Rocky Mountain Conservancy

Quarterly

Winter 2020

Coming of Age in the Wilderness

by Geoff Elliot

In Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Nash details how the concepts of wilderness and nature have changed over the course of history in America. He tracks the impact of the development of modern society on the human relationship with the natural world. His historical journey begins with Native Americans, whose relationship with nature evolved out of necessity and proximity, and it expands into the industrial revolution and early urbanization, wrapping up at the end of the 20th century with the growing influence of technology in daily life.

I recognize that the concept of the "outdoors" and "nature" has taken on different meanings and connotations during different periods throughout my life. As a child growing up in coastal Connecticut, I identified the "outdoors" with the salt marshes, murky harbor waters, and shell-covered beaches my family and I would explore in canoes and kayaks. I was fortunate to grow up along the Indian River, which flowed through the small town of Clinton, Connecticut, draining into the Long Island Sound. We would spend summer evenings and weekends fishing for striped bass, bluefish and shad. I can still feel the mud suck in and release my shoe with each heavy step across the marsh at low tide.

When I began to assert my independence as a high school student and young adult, spending time in nature meant biking through forested neighborhood areas and shoreline communities with friends. These bike rides often included cigars and philosophical discourse on our future careers, relationships, and life goals. I remember these bike rides of adolescence as the first time I began to think of a life outside of the northeast.

Once I left New England for the Rocky Mountains, my relationship with nature shifted to a more traditional concept of "wilderness." I began backpacking in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, fly-fishing the Blackfoot and Bitterroot rivers, and hiking in Glacier National Park in northwest Montana with newfound college roommates and friends. This was the romanticized concept of "nature" as seen in movies, grand and idealized. And it was within this landscape that I decided to shift my professional pursuits from academia to conservation-based education.

Today, I am privileged to be immersed in nature. Whether through my work with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, at home surrounded by U.S. Forest Service lands, or through weekend activities rafting, fishing, and skiing throughout Colorado with my family, the outdoors contributes significantly to my day-to-day life.

With the benefit of hindsight, I have spent a lot of time thinking about how a suburban kid from Connecticut ended up

(**Coming of Age** *continued on page 12*)

INSIDE: Research in Rocky: Ice-Patch Archaeology (See page 8)

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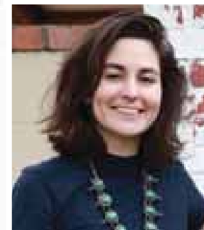

Dear Friends,

As we kick off both a new year and a new decade, we have some exciting accomplishments to celebrate from the past year, and plenty more to come. If you've visited our website in the past year, you may have noticed that it's easier than ever to find the information that you're looking for, whether it's our financial reports that show precisely how your donations were used to help Rocky Mountain National Park, or a registration form for a Field Institute class that's quick and easy to fill out. These improvements not only help make it easier for you to support the park, they also allow Conservancy staff to be more efficient with leveraging your gifts into more programs and projects that steward our public lands.

We are excited to report that thanks to some additional technological improvements in our visitor center Nature Stores this fall, visitors are now being asked at the register if they'd like to "Round-Up for Rocky," bumping up their purchases to the nearest dollar. To our delight, we've found that visitors don't hesitate to participate in the program, with many volunteering to make an even greater donation. These donations, sometimes mere pennies, may seem trivial, but cumulatively, we are optimistic that they will add up to a meaningful gift to Rocky, while giving these visitors a sense of ownership for the park that they have just supported with their spare change.

These same technological improvements are part and parcel with our priority to ensure that your personal information is safer than ever with us. And one thing hasn't changed - we NEVER sell or share your information with other organizations or mailing lists. Rest assured, if you are getting extra junk mail, it's not us! We have recently enhanced our privacy policies, and they are posted on our website for your perusal.

As you come to the final pages of this publication, many of you will find your names, and the names of your friends and family, on the quarterly donor lists. What a gift this is to us, and to Rocky Mountain National Park! Know that your gifts are being used as efficiently as possible, and that we are embracing the latest technologies and best practices to stretch each gift as far as possible, working to bring new donors into our community of park lovers. We are proud to report that the Conservancy was recently awarded the Platinum-level certification with Guidestar, and we received a 100% score on Transparency from Charity Navigator — the highest marks from the premier raters of public nonprofit organizations nationwide.

Cheers to a new decade as we look towards our future together, and cheers for these incredible, wild places that belong to us all.

Best,

Estee

Estee Rivera Murdock
Executive Director

Photo: NPS

Highlights from the Conservancy Nature Stores

Support Rocky with your purchases at Nature Stores in the park and online at RMConservancy.org. Thank you!

YAHTZEE®: National Parks Edition
Adventurers can now pack up their favorite dice game for on-the-go fun! This unique edition of Yahtzee features a custom National Parks dice cup, and dice symbols like a deer, tent, canoe, hiker, pine trees and binoculars. Ages 8+
Price: $16.95;
Member Price: $14.41

Pendleton RMNP Collection Crew Socks
Your favorite National Park stripes in a comfortable, mid-weight cotton blend. Cushioned footbeds for year-round comfort. Cotton/polyester/spandex. Machine wash, warm, inside out; No bleach; Tumble dry low; Imported • Medium: Men's 5-9 / Women's 6-10
Price: 12.50; Member Price: $10.63

RMNP Appliqué Hooded Sweatshirt
This cozy cream-and-gray hooded sweat shirt proclaimes 'Rocky Mountain National Park' across the front in a stylized raised font. • 60% Cotton, 40% polyester
Price: $45.95; Member Price: $39.06

RMNP Women's Night Sky Sweatshirt
This snuggly RMNP sweatshirt depicts a graphic bear constellation in a starry sky.
• Light blue; 55% cotton, 45% polyester
Price: $32.95; Member Price: $28.01

RMNP Night Sky Bear Blanket
This cozy RMNP sweatshirt-fleece blanket features a bear constellation in a dark blue starry sky. Stay warm! • 54" x 80";
80% cotton, 20% polyester
Price: $36.95 Member Price: $31.41

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Cover photo

Magical Rough-legged Hawk, Conservancy Member Putney Nature Images, 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 by March 1 for publication in the 2020 Spring *Quarterly*.

Thank You!

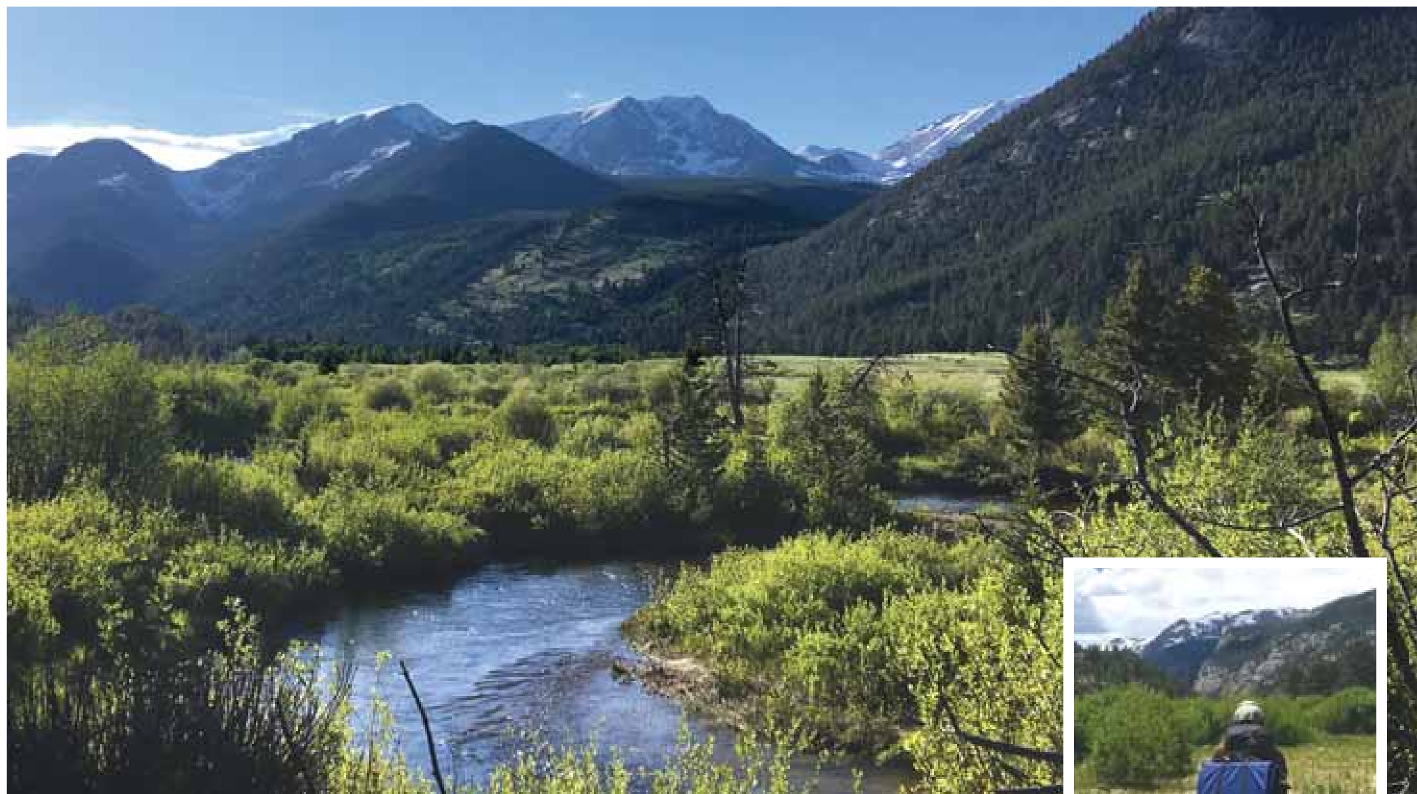
Ask Nancy

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** or write: Nancy Wilson, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, PO Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517.

