



## A DIFFERENT VIEW

by Travis Machalek with Colt Weber

Rocky Mountain National Park attracts visitors for a host of reasons. Some visit to view the natural splendor from the comfort of their vehicles, some take in the sights during a short hike, and some head into the backcountry to experience a night (or more) in the woods. I'll admit to a purist streak — my personal belief is that our country's preserved natural areas are usually best experienced as far away from a paved surface as you can get. But I've come to appreciate the spectrum of experiences available to national park visitors from all walks of life.

While there are many different ways for visitors to experience Rocky, I have become personally acquainted with a unique one. My wife, Ashley, and I hike and camp in the park with a good friend of ours who

is deaf/blind (his preferred term). Colt Weber has lived in Estes Park for more than six and a half years and is more in love with Rocky than anyone I know.

When Colt explains why he loves the park, one quickly realizes that his reasons are not at all out of the ordinary. He has always been an avid outdoorsman and did not want to stop the activities he loves when he lost his sight at age 29. Colt deeply appreciates the physical and mental challenges that come with spending time in the mountains. He has climbed five 14ers (Longs Peak, Mount Bierstadt, Mount Sherman, Quandary Peak and Uncompahgre Peak) with another planned soon (Grays Peak), and takes backcountry camping trips on a regular basis. Perhaps the best example of the physical and mental challenges that Colt appreciates is evidenced by a 2017 backcountry trip during which he spent five nights in the

backcountry, two of those alone. What he enjoys most about these experiences are: physically and mentally preparing for the challenge, spending time with friends on the trail and in camp, listening to the sounds of nature (provided they are loud enough), and listening to his friends describe the areas that he visits.

While Colt's motivations and the value he gets from the park are shared by many people, his experience hiking is quite different. As the reader might imagine, the inability to see is a significant challenge when navigating trails full of loose rocks and other debris. Moving slowly and deliberately is a must, and great attention must be paid to navigating trails that many of us are able to traverse without any conscious processing. This focus results in what Colt characterizes as an intimate familiarity with the condi-

*(View, continued on page 12)*

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Dear Friends,

As you probably know, Trail Ridge Road didn't open until June this year, and the Alpine Visitor Center was closed by snow for the season by October 8th. So, perhaps, as a native Arizonan, I can be forgiven for complaining about the shortest summer — ever. On the bright side, winter in Rocky is stunning, and I'm looking forward to trying out my new backcountry skis. I've been lucky to have a few patient friends who are teaching me the ropes of backcountry skiing, smiling and encouraging me even when I move at the pace of the tortoise, or once, so quickly that I accidentally bit off a small chunk of pine tree as I careened off the edge of a small snow bridge creek crossing.

I am lucky to live in a remarkable community that is teeming with individuals, like these local Hidden Valley ski experts, who are willing to share their expertise about the park, the mountains, and the people who have lived here, past and present. So, it's a compliment when on the flip side, I'm asked to share my knowledge about a field that I've worked in for over a decade — that of public lands stewardship and partnerships. This past year, I've engaged with lands managers from around the world who are visiting Rocky Mountain National Park to find out more about what the government, and partners like the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, have learned in more than 100 years of stewarding public lands in this country.

Through our growing relationship with Colorado State University's Center for Protected Area Management, I've had the opportunity to meet with guests ranging (alphabetically) from Brazil to Vietnam. Through other programs, we've also had guests from Germany, Tajikistan and South America. Rocky also has a long-established relationship with Poland's National Parks, supported through the Conservancy's Sister Park fund. While the ecosystems that we are working to protect may vary widely, as well as the public and private frameworks that we are working within, it's fascinating how similar our stewardship challenges are: funding, managing visitation, human-wildlife interactions, climate change, invasive species, engaging diverse stakeholders, recruiting and retaining qualified and diverse staff, working with partners, and more. Our conservation challenges here in the U.S. are not entirely unique, and it's refreshing to hear and share new ideas about how we can all work, both locally and globally, to protect our environment for future generations.

I hope that if you travel this holiday season, either to Rocky or to other places, that you'll take a moment to really look at the lands around you and ponder how you can help to protect and steward these important places. For even in the densest cities it's usually possible to find a little pocket of greenspace. You might consider making a gift to support that place, or offer to pitch in with needed service work, but it might also be as simple as taking a moment to talk to someone about what you've learned from the places you've loved and helped to protect.

Best,

Estee Rivera Murdock

Executive Director



Photo: Tim Argenziano



## Holiday Gift Ideas

From the Rocky Mountain Conservancy



### Puffy RMNP Bighorn Sheep Blanket

This cozy RMNP puffy blanket features an iconic bighorn sheep posing in front of Hallett Peak. 52" x 75". 100% recycled polyester. 2.1 lbs. Price: \$99.00; Member Price: \$84.15



### RMNP Sun-catcher Ornaments

These glass sun-catcher ornaments highlight classic scenes in Rocky: Colorado columbine; a bull elk amidst autumn aspen; and the Colorado River winding through the Kawuneeche Valley toward the Never Summer Mountains. Recycled glass; 2 3/4" x 2 3/4". Price: \$9.99; Member Price: \$8.49



### Junior Ranger National Parks Opoly

Get ready for a Junior Ranger adventure! Travel all over the USA exploring famous national parks and their most iconic animals. Spot growling grizzlies, wild wolves, and more all in their native habitats. As you collect national parks, learn unique facts about each one on the back

of the cards. Just make sure you don't miss the bus or get lost along the way! Price: \$19.99; Member Price: \$16.99

