

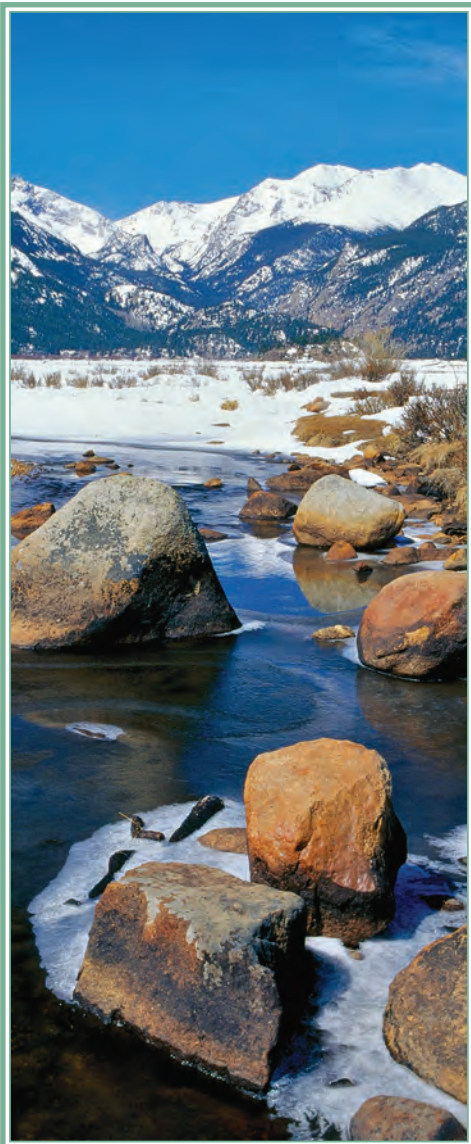


ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATURE ASSOCIATION

Spring 2012

\$4.00

QUARTERLY



AN OLD FRIEND by Janet Robertson

I can't recall a time when I didn't know the old limber pine that's above Lake Helene, next to the trail close to where it starts down the valley past Lake Odessa. My family and I usually stopped by it to admire the way its two lower limbs grew horizontally so they perfectly framed the rock mountain called "Notchtop." Sometimes my father or mother couldn't resist taking yet another photograph of the tree. But even if we didn't make a real stop, we always paused by it, at least, to admire our old friend after we'd arrived from Missouri. "It looks just the same," we'd remark. It was a way of saying we were so glad to be back in honest-to-God mountains again.

When I turned into a teenager and acquired a rather primitive camera with a fixed shutter speed and f-stop, I, too, frequently clicked a shot or two of the tree, usually badly exposed.

Years later, my husband and I made a point of skiing past it. Even though I knew the tree well in summer, I came to understand that its real character was more apparent in winter. In the midst of a blizzard, it seemed indifferent to the brutal winds that swooped down from the Divide, some gusts so strong they nearly knocked me over. Though its branches swayed, they didn't break;

the tree's name, in both English and Latin (*Pinus flexilis*), was apt. During a storm its trunk simply stood still, as though quietly enduring.

Although this particular tree was the most special to me of all those in Rocky, my family and I regarded all limber pines that had been shaped by the elements as special. Because they were gnarled and often stunted, they, unlike most other trees, were recognizable as individuals—as mountain characters, even.

Summer after summer, I spent time at Meeker Park Lodge, which featured limber pines as newel posts and as supports for the second floor, as well as imposing columns for the two-story front porch. They'd been hauled down from Meadow Mountain, victims of an old burn. Scoured of bark, their spiral grain was stunningly apparent. The dear lady who had helped her husband build and run the lodge, once wrote: "The twisting of the trees is due to the wind and the rotation of the earth. They all twist upward from left to right. Below the equator trees twist from right upward to the left." I suspect the trees have inspired other theories as fanciful as that one.

Two years ago, my husband and I set out on a walk from Bear Lake to the Fern Lake parking lot. As we drew near our

(Friend, continued on page 2)



(Friend, continued)

beloved limber pine, I debated whether or not to take a photograph of it to compare with ones taken many years earlier. But as I came closer, I cried out in horror: its needles were the color of rust. The tree was dead.

We took pictures anyway, probably because we couldn't think what else to do.

Since that day, I've noticed other dead limber pines that had been alive when last I'd looked for them. One such example is a cluster near the Dream Lake overlook on the Flattop Trail.

I had been aware that a fungus known as blister-rust (*Cronartium ribicola*) accidentally introduced to the United States from Europe more than a century ago, had spread to Rocky Mountain National Park by the 1950s, and that it attacked limber pines. But until recently, I had not realized that our warming climate has extended the range of pine beetles by a thousand vertical feet. Now they, too, attack even the high altitude limber pines that used to be safe because of the cold.

These days when I come on a magnificently misshapen *Pinus flexilis*, I take special care to admire it. No longer is it a joy that I take for granted.

Janet Robertson has climbed all the 14ers and been hiking, backpacking and skiing in Rocky for most of her life. She served on the board of what has now become part of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association for 20 years, including many years as president. She is author of "Magnificent Mountain Women" and half a dozen others, the latest of which is 100 Years Up High: Colorado Mountains and Mountaineers, published in 2011. She is an instructor for the RMNA Field Seminars program and was an Artist-in-Residence at the William Allen White Cabin in 1984. Jan has sold numerous articles and photographs about the outdoors.

A Time of Rebirth, Renewal and Growth

*by Interim Executive Director
David R. Mohr*

Spring has arrived in the Rockies! According to Wikipedia, the go-to source for information of the day, spring is "one of the four temperate seasons, the transition period between winter and summer. Spring and 'springtime' refer to the season, and broadly to ideas of rebirth, renewal and regrowth."

Springtime in Rocky Mountain National Park usually brings late-season snows with much-needed moisture. As the snow melts and cascades down the streams, the splendor of the first spring flowers is revealed. Pasque flowers reveal their fuzzy purple blossoms, golden banner spread in bold yellow strokes across the landscape and spring beauties display their unique blooms. In more domesticated gardens, the daffodil is one of the first flowers of spring and yet another symbol of rebirth.

Spring is an exciting time for the Rocky Mountain Nature Association as well. Some of the more mundane

activities of winter are now behind us – planning meetings, audits, reports, etc. – and staff members are now engaging in dynamic and exciting activities that more directly lead to providing educational experiences through field seminars and bus tours, developing, publishing and selling educational and interpretive merchandise, and making connections with new fundraising opportunities to benefit the visitors of the parks and lands we serve.