Do other animals (besides humans) experience menopause? Cessation of the physiological ability to reproduce, i.e. menopause, is, at best, rare in mammals — typically there is a gradual reduction in fertility and reproductive success as the mammal ages, until death, but not the cessation of specific hormones and ovum production as seen in humans. Interestingly, recent findings include evidence that orcas and pilot whales also demonstrate a form of "menopause" that is similar to humans! — *Retired RMNP Wildlife Biologist Gary Miller*

How is this winter's weather (snow, wind and temperature) stacking up against past weather patterns? Are there any definitive climate-related conclusions that can be made based on recent data in the last few years? First, it's important that people understand that short-term data — "the last few years" — helps inform climate science, but cannot be used to extrapolate to definitive climate conclusions (i.e. someone holding up a snowball is NOT proof that the climate is not warming). Long-term data is the foundation of climate science, and establishing "trends" or comparisons from year to year is difficult if one wants to stay statistically correct. A great online place to compare snow load from year to year is *https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/co/snow/products/?cid=nrcs144p2_063323*. There's a timeline graph of that year's snow load expressed as a percentage of a 10-year average based on a collection of SNOTEL sites throughout a selectable Colorado water drainage. It paints a good picture of how much snow was received each year and when. When viewing this data, it's helpful to look at the last day when snow was present. There's a weather station data analysis chart that hangs in a park resource office that looks at the lowest minimum temperature recorded each month from November to March from 1948 – 2009 in Grand Lake. It depicts the frequency of temps below -32 degrees that would normally have the potential to kill pine beetles. There are 25 occurrences between 1948 and 1990, then no occurrences between 1990 and 2009. But, again, this is not considered to be enough time, and in only a single sample location, so even this can't be used as a scientific gauge for interpreting weather patterns or climate change. For the committed, there are programs out there that can mine for 30 years of weather data from accredited RAWS weather stations to make your own charts and do your own analysis. Beyond that, the Park Service's Natural Resource Stewardship/Science Division (part of the Washington office) monitors and interprets long-term national/regional climatological data as it relates to regions that include specific parks. Long story short, a report looking at temperature and precipitation from 1900 — 2012 in a region including Rocky shows these attributes shifting outside an historical range of variability in our area (just as it is throughout our world), in that the frequency, magnitude and severity of extreme weather events — and take your pick of any/all — is increasing. *https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/497480 — Retired RMNP Wildlife Biologist Gary Miller and RMNP Fuels Specialist Doug Watry*

Which RMNP rangers are armed, and do they have the same authority as the police? The armed rangers in the park are generally the patrol staff. They are typically referred to as Protection Rangers, or Law Enforcement Rangers. These are the rangers who drive marked vehicles, and have emergency equipment. Generally, Protection Rangers have the same level of authority within the national parks as a police officer. Protection Rangers have additional duties including search and rescue and emergency medical services. Rocky currently has 15 permanent Protection Rangers, and hires approximately 15-20 additional seasonal Protection Rangers during the summer/fall season. — *RMNP Chief Ranger Mark Pita*



Examining Water (or lack thereof) and its Effect on Willow Population Recovery in Rocky

Written and photographed by 2019 RMNP-Bailey Research Fellow Isabel Shroeter

Trekking through meandering, willow-lined streamside areas frequented by hikers and fishers alike, a 20-pound equipment chamber in hand with a metal air tank strapped to my backpack, I surely got some looks from visitors this summer in Rocky Mountain National Park. This strange sight, and the many ensuing visitor interactions, were made possible by the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, who supported my scientific inquiries in the park this past year.

This summer, it was an absolute pleasure and honor to be the 2019 Rocky Mountain Conservancy's RMNP-Bailey Research Fellow. Each year, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy and the National Park Service co-sponsor a graduate research fellowship with a twofold objective: to promote graduate student-led research in the park, and to strengthen the interface between the public and science conducted in the park. Over the years, the Bailey Research Fellowship has supported a diverse array of scientific pursuits, including: wildlife biology and management, vegetation studies, fire ecology, cultural sciences, archeology, historic structures preservation, geology and history. This year, the fellowship supported my inquiries surrounding riparian (i.e. streamside) plant ecology and the restoration of these dynamic ecosystems.

As I discovered over the course of this summer, many park visitors are already familiar with stream-related issues that managers are tasked with addressing in the park today. Rocky Mountain National Park has ecological parallels to the famous Yellowstone National Park trophic cascade, where the loss of a top predatory carnivore — wolves — led to a spike in the elk population, a subsequent decline in willows due to heavy elk browsing, and eventually, a loss of willow-dependent beavers along streams. Many park visitors have witnessed the trajectory of plants inside of the six-foot tall fences that exclude elk from riparian areas; in places such as Moraine Park, Horseshoe Park, and in the Kawuneeche Valley, these fences have allowed some riparian habitat to dramatically bounce back. Most visitors I encountered, however, were surprised to hear that my main research objective was not to study elk impact directly, but to understand how water was limiting the recovery of willow populations in the park.

Historically, in montane riparian ecosystems such as in RMNP, beaver and riparian plants sustained a mutualistic relationship: beavers benefitted from willows for forage and dam-building materials and, in turn, willows benefitted from the creation of beaver dams, which raise water table levels and increase flooding duration and magnitude. Today, with few beavers present in RMNP, one remaining constraint in the recovery of riparian vegetation is the lack of hydrologic feedbacks driven by beaver-vegetation relationships across the landscape. Experimental studies in Yellowstone National Park suggest that willow-dominated plant communities are more likely to approach recovery targets if they are both enclosed by fencing and also occur next to a dam that alters local hydrology. This work motivated RMNP to begin a pilot project installing a small number of simulated beaver dams in the park to assess whether this approach could improve hydrologic conditions. However, it is not yet known what level of restoration is necessary to re-establish riparian plant communities and support

the renewal of the beaver-willow relationship necessary for long-term sustainability of these ecosystems.

The duration and magnitude of human intervention needed in restoration efforts depends in part upon how much riparian plants depend on the excess water afforded by beaver dams. With the support of the Bailey Research Fellowship, I began investigating plant-water relations in the summer of 2019. Beginning in May, I partnered with the Rocky Mountain Inventory and Monitoring Network and the Elk Vegetation and Management Team to survey long-term monitoring sites spanning a gradient of ecological conditions — ranging from target or "reference" sites with tall willows and recent beaver activity, to managed sites that fence out elk or simulate beaver dams, to degraded sites, such as areas of Moraine Park that have transitioned to a grassland state. Across 17 sites spanning from Wild Basin to the Kawuneeche Valley, we began digging into which plants were there and how they were affected by water limitation.

We will ultimately understand not only how, but why different species are likely to respond to altered hydrology in the park.

With the help of two undergraduate field assistants from Colorado University, Boulder, Jo Kuykendall and Jacob Roberts, I surveyed the plant community, herbivory levels, and hydrology at each site. I estimated the relative cover of each plant species within a 100 m² plot, and tracked how much elk and moose browsing had occurred on woody species such as willows (*Salix* spp.), alder (*Alnus incana* ssp. *tenuifolia*), and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) via the amount of dead, crown dieback, and live-browsed stems. To assess hydrologic conditions, I measured the depth to the groundwater table in the 1–2- meter-deep PVC monitoring wells established for monitoring water-table depth and measured volumetric water content in the top layer of soil.

Within the context of these site characteristics across the reference, managed and degraded systems, I used plant physiological metrics to assess the water status of resident woody species. This involved backpacking out to my sites with a classic piece of equipment — the Scholander pressure chamber — and a compressed tank of nitrogen gas to fill the chamber. This instrument assesses how much pressure is required to force water out of a small branch, and taken at peak temperature and light conditions, it provides an indication of how much water stress a plant is experiencing: more pressure means higher stress. I also used an instrument called a leaf porometer to measure how much water individuals were releasing through the pores on their leaves (i.e. stomata) during photosynthesis. Given the lack of beaver mediated-hydrology at most of my managed and degraded sites, I expected the focal woody species of interest — willows (*Salix* spp.) — to demonstrate a level of water status (water potential) that would be damaging to the hydraulic architecture of these plants.

Preliminary data analysis indicates that willows were actually fairly hydrated across all of my sites, and were not drawing water from the soil very strongly. Instead, these plants appear to be operating in a relatively safe range of water potentials, not passing previously published values for closely related species that have been shown to cause substantial hydraulic failure.

However, these willows did appear to demonstrate some regulation of water loss via their stomata. Because stomatal pores on the leaf surface control both the rate of photosynthesis (higher when open) and water loss (lower when closed), a classic trade-off occurs between how fast a plant can grow and how well a plant can tolerate drought. Willows seem to place on one end of this spectrum, avoiding excessive water loss at the cost of reduced photosynthesis during dry periods. Interestingly, willows at degraded sites demonstrated an increased degree of stomatal regulation, suggesting that water limitation could be one reason why willows in these areas are remaining short, with few branches and leaves, and not reaching recovery targets.

Although the field season and support from the Bailey Fellowship has come to a close this year, further processing of leaf and stem samples in the lab this winter will continue to uncover how these willows may respond to varying hydrologic conditions. In addition, water extracted from the stems of willows and analyzed for certain chemical properties, specifically hydrogen and oxygen stable isotopes, will provide an indication from where these plants are getting their water: deeper groundwater, stream water, rain, snowmelt, or a combination of multiple sources.

By integrating this plant physiology dataset with long-term park survey data, I will be able to work with the National Park Service to assess the status and future trajectories of these riparian ecosystems in a new, more mechanistic way. We will ultimately understand not only how, but why different species are likely to respond to altered hydrology in the park. I am hopeful that these efforts will go a long way in providing the critical information that park managers need to make decisions regarding riparian management — and simulated beaver dam restoration.

I am very grateful for the opportunities that both the Rocky Mountain Conservancy and Rocky Mountain National Park have provided through the Bailey Research Fellowship. This first summer spent out along the iconic streams of Rocky collecting my first round of data was an invaluable experience. I look forward to continuing this avenue of research in RMNP for my dissertation, working with the park, and interfacing with the public along the way.

The main scientific device Isabel used to measure plant water status in the field. This instrument — the Scholander Pressure chamber — is a classic piece of plant physiological equipment. It assesses how much pressure is required to force water out of a small branch, and taken at peak temperature and light conditions, it provides an indication of how much water stress a plant is experiencing — more pressure means higher stress.

Support Rocky's resource management programs by donating to the Conservancy's Greenhouse Endowment
RMConservancy.org, or call 970-586-0108

Hiking in the Wilderness: Practicing Preservation With Every Step

Hiking is a great way to get exercise. Millions of people hit the trails every year to enjoy dayhikes and multiple-day treks in national parks and in other public lands across the country. Understandably, all that traffic through the wilderness takes its toll on the landscape. And while there's no way to avoid some wear-and-tear twhen that many people are hiking, there are things that individual hikers can do to minimize their impact, and help to preserve the natural world. Practice these 5 things whenever you're out hiking, and protect nature with every step!

Photo: NPS/Karen Daugherty

Stay On The Trail

The greatest damage to resource comes from straying off the marked trails. Hiking trails are designed to make hiking safer and to protect park natural resources by reducing unwanted social trails that result in erosion and damage to the plants. But fear not! Great effort is made to place trails in the most efficient and scenic areas. If hiking off-trail is necessary, as in extreme backcountry areas, for example, step on rocks where possible, and spread out across an area to reduce potential trampling.

Pack It In — Pack It Out

You might be surprised at how many hikers think it's acceptable to leave behind food wrappers, bits of food, sandwich bags, and other trash. News Flash: it's not. No one likes to encounter another person's trash in an otherwise pristine environment. Some trails have trash bins at the trailheads so hikers can throw away their trash. Please — never litter on the trail. If you pack it in, pack it out.

Choose Your Picnic Spot Carefully

Some of the front country trails in the park have designated areas where people can enjoy a picnic which protects the area from excessive trampling. When it's time for lunch in the backcountry, look for natural clearings or flat rocks to set up your picnic, and never start fires anywhere except in designated campground areas. And while ground squirrels and chipmunks might pander for a treat, it's against the law to feed them — and human food can and does kill these wild creatures! These little critters can get very aggressive and will harass other visitors to the area as well.