### Longs Peak WPA Poster Jigsaw Puzzle

This 1000-piece puzzle is designed in the historic WPA-poster style, and features the Longs Peak Boulderfield cabin and hikers on their trek toward the summit. Finished dimensions: 17.25" x 26.5". Price: \$19.99; Member Price: \$16.99



### Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park — Then & Now

Text: Jim Pickering; Photographs by Mic Clinger and Derek Fortini  
A photographic extravaganza of more than 500 photographs with text highlighting 140 historic sites and structures, including hotels, ranches and resorts,

tracing the evolution of the Estes Park region from the time of Joel Estes to our own. Softcover. 12"x13"; 409 pp. Price: \$59.95; Member Price: \$50.96



Call 970-586-0108, or order online at [RMConservancy.org](http://RMConservancy.org)

### Cover photo

**Song of the Season**, by Conservancy Member PutneyNatureImages.com, Longmont, CO

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

Please send high-resolution images to [nancy.wilson@RMConservancy.org](mailto:nancy.wilson@RMConservancy.org) by December 1 for publication in the 2020 Winter Quarterly.

Thank You!

## Ask Nancy

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

**On a hike in the park, we noticed an area where trees had been cut, and the surface of the stump was covered with a cross-hatch pattern cut into the wood. What is that about?** In the past, the criss-cross design was used in hopes that it would make the stump rot quicker after felling a tree. At a later time, it was found out that the stump does not rot out any quicker than just leaving a flat cut after felling a tree. The park's trail crews stopped doing the criss-cross in the early 2000s. — *RMNP Trails Program Supervisor Doug Parker.*

### Why are there no ponderosa pine on the west side of the park?

There *are* ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) on the west slope of Rocky Mountain National Park! There are not many, although I am aware of one well-established grove on the ridge north of the East Inlet Trail. Unfortunately, most of the old-growth trees were killed by bark beetles during the epidemic between 2003-2008; many saplings survived, however, and last time I visited the area (approximately five years ago), there were perhaps a few hundred trees not more than six feet (2m) tall. Ponderosa pines are not common on the western slope of Rocky Mountain National Park because it's too wet. Ponderosa prefer arid, sunny slopes with well-drained soils and are intolerant of excessively wet sites. Ponderosa pines are adapted to dry conditions, and compete best in places where they can take advantage of their characteristically deep taproot. With these growing conditions in mind, the East Inlet ridge where I know they grow is aptly suited: it's a dry, rocky, sandy and a sunny south-facing ridgeline. — *RMNP Forest Ecologist Brian Verhulst*

### What is the current health status of the park's bighorn sheep populations?

Pneumonia is always a threat to sheep, and involves a complex interaction typically including lungworms (*Protostrongylus spp.*) and bacteria (*Pasteurella spp.*), combined with other stressors that can result in loss of up to a third of the herd. These pneumonia die-offs seem to affect herds every several decades. While the park does not currently have ongoing research to study bighorn health, bighorn sheep routinely are observed during the summer in the three year-round herds (Eastside/Mummy Range, Never Summer Mountains and Continental Divide) through bighorn surveys in known habitat and in concentration areas, such as mineral licks. To give this some context, previous studies in ~2003-2004 (McClintock and White 2006) showed that *Pasteurella spp.* biovariants that were considered to have the highest disease potential were present in five ewes captured. The study also indicated that population declines were ongoing in the Mummy Range, and that the population had not stabilized from the 1994-1995 winter die-off. An updated population study occurred in 2009 and 2010 (Schoenecker et al. 2015), and at that time it appeared that the population numbers were stable, with even larger herds than were indicated in the McClintock study. Outside of the park, however, there are known disease concerns that are currently under investigation by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. So, all that said, these health issues could happen at any time, but no observations of any health concerns (coughing, sneezing) have been observed and reported in 2019 in Rocky Mountain National Park. — *RMNP Conservation Biologist Mary Kay Watry*

## Conservancy's Volunteer Program in Rocky Dynamic and Growing

by Geoff Elliot

In 2019, the Conservancy's Volunteer Stewardship program supported 21 volunteer projects in Rocky Mountain National Park and the surrounding Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests. Eleven of these projects were open to the public, while the other 10 were in partnership with specific youth or corporate groups.

Across these projects, volunteers supported litter clean-ups, trail maintenance, invasive species removal, native plant restoration, and fire fuels reduction. Many of the public volunteer projects marked special days of service during the year, including Colorado Public Lands Day, National Trails Day, Founders Day, 9/11-National Day of Service and Remembrance, and National Public Lands Day. The projects with corporate and youth groups allowed the Conservancy to connect with new audiences and share the Conservancy's mission and work with future stewards and Colorado-based businesses.

By the end of the season, the Conservancy hosted 345 volunteers who served more than 2,000 hours in total in support of Rocky Mountain National Park and surrounding U.S. Forest Service lands. Thank you to all of those who joined us throughout the year during these Volunteer Stewardship days. YOUR support is GREATLY appreciated and contributed positively to conservation efforts on OUR public lands.



Rocky Mountain Rendezvous event group photo



Greystone Technologies of Boulder completes native plant restoration work in Moraine Park.



Volunteers help to gather slash for fire fuel reduction work in Rocky Mountain National Park.