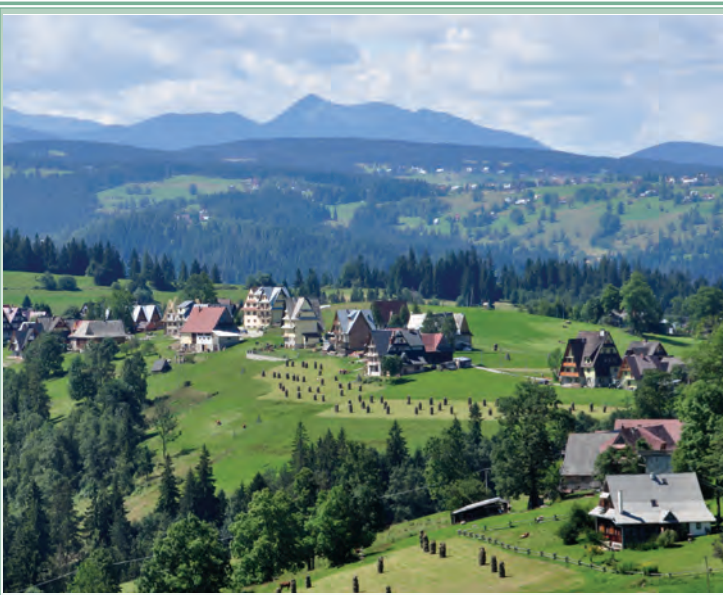
Rebirth and renewal apply to the Rocky Mountain Nature Association as well as we move forward toward change. I have had the privilege to lead the organization as Interim Executive Director for the past six months, observing the enthusiasm and energy of the staff as each person pursues excellence in their respective areas of responsibility. Rebirth, renewal and



Spring beauties, indeed...

regrowth will, I'm certain, continue as a new Executive Director enters this spring and brings with him/her new ideas and a new vision for the future of this outstanding organization.

Dave Mohr has been acting as the interim executive director for RMNA since January 2012. Formerly, he worked as the RMNA business manager.



An amazing experience of culture and nature....

Take A Journey to Poland with RMNA!

Explore the Natural and Cultural History of Rocky's Sister Park, Poland's Tatra Mountains National Park!

Dates: September 15-26

Tentative trip cost: \$2,990 per person *(airfare not included)*

Instructor: Bill Bertschy

This unique eco-tour adventure will introduce participants to a European national park and its surrounding cultural and natural landscapes. Explore the Polish Tatrzański National Park, beginning in Prague; then travel by motorcoach to Zakopane, a town nestled within the Tatra Mountains just outside the national park. Learn about the flora, fauna and geologic history of the region on guided hiking, rafting and caving adventures. What a trip! Don't miss this amazing experience!

Call Rachel at 970-586-3262 to learn more!

Cover photo credits

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

“**Big Thompson Thaw**,” by RMNA Member Ann Duncan, Boulder, CO; “**Avalanche Lily**,” by RMNA Member Linda Wold, Estes Park, CO; “**Mule Deer Games**” by RMNA Member Gene Putney, Longmont, CO. Please send photos or high resolution scans to nancy.wilson@rmna.org by June 1 for publication in the 2012 Summer *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]

What percentage of the park's trees have currently been affected by pine bark beetle and are there any estimates as to when and what the total damages will be when they're done? First, it is important to note that the total number of acres affected by mountain pine beetles, in any one year, has steadily declined from the peaks observed in 2009 (nearly 72,000 acres affected for that year to one degree or another). From data collected by the USDA Forest Service from 2001 through 2011, the mountain pine beetle has affected approximately 70% of Rocky Mountain National Park's forested areas (total forested acres are approximately 165,000 acres) at least to some degree. The qualifier is important because, for any one acre, not all the trees are necessarily killed (for example the smaller diameter trees or those that sprout up after the mature trees have died and opened the canopy), and as you might suspect for some acres, nearly all the mature trees are affected or killed.

For the part of the question speaking to the future, we do not have any way to estimate when the infestation will decline to background levels (beetles are a native to the area and are always present), nor will we really be able to estimate how many acres will be ultimately be affected.—*RMNP Biologist John Mack*

“They” say not to feed animals like elk, deer, chipmunks, ground squirrels and so on, so why can we feed birds? Inside the park it is illegal to feed any wildlife, including birds, so no bird feeders of any type are allowed in park housing areas or elsewhere. There may be some discrepancies in this when it comes to inholders, (private landowners who have a house inside park boundaries). They most likely fall under state regulations on private land. The park currently has researchers working under a research permit who have been studying hummingbirds and using hummingbird feeders to attract the birds to a trap where they can band them and take measurements. The feeders are placed out of reach of any bear. Having a bird feeder at home outside the park is perfectly fine and legal other than at night the recommendation in the Estes Park area is to take any feeders into your house so black bears are not tempted. Outside the park, the state manages wildlife and has regulations about feeding wildlife such as deer and elk that are based on relative dependency and hazards to humans.—*RMNP Resources Management Specialist Jeff Connor.*

What is the history of the old building on the Alluvial Fan road past the parking area on the right? This old cabin is an inholder cabin privately owned by the Margaret Spalsbury Cabin Trust. The cabin was in existence in 1957 and could be a hold-over from other buildings that previously existed in the area. The area once had a car repair garage that very likely sold gas as well, as it was situated in a prime spot at the beginning of Old Fall River Road and very near to the lodge that once stood in west Horseshoe Park.—*RMNP Resources Management Specialist Jeff Connor.*



IN SEARCH OF

NESTING BOREAL OWLS IN ROCKY

*by Scott Rashid,
Director of the Colorado Avian
Research and Rehabilitation Foundation*

Boreal owls nest in woodpecker holes, such as the Northern flicker that is found in the park. According to Greg Hayward and Dr. Ron Ryder, both longtime Boreal owl researchers, Boreal owls usually begin

fledging.

The weather in the Hidden Valley area of the park is often very windy and snowy in March and April when Boreal owls are courting. As a result of this inclement weather, I have had no luck locating a Boreal owl nest within the park.

On 10 March 1996, I assisted Dr. Ron Ryder, Professor Emeritus from Colorado State University, with one of his road censuses searching for Boreal owls along Cameron Pass, northwest of Fort Collins, Colorado. As we arrived at the pass, I commented that the area around Cameron Pass looks a lot like the Hidden Valley area of Rocky Mountain National Park. He said the two areas have perfect habitat for Boreal owls.

In 1996, I became a volunteer with RMNP in search of small owls. On March 31, 1996, three weeks after seeing my first Boreal owl, I decided to search the Hidden Valley area of the park to attempt to document Boreal owls within the park.

Later that evening I heard a vocalizing Boreal owl. A few minutes later I saw it. Virtually every year since 1996 I have either heard, or seen, at least one Boreal owl within the park. A Boreal owl's nest, however, has never been found within the park.

vocalizing from mid-February through mid-April. Courtship calling of some males has been known to last more than 100 days. Eggs are laid, one every two days, with incubation beginning as the first egg is laid.

In Colorado, incubation begins between mid-April and early June. The incubation period is roughly 28 days and the young remain within the nest for 28-36 days before

**Boreal Owl
Measurements & Weights:**

Wingspan:	19 - 25 in.
Length:	8.5 - 12 in.
Tail:	3 3/4 - 4 1/4 in.
Average Weight:	
Male:	4.4 oz.
Female:	6 oz.