Photo: Marlene Borneman

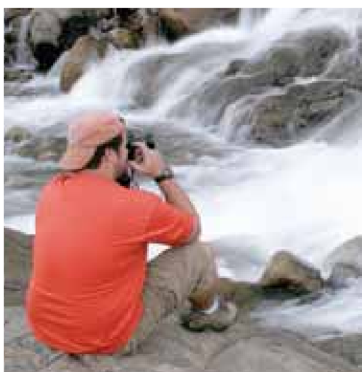


Photo: NPS/Richard Youngblood

Leave What You Find

Picking flowers and leaves or stones, or absconding with other souvenirs found in the park isn't a good idea — in fact, in the national parks, it's not even legal. Rocky is a place for everyone to discover and enjoy — take photos, but leave only footprints.

Keep Dogs Leashed and Off Trails

Hiking with a dog is a lot of fun, and it's great exercise for both you AND your dog. In Rocky, however, dogs are only allowed on park roads — not on any of the trails. (Keep in mind that Old Fall River Road is technically a trail during the summer, but it is a road in the winter!) Luckily, there's a lot of Forest Service land around the park, and it's easy to find beautiful trails nearby that welcome dogs. Please remember: Wherever you are, always keep your dog on a leash so that it doesn't chase animals or annoy other hikers. And please — carry extra bags to clean up and throw your dog's waste properly.

Photo: NPS/Ann Schonlau

Adapted from Personal Injury Help, *an organization dedicated to providing safety information to the public by Rachel Gaffney.*

Support trail improvements in Rocky by donating to the Conservancy Trails Fund
RMConservancy.org, or call 970-586-0108

Conservancy Supports Rocky Museum With Herbarium Documentation Talent

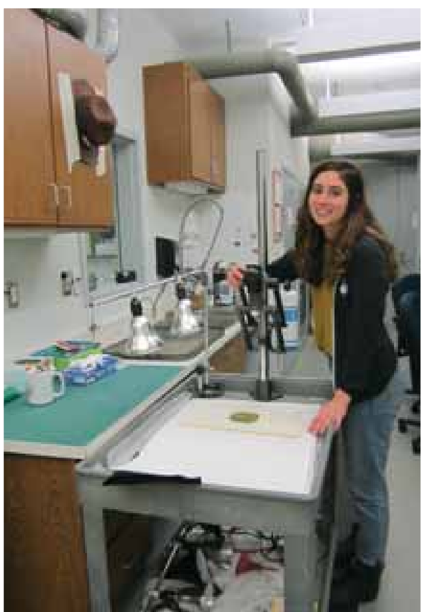
by RMNP Curator Kelly Cahill

The Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) Museum and Archives program, located in the park's east side Utility Area, documents a wide range of resources of the park, from natural resources specimens and archeological and historical objects to park management records and photo albums. This year, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy has partnered with the museum program in innovative ways.

One notable project sponsored by the Conservancy is the photo documentation of park herbarium specimens. Denise Gazawie, summer manager of the RMNP greenhouse, worked in museum collections in 2019 under an agreement with RMNP and the Conservancy. Her work greatly assisted the documentation program for this museum program by photographing the herbarium collections, as well as individual herbarium sheets. Her efforts included photography, photo editing, and adding these photos to museum catalog records. Additional projects included identifying incongruities with names, locations and taxonomy for each sheet.

Denise's work ensures that a large number of goals for the park's herbarium collection are accomplished, including:

- ✿ High-quality digital photographs, with good lighting and high resolution
- ✿ Photographs standardized in format, size and appearance
- ✿ Documentation of the condition of individual specimens in 2019 for a condition assessment, i.e. a snapshot in time
- ✿ Digital images added to the museum catalog records in the Interior Collection Management System (ICMS)
- ✿ Documentation of the physical locations of individual specimens
- ✿ Documentation of the scientific names of individual specimens
- ✿ Identification of data-management errors and gaps, including:
  - ✿ Specimens on loan/not on loan, and location gaps
  - ✿ Taxonomic information, citations in naming conventions
  - ✿ Identifying quantities of specimens needing expert annotation
- ✿ Identification of the extent of needed annotation by a botanist for ICMS
- ✿ Observations about future needs of the herbarium, in coordination with park botanists



Denise Gazawie sets up a photograph for herbarium curation.

Of the 5,288 plant voucher specimens in the park herbarium, Denise photographed 2,250 herbarium sheets and plans to photograph 2,000 more. The remaining specimens are lichens, liverworts and fungi.

Additional collaborative projects with the Conservancy are ongoing and will be completed in 2020, including museum storage enhancements and processing archives. The park and the Conservancy are also funding an art-storage installation in the Museum Research Facility, which will both improve access and protection of Artist-in-Residence photographic, painted, and fabric artworks.

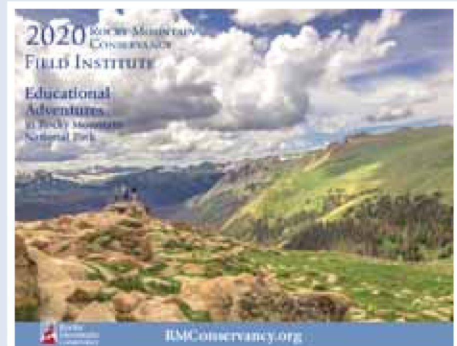
The second project includes processing federal cultural resource management records into park archives. With this effort, an easy-to-use finding aid will be generated, describing records to the folder level. Finding aids support access and standardizes descriptions, help researchers and staff investigate records, and analyze and compose narratives about park resources.

Sample of a finished herbarium sheet

Go to RMConservancy.org to find classes online

Summer is just around the corner, and the Rocky Mountain Conservancy – Field Institute is primed for another season of educational adventures in Rocky Mountain National Park!

Check out these new programs!



2020 Field Institute Catalog

Need a catalog to choose great classes in Rocky Mountain National Park?

Send us an email at: **info@fieldinstitute.org** or call us at 970-586-3262.

An ancient "ice tree" melting out from the smaller ice patch located in the central area of the park.

The Big Melt: Ice Patch Archaeology in Rocky Mountain National Park

by Dr. Jason M. LaBelle, director, Center for Mountain and Plains Archaeology and Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology and Geography, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Colorado, with Kelton A. Meyer

During the past 25 years, scientists have documented the rapid melting of glaciers and ice fields throughout North America using a combination of time-lapse photography and perimeter mapping. This work has taken on great importance, as increasing temperatures has accelerated the pacing of this melt, and made it painfully clear to geoscientists that time is running out to collect data from these paleoclimatic warehouses. Archaeologists are particularly interested in these ice features as they have yielded amazing discoveries around the world, including hunting equipment, clothing, animal remains, and the world famous Ötzi, a frozen mummy from the Italian Alps, dating to 5,300 years before present.

An ice patch studied in the central region of the park, which represents a typical-sized ice patch.

Rocky Mountain National Park contains a small number of mountain glaciers, with well-known examples including Rowe Glacier in the Mummy Range, and Andrews Glacier near Bear Lake. Smaller ice bodies, called ice patches, are also found in the park. These are defined as permanent snow fields, smaller than glaciers and stationery in position. They represent persistent places of late-lying snow, where the summer heat fails to fully melt the standing snow before the first snows of late September and early October. Ice patches tend to be found along north- and east-facing slopes, and in small depressions that seasonally insulate the snow. While some ice patches are found on steep slopes, others are in flatter terrain, and those, in particular, are major attractants to animals utilizing the high country.

The Center for Mountain and Plains Archaeology recently conducted a four-year study of the ice patches of Rocky Mountain National Park, from 2015-2018. During this span, research teams of graduate and undergraduate students backpacked into remote areas of the park to survey 30 ice-patch localities. The goal was to collect baseline data about these ice patches for the park biologists by documenting the size and shape of the patches, and to record what was melting out of the ice. Animal bones and other biological items were anticipated, but we hoped to find artifacts lost by ancient Native American hunters of the high country. It is critical to collect these data now, as biological materials trapped in these ice patches quickly decompose once the ice patches fully melt.

The project was a resounding success. Twenty-seven students and volunteers participated in this work and collectively mapped 329 items (mostly biological) melting from the ice. Twelve radiocarbon dates were processed (now totaling 21 dates for the park's ice patches), providing chronological estimates for the minimum ages of the ice patches.

Quartzite stone flake from the Front Range found in the North Fork of the Thompson River

Several important discoveries were made during this project. For example, an isolated patch of "ice trees" was discovered at a site located west of the Continental Divide Trail and between Otis and Hallett peaks, in the central portion of the park. We documented the ice patch during two trips in 2016 and 2018, mapping the perimeter of the ice patch, as well as the locations of four tree trunks, and many more fragmentary wooden pieces, melting from the ice. These trees are located above the modern-day tree level,

suggesting that environmental conditions were different when these trees were alive — likely warmer but perhaps with different precipitation regimes. We have not radiocarbon dated these particular trees yet (we are seeking additional funding), but archaeologists have dated another group of ice trees in the Mummy Range at the northern edge of the park. These trees, located 145 meters above the modern tree line, date to 4,200 years before present.

Nearly half of the ice patches we surveyed contained animal bones, believed to represent natural deaths of animals in the vicinity of the snow. Commonly identified species include elk, deer, bighorn sheep and even bison. The bison bones were an exciting find, as many people associate bison with the Great Plains or perhaps with mountainous basins like Middle Park or North Park. However, we recovered bison from three different ice patches (and another adjacent ridgeline) and their presence demonstrates ancient bison inhabiting the alpine ecosystem, with radiocarbon dating documenting this use for the last 3,500 years.

Biologists throughout the mountains of North America have observed frequent use of ice patches by elk, caribou and bighorn sheep during the warm summer months. The ice patches provide relief from insects as well as the heat. Archaeologists in the northern Rockies and the Yukon have recovered hunting equipment from many of these ice patches, some dating back 10,000 years ago, and interpreted to represent hunting equipment (arrows, darts) lost in the snow. These tools were probably missed shots, where the arrow missed the animal target and left the shaft lodged deep in the snowbank, inaccessible to the ancient hunter.

Many miles were spent hiking to the ice patches and searching their melt zones for human artifacts, but as mentioned, most contained biological items only. Persistence finally paid off, however, and a palm-sized stone flake was found melting out of an ice patch on one of our last trips to the park. This particular spot, located in the North Fork of the Thompson River, is quite steep and difficult to access. The stone flake is made of a quartzite (metamorphosed sandstone) that comes from the hogbacks of the Front Range, much closer to Boulder/Fort Collins than to the heights of the park. It is not diagnostic to a specific era of the prehistoric Native American past, as it was abandoned with only minimal alteration and is a general-use tool. Yet, it is clearly a human-made item, and one that was carried on an extended trip to an ice patch within the park.

The ice patches of Rocky Mountain National Park have begun to yield their stories. Park biologists now have baseline data on these 30 locations which will enable them to be monitored in the coming decades for additional finds. Our research documents ancient forests, bison traversing the alpine high country, and human hunters venturing to the headwaters of Front Range rivers. None of this work would be possible without the melting of the ice, an ironic benefit of the rapid warming of our planet.

A bison metacarpal (lower leg bone) found melting out of an ice patch in the Mummy Range.

Author acknowledgements: *We would like to thank the field crews for all their efforts on this project, as well as the Continental Divide Research Learning Center for principal project funding, and the Jim and Audrey Benedict Fund for Mountain Archaeology (CSU) for supplemental funding.*

Kudos for Rocky Interpretive Ranger Kathy Brazelton!