**All this and more!**

Call Geoff at 970-586-0108 to find out how you can be a part of the Conservancy's volunteer efforts to improve Rocky.



## The Conservancy Welcomes Rocky's New Chief of Interpretation Nancy Holman

My mom says that from the time I could walk I was fascinated by tidepools. Raised in a small town in northwestern Washington State, I grew up with wild places. As a family, we picnicked, camped, hiked, fished, farmed and harvested firewood. My brother, sister and I spent endless hours playing outside in trees, fields, creeks and on beaches. I was a Girl Scout,

and later followed my love of animals into 4H and FFA. I played sports, trained and showed dogs, did lots of public speaking, and emerged as a leader throughout the myriad activities I engaged in. I was a model over-achiever.

I chose a university as much for its location and beautiful campus as its academics. During my time at Western Washington University, I recreated as much as I studied. I learned to ski, mountain bike, rock climb, kayak and more. I earned a degree in marine biology and worked my summers at state parks, county parks, and nature centers. One opportunity led to another, and I landed a coveted seasonal park ranger educator position with North Cascades National Park. Thus began my bumpy, sometimes reluctant, often triumphant, career with the National Park Service.

I've had the opportunity to explore and share the wonder of some of America's most treasured wild places. From the red rock deserts of southern Utah to the mountains of the North Cascades, the beaches and forests of the Pacific Ocean to the sawgrass swamps of southern Florida, the hardwood forests and wetlands of the heartland and the vast tundra and rivers of Alaska — it has been an adventurous ride. I've been lucky to work with some of the best educators and public-lands advocates along the way.

I took a short hiatus from the NPS to attend graduate school and work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at a National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Back in the Northwest, I studied leadership and organizational development, both at a semi-residential academic program and in my new position. Hands-on learning with a cohort, real clients and a new work team provided transformative experiences that continue to shape the way I view community, work and life.

I have always had a great deal of curiosity. I love to explore and learn, whether in my backyard or in a foreign land. I'm gregarious and genuinely love people. Working as a park ranger is practically perfect for me. I am a strong visitor advocate, natural teacher and have a passion for bringing the best out of staff. My entrepreneurial spirit and whole systems perspective are a good match for the juicy challenges that the staff, volunteers, visitors and wild spaces of Rocky Mountain National Park are currently facing. I am happy to be here and excited to serve!

Thanks to everyone who has already extended a warm welcome to me, and hello to the new friends I have yet to meet. It's hard to believe that I have only been here six months — so much has happened already! I've met oodles of staff, volunteers and visitors, hiked miles and miles of park trails, and even participated in a handful of running races, concerts and fun local events. So, although I do miss poking around in tidepools, exploring this place is my current delight.



### Fun Facts About Rocky's New Head of Interp

- 🐾 Nancy loves to write and send postcards, but she doesn't have a social media account.
- 🐾 She won Best Junior Showman at the Seattle Kennel Club with her dog named Hiccups.
- 👩 She makes most of her meals from scratch, although she does cheat with a breadmaker.
- 🐾 Her dad gave her tools every Christmas. Her tool box is extensive and she knows how to use them.
- 👩 Nancy loves to participate in art classes. Something she once painted was fought over at a community fund raiser.

Support education and research programs by donating to the Conservancy's Education Fund

**RMConservancy.org, or call 970-586-0108**

## The RMNP East Side Utility Area: Preserving the Past While Heading for the Future

by Cheri Yost and Carissa Turner

Cultural landscapes — historically significant places that have been affected, influenced, or shaped by human involvement — exist all around us. The National Park Service (NPS) strives to protect these places, but protection doesn't mean that time stops. In fact, the east side Utility Area near the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center is a very dynamic cultural landscape; a place where people have lived and worked for centuries, and will continue to live and work for centuries to come. Ongoing needs to update buildings, rehabilitate utility lines, build new housing, and maintain roads (among other things), have prompted the park to request a much-needed cultural landscape inventory for the Utility Area. Thanks to the financial support of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, this process started this summer!

Parks need places to grow and change, and Rocky's utility area has been a working landscape since the 1920s when the NPS constructed the first housing units. Soon followed Civilian Conservation Corps construction of garages, gas pumps, a barn, and offices. The area underwent another era of development post-World War II, when buildings from the Civilian Conservation Corps camp were moved into the area to increase housing. Again, during Mission 66, the area expanded and evolved. Additions during this time included ranch-style houses and the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, now a National Historic Landmark. Post-Mission 66 changes included more housing, rehabilitation of garages into offices, utility line replacements, and new construction, such as the greenhouse, facilities and fire management offices, and a museum-storage facility.

Many of the buildings in the Utility Area are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (or determined eligible for listing). But it isn't just the buildings and roads that showcase its history — what about the street-lights, culverts, social trails, greenhouse, clotheslines, play



Historic ranger dorm, now McLaren Hall

Photo: NPS

structures, and the amazing view of Longs Peak?

Enter Liz Sargent, an historical landscape architect hired by the Rocky Mountain Conservancy to complete a cultural landscape inventory of the Utility Area. Based out of Charlottesville, Virginia, Liz and her team travelled to Rocky for a few days in late July to begin their research. To start, the team dug into the park's archives to look for old photos, maps, and Superintendent's reports, and reviewed previous studies of the area, including natural and cultural resource reports. The team also spent time in the field taking photos and collecting GIS data to help them examine and understand changes over time.