I had, however, located several Northern saw-whet owls within the park. The Northern saw-whet owl is a slightly smaller cousin to the Boreal owl. Northern saw-whet owls nest in many more areas within the park than the

Boreal owls do. I have located Northern saw-whet owls singing from Hidden Valley in the park, through many areas of the Estes valley, to Drake, and east of Estes Park about 14 miles.

To determine if Boreal owls nest within the park, I wanted to set up a series of traps to capture and band the owls. Both Greg Hayward, and Dr. Ron Ryder suggested to me that if I could capture owls hatched in 2011 before they disperse from their natal areas in the fall, it would prove that Boreal owls nest within RMNP.

In the summer of 2011, I contacted Jeff Connor, Resources Management Specialist and Wildlife



Park Wildlife Biologist Gary C. Miller setting up sound equipment used to call in Boreal owls.

Biologist Gary C. Miller, both working for RMNP, to find out what I would need to do to obtain a permit to trap and band Boreal owls in the park. With the assistance of Resources Management Specialist Judy Visty, Jeff and Gary, my research permit was amended, permitting me to trap the owls.

With the assistance of Gary Miller and a few volunteers, I set up mist nets and a compact disk player on October 3, 2011. These nets are 40 feet long and 8 feet high. They are made of nylon mesh and have four pockets, each of which stretches the length of the nets. We used three nets placed in the shape of a “U” and a CD player with detachable speakers placed in the center of the “U”.

After dark, the Boreal owl’s call was broadcast. Every half hour we walked the net line and extract any owls that had been captured. Within a few minutes after we started that first evening, two Northern saw-whet owls began responding, yet no owls were caught during that first net check.

Due to my schedule we were only able to set up and trap owls on Monday and Tuesday evenings, weather dependant. As it turned out, due to the weather we were only able to set up to trap owls on 6 evenings total.

At 9:30 p.m. we walked the net line and found our first Boreal owl captured in one of the nets. I extracted the owl and took it into the warming house at Hidden Valley to be examined. The examination consists of measuring, aging, sexing, banding and then releasing the owls.

This first owl weighed 133.6

grams and had a wing length of 172 millimeters. Due to the combination of wing length and weight, I identified the owl as a male.

On October 10 we captured three more owls, one Northern saw-whet and two Boreal owls. The saw-whet was a female, hatched in 2010. One of the Boreal owls was determined to be a female at least three years old and the other was a young female. The fourth Boreal owl was captured and banded on October 18, 2011. It was a young male.

The timing of our Boreal owl captures and the aging that we determined indicated that the young birds that we had captured had hatched within the national park boundary, therefore verifying that Boreal owls do nest within the national park.

The more we understand about these amazing birds, the better able we will be to protect them. Scott’s research is conducted through the nonprofit Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute (CARRI).

The Boreal owl is a “sit and wait” predator. It can locate and capture prey strictly audibly, such as beneath the snow or vegetation.



A Boreal owl in the net.



Director of CARRI, Scott Rashid, removes a Boreal owl from one of the nets.

Tax-deductible donations to CARRI to further the research efforts of this institution are much appreciated.

Contact Scott at:

CARRI
Attn: Scott Rashid, Director
 Box 3351
 Estes Park, CO. 80517

BIOBLITZ IN ROCKY!

.... A WHAT?!?

by Apryle Craig

On August 24 and 25, 2012, the sixth in the series of National Park Service-National Geographic Society BioBlitzes is scheduled to take place in Rocky Mountain National Park. This event is being held in a different national park each year leading up to the National Park Service Centennial in 2016. The Bioblitz is a two-day event focusing on a park-wide species inventory and appreciation for biodiversity.

In August, RMNP will explore its biodiversity as hosts of this year's Bioblitz. Teams of experts and volunteers will explore the park's majestic mountains, meadows, lakes, streams, forests and tundra to have as many personal species discoveries as possible. The event will also include a two-day festival open to the public, including information booths, lectures and scientific demonstrations.

In addition to species discovery, Bioblitz will also be a time to discover the many ways biological diversity is important. Many of us find enjoyment in experiencing biodiversity through hiking, birding, photography and other activities. Others value the economic benefits of biodiversity through tourism or the social welfare benefits of discovering a new

species with a pharmaceutical use. However, some of the most important benefits of biodiversity might be the most subtle. Organisms undergo complex interactions with each other and with their abiotic environment including logs, water and rock. Through natural processes such as plant growth, decomposition, and nutrient cycling, biodiversity provides vast ecosystem services. The results of these processes include water purification, clean air, soil fertilization, climate buffering, pollination and erosion prevention. Each time that we brush our teeth or take a breath, we are enjoying the byproducts of complex species interactions and their environments. The first step in understanding how each organism contributes to these ecosystem processes is to understand which organisms are present in the ecosystem. Bioblitz will help us to identify species that may have otherwise gone unnoticed – species that may play a unique role in one of these life-sustaining processes.

Just as the species relationships within ecosystems are complex, measuring biodiversity is also complex. Simply stated, biodiversity is the variety of life forms in an area. In practice, however,

The Bioblitz is a two-day event focusing on a park-wide species inventory and appreciation for biodiversity.

measuring biodiversity is a multifaceted task that incorporates a number of different measurement techniques.

The August Bioblitz in the park will focus on measuring species richness, or the number of different species in an area. To illustrate this point, imagine two riverside sites where your

count will survey plant biodiversity as shown in Figure 1 (animal or insect diversity would be other options to count). As you count species in Site A, you notice that the site is virtually covered with one species of grass, plus four solitary species of wildflowers. Would you call the site diverse? Though an essential component of biodiversity, species richness, alone, does not tell the full story of biodiversity. The abundance or proportion of each species is also an important measure of biodiversity. If your site had equal abundance of each species, you would likely rate the site higher in diversity than the site dominated by one species. This measure of biodiversity is referred to as species evenness. Surveying Site B, you find much greater species evenness. However, Site B has only 3 species of flowers so it is not as great in species richness. Neither of these measures of diversity is 'wrong' and biologists have created algorithms and indices to try to account for both components.

This August, as we count and map new species, we have a great opportunity to learn more about the biological diversity in the park. From bugs to bats, and birds to beavers, each creature plays a role in a complex, functioning ecosystem. Bioblitz will help us learn more about how each of these creatures touches our lives through ecosystem processes and individual enjoyment. Save the date for Bioblitz and join us to discover new species and celebrate the importance of protecting the biodiversity of this extraordinary place.

Apryle Craig is a graduate student at Colorado State University and a part-time biological technician at RMNP. Apryle's graduate work will likely focus on how ungulate browsing affects willow community overall biodiversity. She is interested in how to best assess willow recovery as the elk-vegetation management program continues.