On November 12, 2019, Kathy Brazelton, Rocky Mountain National Park's East District Interpreter, was honored by the National Association of Interpretation with the 2019 Thomas Say Award. The award, named after famous naturalist Thomas Say (1787-1834), honors naturalists who have demonstrated the highest accomplishments of the interpretive profession, and who have inspired greater understanding, awareness and stewardship for our natural resources.

Kathy's love of the outdoors began as a child and continued through her college years. She studied forestry and natural resources at Colorado State University, and then went on to earn two masters degrees from Southern Oregon University in education and plant ecology. She began her 30-year career in the National Park Service writing educational curriculum for Redwood National Park in California, and has gone on to work at several other National Park Service sites, including Timpanogos Cave, Great Sand Dunes, and Florissant Fossil Beds. For the last 18 years, Kathy has worked at Rocky Mountain National Park and lived in Estes Park.

Kathy is the consummate naturalist. Her love of the natural world, and those that write and philosophize about it, is imbued in everything that surrounds her. From her car (coated in "Tree Hugger" and "Park Geek" bumper stickers) to her office (covered in quotes by Muir, Mills, Abbey and the like) to her home (with books about everything from ravens to *Ranunculaceae*), Kathy's life is about learning, connecting with, teaching about, and protecting the living things in our world.

More than this, though, Kathy is a resource, an example, and a mentor to those around her. At Rocky, when you have a question about the natural world, you ask Kathy. "What flower is that?" "Ask KB!" "Why is that bird doing that?" "Kathy knows!" "What's the park policy on wildlife management?" "You should ask Kathy!" She delights in exploring and explaining how the natural world works, and how to best interpret it for visitors. She is constantly taking classes to continually increase her knowledge of relevant park and global environmental topics, and she is a persistent voice for the value of naturalist training for park interpreters. Her guidance for her employees ensures that they continue to increase their knowledge of park flora and fauna to better connect park visitors with the natural world they are coming to see.

Enos Mills said "The forests are the flags of Nature. They appeal to all and awaken inspiring universal feelings. Enter the forest and the boundaries of nations are forgotten. It may be that sometime an immortal pine will be the flag of a united and peaceful world." While the forests are the flags of nature, Kathy Brazelton is a passionate and knowledgeable guide to lead us through them.

Support Rocky's NGF education programs at **RMConservancy.org, or call 970-586-0108**

A Unique Partnership

Rocky's Resident Hotshot Crew: An Origins Story

The Hunter Peak Fire near Cody WY on the Shoshone National Forest, 2016

by Shelley Hall

The subject of wildfires is all too familiar to people who live and recreate in the West. The risk of fires is year-round. Even during the winter, the water content and melting rates can dictate how early the next fire season starts. In Rocky, winter provides an excellent opportunity with the perfect conditions for fire mitigation work. Burning slash piles is one of the strategies the park uses for fire mitigation, and there are many standing piles along the road to Bear Lake.

In 2012, Cub Lake experienced one of the biggest and most intense fires in the park's recent history. This fall, I hiked around Cub Lake and observed signs of the fire, and up to Bierstadt Lake which has several large slash piles that are set up for burning. It was interesting to see, almost simultaneously, one area recovering from a fire and another area undergoing mitigation work, both immediately before my interview with Superintendent James Champ of the Alpine Interagency Hotshot Crew (IHC). This agency partners with Rocky Mountain National Park in a symbiotic way that provides fire protection for Rocky during wildfire events, while the park provides a base for the crews that travel to fires throughout the West as needed. I wanted to learn more about hotshot crews and how they operate within a national park.

A quick Hotshot History overview: Organized wildland fire suppression crews of today have their earliest roots in the fire crew teams established in the early 1900s by the U.S. Forest Service. The idea of regional fire suppression crews was adopted and transformed in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) which was established in 1933 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The CCC was a public work-relief program, and a part of Roosevelt's New Deal initiated during the Great Depression. These crews were used for wildfire suppression until 1942 when the CCC was disbanded.

A brief history of today's Interagency Hotshot Crews:

- 1939: The U.S Forest Service established a 40-person fire-suppression crew located on the Siskiyou National Forest in southwestern Oregon.
- 1946: A fire-suppression crew administered by the San Bernardino National Forest was renamed the Del Rosa Hotshots.
- 1948: The U.S. Forest Service established its own hotshot crew. The Los Padres Hotshots were organized in Santa Barbara, California.
- 1961: The Interregional Fire Suppression Crew program (IRFS) established six 30-person "IR" (U.S. Forest Service Inter-Regional) crews across the West.
- 1969: 14 more IR crews were established.
- 1982: IR crews adopted the title of Interagency Hotshot Crew (IHC) starting with the California crews.

The first National Park Service Hotshot Crew Program was initiated in 1981 after the 1978 Ouzel Fire in Rocky Mountain National Park. It was intended to address the National Park Service need to have dedicated professional hand crews available, as IR/Hotshot crews from the U.S. Forest Service were not always available. It would also provide much-needed crews for the available pool of national firefighting resources. National Park Service (NPS) Fire Program Manager Dave Butts and NPS Fire Management Specialist Bob Sellers were instrumental in modernizing the NPS fire management program which included the NPS Hotshot Crew Program.

Three Park Service crews were established in 1981, identified as Arrowhead 1 (based in Arizona), Arrowhead 2 (based in California), and Arrowhead 3 (based in Wyoming). In 1982, the Arrowhead 1 crew changed its name to Alpine Hotshots to more closely align with the snow-capped mountains in the NPS arrowhead logo. In 1984, the Arrowhead 3 crew in Wyoming was disbanded.

Here's how the first superintendent of the Alpine IHC, Jon Larson, recalls the hubbub around the name change:

Confusion resulted from originally naming the crews Arrowhead 1, 2 and 3, largely because organized hand-crews at that time were designated as category 1, 2 or 3 (today crews are categorized as type-1 or type-2). In 1982, Sellers told the three crew superintendents to choose names based upon elements found in the NPS arrowhead logo. "Cook aced me out on Arrowhead," said Larson. "Then the name 'mountaineers' was brought up, and I immediately said 'no way.' We didn't want anyone calling us the mouseketeers." As a result, Arrowhead 1 Interregional Crew became the Alpine Hotshots in 1982.

Jon Larson was a fire operations specialist at the Boise Interagency Fire Center (BIFC) in 1981 when the National Park Service was looking to hire three

interregional crew superintendents. The original position was listed as temporary, and Jon already had a career appointment job, but he took the chance that this new position would eventually lead to the same employment status. Jon had worked fires with Bob Sellers and had just finished project work for him the previous winter, so he already knew one of the founders of the program.

In the first year, Larson remembers how it was necessary to gain credibility with the long-established Forest Service Hotshot crews through cooperation and hard work. He was also aware that he needed to establish good working relationships within the national parks themselves, since the new hotshot crew concept had originated on a national level, and individual parks were still buying in to the idea.

Larson's first crew (Arrowhead 1, later renamed Alpine Hotshots) consisted of himself, three squad bosses and 16 crew members. They started in the Grand Canyon knowing that they'd be moving around as needed as the fire season progressed. Fire training opportunities were limited in the Grand Canyon because of tree density, so Larson and his crew drove to the Coconino National Forest of Arizona to practice handline construction drills and chainsaw techniques.

In June of 1981, Arrowhead 1 Interregional Crew responded to its first assignment in Florida's Big Cypress National Preserve. They fought two other fires in that area that season and kept busy with park projects in between. This ultimately led managers at Big Cypress to start relying on this crew for a lot of other projects, leaving the preserve disappointed when the crew had to return to Grand Canyon National Park.

The Park Service was new to the idea of hotshot crews and how best to utilize them, so Bob Sellers worked with the Service to coordinate crews for projects around many different parks. After watching the crews work, the Park Service realized the importance of keeping the crew members together as a whole team, all the time, to optimize productivity on fires and with park projects.

The Hotshot crew uniforms were another element to be addressed. The Park Service has strict requirements for their employees, but there were no standards for fire crew uniforms. Bob Sellers got a waiver so they could wear flame-resistant Nomex fire pants and crew t-shirts, a uniform eventually accepted as the NPS 'Class B' Uniform. Standard NPS uniform shirts and hats were still worn on special occasions.

The Badger Creek Fire on the Medicine Bow/ Routt National Forest in Wyoming, 2018.

Jim "JP" Mattingly was on the second crew that worked for Larson starting in 1982. He left the U.S. Forest Service Prescott Hotshot crew and worked for the Bison Hotshot Crew in 1983-84. He was significantly involved in selecting the park that would permanently house the Alpine Hotshot crew. There were about nine proposals that were submitted, with Rocky Mountain National Park the only one to propose new housing construction. This made them the top choice.

The Coffee Fire in California on the Shasta Trinity National Forest, 2014

The Alpine IHC crew found a permanent home at RMNP in 1993 after many years working at other locations. Permanent housing finally brought a level of continuity and a more settled feeling to the crew. Initially, there was some concern on the part of some of the park management staff because the crew came with a separate budget authorization from the NPS Fire and Aviation Management Office in Boise (the national office). But once that hurdle was jumped, the overall support for the hotshot crew was positive, and the crew reciprocated by providing significant additional labor for park projects when they weren't assigned to fires.

I've been hiking in the park since 1973, and I have a lot of respect for the fire skills that are needed to manage such a large area, and in some incredibly challenging terrain. And as a mountain homeowner, I can attest to the fact that one can never really quit working on fire mitigation. These Hotshot crews deserve many thanks for keeping RMNP safe and accessible.

For more details about the Hotshot program history, and about specific work done around Rocky Mountain National Park, go to *www.nps.gov/romo/learn/management/why_alpine.htm*

With many thanks to the current Alpine IHC Superintendent James Champ, Jim (JP) Mattingly, and Dave Niemi, all of whom fed me stories and historical information for this article.

Shelley Hall is a resident of Vail and an enthusiastic supporter of the work the Conservancy, park employees and volunteers do.

Congratulations Are In Order!

Rocky Mountain National Park's Distance Learning Education Program Receives Two Awards

Students at Solvay High School in New York interact with Distance Learning Eudcation Ranger Kathryn Ferguson on screen. *Photo: NPS*

by RMNP Education Program Manager Katie Phillips

Distance and bus transportation funding shortages no longer keep schools from "visiting" their national park. Through utilizing basic video conferencing platforms such as Google, Zoom and Skype, students across the country (and the world!) get a chance to sit down with a ranger to explore various topics relevant to Rocky Mountain National Park.

These curriculum-based programs include topics that challenge students to investigate the four ecosystems of Rocky, research ranger career opportunities, and delve into the fascinating world of winter. All that's required of a school is to have access to a webcam, projector, and a computer with a good internet connection.

These distance-learning programs have already reached more than 3,000 learners in locations across the country and the world, including Vermont, Colorado, California, Georgia, Wisconsin, Montana, British Columbia, Puerto Rico and China. None of these experiences would be possible without the support of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Next Generation Fund (NGF). For it's the Education Technicians and Interns funded by NGF that assist with planning and presenting these award-winning programs.

Distance-learning programs are a fresh, fun and interactive take on the traditional classroom setting. Through this venue, Rocky rangers challenge students to get up and move while they learn, collaborate with their peers, and encourage students to discuss current global issues together.