Over the next few years, Liz and her team will analyze all the cultural landscape features in this approximately 200-acre area. Site visits allow the team to reexamine areas and features that come to light through their research. As part of this project, they will draw maps showing change

over time, creating "snapshots" of what the landscape looked like in key years.

The cultural landscape inventory will do more than just provide succinct documentation of the history of the area. It also will be a valuable tool that helps the park plan for the future while also taking into account the need to preserve important aspects of our past. The document will allow park staff to consult with the State Historic Preservation Office efficiently. The photos and maps collected and created during this project will also serve as educational tools to share Rocky's administrative history in a visual and vibrant way. Thanks to the support of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy and its members, this project will help us determine what makes this place special and help us to manage change for the next 100 years.

*The Rocky Mountain Conservancy is providing \$98,882.50 over three years for this project. The final report will provide guidance to ensure that the Utility Area Historic District is preserved over time.*

*Cheri Yost heads the park's Planning and Park Stewardship program. Carissa Turner is the Science Communication Coordinator for Rocky's Continental Divide Research Learning Center.*

**2020 Field Institute Catalog**  
A smorgasbord of great classes in Rocky Mountain National Park are being planned for next summer! A catalog of Conservancy offerings will be sent mid-winter — stay tuned!

**Learn more at: [RMConservancy.org](https://www.rmconservancy.org)**  
Or call 970-586-0108 for more information

Support historic preservation in the park by donating to the Conservancy at  
**[RMConservancy.org](https://www.rmconservancy.org), or call 970-586-0108**

# Eagle Rock School Students and Pathways to Parks: Learning and Growing in Rocky Mountain National Park

by Ashley Dang

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy supports many programs that provide youth with opportunities to learn, build careers, and grow as individuals at Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). The Pathways to Parks internship program aims to provide students from diverse backgrounds with hands-on experiences working for the National Park Service while supporting ongoing student learning and professional development.

Representing a partnership between RMNP's Continental Divide Research Learning Center (CDRLC) and Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center (ERS), the ten-week Pathways to Parks internship program takes a dynamic approach to career development. Located in Estes Park, Eagle Rock School serves adolescents who are not thriving in their current situations and who are interested in taking control of their lives and learning. ERS students participating in the program spend the first five weeks of their internships volunteering in the park part-time while taking an internship course at ERS. At school, students learn about professionalism and workplace culture; at work, students train in and practice their technical and leadership skills. During the second five weeks of their internships, students live in the park and work full-time in their internship positions, and they continue their discussions about professionalism, career development, and diversity in a National Park Service workplace with RMNP and CDRLC staff.

Since its inception in 2009, the Pathways to Parks program has provided 46 students with unique opportunities to live, learn and grow as professionals at RMNP. This year, the Conservancy partnered with the CDRLC and ERS to facilitate internships through the Pathways to Parks program for five incredible students. Meet 2019 Pathways to Parks interns:



## April Ojeda

My name is April Ojeda and I am 18 years old. I came to Eagle Rock School in May of 2017 and I will be graduating in August of 2019. I am from Los Angeles, California, and I love going to the beach and having sunny winters. I am working at Rocky Mountain National Park on the Vegetation Crew. We work on helping the native plants thrive in their environment. We also work with herbicides to help control invasive species. My favorite thing about the park is breathing in the crisp and clean air. The thing I am most excited about is becoming independent, getting a small taste of being an adult, working, and having responsibilities. My goal for the future is to work at Channel Islands National Park.



## Ra'keim Thompson

My name is Ra'keim Thompson. I was born in Derby, Connecticut, and I am 18 years old. I am currently going to Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center. I've been at ERS for 1 year. I am working with the Trails Crew at Rocky Mountain National Park, fixing bridges, building rock staircases, breaking rocks, chopping trees, shaving trees, and fixing trails for visitors. My favorite thing about the park are the views and the beautiful projects I get to work on. I'm excited for all the responsibility I will have, and can't wait to get back to ERS to tell all the stories about the summer internship. My future goal is to continue this working path every summer.



## Hendrick Paz

My name is Hendrick Paz and I am from Simi Valley, California. I have been at Eagle Rock School for three years, and I will be graduating in early August. I am working at Rocky Mountain National Park on the Custodial Crew. We maintain the restrooms, front country and backcountry vaults in the park, and keep them all stocked for the visitors from around the world. My favorite thing about being in RMNP is hearing the different languages and accents from the visitors. I am most excited about working with the llama packers because I get to hike Longs Peak with some great guys and llamas. After my season with RMNP, I hope/plan to take an Outward Bound semester course and Wilderness First Responder course to further my outdoor skills and knowledge.



## Joy Page

My name is Joyce Page, but I prefer to be called Joy. I am from Lancaster, California and I have been at Eagle Rock School for one year. I am working at Rocky as part of the Vegetation Crew. We work on starting plants in the greenhouse, then planting them in the park. We also work on controlling non-native plants in the park with

herbicide so that the non-native plants don't take over, or stop native plants from growing. My favorite things about the park are the landscapes and the people I work with. I like working at RMNP because it is such a unique experience, and my workers are always helping learn new skills. I am also excited to get a foot in the door for working in outdoor education. My goal for my career is to become an actress, a basketball coach for middle school girls or an outdoor educator for young adults.



