



# QUARTERLY

Fall | 2020

## Window to the World

by Suzanne Silverthorn



### Look Inside

#### MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Despite the current unpredictable conditions, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy will continue to support this park.*

**PG. 2**

#### ASK NANCY COLUMN

*Trail Ridge Road snowpoles, bird migration and mice, Oh My!*

**PG. 3**

#### FEATURED STORIES

*Alpine Restoration Research  
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Rocky's Photo Intern*

**PG. 4-9**

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*Test your knowledge of Rocky!*

**PG. 10**

#### OUR AMAZING DONORS

*Invaluable. Influential.  
Foundational.* **PG. 11**

Not many things can chase Tommy Caldwell off a mountain, but to hear him describe the sensation of an approaching thunderstorm in Rocky Mountain National Park, you get the feeling he's human after all. The booming sound of thunder rolling across the mountaintop, hair eerily drawn to the sky from static electricity, the buzz of climbing gear dangling nearby. Tommy is no match for Rocky's powerful storms. It's time to head down, and quickly.

Tommy has been drawing inspiration from the park for a lifetime. His dad moved the family to Estes Park when Tommy was four so the elder Caldwell could be closer to Lumpy Ridge, the massive rock formations north of town, a magnet for rock climbers. As Tommy tells it, dad Mike was one of the early route developers at Lumpy, and it wasn't long before Tommy's climbing prowess was being propelled by his dad's high-stakes encouragement. Rocky Mountain National Park became the ultimate playground for Tommy while his older sister and mother did their best to accommodate. He summited Longs Peak for the first time when he was seven, and by age 12 he had scaled the east face of Longs Peak, known as the Diamond.

At age 21, he conquered the Diamond's hardest route.

Now 42, Tommy is one of the most prolific climbers of his time. His dramatic rock and alpine climbing ascents are legendary. His memoir, *The Push*, published in 2017, chronicles the incredible story of his inner strength and perseverance to climb routes no one thought possible. Today, his athletic pursuits are continuing to mesmerize. But now the fire in Tommy's belly is fueled by something far greater than climbing. His new push is about saving the planet.

It was about a decade ago when Tommy started noticing changes in Rocky Mountain National Park. The snowfields were melting out in late summer leaving a black layer of organic matter that gave off a foul smell. "I never remembered seeing that when I was a kid," he recalled. "Usually there would be a fresh layer [of snow?] on top of that ice. That was the first symptom I noticed."

Snow melt is occurring two to three weeks earlier in the park than it did 40 years ago, according to researchers. And the rising

*Rocky Mountain  
National Park needs all  
of us working together to  
protect our beloved public  
lands in the new year.*



## A Message from our Executive Director



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Dear Friends,

Just when we thought that 2020 couldn't possibly push the envelope any further, wildfire season in the American West has reached new heights of destruction, and unfortunately, Colorado has been no exception. Not only did the state set a record with the Pine Gulch Fire for the largest fire in the history of the state in July, that dubious honor was taken by the Cameron Peak Fire a mere seven weeks later. At this moment, I can see the smoke (and occasionally the flames) of five fires burning in and/or near Rocky Mountain National Park.

While it may be years for communities to fully recover from the impact of these fires, it has been heartening to see the support that has sprung up to support the people affected by these disasters. I was not yet a resident of the Estes Valley when the 2013 floods inundated the region, so it's only now that I'm beginning to truly understand the sentiment behind the phrase "Mountain Strong," even though I see the phrase almost daily in Estes Park. In this vein, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy will be strong, and we will be here for Rocky Mountain National Park in the years ahead as the recovery of its ecosystems becomes one of the highest priorities for the park.

But it's also the people that love Rocky that will always remain a priority concern. At our most recent board meeting, our board of directors committed to investing more than \$1 million dollars toward projects in the park this coming year. In this next year, you will see the strength of the support we've pledged for the park's highly specialized backcountry first responders, the Search and Rescue team. In the face of growing demand for their services, the Conservancy is committed to ensuring that they are prepared for the challenges at hand with the best possible resources and training.

Be safe and take care of yourself and your loved ones during these rocky times. Rocky Mountain National Park needs all of us working together to protect our beloved public lands in the new year. And don't forget, despite the distractions all around us, there's no time like the present: brush off those snowshoes and pull out your skis and your sleds. Winter is coming, and there's beauty and peace to be found in this place.

Yours truly,



*Estee Rivera Murdock*

Estee Rivera Murdock  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# Ask Nancy



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

## Why aren't the snow poles along Trail Ridge Road more sophisticated; that is, made of pipes or other more permanent material? And, how do they stay in the ground given the rock/ledge that the Rockies consist of?