Through this venue, Rocky rangers challenge students to get up and move while they learn, collaborate with their peers, and encourage students to discuss current global issues together.

To further their personal experience, at the end of every program students are given the opportunity to ask the rangers questions, a segment rangers find incredibly valuable to the students. Distance Learning Education Ranger Kathryn Ferguson has this to say:

"Hands down my favorite portion of every program is the question-and-answer time at the end. Not only are they being pushed to think outside the box and make connections, they're being given an often rare opportunity to ask a ranger their question live! You never know what questions you'll get — which really keeps me on my toes!"

Rocky's Education program is proud to have developed this new way to connect with students that otherwise may never have had the opportunity to visit Rocky Mountain National Park. And others most definitively agree. Recently, Rocky's Distance Learning Education Program was awarded two prestigious awards — the CILC Pinnacle Award and the 2018 CAEE Innovative Environmental Education Program Award.

The Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC) Pinnacle Award recognizes CILC content providers from around the world who have received outstanding ratings on program evaluations completed by educators and activity directors. This year's winners represent museums, science centers, art galleries, zoos, aquariums, musicians and authors. All have delivered remarkable quality educational content and demonstrated exceptional skill with program delivery.

The Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE) has more than 850 members across the state in classrooms, nonprofits, nature centers, government agencies, higher education, businesses, and more — all working to advance environmental education. Each year, individuals and organizations from around the state of Colorado are recognized and honored for their hard work and dedication in the field of environmental education. Awards honor and celebrate environmental education programs, the lifetime accomplishments of an individual in the field of environmental education, and retiring environmental educators.

Ultimately, Rocky's education programs are successful when they are connecting future stewards to their national parks. Being able to connect with a park ranger across the country with such ease is an exciting step toward achieving this goal. Rocky's education program staff is proud to be on the cutting edge of creating tomorrow's park stewards!

Visit the park's website at *www.nps.gov/romo/learn/education/learning/index.htm* to learn more about the specific distance-learning programs that the park is offering.

Teachers from across the country rave about the level of engagement presented through the screen by rangers:

"We loved this program and will definitely do it again! One student described the experience as "phenomenal"! (The ranger) was able to keep my students focused for an hour!!! That's not easily done."
-2nd grade teacher, South Carolina.

"I absolutely loved having the opportunity for my students to virtually tour Rocky Mountain National Park. Your program added in more movement than I could have imagined, and the students were in awe of some of the footage. The students were engaged in the tour while speaking with one of the park's official, very knowledgeable rangers, and the videos helped created connections and feelings like we were in the park. Thank you very much for such a great opportunity!"
- 3rd grade teacher, Colorado

(**Coming of Age** *continued from page 1)*

working in and living adjacent to Rocky Mountain National Park. How did I develop this relationship with the outdoors? As a graduate student at Colorado State University (CSU), I investigated this very question during my project work with the Conservancy: How do we connect people with the outdoors and foster an environmental ethic in the process?

My graduate work at CSU allowed me to use evaluations from the Conservation Corps and High School Leadership Corps programs to try and address this question. From a research perspective, the two programs served as great case studies. Both hosted diverse groups of youth and young adults in immersive nature-based programming. Both are rooted in developing the next generation of public land stewards. And from a programmatic perspective, understanding what aspects of the programs helped connect people to the outdoors could only make the work more effective.

To improve the evaluations, I dove deep into the field of “conservation psychology.” I read study after study about how academics researched the topic, what other programs have done, and what conclusions had already been reached. The more research I reviewed, the fewer answers I found. Like most things, the answer is not simple. There is not one recipe to help connect people with the outdoors. It is not enough to simply place someone outside, nor to merely educate them about the natural world. For someone to truly connect with the outdoors, it requires a multitude of less tangible ingredients.

In the end, the program evaluations were expanded to ask several questions related to conservation psychology. The Conservancy now tracks changes in people’s connections to nature, interest in outdoor recreation, understanding of public land stewardship, and intent to continue conservation-based activities. Each of these inquiries includes a qualitative response soliciting for open-ended responses to understand why a change has or hasn’t occurred.

In the three years since these evaluations have been in place, the Conservancy staff has been fortunate to learn that we are, in fact, moving the needle. Youth and young adults leave the programs with an increased connection to nature, a developed interest in outdoor recreation, a greater understanding of public land stewardship, and a refreshed desire to continue conservation-based activities. Some of the reasons behind these changes seem obvious. For example, members cite increased time outside, more understanding of human impact, and an increased awareness of public land agencies.

Enjoying the summit of Fairchild Mountain while attempting the Mummy Kill (that is, summiting all the Mummy Range peaks in one go) on July 4, 2014.

Less obvious among the results is the link between members’ relationships with nature and their social connection with others. Time and time again, crew members cited the social setting of the program as a major determinant of how their relationship with nature evolved. Responses included such comments as “being surrounded by like-minded individuals” and “being pushed to try new outdoor activities with my crew.”

Stepping away from my work at the Conservancy, I can now see that this “social factor” was also crucial in how my relationship with nature changed over time, morphing as my social circle evolved. I would even go so far as to say that my relationship with other people defined my relationship with the outdoors. I can clearly see that my relationship with nature has consistently evolved from my immediate reality. And at some fundamental level, I find that I am resistant to this admission. I want to claim that my relationship with nature has always been my own. I want to identify with iconic naturalists and philosophers like Henry David Thoreau and John Muir, who prioritized solitude in the natural world.

Pragmatically, however, this is what it is. Humans are social creatures. We thrive on the communities and networks we exist within. Everyone defines their own social circle differently, but we all have one, and the people around us contribute to who we are. For me, my family connected me with fly-fishing, a childhood friend gave me a longing for the West, and college roommates brought me into the mountains. Without these social incentives, I’d likely be living in a suburban New England with very limited awareness of the natural world, public lands, and conservation. I am thankful for these coming-of-age moments and grateful to those who guided me along the way.

Geoff sharing his passion for rivers with stepson Leo on a rafting trip down the Colorado River.

Nature. Pass it on.

Geoff Elliot is the Conservation Director at the Rocky Mountain Conservancy.

Rocky Mountain Conservancy

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Colorado Gives Day Gives the Conservancy a Huge Boost!

On Colorado Gives Day, December 10, 2019, the Conservancy capped off one the single biggest fundraising days in the Conservancy's history. In all, more than 400 online donors gave through ColoradoGives.org. Colorado Gives Day is an annual giving holiday in Colorado that provides a matching incentive for donors to give to their favorite nonprofits. 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 will recieve a portion of the Incentive Fund, which increases the value of your gift to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. The Conservancy Team would like to thank those who participated in Colorado Gives Day, and our year-end annual campaign as well. Your support helps to protect and conserve Rocky, refurbish hiking trails, and support a variety of programs to improve the visitor experience.

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Catherine McCallum, Fort Collins, CO:
In honor of Jim McCallum
Douglas McCallum and Diana Neff, Longmont, CO
Ron and Andrunette McCollum, Parker, TX