## Carter Raymond

My name is Carter Jade Raymond, and I am a senior at Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center. I'm 18 years old, and I am from Waterbury, Vermont. I am working with the Division of Interpretation and Environmental Education at Rocky Mountain National Park. I have been doing Discovery Days and

the Wildland Fire programs at Junior Ranger Headquarters. My favorite thing about RMNP is going to the highest point on Trail Ridge Road and seeing the tiny little plants that have adapted to live in the harsh environment that is the alpine tundra. I am very excited to go roving around this summer, and hopefully see some bighorn sheep! In the future, I hope to pursue outdoor education and wilderness therapy.

# Help Us Protect and Preserve Rocky

## Please make your annual gift today!



**Rocky  
Mountain  
Conservancy**

Please give what you can  
today using the handy  
envelope attached.

Dear Friends,

Imagine – miles of heavily traveled hiking trails in Rocky maintained, native habitats restored, beloved historic structures repaired, and young people learning what it means to become a public lands steward. Each year, your gifts help to make this important work possible. This past year was another productive year of discovery, conservation and stewardship at Rocky Mountain National Park. I'm pleased to share that your generosity has made it possible for the Conservancy to make a significant impact on the park – by improving the park for visitors, and for the living creatures that call the park home. Here are a few highlights:

- Conservation Corps repaired and maintained 140 miles of heavily impacted trails, improved visitor services at campgrounds and preserved 11 beloved historic buildings in Rocky Mountain National Park and adjacent public lands.
- More than \$1 million was allocated to support high-priority projects in Rocky Mountain National Park, such as supporting the reintroduction of an endangered toad to a pristine habitat.
- Campgrounds were improved, including erosion protection at five popular campsites. Additionally, outdated bridges were replaced across wetland areas between Mills Lake and Black Lake in the Glacier Gorge area.
- Added a third education fellowship, allowing for more custom kids' programming and outdoor experiences in the park. New classes added, such as *Tribes and Traditions*, to educate kids about the tribes and traditions that historically occupied Rocky – and that continue to connect back to this wild and scenic place
- Provided funding for Search and Rescue at Rocky, including wilderness education programs to teach outdoor safety to hikers in hopes of preventing unnecessary rescues

Though 2019 was another incredible year at Rocky, there is still more work to be done to steward this precious national treasure. The upcoming year presents exciting new challenges AND opportunities for land protection, stewardship of our beloved park trails, and preservation of valued park resources so they may be enjoyed for years to come.

**Will you make a gift to support the park?  
Please return your gift in the attached envelope today.**

Thank you for being a valued member of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. Your generous gift today is vital to our ability protect, preserve and enhance Rocky Mountain National Park — for everyone.

With gratitude,

Estee Rivera Murdock  
Executive Director

- You also can make a gift online at **RMConservancy.org**



# Make a difference for Rocky in 2020:



## ✓ Best Use

Help the park where support is needed the most. Selecting this option for your donation allows the Rocky Mountain Conservancy flexibility to respond quickly when new or urgent needs arise in the park, including trail restoration, youth education, land protection and historical preservation.



## ✓ Next Generation Fund

Your gift provides kids' learning experiences in the park and in schools, as well as the Junior Ranger Program, park internships, engagement with Native American Tribes and more. It will also provide tuition-free Field Institute classes for kids in the park.



## ✓ Trail Improvement Fund

Rocky's beloved and spectacular trails are always in need of regular repair and maintenance. As more people visit the park each year, the need for sustainable trail management has never been greater. In 2020, we will continue rebuilding the Alluvial Fan trail after a successful bridge construction this year to provide access to hikers of all abilities to this unique feature in Rocky.



## ✓ Conservation Corps

In 2019, the Conservation Corps restored impacted trails, improved campground visitor services, restored native habitats, and preserved historic buildings in Rocky and the surrounding U.S.F.S. lands. With your gift, crews will continue to protect our public lands, improving trails across the park, and near the Alluvial Fan, and improving access trails to Cub Lake.



## ✓ Kawuneeche Visitor Center Exhibits

As a place of discovery and learning, the Kawuneeche Visitor Center plays an important role in the park experience for more than 160,000 visitors each year. Your support will help the Conservancy work with RMNP to redesign KVC's educational exhibits to provide more modern, interactive exhibits for a new generation of park visitors.

*Your contributions at work*

## Conservation Corps Spotlight



*I will forever be grateful to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. It has taught me life lessons that I do not believe I would have been able to obtain anywhere else. Most importantly, I was able to give back to the public lands that have given me so much since I was a kid. It warms my heart to know other people that care so much about these areas and want to spend their time protecting them. The power of hard work, leadership, education, dedication, friendship, and giving radiates through the program.*

— Angelee Rose  
Colorado



Building steps along the Cub Lake Trail

## Two Youthful Crews Thrive in 2019 High School Leadership Program

ground projects and four days of training, education and exploration. During their eight days of work, the crews helped construct a bridge along the Young Gulch Trail, build turnpike along the South Boulder Creek Trail, reroute sections of trail in the Indian Peaks Wilderness, install steps along the Cub Lake Trail, and support native plant restoration projects throughout Rocky Mountain National Park. To complement this on-the-ground stewardship work, high school members learned about Leave No Trace ethics, leadership styles, conservation careers, and the cultural and natural history of the area.