We utilize natural wood products harvested from areas within RMNP for our snowpoles. Lodgepoles have always been utilized because of their abundance in the park and their nature of being straight without the bulk. This is one tradition we like to keep alive on this historic roadway. Additionally, we use lodgepoles because if we hit one with the equipment and it gets spread on the tundra, it is a natural element from Rocky that we don't need to worry about retrieving. We have tried other methods, such as plastic delineators, etc., but they do not seem to hold up as well as lodgepoles. We need to use something that can withstand the hurricane-force winds we encounter in the alpine but still break away if something were to hit it. Our crew installs snowpoles in holes that have been used over the years. If possible, we try and pull the broken or deficient pole out and place a new one in the same hole. If we need to add or modify the location for the marker, we use a rock drill with a 3" bit for installation. We drill into soil and rock about 36" deep to ensure the poles have a good base to withstand the winter abuse.

— RMNP Engineering Equipment Operator Supervisor Michael Bernhardt

## With regard to birds, what came first: migratory or non-migratory species?

There are several hypotheses regarding the evolution of flight: cursorial (running, leaping — the pterosaur Archaeopteryx of ~150 million years ago is best known), as well as arboreal and pouncing (predation). All hypotheses agree that the evolution of flight from non-flight was gradual, however, increasing to greater and greater flight capabilities over thousands of years. Thus, the adaptations and abilities to migrate would likely have come later in the evolutionary scheme. Studies I've read have found earliest evidence/indication of bird migration in the range of 50,000 – 300,000 years ago

— RMNP Retired Wildlife Biologist Gary Miller

## Why are there so many mice this year?

Small rodents like deer mice and voles, etc. have populations that are tied mostly to their nutritional plane, which cycles periodically — better (or more) food means higher birth and survival rates. These little creatures are highly prolific, which allows results in population peaks that are 5 – 10 times the population lows in just 3 – 5 years. This trend usually presents with slower growth in the first years of recovery, then BOOM — it's exponential growth — in fact, a "J" shaped curve (rather like compound interest). Populations then often overshoot the habitat (nutrition)-carrying capacity, and BAM — they crash. It has also been noted that the Wyoming and other ground squirrels have come back in force this year following their decimation in 2013. They, too, exhibit a similar trajectory in their populations. — RMNP Retired Wildlife Biologist Gary Miller

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### SCENIC ROCKY CALENDARS

**JAMES FRANK:** Features 12 stunning photographs of Rocky Mountain Park. Each month includes descriptive text about the photo. Price: \$15.95 **Member Price \$13.56**

**ERIK STENSLAND:** Gorgeous images highlight a year-long journey through the heart of Rocky Mountain National Park. Price: \$14.95; **Member Price: \$12.71**



### LONGS PEAK ETCHED MUG & SHOT GLASS

This unique mug features a minimalist graphic design of Longs Peak and Rocky Mountain National Park on opposite sides. The interior of the mug is available in four colors: red, green, blue and purple. Dishwasher and microwave safe.

**Mug:** Price: \$12.95; **Member Price: \$11.01**  
**Shot glass:** Price: \$5.99; **Member Price: \$5.09**



### ESTES PARK AND ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK – THEN & NOW

Then & Now introduces the reader to 142 separate historic sites and structures. These landmarks and landscapes trace the evolution of the Estes Park region from the time of Joel Estes to our own. More than 500 photographs highlight these historic places. Softcover. 12"x13"; 409 pp.

Price: \$59.99; **Member Price: \$50.99**

More memorabilia at  
[RMConservancy.org](http://RMConservancy.org)  
970-586-0121 x201

Native alpine species were propagated at the RMNP greenhouse during the 2018 – 2019 winter from seed collected in the alpine tundra in 2018 and earlier.



## Protecting and Restoring Tundra Communities

*“When recreating in the Colorado high country, help do your part by treading lightly when visiting the tundra.”*  
— Camille Thorson

*The “Trail to Nowhere” seen from the top looking down toward Trail Ridge Road.*



Approximately one-third of Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) is alpine tundra, making it one of the largest examples of this ecosystem type protected in the contiguous United States. Cold and windy conditions, along with a short growing season, mean these plants require unique adaptations to live on the tundra.

Alpine plant species generally grow low to the ground and have a very short window, around three months, in which to leaf out, flower and produce seeds. In 2019, RMNP’s vegetation crew started a set of new restoration projects in the alpine tundra. After years of monitoring tundra conditions, park staff observed that several areas along Trail Ridge Road had become increasingly negatively affected by off-trail visitor exploration — often referred to as social trailing. After years of observing changes, and a growing desire to improve this fragile habitat, the crew restored a couple of high-impact areas to pristine condition. These areas will continue to be monitored as part of an adaptive management process to ensure that they remain unimpaired for future generations to enjoy.