Barbara McCornack, Fort Collins, CO
Margaret L. McCranie, Irvine, CA
Barbara McDonnell, Aurora, CO
Kathi McGee, Boulder, CO
Michael McGettigan, Highlands Ranch, CO
Michal McGinnis, Greeley, CO
Michael McGrath, Cape Girardeau, MO:
In honor of Stella J. McGrath
Regina McGuire, Springfield, IL:
In memory of Dorothy McGuire
Raymond McMahon, Omaha, NE:
In memory of Margaret McMahon
Mary McMahon, Parker, CO:
In memory of Ryan Butner
William McManus, Spring Branch, TX:
In memory of Emmett Landry
Ronnie and Charla McManus, Hurst, TX:
In memory of Madeline Framson
Nancy and Stewart McNab, Tabernash, CO
Champney and Judi McNair, Granby, CO
Ken and Kathy McNaught, Timnath, CO
Randall and Pat McNeely, French Lick, IN:
In memory of Glen Campbell
Randall and Pat McNeely, French Lick, IN:
In memory of Jan Baringer
Carla and Monte Mead, Wheat Ridge, CO
Marla Meehl, Boulder, CO:
In honor of Mark Sparn
Frank and Paula Megorden, Colorado Springs, CO:
In memory of E. Melvin Kessinger
Cheryl and Gregory Meier, Chesterfield, MO
Margaret Meister, Estes Park, CO
Lisa Meltzer, Denver, CO
Joe and Connie Melvin, Niwot, CO
Nicholas Melzer, Evergreen, CO
Roberto Mendoza, Denver, CO
James and Deirdre Mercurio, Houston, TX
Kathy G. Merlo, Loveland, CO
Mackenzie Merrill-Wick, Loveland, CO
Michael Merriman, Windsor, CO
Kevin Messerschmidt and Denise Jurgens, Carbondale, CO
Betty and Kent Meyer, Estes Park, CO
William and Lynn Meyerchak, Highlands Ranch, CO
Cathy Michael, Red Hook, NY:
In honor of Pam Prairie and Bill Premo
Rhonda Mickelson, Estes Park, CO
Elizabeth Middleton and Roger Reese, Monument, CO
Colin Mielke, Highlands Ranch, CO
Alan and Suzanne Miller, Estes Park, CO:
In honor of Linda and Fred Kelsey
Liz Miller and Lindy Eakin, Lawrence, KS
Mary and Charles Miller, Landenberg, PA
Larry Mills, Florissant, MO
David and Joy Mohr, Estes Park, CO
Philip and Susan Moldenhauer, Tulsa, OK
Keren Monarrez, Vail, CO
Julie Montgomery, Littleton, CO
Gary and Gail Moon, Fishers, IN
Jean L. Mooney, Loveland, CO:
In memory of Ray Longserre
Chris and Cindy Moore, Denver, CO:
In memory of KO & Anna Moore
Merle and Patricia Moore, Estes Park, CO
Fred Moore, Boulder, CO
Jerry S. Moore, Estes Park, CO
Lynda K. Moore, Loveland, CO
Marilyn Moore, Palm Beach Gardens, FL
Charles and Shirley Morgan, Platteville, CO
Morgan Stanley Smith Barney/Brian and Carol Quinn, Chattanooga, TN
Morgan Stanley Smith Barney/Laird and Carol Ingham, Hollywood Park, TX
Kerry Morimoto, Denver, CO:
In honor of Douglass Dalton and Michel Pilon
Kerry Morimoto, Denver, CO:
In honor of Linda Goff
William and Rosemary Morris, Thornton, CO
Terri and Otis Morrow, Arkansas City, KS
Maxwell and Jeanne Morse, Lakewood, CO
Richard and Mary Ann Moseley, Boulder, CO
Jeanne and Mark Mosher, Louisville, CO
Michael and Mary Motyka, Chicago, IL
James and Connie Mueller, Oelwein, IA
Kristin Mueller, Brooklyn, NY
Marc Mueller, Fort Collins, CO
Luke and Susan Mullen, Lafayette, CO
Tanya and Eric Mullins, Cincinnati, OH
Jim Mundell, Golden, CO
Erik and Estee Rivera Murdock, Estes Park, CO
Carol Murin, Longmont, CO
Leila and James Murphy, Centennial, CO
Marilyn Murphy and Robert Medlock, Fort Collins, CO
Katherine and Stephen Murphy, Atlanta, GA
Martha Mustard, Golden, CO
Kathryn Mutz, Boulder, CO
Valerie and David Myers, Littleton, CO
James and Jeanne Mytton, Broomfield, CO
Ted and Kathy Nace, The Villages, FL
Naktenis Family Foundation, Niantic, CT
Ray R. Nassimbene, Denver, CO
Carol and Paull Nation, Denver, CO
Edward and Sara Naureckas, Oak Park, IL
Betty Neale, Estes Park, CO
Lise Nelson, Denver, CO:
In memory of Laurence Nelson
Audrey Nelson, Boulder, CO
Cynthia Nelson, Loveland, CO
Dean and Diane Nelson, Loveland, CO
Jane Adams Nelson, Denver, CO
John and Janet Nelson, Longmont, CO
Wendy Nelson, Boulder, CO
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New Roots Real Estate, Estes Park, CO
Robert and Amy Newtson, Marana, AZ
Barbara and Thomas Nichol, Estes Park, CO
Ford and Merry Nielsen, Estes Park, CO
Lori Nielsen, Blair, NE
Lynne Niemeyer, Loveland, CO
Michael and Leah Noble, Westminster, CO
Les and Susan Noe, Boulder, CO
Kevin O'Neill, Henrico, VA
William Oberdorfer, Washington, DC:
In honor of Kathryn Oberdorfer
William and Judy O'Brien, Roanoke, VA
William O'Donnell, Grand Lake, CO:
In memory of Jean C. O'Donnell
Franklin Oetting, Louisville, CO
Terri Ogden, Columbia, MO:
In honor of James D. Zafarana
Ann O'Leary, North Port, FL:
In memory of Margaret Guthrie
Laurie Oliver, Estes Park, CO:
In memory of Kurt Oliver
Steven Olsen, Centennial, CO:
In memory of Larry Olsen
Dayton and Rosina Olson, Estes Park, CO
George Olson, Fort Collins, CO
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Janice Orr, Peculiar, MO
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Derk and Marjorie Osenberg, Chicago, IL
Sylvia Ostos, Kerrville, TX
Douglas and Mary Ann Otte, Greeley, CO
Frank and Betty Ottesen, Greeley, CO
Jack and Mary Overly, Estes Park, CO
Carol and Wilson Pace, Denver, CO
Russell and Barb Panneton, Nederland, CO
Valerie Paolino, Denver, CO:
In honor of Skylar Visnack
Ricky and Vicki Papineau, Estes Park, CO
Jeanne Paradeis, Denver, CO:
In memory of Dan Paradeis
Wayne and Sally Park, Estes Park, CO
Rudy and Hassie Parzl, Glendora, CA
Meredith Kay and Paul Passmore, Boulder, CO
Ginny Passoth, Denver, CO
Christophe Pattyn, Windsor, CO
Tyler Patzel, Colorado Springs, CO
Laurie Paulik, Loveland, CO
Susan and Bill Pedrick, Erie, CO
Winston Peeler, Platte City, MO
Jeri Peirce, Grand Lake, CO
Sondra Perry, Grand Prairie, TX:
In memory of Jim Perry
David Perry and Kathleen Meier, Point Pleasant, PA
Pershing a BNY Mellon Company, Jersey City, NJ
Jim and Betsy Petersen, Metairie, LA:
In memory of Elizabeth "Betsy" Petersen
Josh Petersen, Altoona, IA
Kristina and Richard Peterson, Gray, LA:
In honor of Richard Krajeski
Franz and Carol Peterson, Oviedo, FL
Karen Peterson, St Paul, MN
Joanne Peterson-Falcone and Robert Falcone, Colorado Springs, CO:
In memory of Ellen Perry
James and Terry Pfister, Wichita, KS
Lisa Pfizenmaier, Cheyenne, WY
Kyle Patterson Phillips and Tim Phillips, Estes Park, CO:
In honor of John Mack
Ross Pibal, Lafayette, CO
James and Pat Pickering, Estes Park, CO
Rich Pickowitz, La Quinta, CA
Scott Piette, Evergreen, CO
Shirley J. Pine, Little Rock, AR
Charles Place, Houston, TX
Amy and Todd Plummer, Estes Park, CO
Dotty Poehler, Loveland, CO:
In memory of Dorothy Arlene Yates
Krista Poeschl, High Ridge, MO
Chris Poindexter, Lees Summit, MO
Kirk and Christine Pokrandt, Denver, CO
Joseph and Christine Polazzi, Fort Collins, CO
Peter Pollock and Diane Yates, Boulder, CO
Jules and Margaret Porsche, Aurora, CO
Ellen and Douglas Porter, Lakewood, CO
Thomas Posever, Boston, MA
Dave and Margaret Powell, Wooster, OH
Dianne and Richard Pratt, Durango, CO
Joel and Linda Prehn, Lakewood, CO
Barbi Preston, Ridgway, CO
Lillys and Hugh Price, Fort Collins, CO
Kathleen Prucha, Erie, CO:
In memory of Rick Prucha
Elizabeth Pruessner, Fort Collins, CO
Paul Pryzant, Houston, TX
Joe and Marcia Pugh, Loveland, CO
Sherri and Michael Punches, Estes Park, CO
Terry and Jean Quinn, Colorado Springs, CO
Ellen Raeker, Fridley, MN
Jason Rainey, Fort Collins, CO
Fred Rainguet, Allenspark, CO
Jerry and Ann Raisch, Boulder, CO
Glenn Randall, Boulder, CO
Edward and Georgia Randinitis, Plymouth, MI
Eugene Rardin, Overland Park, KS:
In memory of Juanita A. Rardin
Duncan and Sherry Rarity, Estes Park, CO
Janice Rasmussen, Loveland, CO
Brody Rastall, Denver, CO
Yolita Rausche, Chagrin Falls, OH
Bonnie Ravesloot, Saint John, IN
John Reber and Sarah Wynn, Longmont, CO
Kathryn Reed, Seattle, WA:
In honor of Constance McIntyre
Kathryn and Don Reed, Hilton Head Island, SC:
In honor of Luca and Bodhi Reed
Eric Reed, Wheat Ridge, CO
Gene and Polly Reetz, Denver, CO
Jennifer Reich, Denver, CO
Alexandra Reid, Estes Park, CO
Katherine Reid and Gary Eastman, Fort Collins, CO
Frank and Nancy Reilly, Phillipsburg, NJ
Marilyn K. Reiter, Tucson, AZ
Richard Remington, Arvada, CO
Robert Renfro, Denver, CO
Thomas Reznik, Fort Collins, CO:
In memory of Ruth Johnson
Charles Riblett and Carolyn Taylor, Loveland, CO
Austin Rice, Susanville, CA:
In memory of Lee Emory
Dallas and Sharon Richards, Hays, KS
Claire Richardson, Denver, CO
Robert and Donna Ricklefs, Olathe, KS
Mike and Jane Riegel, Highlands Ranch, CO
Robert Riker, Longmont, CO
William and Norma Riley, Omaha, NE
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Diane Ritz, Highlands Ranch, CO
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Blake and Susan Robertson, Estes Park, CO
Janet Robertson, Boulder, CO
Aime and Carl Robicheaux, Estes Park, CO
Elizabeth and James Robinson, Wayne, PA
Gary and Sharon Robinson, Fort Collins, CO
Lois Roche, Henderson, NC
Rock Inn Mountain Tavern, Estes Park, CO
Barbara Rodekohr, Fort Collins, CO
Sheilah Roenfeldt, Evergreen, CO:
In honor of the Roenfeldt Family
Linda Rogers, Golden, CO
Chris and Elizabeth Rollinson, Erie, CO
Phillip and Jane Romig, Golden, CO
Robert and Lee Roper, Denver, CO
Cindy Rose, Berrien Center, MI
Mark D. Rose, Lutz, FL
Stanley and Cynthia Rosenberg, Centennial, CO
Judith Ross and James Carr, Estes Park, CO
Brian and Debby Ross, Denver, CO
Rotary Club of Estes Park, Estes Park, CO
Leonard and Mary Rothfeld, Lakewood, CO
Dustin Rozewski, Fort Collins, CO
Tony Ruckel, Denver, CO
Melvin and Leonora Rueppel, Estes Park, CO
Josef Ruhl, Arvada, CO
Dave Rusk, Estes Park, CO
Henry and Laurine Russell, Lee's Summit, MO
Keith Rutledge, Tolleson, AZ:
In honor of the Turner Family
Jane Rutledge, Estes Park, CO
John and Rebecca Saccardi, Broomfield, CO
Victor Salas, Leadville, CO
Kay J. Saltus, Denver, CO
Richard and Karen Sandberg, Omaha, NE:
In honor of their grandchildren
Christopher Sanders, Centennial, CO
Susan and Philip Sargent, Fraser, CO

Eric Schaetzel, Longmont, CO
Barbara Schally, Loveland, CO
Gladys Scheid, Cheyenne, WY:
In memory of Karen M. Scheid
Jerry and Mary Scheppel, Spokane, WA
Deborah Scherger, Hartsel, CO:
In honor of Shane Williams
David Schilling, Peachtree Corners, GA
Gerald Schlemer, Edwardsville, IL
Janet Schlindwein, San Antonio, TX:
In honor of Quinn Brett
Constance Schmidt, Saint Louis, MO
Gary and Connie Schmidt, Estes Park, CO
Mary and Wolfgang Schmidt, Loveland, CO
Sara Schmidt, Kittredge, CO
Keith and Marilyn Schmitt, Longmont, CO
Mackenzie Schmitt, Loveland, CO
Maureen Schmutzler, Parker, CO
Larry and Kathy Schnuck, Whitefish Bay, WI
Barbara Schnurr, Louisville, CO
Robert and Susan Schubert, San Jose, CA
Larry Schulman, New Franken, WI
Gin Schulz, Parker, CO
Dave and Cheryl Schutz, Estes Park, CO
Schwab Charitable Fund/Cecily Drucker, Mill Valley, CA
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Schwab Charitable Fund/ Joan and Bruce Winstein, Denver, CO
Schwab Charitable Fund/ Kerry and Kristine Maletsky, Monument, CO
Schwab Charitable Fund/ Matthew and Marie Gordon, Englewood, CO
Schwab Charitable Fund/ Richard and Vicki Lane, St. Louis, MO
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Annette Scohy, Marietta, OH
Jeannine Seagren, Wheat Ridge, CO
John and Vicki Seeck, Bettendorf, IA
Mary Jo Seifert, Estes Park, CO
Andrew and Ellen Selig, Denver, CO:
In memory of Robert "Bob" Brunson
Richard Selim, Highlands Ranch, CO
Mark and Kathryn Semerad, Estes Park, CO
Barbara Shaeffer, Smyrna, GA
Eileen Sharkey, Evergreen, CO
John and Patricia Shearer, Johnstown, CO
Michael Sheets, Littleton, CO
Brett Shelton, Corning, NY
Charlotte and John Shepic, Lakewood, CO
Melissa Shifflette, Charleston, SC
Pam Shindeldecker, Austin, TX
Janice Shirey, Louisville, CO
John and Barbara Shirley, Taylorsville, KY:
In memory of Carolyn Veneeman
Jessica Short, Highland, IL:
In honor of Brian Warden
Gregory Shows, Lakewood, CO
Peter and Mary Shultz, Westminster, CO
Daniel Shurz and Katherine Lee, Denver, CO
Darla Sidles and Mark Collins, Estes Park, CO
Logan Sigala, Littleton, CO
Cailee Simon, Boulder, CO
John and Charlotte Simonson, Prairie Village, KS
Sarah and Kenneth Singer, Jacksonville, FL:
In honor of Jesse Miller
Donna Singer, Broomfield, CO
Doug and Lynn Singletary, Gulfport, MS
Richard and Deborah Sisung, Grand Lake, CO
Skechers USA, Manhattan Beach, CA:
In memory of Daniel Classen
Kimberly Skyelander, Loveland, CO