*“Something that I learned is teamwork: having someone with you, helping you, and encouraging you to keep going. Today was very tiring. I wanted to give up, but because of my teammates I didn’t. My*

*body was very weak, but in the end I felt accomplished.” – Aracely (Denver, CO)*  
*“This program has changed me. It’s brought me close to new people. This is an unforgettable trip.” – Yasmin (Denver, CO)*



High School Leadership crew proudly presenting the new turnpike they helped build.

In 2019, the Conservancy welcomed 18 high school students to the High School Leadership Corps to experience twelve days of service projects, environmental education, and outdoor education. These 18 youth came from high schools along Colorado’s Front Range, to learn, live and work in Rocky Mountain National Park and surrounding U.S. Forest Service lands.

The 18 crew members served on two crews, one in June and one in July. Each crew completed eight days of on-the-



## Conservancy Supports Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument Intern

by Jeff Wolin, lead interpreter

In the summer of 2019, The Rocky Mountain Conservancy sponsored a 12-week internship at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument through the Environment for the Americas program. The intern, Karleen Absher, received initial training in interpretation in May and began working at the visitor center desk. Throughout the summer, she also developed and presented interpretive programs for the general public, and worked with Colorado Springs schools to co-lead three weeks of geology/paleontology camp for 4th and 5th grade students.

Of the internship Karleen said, “My favorite part of this internship was co-

leading a geology/paleontology camp for 4th and 5th grade students. The camp was designed to facilitate a relationship between students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and the natural world, through an experience at a National Monument. The camp is comprised of a five-day long program of four curriculum-based activities a day, ranging from guided trail hikes, to learning the rock cycle through hands-on science experiments, and digging for fossils at a privately owned quarry. Throughout this process, we fostered what will hopefully be a long-standing relationship with another Colorado school district and the

hope is that we contributed to a new generation of resource stewards.” The internship greatly expanded the interpretive and education program at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.

The opportunity was also of benefit to the intern Karleen as she said, “This summer has provided me with some wonderful experience and it has given me an opportunity to do what I love for a living. I am so thankful to everyone at Environment for the Americas and at the Rocky Mountain Conservancy who made it possible for me to fulfill this internship.”

## A Season of Success: The 2019 Conservation Corps Report

The 2019 Conservation Corps season has come and gone. In late May, crew members arrived, eager to enjoy their experience and cautiously optimistic about the work ahead. After training, crews entered the field for eight weeks of field work.

Outside of their work in the field, the Conservation Corps crews participated in educational field classes and career



*The Boulder crew performing specialized rock work on the Isabelle Glacier Trail in the Brainard Lake Recreation Area.*

development workshops. By the time they emerged from the backcountry in August, the individuals who arrived had transformed into committed public land stewards, experienced outdoors people, and lifelong friends.

During their eight weeks of on-the-ground work, crews completed projects in Rocky Mountain National Park and the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests. In Rocky, two crews helped to maintain 56 miles of trail, construct and repair backcountry bridges at Jewel Lake and Calypso Cascades, manage 39 acres for invasive plants, restore vegetation to the alpine tundra, and improve Moraine Park and Aspenglen campground facilities.

Beyond the park's boundaries, three crews worked in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests bordering Rocky Mountain National Park. Along the Cache la Poudre River, the Conservation Corps maintained more than 60 miles of trail and contributed to the reopening of the



*Estes Crew with NPS staff at the new bridge constructed this summer near Jewel Lake.*

Young Gulch Trail. On the southern and western borders of Rocky, crews helped construct a wilderness bridge along Cascade Creek, improve trail structures below Isabelle Glacier, build turnpikes along South Boulder Creek, and build new multi-use trails.

Altogether, the Conservation Corps maintained 137 miles of trail, cleared 846 trees from trails, constructed 4 bridges, improved 5 campsites, repaired roofs on two historic buildings, and so more. You should hear the stories they tell!

## SUPPORT THE CONSERVANCY AND RMNP ON COLORADO GIVES DAY, DECEMBER 10

On Tuesday, December 10th, your donation to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy through [www.coloradogives.org](http://www.coloradogives.org) gets an extra boost thanks to help from the \$1 million Incentive Fund from Community First Foundation and FirstBank. This is a great opportunity to stretch your dollars a little farther to help protect and conserve Rocky Mountain National Park!

Last year, the Conservancy raised more than \$50,000 to provide critical support to Rocky Mountain National Park.

### **Schedule Your Donation Early!**

Colorado Gives Day is powered by ColoradoGives.org, a year-round website which

allows you to schedule your donation at any time before December 10th. While your gift will not be processed until December 10th, you can conveniently pledge and schedule your donation early with a credit card.

### **Your Dollars Matched!**

Thanks to Community First Foundation and FirstBank, Colorado Gives Day features a \$1 Million Incentive Fund, one of the largest gives-day incentive funds in the country. Every donation on Colorado Gives Day receives a portion of the Incentive Fund, which increases the value of your gift to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy.



To donate to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy on Colorado Gives Day, go to

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Rocky Mountain Conservancy.

To donate to us on Colorado Gives Day, go to [coloradogives.org](http://coloradogives.org) and search for the Rocky Mountain Conservancy.

(View continued from page 1)

tions of any trail he has hiked. Another challenge is the inevitable bumps, scrapes, and bruises that come when he loses his footing. This required a mental adjustment when Colt first started hiking again after losing his sight. Colt also relays that it is much harder to tell how far he has walked without being able to see the terrain passing. He copes with this by settling into hikes and adopting a pragmatic attitude of 'I'll get there when my friends tell me I'm there'.