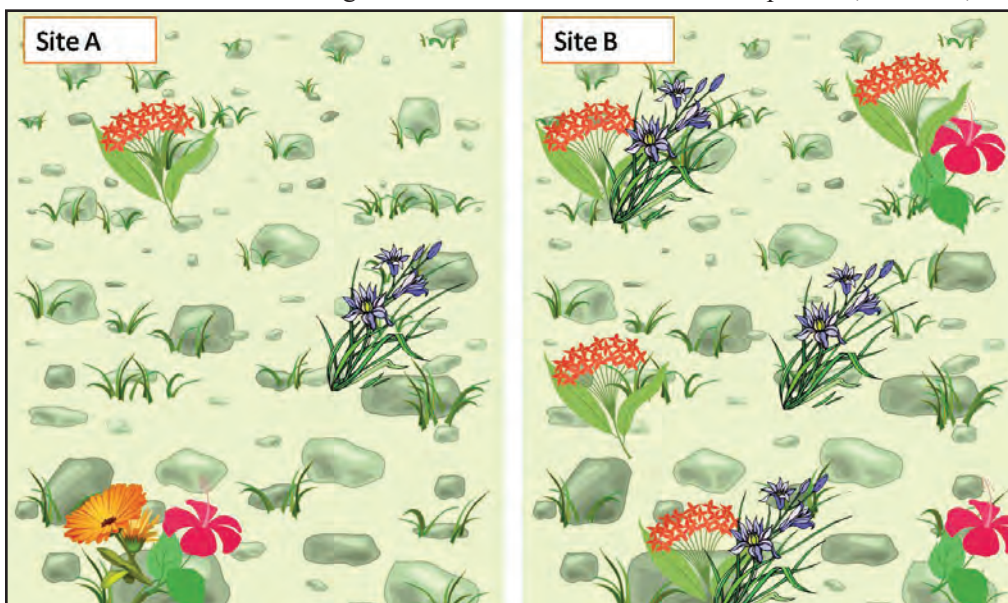


Figure 1: With 4 species of flowers and 1 grass, Site A is greater in species richness. Although Site B only has 3 species of flowers plus the grass, each species that is present is more abundant, making Site B greater in species evenness.

SPRING IN THE ROCKIES!

Spring in the Rockies can be a dramatic highlight not to be missed! Hikers are likely to find deep snow and drifts in the high country, and blooming spring wildflowers in Moraine Park! Come prepared for any weather - this is truly an understatement when it comes to spring weather. And come prepared to see the park with fresh eyes - it's a delightful season in the park!

Join Membership Manager Curtis Carman, and special park guests, for monthly hikes in Rocky Mountain National Park throughout the year!

This free hiking series was designed to give RMNA Members the opportunity to hike to various sites in Rocky Mountain National Park with a group of like-minded individuals while learning more about RMNA, RMNP, and each other. Limited to 15 people per hike, outings will explore a different area in Rocky Mountain National Park each month. Come with your questions about current RMNA projects, park management issues and natural history.

Call Curtis Carman at (970) 586-0108. Or, email him at curtis.carman@rmna.org

Spring Dates:
April 27 - Emerald Lake
May 25- Cub Lake Loop
June 29 - Lake Isabel (Indian Peaks Wilderness)



Here's the Member Hiking group that hiked to Chasm Falls in February, 2012.

(Back left: Mike Maus, Ford Nielsen, Curtis Carman, Karen Kilpatric, Jerry Atkinson, Jeri Lou Maus, Ruth Hess, Ed Waterman; Bottom row: Sue Carrick, Bob Nelson. Not pictured: Lisa Thompson, photographer)

Park Puzzler by RMNA Member Joel Kaplow

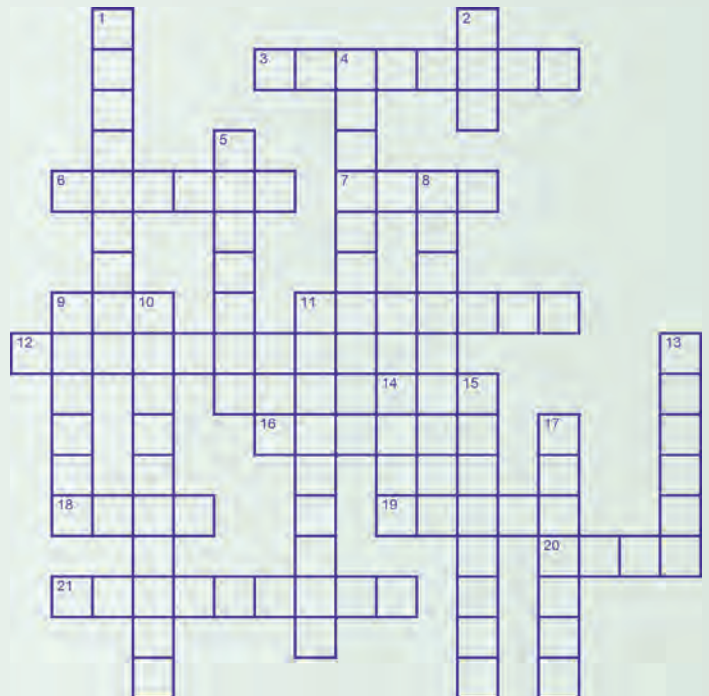
ACROSS

3. This year marks the ___ anniversary of RMNA's Field Seminars program. Congrats!
6. Bordering RMNP to the south, the gorgeous ___ Peaks Wilderness was signed into existence in 1978 during the Carter administration.
7. Roger ___ was RMNP's superintendent from 1921 through 1929, when he then transferred to Yellowstone. His brother Oliver kept the records during the project cited in 11-Across.
11. During two weeks in the summer of 1914, at the behest of the nomenclature committee of the Colorado Mountain Club, two Indian elders from the ___ Tribe toured the area that would become RMNP for the purpose of designating landmarks with the original names they could remember from decades earlier.
12. The park's backcountry campers are now required to use bearproof food ___.
16. John Wesley ___ led the first documented climb of Longs Peak on August 23, 1868, one year before he led the first expedition down the Green and Colorado rivers through the Grand Canyon.
18. Mount Meeker and Longs Peak were referred to by early French fur trappers as *Les Deux Oreilles*, or The Two ___.
19. The park is home to stone walls built more than 5,000 years ago that channeled animals toward hunters waiting in ambush. These structures are known as game ___ systems.
20. On July 15, 1982, the earthen dam at RMNP's ___ Lake gave way resulting in a torrent that took three lives, flooded downtown Estes Park and created the alluvial fan that is now a park attraction.
21. RMNP is home to *Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*, aka the ___ cutthroat trout, Colorado's state fish.