Kenneth and Susan Slack, Dallas, TX
Charles and Barb Slicker, Estes Park, CO
Lara Smith, Denver, CO:
In memory of Carolyn Spencer
Jennifer Smith, Muncie, IN:
In memory of Karl F. Gasteyer
Gregory and Patricia Smith, Gainesville, FL:
In memory of Perky Smith
Pete and Carol Smith, Estes Park, CO
Bruce Smith, Salida, CO
Carol and Randy Smith, Spring, TX
Denise Smith, Sellersburg, IN
Francoise Smith, Fort Collins, CO
Marilyn Smith, Colorado Springs, CO
Ralph and Janet Smith, Fort Collins, CO
Robert and Deana Smith, Oklahoma City, OK
Sidney Smith, Superior, CO
Stuart and Elizabeth Smith, Waco, TX
Theodore Snyder, Granada Hills, CA
Bernd Sokolowski, PhD, Littleton, CO
Susan Solick, Berthoud, CO
Jean Sommerville, La Canada, CA
Greg and Carin Spalla, Seymour, IN
Ian and Breanna Speir, Colorado Springs, CO
Logan Spencer, Westminster, CO
Linda and Don Sperber, Lakewood, CO

Abigail Sperry, Longmont, CO
Margaret Spitzer, Greeley, CO
Debra Squires, Boulder, CO:
In memory of Duane and Bonnie Squires
Gayle Stagnitta, Aurora, CO
Thomas and Linda Stanar, Highlands Ranch, CO
Ravi Starzl, Boulder, CO:
In memory of Thomas E. Starzl
John Stauffer, Topeka, KS
David and Joanne Stearn, Calabasas, CA:
In honor of Sonny, Sal and Family
Judith Steel, Ashland, VA
Ned Steele, Sunnyside, NY
Steiner King Foundation, Cincinnati, OH
Robert Stephenson, Overland Park, KS
John and Sally Stevenson, Estes Park, CO
James Steverson, Denver, CO
William and Mary Kay Stoehr, Boulder, CO
Rosemary Stoffel, Denver, CO
Michael and Cynthia Stohl, Santa Barbara, CA
Martha Stokely, Beech Island, SC
Dennis Stoltenberg, Broomfield, CO
Mike and Carol Stolz, Fort Collins, CO
David and Elizabeth Stonecipher, Fort Collins, CO

Denise and David Stookesberry, Glen Haven, CO
Jane Stotts, Blue Ash, OH
Kevin and Janice Stout, Dillon, CO
Stephen Strachan, Parker, CO
Scott Strader and Cathy Taphorn, Littleton, CO
Philip Straffin, Jr., Longmont, CO
Dwight and Linda Strandberg, Estes Park, CO
John A. Streun II, Denison, TX
Ruth Streveler, Lafayette, IN
Karin and Mark Striepe, Great Falls, MT
Roger and Carol Struve, Omaha, NE
Brian Stutheit, Littleton, CO
Evan Sugarbaker, Columbus, OH
Wayne Sullender, Estes Park, CO
Briana Sullivan, Fort Collins, CO:
In honor of John Sullivan
Allen and Christine Susedik, Eau Claire, WI
James and Jan Swaney, Estes Park, CO
Jon and Ginger Swanson, West Des Moines, IA:
In memory of John and Dar Swanson

Rocky Mountain Conservancy

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES IT HAPPEN

• 2019 HIGHLIGHTS •

SPENT **$2.5 MILLION** IN SUPPORT OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

RALLIED **372** VOLUNTEERS THROUGH **21** STEWARDSHIP EVENTS, FOR A TOTAL OF **2,224** HOURS SERVED

PROVIDED FUNDING FOR **SEARCH AND RESCUE**, INCLUDING **WILDERNESS ED** TO HELP PREVENT THE NEED FOR RESCUES

RESTORED **11** HISTORIC BUILDINGS

IMPROVED AND STEWARDED **5** POPULAR CAMPGROUNDS IN RMNP

OFFERED **335** EDUCATIONAL CLASSES, TOURS AND EXPERIENCES TO **7,037** PARTICIPANTS

OFFERED **TUITION-FREE** CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING THROUGH OUR FIELD INSTITUTE

CONSERVATION CORPS MAINTAINED OR REPAIRED **140** MILES OF TRAIL

SUPPORTED REINTRODUCTION OF THE **ENDANGERED BOREAL TOAD** IN THE PARK

REPLACED OUTDATED BRIDGES ACROSS WETLAND AREAS NEAR **GLACIER GORGE**

ADDED A **THIRD EDUCATION FELLOWSHIP** TO SUPPORT **KIDS'** UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

MORE STEWARDSHIP STATS!

155	846	2,235	127	4	39
MILES OF TRAIL MAINTAINED, REPAIRED AND BUILT	FALLEN TREES REMOVED FROM TRAILS	DRAINAGE STRUCTURES INSTALLED/ REPAIRED	CHECK STEPS IMPROVED OR CONSTRUCTED	BRIDGES BUILT	ACRES MANAGED FOR INVASIVE PLANTS

Jon and Ginger Swanson,
West Des Moines, IA:
In memory of Judy R. Brooks
Jim and Sue Swanson, Denver, CO
Michael Sweeney, San Antonio, TX
Les and Sarah Sweeney, Evergreen, CO
William and Nancy Sweet, Denver, CO
Christine Sweetland, Centennial, CO:
In memory of Carl Thornburg
Caesar and Peggy Sweitzer, Chatham, NJ
Houston and Matilda Swenson,
Indianapolis, IN
Nancy K. Sworts, Arvada, CO
Karen Szews, Greenfield, WI:
In memory of Ed and Jean Szews
Brian Talmadge, Lafayette, CO
Yuet Tang, Golden, CO
Nancy Tanner, Grand Junction, CO:
In honor of Amy Rodriguez
James Tanner, Boulder, CO
Mark and Wendy Tarletsky, Centennial, CO
Bruce Tarwater and Ruth Bradley,
Iowa City, IA
Mary Ann Tavery, Denver, CO
Pat and John Taylor, Silverthorne, CO
Vickie and Alex Taylor, La Canada, CA
Jeff Terrill, Lakewood, CO
Diane Teto, North Grafton, MA:
In memory of Ellen M. Smith
The Colorado Trust, Denver, CO
The Graham Edwin and Sharon Janosik
Mitchell Foundation, West Chester, OH
The Greater Cincinnati Foundation/Smith
and Susan Hickenlooper, Cincinnati, OH:
In memory of John Blakemore
The Greater Cincinnati Foundation/
Joseph and Susan Pichler, Cincinnati, OH
The Northern Trust Company/
Daniel J. Wilhelm, Phoenix, AZ
The T. Rowe Price Program for Charitable
Giving/Arthur and Denise Foley,
Colorado Springs, CO
The T. Rowe Price Program for Charitable
Giving/Stephen Roberts, West Hartford, CT
Michael Thebeau, Lone Tree, CO
Peggy L. Themar, Highland Village, TX:
In memory of Peggy Askew
Dan Delancey and Linda Thomas,
Kansas City, MO
Catherine Thomas, Austin, TX
David and Susan Thomas, Estes Park, CO
Rick Thomas, Loveland, CO
Arlene and Richard Thompson, Denver, CO:
In memory of Eric Karika
Herbert and Sharon Thompson, Decatur, IL
James and Janice Thompson, Estes Park, CO
Micha Thompson, Aurora, CO
Scott and Karen Thompson, Estes Park, CO
Bruce Thornblad, Omaha, NE
Mary Jane and Steven Thorson,
Fort Collins, CO
Gregory and Heather Thorwald,
Westminster, CO
Nancy and John Thut, Estes Park, CO
TIAA Teachers Insurance and Annuity
Association/Gordon Family Foundation
Giving Fund, Denver, CO
Rebecca Timmins and Michael Barnes,
Merrifield, MN
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Santos Tobar, Sunnyvale, CA
Julie and John Tobin, Highlands Ranch, CO
John and Carole Tomaras, Bloomingdale, IL
Barbara Trofholz, Estes Park, CO:
In honor of their grandchildren
Miranda and Bob Trout, Berthoud, CO
Larry and Linda Tryon, Fort Collins, CO
Linda Trzyna, Colorado Springs, CO
Susan Turman, Denver, CO:
In memory of Marcia and Bill Turman
Nathan Turner, Denver, CO
Carole K. Tuttle, Fort Collins, CO
James and Catherine Tyree, Corpus Christi, TX
U.S, Charitable Gift Trust/Janet Greiner,
Lakewood, CO
Elizabeth Ugalde, Estes Park, CO
Union Pacific Fund for Effective
Government/Jolene and Keith Svancara,
Estes Park, CO
Urban Charitable Foundation/Tim Urban,
Des Moines, IA
US Bank, Estes Park, CO
Sandra Utz, Longmont, CO
Liz Vaagen, Broomfield, CO
Carl Vail, Steamboat Springs, CO
Dino Valaoritis, New York, NY
Jennifer Van de Kamp, Broomfield, CO
Barbara Van Horne, Denver, CO
Jacqueline Van Lysebettens, Seattle, WA
David and Debra Van Tassel, Estes Park, CO
Jean and Joe Van Winkle, Estes Park, CO
Scott VanEyk, Cherry Hills Village, CO
Vanguard Charitable/
Edward and Mary Moyer, Peoria, IL
Vanguard Charitable/
Paul and Joan Lavell, Boulder, CO
Vanguard Charitable/Willard and Nancy
Lewis, Trabuco Canyon, CA
John Vanier, Salina, KS:
In honor of Donna Vanier
Robert and Karen Venohr, Aurora, CO
Marilyn and John Vergoth, Estes Park, CO
Ronald Villiotti, Highlands Ranch, CO
Jane Von Letkemann, Longmont, CO:
In memory of Grant B. Von Letkemann
Gary and Diana Wade, Loveland, CO
Priscilla Wagener, Boulder, CO
Daniel Waggoner, Denver, CO
Ronald and Linda Wagner, Roeland Park, KS
William Wahl, Longmont, CO
Jim and Karen Wailes, Black Hawk, CO
Martha Bendel Waite, Canon City, CO
Dean and Kathy Waits, Colorado Springs, CO
Rachel Walborn, Monument, CO
Beth Waldinger, Scottsdale, AZ
Melissa Walker, Colorado Springs, CO
Barbara Wallace, Bowie, TX:
In honor of June Heard
David Wallace, Eden Prairie, MN:
In memory of Fred R. Wallace, Jr.
Timothy and Julie Walsh, Windsor, CO
Gloria and John Walsh, Orland Park, IL
Claire Walter, Boulder, CO
Sharon Ward, Fort Collins, CO
Thomas and Judy Ward, Denver, CO
Jennifer Warner, Greenwood, IN
Cynthia and David Warrick,
Highlands Ranch, CO
Thomas and Rachelle Washburn,
Estes Park, CO
Joe and Barb Wasung, Greeley, CO
Cory Watkins, Seattle, WA:
In honor of Louise V. Atteridg
Steve and Carol Watson, Bozrah, CT
Michael and Rebecca Watts, Estes Park, CO
Sarah Webb, Alstead, NH
Allen and Georgia Weber, Waco, TX
Barbara Weber, Denver, CO
Andrea Webster, Maineville, OH
Elizabeth Weisberg, Estes Park, CO
Lisa L. Weisensel, Beaver Dam, WI
Hillary and Edward Weisman, Brooklyn, NY:
In memory of Ella Weisman
Tim Welch, Littleton, CO
William and Marlene Wenk, Denver, CO
Carol Wernet, Louisville, CO
Adla and Phillip West, Denver, CO
Daniel Westcott, Lakewood, CO
Donald and Mary Sue Wester,
New Hope, MN
Chuck and Sarah Westerheide, Edmond, OK
Vanessa Westfall, Sugar Grove, IL:
In honor of Kelton Westfalll
Wayne Wexell, Windsor, CO
Donelda Wheatley, Yukon, OK:
In memory of Newt Wheatley
Carolyn Wheeler, Monument, CO
Whitney and Jim Wheeless, Boulder, CO
Joan Whitbeck, Denver, CO:
In honor of Ellie Miller
Amy White, Danville, CA:
In memory of Wendy Basmajian
Caitlin White, Boulder, CO
Steve White, Van Wert, OH
Steven and Frances White, Arvada, CO
Zac Wiebe and Nicole Paschis, Fort Collins, CO
Nancy Wigington, Boulder, CO
Wynne Wilbur, Kirksville, MO
Lawrence and Linda Williams, Estes Park, CO
Chad T. Williams, Omaha, NE
Michael Williams, Highlands Ranch, CO
Nancy Williams, Seattle, WA
PJ and Jeanne Williams, Colorado Springs, CO
Robin and Gary Williams, Estes Park, CO
J. M. Michael and Peggy Wilson,
Whitefish Bay, WI:
In memory of Sally Virginia Pepper
Linda Wilson, Bloomington, IL:
In memory of Vicky K. Barton
Lorraine Wilson, Lafayette, CO
Julie Winchell, Kelley, IA:
In memory of Wayne A. Stensland
Joe and Lori Wisniewski, Lansing, MI
kevin and Kevin wolf, Estes Park, CO
Joy Wolf, Mount Pleasant, WI
Roger and Deborah Wolfe, Fort Collins, CO
Esther Worker, Broomfield, CO
William and Suzanne Wuerthele, Denver, CO
Bryan L. Wyberg, Roseville, MN
Arthur and Virginia Wycoff, Williamsburg, VA
Xanterra Parks and Resorts, Estes Park, CO
Susan Yancik, Boulder, CO:
In memory of Frank and Marion Yancik
Victoria Yang, Longmont, CO
Ginny and Rich Youngkin, Littleton, CO
YourCause/Andrew Walters, Centennial, CO
YourCause/Jane Stout, Ankeny, IA
YourCause/Michael Booth,
Colorado Springs, CO
YourCause/Scott and Melanie Joy,
Denver, CO
YourCause/Susan Bourque, Englewood, CO
Julie Zahniser, Boulder, CO:
In memory of John Thweatt
Tibor and Bess Zana, Madison, WI
Brittany Zeinstra, Lafayette, CO:
In honor of Lauren Bendinelli
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Extended Nature Notes