One of the most distinct features of our experiences in the park with Colt are the interactions we have with other hikers. Colt generally categorizes these interactions into one of three groups: 1) normal small talk/greetings, (2) unintentional condescension, and (3) questions and concerns about his service (guide) dog, Pete. Many, if not most, of the fellow hikers we pass on the trail offer general greetings or bits of small talk as they pass. The more challenging aspects of Colt's experience comes when usually well-meaning people say things like, "great job," "keep going, you're almost there," or "you are such an inspiration!" He reminds himself that people do not mean to be condescending, but he would much prefer that people take the opportunity to ask about his experience and how they might help people they know with disabilities experience Rocky. By far, the most trying conversations revolve around Pete, since dogs are generally not allowed on trails in the park. However, Pete is a trained service animal and is permitted to accompany Colt. It is frustrating for all of us to have to stop hiking to respond to accusations or questions about Pete. We appreciate that people are looking out for the welfare of the park, but frankly, we



Colt (left), Travis and Pete above Odessa Lake on their way to a backcountry camping site at Spruce Lake.

Photo: Ashley Machalek

would much prefer people take an extra minute to fully assess the situation and recognize that Pete is a service dog.

Certainly, Colt's experience in the park is much different than the average visitor's. What may be less apparent is that my wife and I experience the park differently when hiking or backpacking with Colt as well. The deliberate speed

*"The deliberate speed at which we travel with Colt calls our attention to things that might be lost in a single-minded march to a destination. Sections of trail that could otherwise pass by without much notice suddenly take on a whole new meaning and significance."*

at which we travel with Colt calls our attention to things that might be lost in a single-minded march to a destination. Sections of trail that could otherwise pass by without much notice suddenly take on a whole new meaning and significance. There is less of a hurry

to the day (even when caught in a hailstorm), and the sense of urgency we usually feel to reach a campsite, or the end of the trail, is diminished. Put simply, we enjoy and appreciate the journey as much as the destination.

We also gain a unique perspective of the park when Colt asks for a description of the surroundings or a destination. Viewing beautiful natural features is something that we always took for

granted. The end of our hikes followed a familiar cadence: arrive at the final stop, look at the mountains or meadows or lakes, then leave. When asked by Colt to describe a scene we find ourselves looking with more purpose, focused on providing a vivid enough picture for him to visualize. By virtue of spending more time looking, and looking more intently, we have found that our memories for some of our favorite places and outings in the park are dramatically improved.

I can say with confidence that our time spent exploring Rocky has been greatly enhanced by experiencing it with Colt. I would encourage any visitor to the park (or one of our country's many other wonderful national parks) to reflect on the different ways these unparalleled natural resources can be experienced. Consider slowing down, reflecting and enjoying the little things. Colt and I would also encourage you to talk to friends or relatives with disabilities about experiencing the beautiful natural areas we have access to. Colt does not want to be unique in Rocky Mountain National Park; he wants to be just one of many people with disabilities experiencing what it has to offer.

*Travis Machalek is the Town Administrator for Estes Park. Colt Weber is the Family Programs Specialist for the YMCA of the Rockies.*



# Rocky Mountain Conservancy

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

June 29, 2019 – October 1, 2019

Total gifts: 332 ~ Total donations: \$169,539

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Special note: Our Park Puzzler crossword constructor, Joel Kaplow, is under the weather at this time.

Any other crossword maestros out there willing to take up the baton in the meantime? If so, please contact Nancy Wilson, *Quarterly* editor, at [nancy.wilson@RMConservancy.org](mailto:nancy.wilson@RMConservancy.org).

Thank you!

## Conservancy-funded Seasonal Housing: In-the-field Reporting

by *Carly Adams*

In 2019, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy helped fund two new bunkhouses for seasonal park employees this year, which have the ability to house a total of 16 staff. Bunkhouse 1197 sits under the marvelous Eagle Cliff Mountain on the edge of Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP).



*Behold! The finished bunkhouse in Rocky's east side housing area.*

When I arrived at RMNP for my seasonal appointment this May, I was the very first resident of bunkhouse 1197. It was my first time living in park housing and to be honest, I had heard some displeasing stories about housing in other park service locations before I arrived. To my delight, my new home was brand new and spacious. The kitchen is decked out with two refrigerators, stove tops, microwaves, and sinks. The huge windows throughout the house frame a nice view of Longs Peak, and the outdoor decks provide a relaxing place to soak in the sun.

Within my first week here, six roommates moved in and I quickly learned that all but two of them work for the Conservancy. This is my first season working for Rocky, and I was unfamiliar with the Conservancy's partnership with the park. Living with staff from other divisions and appointments has provided the opportunity to learn from one another, and our differences in employment provide insight into the variety of relationships between the two entities and the broad scope of work capacity.

I also learned what it is like to live next door to the park's pack llamas, discovering firsthand the sounds the animals make and how they behave. By the end of the summer, our house had bonded over the llamas and christened out lodging, "The Llama House!" I never thought I would call a llama my neighbor! Opening our large windows on Wednesday evenings, you can hear the cheers from the nearby sand volleyball court. Warm summer evenings provide the opportunity for park staff to get together for food, friends, and a fun game or two of casual sand volleyball. I enjoyed the easy walk over from my bunkhouse to participate in the festivities.