DOWN

1. "Climb the mountains and get their good ___. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees." — John Muir
2. The park's chickaree is also known as the pine squirrel and ___ squirrel.
4. Ptarmigans get around in the snow so well because they have ___ on the bottoms of their feet that act as snowshoes.
5. The park's yellow-bellied ___ are active only 20% of the time, with the other 80% spent hibernating, sleeping and lazing about on rocks in the sun. That's the life!
8. Translated from Arapaho, ___ Ridge, north of Estes Park, is called such due to its bulgy, knobby rock structure.
9. Agnes ___, secretary of Denver's Chamber of Commerce, summited Longs Peak in January, 1925, but froze to death on the way down. Her sister Harriet was

- involved in the project cited in 11-Down eleven years earlier.
10. "In ___ is the preservation of the world." ___ Thoreau
11. RMNP borders the large Granby, Shadow Mountain and Grand lakes. The largest body of water within the park is the comparatively small ___ Lake, named for its shape.
13. Rocky Mountain National Park came into existence on January 26, 1915, with a bill signed by President ___.
14. The park's bruins could become nuisance bears if they were to get hooked on Fritos, Doritos, Cheetos and Tostitos. Since nuisance bears may attack humans and be put down, this catchphrase is posted: "A fed bear is a ___ bear."
15. It is not uncommon for some RMNP visitors to experience some or all of the following: headaches, nausea, shortness of breath, rapid heartbeat, fatigue. These are symptoms of ___ sickness.
17. The broad saddle high up between the Notch on Longs Peak and Mt. Meeker's summit is appropriately called ___ (2 wds.)





Erecting wall panel forms for the upper segment of Bear Lake Road in Phase I.

by RMNP Information Officer Kyle Patterson

Bear Lake Road is one of the most popular scenic roads in Rocky Mountain National Park and provides year-round visitor access to a variety of wonderful recreational opportunities. More than 2 million visitors a year are estimated to drive on Bear Lake Road and last year more than 440,000 riders took advantage of the shuttle buses along the corridor. Beginning on March 5, major construction work on the lower section of the road began and will continue for the next two years.

The construction will take place on Bear Lake Road from the junction of Trail Ridge Road/Highway 36 to the Park & Ride – Glacier Basin Campground intersection, covering 5.1 miles. The work will be similar in scope and impact as the first phase of reconstruction on Bear Lake Road which was completed in 2004, and took place on the upper 4.3 mile section of road.

This major project will involve construction of significant retaining walls to improve safety and drainage. In addition, a 0.9 mile section will be rerouted away from Glacier Creek to prevent impact to wetlands and riparian habitat and reduce costs. Repairs will be made on the Big Thompson Bridge to improve safety. Structural deficiencies will be corrected in the roadway and inadequate parking and pullout design will be improved. This project also will widen the road and improve the road surface to better accommodate park shuttle buses. In addition, safety associated with winter snow removal will be enhanced by the wider road.


As of March 5, park visitors should


Another Summer of Construction in the Park: **PHASE II OF BEAR LAKE ROAD CONSTRUCTION HAS BEGUN**





Panels poured and curing, again, for the upper segment of Bear Lake Road in Phase I.

expect at least one 30-minute delay, Monday through Friday, on the lower section of Bear Lake Road. As the construction proceeds, visitors should expect rough road conditions.

 From May 29, through October 9, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Bear Lake Road, approximately one mile west of Moraine Park Visitor Center to Bear Lake, will be accessible by free shuttle bus only, seven days a week.

 Private vehicles will be allowed both directions prior to 9:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m. Visitors in private vehicles who make the 9:00 a.m. cutoff time will be allowed to travel eastbound throughout the day. All visitors, in private vehicles or shuttle buses, should expect at least two 20-minute delays both west and eastbound through the construction area.

 There will be no construction delays between Park & Ride and Bear Lake.

 There may be night closures during the construction. Night closures will be announced at least two weeks prior to occurring.

Most facilities along Bear Lake Road will be available to the public during the reconstruction project. However, Glacier Basin Campground and the Tuxedo Park picnic area and shuttle stop will be closed.

Numerous pull-off areas may be closed at times during the construction. Moraine Park Visitor Center will be open, however visitors should expect congestion and very limited parking. Visitors should also expect congestion and limited parking at the popular picnic and angler area in lower Moraine Park, north of the Big Thompson River.

During the next two years, visitors who plan to go to the Bear Lake area will have easier access if they plan ahead, hike early or hike late, and carpool. All trailheads along the Bear Lake Corridor, the Park & Ride, Moraine Park Visitor Center and Beaver Meadows Visitor Center have limited parking spaces available. For those visitors who want to access the Bear Lake area between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., the best option will be to park in Estes Park at the parking lot near the Fairgrounds or the Estes Park Visitor Center and take the Hiker Shuttle in to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Rocky Mountain National Park is approaching its Centennial anniversary in 2015. Bear Lake Road was completed in 1928 and until 2003, no significant improvements were made. No major road work has taken place on the lower section for more than 80 years. When this project is complete, just prior to the park's hundredth anniversary, it will conclude more than 47 miles of critical improvements on park roads since 2003.


The Federal Highway Administration awarded a \$28 million contract to American Civil Constructors and is administering this project on behalf of the National Park Service. American Civil Constructors is based in Littleton, Colorado.

This project involves 5.1 miles of road and access to another 4.3 miles. There are 110 miles of road in the park. This project does not include Trail Ridge Road. Information on the Bear Lake Road Reconstruction Project will be available at www.nps.gov/romo, the park's recorded road status line (970) 586-1222 or through the park's Information Office at (970) 586-1206.

HAPPY 50TH ANNIVERSARY TO THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FIELD SEMINARS PROGRAM!



This is an exciting year for the Rocky Mountain Nature Association's Field Seminars program. Founded in 1962, the program turns 50 years old in 2012. To celebrate this bicentennial, RMNA has arranged an enticing selection of new seminars to turn back time and bring some history to life! Past Field Seminars instructors are returning to share their stores of knowledge, and surprise instructors and programs (not listed in the seminar catalog) will be offered throughout the year!

Read more! 

RMNP Bear Lake Shuttle Schedules Summer 2012

Park Shuttle Routes:

The park's three shuttle routes will be modified during the construction. The Bear Lake Route will run between Moraine Park Visitor Center and Bear Lake with stops at Hollowell Park, Park & Ride, Bierstadt Bus Stop, Glacier Gorge Trailhead and Bear Lake. The Moraine Park Route will run between the Moraine Park Visitor Center and the Fern Lake Bus Stop with stops at Moraine Park Campground, Cub Lake Trailhead and Fern Lake Bus Stop. The first bus will depart from the Moraine Park Visitor Center at 7:00 a.m. and the last bus will leave at 7:00 p.m. The last bus of the day will leave Bear Lake and Fern Lake Trailheads at 7:30 p.m. Bear Lake Route buses will run every 15 minutes but may be delayed during periods of road construction. Moraine Park Route buses will run every 20 minutes.

Estes Park - RMNP Routes:

The Hiker Shuttle Route will make stops at the Estes Park Fairgrounds Parking Lot, the Estes Park Visitor Center, the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, and the Moraine Park Visitor Center where passengers will transfer to either the Bear Lake Route or the Moraine Park Route. The first bus will leave the Town of Estes Park Visitor Center at 6:30 a.m. and the last bus will leave the Moraine Park Visitor Center bound for Estes Park at 8:00 p.m. The Hiker Shuttle will run on an hourly schedule early and late in the day; switching to a half hour schedule from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.