An Eerie Encounter in Moraine Park

Illustration: Wendy Smith

Kim Muench has lived in Estes Park for more than 30 years, and she's spent a lot of time in the backcountry. She's seen the back side of a mountain lion twice, and a dead mountain lion in her neighborhood on the west side of Prospect Mountain many years ago. Her next encounter was face-to-face, and it felt very different.

It was early September last year, and she and her husband drove out to Moraine Park for a couple hours of fly fishing around 6-8 P.M., like they had done many times before. They parked a bit east of the stables and planned to rendezvous back at the car by 8 P.M., which was around dusk. Kim fished upstream from her husband until around 7:40. She fishes tenkara, so she's pretty quiet — no clicking of a reel, etc. She remembers looking at her watch because she was debating whether she'd have time to try a different fly, something she could better see in the fading light. She decided she should head back to the car instead.

She stepped up on the south side of the pebble stream bank, popped her telescoping rod down and looked up to see a mountain lion looking down at her about 20 feet away from the wooden bridge by the Cub Lake trailhead. Both she and the mountain lion froze. It made her think of her border terrier that does this kind of freeze thing right before he would pounce — and it felt like that. She remembers reflexively zipping up the collar of her vest — maybe to protect her neck. Maintaining eye contact and facing the lion, Kim stepped very slowly back into the middle of the thigh-deep stream, thinking the lion might think twice about getting wet. Then she started yelling very loudly "Help! Lion!" hoping her husband, or even someone parked at the trailhead, might hear her, and also perhaps to indicate to the lion that she wasn't the usual type of prey. No one ever did come.

After what felt like a minute, the lion broke eye contact and ran into tall grasses on the side of the bank where Kim was originally standing, away from the trailhead. Not being able to see it was a bit unnerving, but she kept facing that side of the stream and watching while slowly backing toward the trailhead, continuing to yell, until she was quite hoarse. Thinking back on this event, Kim thinks a little whistle would be more effective in the future!

Back at the trailhead there was an older woman, and Kim asked her if she heard her yelling, telling her she had just had an encounter with a mountain lion. The woman said she'd heard something, but thought it was just kids fooling around or something. Yikes! Kim asked her if she'd drive alongside her while she walked to her car. Kim got out of her waders and vest, and by now it was nearly 8:00 and getting dark. Then she heard a man yell back in the direction of the trailhead. Her first thought was that the lion had gone after her husband. She grabbed the metal tube case that holds her fly rod and drove back toward the trailhead. About halfway there she spotted her husband coming through the fence, beaming from another great day of fishing, as usual.

Kim was pretty rattled and was really worried about a lion being so close to a highly trafficked area, near the campground, kids and families. They called a ranger friend who assured her that park staff would be monitoring the area, which made her feel a little better.

Kim tried thinking of the event as a kind of visitation instead of a near attack. She looked up the symbolism of a mountain lion: "A mountain lion represents power and leadership, a solitary hunter, majesty, and the authority of the soul." This actually really helped. A little magical thinking can be very soothing when faced with a pretty powerless situation.

The next day she picked up a palm-sized can of Mace and slipped it into her fishing vest for a little extra magic — just in case.

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Chasm Lake in winter *Photo: Jennifer Klink*

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Nature Notes

Snow has been the theme of early winter so far, with two significant snowfalls before Halloween, and a couple more big dumps in mid-November. Not much snow in December, however, and trails are getting icy up high 🐾 Park Volunteer **Beth Honea** reported that this past summer, Park Dispatch received multiple reports of a small enclosure that housed a pet carrier, a rabbit and some guinea pigs which was spotted in various places in the park. Following a rove, VIPs **Don Schwarm** and Beth found the culprits unattended at the Colorado River Trailhead picnic area. While waiting for the owner to reappear, they delighted in the dozens of opportunities they had to educate park visitors about the dangers of leaving unattended pets in the park, including that of attracting predators to the area, as well as the bacteria that could be passed on to wildlife through 'deposits' of saliva and waste left on the ground. Volunteer Park Ranger **Jake Bolejack** responded to their request for assistance, and the pets, carrier and fencing were confiscated. The visitor reclaimed the animals before they were transported to the county shelter. The visitor also received a citation 🐾 Conservancy Member **Marlene Borneman** and her Conservancy Board Member husband **Walt** were hiking their annual trek over to Grand Lake from Estes Park, this year a 19-mile adventure on the Tonahutu Trail. As they approached Grand Lake, they practically ran into a calf and mother moose on the trail. Lucky for them the two moose were just as surprised as the humans were and they quickly disappeared into the forest, stopping briefly for a photo op 🐾 While backpacking at Lost Lake last August, **Walt** and **Marlene** were pleasantly surprised to observe a bird they had not seen in Rocky before: a spotted sandpiper, replete with its distinctive rounded spots on its breast. The bird was performing the distraction display, acting distressed or wounded, and they soon found out why as a small chick emerged from the willows 🐾 Conservancy Administrative Assistant **Victoria Johnson** was leaving her house in Estes Park in late fall and turned to find a massive bull elk with an impressive set of antlers blocking her a mere three feet away. He was not inclined to move, and Victoria was carrying her 2-year-old on her hip, but she tried a variety of techniques to get him to move on, including yelling, playing loud techno music, and setting off two car alarms. What eventually enticed him away from her door was the neighbor calling him with a *tisking* sound — the elk jumped the fence between the properties, and actually climbed up steps to stand on her elevated deck. Hmmmm, is someone getting handouts, perchance? 🐾 Conservancy Member **Steve Coles** from Allenspark reported that the nearby town of Raymond had experienced seven bear break-ins in two weeks in mid-November. On two occasions, the intruding bear managed to turn on stove burners while rummaging for food. Allenspark firefighter **Les Male** found smoldering tea bags on one of the stoves, prompting the suggestion that homeowners remove stove knobs while away from home 🐾 Conservancy Member **Rich Gilliland** observed seven different species of raptors from his home in Estes Park from late summer into fall, including: a sharp-shinned hawk, a bald eagle, a golden eagle, an osprey, prairie falcon, peregrine and a red-tailed hawk. He also watched a pair of peregrine doing their amazing aerobatics in the sky 🐾 Happy New Year to you all!

Estes Park resident Julie Klett observed this wild rabbit hiding in a Estes Park office gutter drain in early fall. The bunny stayed like this for at least 30 minutes — it was not stuck, she determined, but perhaps just spectacularly bad at hide and seek.

*Difficult to discern, but if you look closely at the beak of this nuthatch, you can see that the lower mandible of the beak is curving upward — dramatically so! Estes Park resident **Dean Martinson** captured this photo when the bird visited his feeder on a number of occasions. While he didn't notice the beak at first (it looked like a piece of sunflower seed hull), the bird's behavior was odd for a nuthatch. Instead of efficiently picking up a seed and flying away with it, as these birds are wont, it spent a fair amount of time hopping about, ineffectively stabbing at the seeds in the tray. Former RMNP Wildlife Biologist **Gary Miller** noted that he's seen a number of bill deformities, but this one is extreme. The keratin sheath of a bird beak continues to grow throughout a bird's life. It's normally worn down, and kept functional by the opposing mandible. But in this case, the normal wear hasn't occurred. There is something called avian keratin disorder — caused by various things, including disease — that causes bill deformities, but nearly always results in a down-curve. Recently, a virus has been associated with increased deformities, mostly for chickadees, in Alaska, but the keratin grows in a twisted fashion — the one in this photo appears to have the normal smooth surface. If he had to guess what happened with this bird, he suggested that an injury upset the normal growth of the lower mandible, although a genetic aberration cannot be ruled out.*