As one of the first residents of bunkhouse 1197, I can only begin to imagine all of the fun times and learning experiences future seasonal staff will have there. I am thankful to have been provided the opportunity to live in park housing and am especially grateful to have been able to call 1197 and RMNP home this season.

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Busy muskrat at Lily Lake  
Photo: Conservancy member Jim Ward



# Rocky Mountain Conservancy

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## Nature Notes

An early snow on Longs Peak in mid-September made real the idea that winter really is coming to the high country — despite the slow and rainy start to summer 🐾 RMNP Sign Shop seasonals **Matt Haliday** and **Jillian Gericke** were hiking on the Aspen Brook Trail replacing some trail signs in early August when they saw a two-inch garter snake slither across the trail with a pretty large tiger salamander in its mouth. They watched in awe as it swallowed the salamander whole 🐾 In a similarly carnivorous vein, in early June, RMNP Woodcrafter **Cory Johnson** spotted a weasel running across the road in front of him just before Forest Canyon Overlook with a mouse or something like it in its mouth 🐾 Cory also reported in mid-September that they had a bat flitting around the woodshop. They caught it when it landed on a broom, and they were able to carry it outside where it took off and flew away. They got a good look at it and believe it was a long-eared myotis 🐾 RMNP Facility Manager **Danny Basch** noted that two handsome buck deer spent most of a rainy weekend in early August tucked away in front of his woodpile in his backyard in Estes Park — he didn't even see them until he accidentally spooked one. They eventually returned, and on the next day he watched one as it was nodding off — its antlers would tip over as it started to doze off, causing him to wake up before he fell asleep, making Danny appreciate being able to rest his head on a soft pillow without having to always be on high alert for fear of being eaten by a mountain lion 🐾 West side VIP **Beth Honea** reported that fellow VIP **Don Schwarm** and she had finished roving at the Colorado River Trailhead and they'd come back to the parking lot for lunch and to visit with people in the picnic area. Something under one of the parked cars attracted a group of young visitors who were collecting sticks to poke at it. After a discussion about not feeding, approaching, or poking wildlife, Beth took a look. Initially *hoping* thinking it might be a baby sasquatch, she found instead an adult porcupine that was sitting in the shade of the front tire. After half-an-hour, the owners of this shady spot came back, and very carefully (with much help from Don) backed up their truck, and left. The porcupine sat in that same spot for almost a minute. Did it then head to the forest, maybe six feet to the nearest tree? Nope! It walked across two parking spaces and went under another car. After almost two hours of porcupine-sitting and keeping two adjacent parking spots empty on the chance that the spiny creature could self-rescue, they called the park dispatch office. Colorado River District Ranger **Jim Caretti** responded, and he and Don got their own long sticks and scraped them noisily along the asphalt to get the porcupine moving. After a false start during which it ran around one of the car tires, jumped over Don's stick, and looped back under the car, they had it headed for the forest. The porcupine reached a pine tree, climbed about 15 feet up, and sat down on a branch. *<Whew!>* The visitors really enjoyed being part of this animal rescue and it was a great ending to an wonderful day in Rocky 🐾 RMNP Biological Science Technician **Nicholas Bartush** was hiking on the North Inlet Trail in late August when he observed two yearling cow moose eating willow as they ambled up the valley.



Colorado River District VIP **Don Schwarm** and Ranger **Jim Caretti** utilizing specialized wildlife management strategies to best effect. Photo: Conservancy Member **Beth Honea**

One approached a small pine tree that was clearly bleeding sap and began to rub her face up and down the tree. The second cow soon followed suit, and then they proceeded to rub their faces on each other in what appeared to be an attempt to spread their newfound mosquito repellent around their heads and necks. They continued this adorable routine for about five minutes before continuing their journey up the valley 🐾 Per RMNP Conservation Biologist **Mary Kay Watry**, on August 9, Rocky Mountain National Park and Rocky Mountain Conservancy employees successfully released 631 boreal toad tadpoles into a new reintroduction site. The tadpoles were originally collected as eggs on July 2 in the Fay Lakes drainage of the park and transported to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Native Species Hatchery in Alamosa. There they were raised to large tadpoles and then transported to the park on reintroduction day. The boreal toad is the Colorado state amphibian and is also a Colorado endangered species 🐾 Conservancy Development Assistant **Victoria Johnson** witnessed three toddlers (ages 18, 21 and 22 months) toddling more than one mile on the North Inlet Trail. There's some evidence that they may have ventured further but for an enormous bull moose near the trail that foiled the plan 🐾 In mid-August, **Victoria** also spotted a snowshoe hare on the way down the Sandbeach Lake Trail. The hare's feet were white. In August 🐾 In mid-August, on a hike down Trail Ridge Road on the west side from the Alpine Visitor Center, Conservancy Membership Manager **Alexis Arnold** and Bailey Education Fellow **Tommy Egland** came upon a herd of park visitors watching a herd of elk on one side of the road. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to the sightseers, on the other side of the road, Alexis and Tommy saw four moose, two adults, a yearling and a calf, taking a stroll by Poudre Lake 🐾 Alexis also reported seeing a long-tailed weasel on a 19-mile trek in Wild Basin, from Boulder-Grand Pass to down to Lake of Many Winds 🐾 'Tis the elk rut season and visitors are out in force — be sure to plan your trips to the park with care!