Since the 1980s, Rocky Mountain National Park has had an active plant restoration program. This program was originally governed by the 1993 Revegetation Management Plan,

which was updated in July 2006. The updated plan provided new guidance for restoration projects throughout the park, which mandates the use of only native plants collected from within the park. This significant mandate allows the park to preserve its genetic diversity and ensures that the plants are adapted to the park’s unique ecosystems.

To accomplish this mandate, the RMNP Vegetation Crew plans projects years in advance because the seeds and plant material must be collected, germinated and nurtured in the greenhouse before being planted in the alpine areas to optimize the success of the restoration.

The “Trail to Nowhere” originated as a social trail connecting a vehicle pull-off along Trail Ridge Road to the Toll Memorial trail at Rock Cut. The entire trail travels above tree line at around 12,100 feet of elevation through alpine tundra plant communities and rocky drainages. At some point in the 1980s, the RMNP Trail Crew edged “Trail to Nowhere” with rock and paved the surface. As use of this trail increased over time, tundra plants, both along the trail and at its terminus, were damaged by off-trail foot traffic. Buck-and-rail fencing was added to prevent pedestrians from continuing past the asphalt and onto the tundra, but this had limited success. So, other options were considered.

The testing of various strategies, such as fencing or paving trails, followed by monitoring the results they generate, are key pieces of the adaptive management process that RMNP uses to protect its key resources. As a result of employing this type of management process, RMNP's leadership team determined that closure and native plant restoration of the "Trail to Nowhere" were the best courses of action to protect and preserve this fragile ecosystem.

Demolition of asphalt at this site began in July 2019. Due to the steep grade of the trail near the road, the use of heavy machinery was too dangerous, so demolition was performed by hand with pick-mattocks, rock bars, and wheelbarrows. Removal of the asphalt left the trail bed four- to six-inches lower than the surrounding tundra, requiring that topsoil be imported to raise the surface level. Rocks were "planted" in the trail to match the surrounding tundra aesthetic, aid with erosion control, and to give protection to the new plantings.

Alpine tundra plants are slow growing, and to ensure maximum growth and root development they are germinated and grown in the RMNP greenhouse. Germinating tundra seeds and allowing the plants to grow in a controlled greenhouse environment gives the plants a six- to seven-month head start before being planted in the field. Thirteen native species were grown for this restoration site. Plants were placed with two- to four-inch spacing to aid in the rapid recovery of tundra in this area.

The Vegetation Crew, along with interns and volunteers, planted 21,307 plants over the course of five weeks. At the end of 2019, there was about 20 percent of the trail that still required work the following season. Erosion matting was laid over the topsoil to prevent loss of soil over the winter season. The project picked back up again in July 2020, and concluded with a total of 33,233 plants planted on the tundra at this site.

The "Trail to Nowhere" isn't the only alpine area that has gotten some help in the last couple years. Another area known as the "Snow Play Area," located just west of Rock Cut, had also been identified as a high-impact site in need of restoration. Historically, the boardwalk installed in this alpine area was intended to allow access to a small snow field while providing protection from trampling and compaction to fragile tundra plant communities. The original impetus for a boardwalk in this area came from the recommendation of Dr. Beatrice Willard in her 1963 thesis. Even then, Dr. Willard had already observed impact to tundra vegetation at this site.

In recent years, this snow play area has continued to experience high foot traffic beyond the boundaries of the snow field. This has led to the creation of social trails and areas denuded of vegetation. The boardwalk still gives access to the snow field, but there was nothing to stop people from wandering and exploring further. It was decided to eliminate the boardwalk for the 2017 season to determine if the boardwalk's absence would deter visitors from walking in the area. While a buck and rail fence clearly closed off the area, the large pull off parking area was still enough to entice visitors to the snowfield and areas beyond.

A photomonitoring project was implemented in the summer of 2017 to observe and record human impact on tundra vegetation. The snow play area remained closed for the 2018 and 2019 season for further photomonitoring. In 2019, it was observed that visitors were mostly staying out of the snow play area, but instead they were crossing the road to access another snow patch. Obvious social trails are now being created in this new area, and additional photo points were created to capture the ongoing degradation. These monitoring protocols will give evidence to park managers to determine what next steps are necessary.

Both tundra restoration management actions are examples of passive adaptive management, where one option is implemented and subsequently monitored for success. Both sites were closed to remove visitor access, and then monitored to gain photographic evidence to observe changes over time. Managers can review the collected observations and use it to guide the next management action.

When recreating in the Colorado high country, help do your part by treading lightly when visiting the tundra. Stay on official trails and observe and follow posted signage. Teach your friends and family about the tundra lifecycle and what a unique place it is.