Participants will join former RMNA Board President and historian Janet Robertson and Park Ranger Leanne Benton in **Tundra Pioneer: The Life and Legacy of Bettie Willard (July 15)** as they recount the incredible life and stories of the Field Seminars program founder, Bettie Willard. Willard was an avid botanist and tundra plant researcher whose contributions were noted in RMNP, at many universities across the United States and with government environmental efforts of the time. This class will include a trip to explore her still active study plots along Trail Ridge Road, while discovering her dedication and ties to the park and to RMNA.

Professor John Emerick, author of *Rocky Mountain National Park Natural History Handbook*, will return to conduct a three-day course examining the unique life zones of RMNP in **Mountain Ecology: Unique Interactions in Nature (July 13-15)**. Emerick, who was an instructor for RM Field Seminars in the 90's and early 2000's, will explore the various park ecosystems and focus on how plants, animals and their environments connect. This class is a great experience for anyone interested in a comprehensive study of RMNP ecology.

Professor and historian John Pickering will lead **Historic People and Places: History of the Estes Valley and Rocky Mountain National Park (August 15)**. Pickering brings a wealth of knowledge encompassing the history of both the park and of the Estes Valley. His first class on August 8th filled so quickly that he agreed to a second class on August 15th which is now available for registration.

Join us for this historic summer celebrating 50 amazing years! A host of additional programs are also available in 2012, including new art and photography classes, a trip to visit Tatra National Park in Poland, and much, much more. For a complete listing of courses, visit www.rmna.org or call 970-586-3262. We hope to see you this summer!



Photo: Gene Putney

NEWBORN WILDLIFE USUALLY BETTER OFF LEFT ALONE

The Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, formerly the Colorado Division of Wildlife, printed this public awareness article some years back to raise awareness of hands-off practices for newborn wildlife in spring and early summer. This information is relevant wherever you live, but in particular in RMNP and many natural areas where a “let nature take its course” policy is the rule. In Rocky Mountain National Park, please do not handle or approach any wildlife. If you believe a young animal needs attention, such as an injured or dead mother on the road, simply report it to a ranger, visitor center, or the park’s information office, but please leave the creature undisturbed.

COLORADO’S NEWBORN WILDLIFE IS ALL AROUND US DURING THIS TIME OF THE YEAR — PLEASE RESPECT THE BABY ANIMALS.

With spring and early summer comes a rebirth of Colorado’s wildlife. From robins and jays to elk and deer, newborn wildlife can be found throughout the state at this time of the year. The Division of Wildlife (DOW) asks Colorado residents and visitors to please refrain from touching or approaching the newborns, so that they have a chance to thrive in their natural habitat.

“In almost every instance when somebody finds a baby chick, fawn or calf, the best course of action is to leave the newborn animal alone,” said Rick Spowart, district wildlife manager in the Estes Park area. “Most newborn wildlife is typically left alone for long periods of time by their mothers on purpose.”

By design, deer fawns and elk calves are born with natural camouflage and a lack of scent. In the first few days of their lives, the newborns are not mobile enough to travel with their mothers. As a defensive tactic to keep nearby predators away from the newborns’ location, the mothers will often leave the young animals alone for

long periods of time. During this crucial period the mothers will visit the newborns at least twice a day to feed them. After a few days, the fawns and calves are usually strong enough to join their mothers and the herd, where there’s more protection.

“The first few days of a newborn’s life are critical,” Spowart said. “Many people find a calf or fawn left on their own and they think the animal’s been abandoned. That’s typically not the case.”

Spowart asks persons finding a newborn deer, elk or antelope to leave the animal alone for at least 12 hours before calling the DOW – unless they are absolutely sure the parent animal is dead (hit by a car for example). In cases where young animals are orphaned, the DOW will attempt to contact a licensed rehabilitator to help the animal.

Often times, people will find young birds that appear to have fallen from their nests. Sometimes the birds have actually fallen and other times they’re in the process of learning to fly. If the birds can safely be put back in the nest or on a high branch, it’s okay to do so.

One of the best things residents and visitors can do to protect Colorado’s newborn wildlife is to keep their pets

under control. Countless numbers of baby rabbits, squirrels, birds and other wildlife fall prey to domestic dogs and cats every year. Owners of dogs that chase or injure big game animals – including newborns – can be held liable by law for their dog’s actions.

“By nature, dogs and cats are predators. You can’t really blame them for what they do naturally,” said Steve Yamashita, assistant regional manager in Grand Junction. “But you can blame their owners. It’s up to pet owners to contain their animals if they care about local wildlife.”

According to Yamashita, dogs that chase wildlife without actually catching an animal still do much harm, either causing the animal to expend critical energy or running it away from its newborn. However, dogs aren’t the only dangerous pets.

“This time of the year we have all of our young birds hatching out, and they’re easy prey for cats,” he said. “In my neighborhood alone, I’ve witnessed the cat population decimate a covey of quail.”

Keeping your pets restrained or indoors as much as possible will protect newborn wildlife, as will respecting the many seasonal wildlife closures which are in place during this time of the year on various municipal, county, state and federal properties to protect young animals.

“Most newborn wildlife is typically left alone for long periods of time by their mothers on purpose.”

—Rick Spowart, Estes Park District Wildlife Manager

Announcing the Bailey Nonprofit Internship: RMNA Seeks Qualified Applicants

Thanks to a generous gift from the Leslie Fidel Bailey Trust, we will welcome our very first Bailey Nonprofit Intern this summer season. This special work-learning position is closely modeled after our ongoing Olson Fellowship, which allows a student to serve in a national park while exploring careers in environmental education and the nonprofit sectors.

The Bailey Nonprofit Internship will introduce an exceptional college student to the behind-the-scenes business side of a nonprofit and relationships with our affiliated partners. Through this unique work-learning opportunity, RMNA hopes to educate students in nonprofit management by enabling them to contribute to daily tasks and special projects, and to learn from our top-notch professional staff.

The intern will work most closely with the development and membership departments and will assist with administrative tasks, web and social media content development, grant research and writing, donor cultivation, the annual Membership Picnic, and more. This intern also will have the opportunity to work side-by-side with managers in our retail, publications and accounting departments, as well as our Field Seminar Center to understand the role of each division and how each enhances RMNA's ability to achieve our mission to support the park and nurture the public lands stewards of the future.

If you know of a talented student interested in exploring careers in nonprofit management, they can find application information on our web site.

RMNA Volunteer Opportunities

Are you interested in helping RMNA help the park?

RMNA is seeking volunteers to assist with a few specific projects this summer that will help the Development department enormously. Check out these weekly opportunities!

Donor Recognition Wall Caretaker:

Our beautiful and deeply meaningful Donor Recognition Wall in the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center needs a regular caretaker. This is where we highlight our many generous donors, and it needs to be kept in sparkling condition. If you are meticulous and have the time and patience to check the wall, restock brochures, and clean the donor plaques once a week (one hour or so, at your convenience), please contact Julie: julie.klett@rmna.org, 970-586-0108, ext. 11.



