species. Studies examining genetic variation within pine species are on-going and have indicated that mountain pine beetle reacts differently to different host genotypes. Maybe one day we will be able to do a simple test and determine how resistant a pine tree is to mountain pine beetles. Then again, as we do more research we often discover how complex these biological systems are. —*Sheryl L. Costello, USDA Forest Service, Entomologist*

PARK PUZZLE ANSWERS



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*This red-headed woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*, was spotted by Park Biologist **Gary C. Miller** and Park Volunteer **Rich Gilliland** at the end of May in the West Alluvial Fan area. While not rare east of Colorado, this bird is very rare in the Rocky Mountains.*

Photo: Richard Hahn



Summer lenticulars Photo: RMNA Member Dick Coe

Nature Association Notes...

Summer is here!!!! All the early rains made for a very green spring, with golden banner and purple iris on full display. Heavy clouds still lurk over the Continental Divide, as if reminding us that weather in the Rockies is nothing if not inconsistent. No relaxing for this hardy bunch.... In mid-May, RMNA Member **Dick Coe** and a friend were watching a golden eagle's nest when they saw one of the golden eagles fold its wings and dive from near the nest at a very high speed at some prey it had sighted. It missed its intended supper and flew low, landing on the ground above the ditch alongside a road. It appeared to be looking at something in the ditch, and Dick thought the eagle had perhaps spotted a ground squirrel or a marmot, but it did not go after whatever it saw. As the eagle took flight, Dick drove toward the eagle and looked into the ditch where the eagle had been. Lo and behold, there was a badger. No wonder the eagle had second thoughts about this possible prey. Badgers can weigh more than 20 pounds....Estes Park highschooler **Madeline Wilson** observed a small lump moving jerkily across a dirt road near her home in Carriage Hills. She assumed it was a ground squirrel dragging off the corpse of a recently fallen comrade. As she drew nearer, however, she saw the telltale black-tipped tail and streamlined body of a long-tailed weasel hauling a ground squirrel that was bigger than itself to its lair (not without a few breaks to catch its breath, it did appear!). Because long-tailed weasels are known for their fierceness in battle, it wouldn't have been unlikely for the weasel to have attacked and killed the ground squirrel itself. But it's just as likely that it was collecting the hit-and-run carcass of one of the many ground squirrels in the neighborhood, since these weasels are also scavengers extraordinaire.....Spring brings a host of birds to and through the park when migration is underway. Park Biologist **Gary C. Miller** watched in awe as a flock of more than 50 white pelicans riding the thermals flew above Deer Mountain in late May. Most Colorado white pelicans winter on the Gulf Coast of Texas and Mexico. When they return, these birds are very selective in their choice of nest sites, choosing isolated areas and islands where they nest in colonies. The nests typically are situated twice the distance of an adult's extended bill, head and neck from each other (i.e., only just barely touching bill tips when they "jab" at each other). Originally, these birds nested in Colorado at just one site east of Greeley, hosting only a couple hundred birds classified as endangered in Colorado. Now, they're known to also nest in North Park, at Antero (South Park), and possibly at some other areas, bringing their numbers in Colorado up to several thousand, and now considered secure.....Park Volunteer **Richard Gilliland** had a most unusual sighting in mid-May while giving his bird walk in Moraine Park meadows. As the group drew near the Big Thompson, he spotted what initially he assumed was a Common muskrat swimming rapidly out into the current. This didn't seem right to him, and soon it became apparent that it wasn't a muskrat at all. After much discussion about the diagnostic field marks and behaviors with park staff and others, all ten field marks solidly confirmed the presence of a mink! When first seen, the mink swam out from the right bank to the middle of the inlet, dove and reappeared on the west side of the inlet. It moved around in the vegetation a little and then silence...then it reappeared in the middle of the inlet with a 5.5 inch trout

firmly in its mouth and swam back to the bank from where it had originated. Two minutes later it appeared again, following the same pattern of swimming, diving and reappearing on the far inlet bank, moving around, then silence. This time when it reemerged it had a spotted salamander firmly in its mouth.

Unlike the squirming fish, the salamander was immobile. The whole episode was 16 minutes long and yet it seemed like 16 seconds. What a thrill! It was suggested that this was probably a female that was possibly carrying food to its young in a nest in the bank.....Park visitors reported being awakened at 11:00 p.m. in early June to the sound of a ruckus in the garbage cans outside the rental in which they were staying in Estes Park. They watched as a mother bear attempted to show her two cubs how she planned to access the treasure trove of goodies inside the trash can. After sending the cubs up a tree to watch, she hauled one of the three cans out of the enclosure and proceeded to try to rip into it with her claws, jump on it to pop the lid and roll the can around to break the clasps. Luckily, the can was bear proof and ultimately stymied her. But this bear brings her cubs every year to try her luck, indicating that she's having success with other trash cans, somewhere. If you live in bear country, please buy bear proof trash cans to stop this vicious cycle that ultimately kills bears.....RMNA Member **Dick Orleans** observed a mule deer fawn that was born early one morning after a tremendous hail and lightning storm the night before. The mother deer was vigilantly protecting her newborn, and when she saw a large bobcat that must have caught wind of the birth approach the area, the mama deer immediately chased the bobcat up a nearby ponderosa. After the bobcat sulked away to a neighbor's yard, she kept watch most diligently. She even came around the back side of Dick's house to keep an eye on the bobcat. At one point, the bobcat came back around the house to try a different approach, but when it saw Dick spotting it with his camera, the bobcat left without a meal.....After tackling huge snowdrifts and snow slides that repeatedly covered the newly plowed road, Trail Ridge Road finally opened for the season on June 6. According to Park Information Officer **Kyle Patterson**, due to significant snow accumulation, Old Fall River Road is not expected to open by the Fourth of July weekend as it traditionally does. This scenic road presents additional challenges for park snowplow operators. In mid-June, sections of the top of the road were under an estimated 15 feet of snow, obscuring the snow poles that guide snowplow operators on the location of the road. Avalanche activity is typically encountered along several slide paths that cross the road and this year, these events are anticipated to be larger with the potential for significant deposition and debris that will have to be cleared from the road corridor.....Never a dull day in RMNP!



Just hours old... Photo: RMNA Member Dick Orleans