Information Kiosk Maintenance:

Looking for a legitimate excuse to travel the park? Help us spread the word about RMNA! We need a reliable person (or two) to clean and restock membership and donation information at all the Visitor Centers each week. This responsibility could be split between the east and west/alpine areas, or one ambitious, adventurous person could take it all on. Days and times are flexible. Contact Julie for more information: julie.klett@rmna.org, 970-586-0108, ext. 11.



We're More Than Just a Pretty Face....
LIKE Us Today on Facebook!



We know you love RMNA, but have you LIKED us yet?
Do you really, really like us?

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Join our Facebook community, a place to read updates on RMNA goings-on, events and projects, current park news, fascinating park facts, stories, special contests and promotions, wildlife sightings, plenty of spectacular photos and more. It's an easy and terrific way to stay in touch, if you're so inclined! So, "Like" us on Facebook today!

www.facebook.com/RockyMountainNature
(or search for: Rocky Mountain Nature Association)



BUY ESTES PARK DUCK RACE TICKETS TO SUPPORT RMNA!

WIN BIG!

WIN BIG!

WIN BIG!

The Estes Park Duck Race is held annually on the first Saturday in May. The 24th Duck Race will be held on May 5th, 2012, and continues a tradition started in 1989 to support the local charities of the Estes Valley.

For many years, RMNA has participated as a local charity. It's easy and a mutually symbiotic way to support the organization.










**Sign up at www.rotaryclubofestespark.org/DuckRace/
Or, call Julie at 970-586-0108 x11**

The Duck Race is simple. You “adopt” little rubber duckies and select one of 65 different Estes Valley charities to benefit from your adoptions. These charities will receive 95% of the monies collected from your adoptions. The more ducks that are adopted for a particular charity, the more money that charity makes.

But that’s not all. Thanks to the generosity of the major sponsors and the local area merchants, there are prizes galore!

If your little ducky is one of the lucky winners as they cross the finish line, you can win all kinds of prizes! You don’t have to be present to win, but if you are in town, there’s lots of music and entertainment to enjoy! Support RMNA today!

Major prizes you can win:

-  MacBook Pro Laptop
-  Sony Bravia 46-inch /1080p / 120Hz/ LCD HDTV
-  Dell Inspiron All-in-One Desktop Computer
-  (2) Apple iPad 2
-  Radio Shack Digital Desktop Scanner
-  Canon Powershot Point And Shoot Digital Camera
-  Roku2 XD 1080p Streaming Internet Player
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-  Olympus Digital Voice Recorder (VN8000PC)

RMNA Member Donates Microsoft Office 2010 to RMNA - Hooray!

Sometimes a gift with huge impact is not cash. Donations of goods and services, or “in-kind” contributions, can be incredibly valuable and can make a world of difference to a nonprofit organization.

Recently, RMNA was approached by a visionary Member, a Microsoft employee, who wanted to help in a very special way. Clark Cyr asked if we could use several copies of Microsoft Office 2010, a gift he could arrange through Microsoft’s matching gifts program. At the time, our staff was working with several different ancient versions of Office, which was frustrating at best, inefficient at worst, and not infrequently the source of barely muffled grouchy grumblings.

Several conversations about our technology and our general needs ensued, and within several months,

Microsoft Office 2010 was installed on all 18 of our administrative staff computers. Delighted and relieved cheers erupted all over the office! What a difference this has made in our everyday work and in our ability to be as productive as possible! And the grumbles have almost entirely disappeared!

So, many thanks to you, Clark Cyr, for making this thoughtful gift possible, and for updating this useful tool to RMNA.

Matching gifts, both cash and in-kind, are available and encouraged by many employers. Check with your company today! And thanks to all of you who already arrange for matching gifts to the Rocky Mountain Nature Association. We appreciate you being a part of our team.



Some of the RMNA staff show their appreciation for the gift of updated software! (From left: Steve Coles, Rachel Balduzzi, Carolyn Kilgore, Curtis Carman, Julie Klett. Not pictured: Mike Hewell, Nancy Wilson, Dave Mohr; Megan Matzen, Judy Heider and Ruth Hess.)

Matching gifts and in-kind donations to RMNA are always greatly appreciated! Consider such things as professional services, computer software and hardware, outdoor gear for the American Conservation Corps and field seminar equipment.



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Sammy and Geraldine Anderson,
 Windsor, MO
 Ida L. Walter, Sedalia, MO



Corrections: A much overdue apology for the omission of the photo credits to Lisa Foster in Jim Detterline's A Wintery Ascent of Longs Peak in the Summer 2011 issue of the RMNA Quarterly. Also, 20 lashes for wrongly attributing the bird sightings in the Winter 2012 Quarterly Nature Notes to Richard Hahn instead of Richard Gilliland. Mea culpa! ~RMNA Quarterly Editor Nancy Wilson.

Quick Fix Science

COULD BEATRICE WILLARD'S ALPINE TUNDRA RESEARCH PLOTS BE DESIGNATED AN HISTORIC SITE?

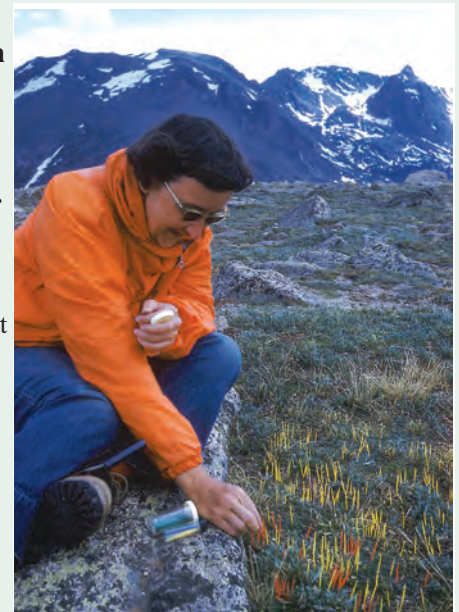
Dr. Beatrice Willard (1925-2003) was a beloved and respected tundra ecologist. In 1959 she established research exclosures (a fence used to keep something out of an area) along Trail Ridge Road at Rock Cut and Forest Canyon Overlook. Both areas showed great signs of human impact: vegetation was destroyed, lichen removed from rocks, and paths worn into sensitive tundra soils. Dr. Willard's dissertation and subsequent scientific journal articles about alpine tundra recovery after human trampling have been cited extensively by scientists. In 1972, Dr. Willard co-authored the seminal book on alpine tundra: *The Land Above the Trees*. At Rocky Mountain National Park, Willard influenced how the park manages its alpine tundra by implementing several of Willard's recommendations from her 40 years of research. Because of her influence in the park, managers wondered if her plots could be designated an historic site.

The Project: Write the story of Dr. Willard's plots and life in their historic context.

Park Ranger Chase Davies and Historian-Ranger Cheri Yost used a variety of sources to analyze Willard's contributions to park history. The pair reviewed copies of Willard's obituaries, speeches, notes from her journals, newspaper articles from around the country, scientific journals, and other primary sources. They also reviewed the notes and photos that Willard donated to the park. Secondary sources ranged from magazine articles and books about women scientists, the history of American ecology, and research in the National Park Service. They also studied research plots in other parks and universities around the country. They constructed a history that placed the plots and Willard's scientific contributions in a local, state, and national context.

The Results: Dr. Willard's plots are important to both our park's and our nation's history. They are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Dr. Willard's work at the plots and the subsequent influence she had over national environmental policy is of great importance to our nation's history. According to ecologist David Cooper, the plots "represent one of the first U.S. efforts incorporating science into long-term land management and planning. These are among the oldest study plots in alpine tundra or mountain environments in the world." They are most likely the oldest permanent alpine tundra plots in the National Park System and have demonstrated the need for careful management of alpine tundra. Dr. Willard's work at the research plots prepared her for public life. She was an important Colorado environmental leader, directing the Thorne Institute near Aspen, counseling Colorado governors, establishing the Colorado School of Mines environmental sciences program, protecting Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, and convincing Bill Coors to create a recyclable aluminum can. She influenced federal environmental policy as well, working to get the oil and mining industries and environmentalists to work together. She was a key advisor to Presidents Nixon and Ford, the first woman to serve on the President's Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ). During her tenure at the White House, she consulted on the design and installation of the Alaska Pipeline. Historian Janet Robertson notes that Willard was a "remarkable woman...a writer, a teacher, a researcher, a superb organizer, and a catalyst for sweeping national and international changes."



Dr. Willard in the 60's marking and counting plants in her research plot along Trail Ridge Road.

RMNA SEEKS SILENT DONATION ITEMS FOR MEMBER PICNIC 2012

PARK PUZZLER ANSWERS



The annual membership picnic will be held August 4, 2012 from 11:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. at the Stanley Park Pavilion in Estes Park. As in past years, there will be a delicious catered lunch with musical entertainment - we also will be holding another exciting silent auction!



Last year's silent auction was the most successful auction ever. Members donated beautiful items to sell. Let's do it again! What a great use for the quality unused or unappreciated items in your closet!

Please send or drop off new or gently used things to make this silent auction even better than last year's - from framed art and pottery to park memorabilia and hiking accessories. All quality donations are welcome.

As a thank you to donors, all donors will be listed on the picnic program and in RMNA's newsletter. Items will be on display throughout the picnic. As a donor, if you're not a Member, you'll be invited to attend the event — you might even find a few bargains of your own! All donations must be received by our membership manager by July 31 for inclusion in the 2012 silent auction. Contact membership manager Curtis Carman at curtis.carman@rmna.org or call (970) 586-0108 for more information.

THANK YOU!



For comments or questions contact:
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www.rmna.org

Non-Profit
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 Estes Park, CO

Angry Mountain bluebird (actually, just wind ruffled...)

Photo: RMNA Member Helen Anderson

NATURE ASSOCIATION NOTES...

On the heels of a colder and blusterier winter than usual, the east side of RMNP has been experiencing warmer and dryer extremes this spring. The west side is also less snowy, melting out earlier than usual....According to RMNP volunteer naturalist **Richard Gilliland**, ongoing dry and warmer than usual conditions are projected for the upcoming season for this region by the National Weather Service. Reports from many states in the most recent issue of *Birding* magazine repeatedly suggested rare and out of normal range bird sightings that appeared to result from a strong La Nina oscillation pattern off the west coast which has affected the Rocky Mountain region and much of the rest of the continental United States for the last year. Birds typically respond to weather far more than humans, so another year of unusual sightings is a good bet. Here in Estes Park, Lake Estes is primarily open water and is currently drawing Common goldeneye ducks in large numbers. In addition, Common ravens are practicing courtship behavior earlier than normal and flocks of Evening grosbeaks, Cedar waxwings and Mountain bluebirds have been seen in the area through much of February, returning earlier to the area than is normal....Colorado River District Systems Specialist **Debbie Mason** reported being treated to the sight of a young pine marten exploring one of the spruce trees outside the Kawuneeche Visitor Center office windows. It appeared to be trying to gain access to the building, repeatedly returning to the low windows in the Backcountry Office area, hopping up onto the window ledge as if it really, really wanted to get in. It also went up to investigate an old robin's nest about 5 feet off the ground in a spruce tree....In mid-January, Debbie caught a flash of motion in her peripheral vision. She turned and spotted a short-tailed weasel at the far side of her yard. Colorado's smallest carnivore, the short-tailed weasel is also known as an ermine and turns completely white in winter except for the black nose, eyes and tail-tip. This bold little hunter stopped, stood up on its back legs and peered directly at her. It then bounced over to a snowmobile parked in the yard, stopped, stood up and checked on her again before bouncing over to the woodpile and disappearing. This particular critter had been making tracks in Debbie's yard all winter, a delight to behold, especially since they eat voles, mice, shrews and other small mammals that can be destructive to human structures and belongings....Estes Park resident **Dean Martinson** spotted a bobcat feeding on the carcass of a mule deer alongside a residential road in Estes Park. Later, he observed the same, or



Rare picture of a coyote hunting and pouncing in action.

by RMNA Member Lyn Ferguson, Estes Park

perhaps another, bobcat in a nearby meadow, slinking through the grasses, appearing to be hunting for mice and voles. It was obviously cowed by the sequential flight of ravens dive bombing the cat as if to announce the predator's presence to the whole neighborhood. He watched as it slowly slunk toward the protection of the nearby trees....RMNA Member **Marcia Tavel** reported the first sighting of Spring beauties in Moraine Park in mid-March....RMNA Member and volunteer **Margaret Guthrie** excitedly reported that local bird rehabilitator Scott Rashid put up the first Northern saw-whet owl box in the Estes Park area in one of the trees at her home in Estes Park. These little owls seem fearless and have been known to happily sit on the palm of a hand. They love deer mice and will eat as many mice as seven cats will eat. Scott is the director of the Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute (*see article on page 4 of this publication*) and will be checking the box from time to time to see if saw-whets use the box to reproduce. The box is visible from the window on the back deck but Margaret is wary of disturbing any potential nesters for fear of frightening them away from their brood....RMNA Member Hike Master **Curtis Carman** noted that on their most recent hike to Chasm Falls there was an abundance of snowshoe hare tracks and a few pine squirrel tracks....Wildlife Biologist **Gary C. Miller** reported that the first sighting of Least chipmunks emerging from hibernation that was reported on March 7th....Good news! Former RMNA Executive Director **Curt Buchholtz** is now working for the National Park Foundation - visit his website at www.curtbuchholtz.com. Congratulations, Curt!.... Spring is in full swing here in the park —don't miss this fleeting season! It's elusive at best, often masked by heavy snow and high winds. But the buds are bursting and the birds are back and the first flowers are braving these unpredictable conditions. Take a look at this awakening world around you - it's truly magical!



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
RMNA MEMBER PICNIC
AUGUST 4, 2012

STANLEY PARK PAVILION, ESTES PARK
11:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.