*Camille Thorson is the Learning Specialist at the RMNP Continental Divide Research Learning Center*



*The trail scar before planting in 2019*

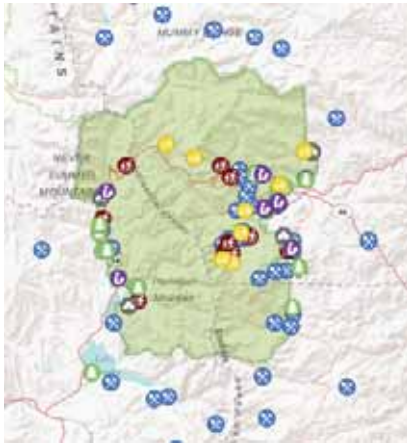


*The trail scar after planting in 2020*



by  
Sheri  
Fedorchak

## Fall River Connector Multi-use Trail: A Partnership Project in Progress



### Conservancy Benefits From CSU Student Capstone Project

This summer the Conservancy partnered with the Masters of Conservation Leadership program at Colorado State University to develop an interactive map of projects completed by the Conservancy since 1985. Led by students Roberta Farrington and Kristen Brinkley, the goal is to improve communication about the impact between humans and nature in Rocky Mountain National Park.

A more comprehensive article about this project will be included in the upcoming *Winter Quarterly*. Visit [RMConservancy.org/our-impact/](http://RMConservancy.org/our-impact/) to learn more!

A partnership between Rocky Mountain National Park, the Town of Estes Park, and the Rocky Mountain Conservancy is making possible the construction of a multi-use-trail section in the park to connect with the town's 1.5 mile section of the Fall River Multi-use Trail that is currently being built along Fish Hatchery Road.

The short trail section in the park extends from the north side of the pedestrian bridge over Fall River in the campground, to the south side of the bridge, where it will end at the closest campsite adjacent to the bridge. The trail will terminate at Aspenglen Campground in Rocky. The park will convert this campsite to a welcoming place for pedestrians and bicyclists, with signage, two picnic tables and a bench. The projects are scheduled for completion in the spring of 2021.

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy provided funding to design and construct the portion of the trail in the park. To capitalize on efficiencies and to ensure that the park and town portions of the trails match up, the park and the town will continue to

partner using the same contractor for design and construction. The town is managing construction of both sections of the trail under a special-use permit.

A 2016 planning effort in the park titled, *Multi-use Trail Environmental Assessment* evaluated alternatives for providing a multi-use trail system along the developed corridor of roads on the east side of the park. The analysis looked at the overall feasibility of a multi-use trail in the park, which resulted in a *Finding of No Significant Impact* to construct this short trail connector section of approximately 400 feet in the campground.

The construction of this connecting trail segment will enable the park to evaluate its effectiveness, annual maintenance costs, and amount of use. An update on this project at its completion next spring will be included with photos in the *Summer Quarterly*. We are looking forward to the day when this newest section of the Fall River Multi-use Trail is ready for use!

### Give a Gift Membership This Holiday Season



Your friends and loved ones will adore this personalized gift, which includes a Parks Project t-shirt and the full benefits of membership, including discounts at all of the Conservancy's Nature Stores.

Each membership helps to fund the Conservancy's work to protect and conserve Rocky. Your gift recipient will be welcomed to the Rocky

Mountain Conservancy family with a membership packet and commemorative t-shirt, delivered by mail.

**Attention Members  
and Current Donors!**  
**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**Virtual Holiday  
Celebration**  
**December 4 & 5, 2020**  
**Fall River Visitor Center**  
Check your e-mail for  
more details coming soon!

[RMConservancy.org/giftmembership](http://RMConservancy.org/giftmembership)

## Conservancy Funds Photo Intern for Rocky



The Rocky Mountain Conservancy has a long history of connecting youth with public lands, including providing internships during which young people can gain real-life experience while working in Rocky Mountain National Park.

During the summer of 2020, the Conservancy provided the financial support for a photojournalist intern. The assignment: take high quality images for RMNP and Conservancy use on social media and websites and to highlight upcoming projects. This experience serves to help bridge the intern from academic learning to a professional work environment. Valuable skills are gained, including assignment deadlines and completion, time management, teamwork and more, while expanding and updating the park and Conservancy photo libraries.

The COVID-19 pandemic altered the original plan to have two interns in 2020 due to the impact on park and conservancy operations. Fortunately, the park was able to onboard the talented Kim Grossman for four months of photography and learning. Check out her photographs by exploring the park's Instagram account: <https://www.instagram.com/rockynps/>.

Kim Grossman is a professionally trained photographer who has been

working in the national parks for 12 years. Kim has taught photography formally at the Ansel Adams Gallery in Yosemite Valley, and she has built her interpretive skills in Rocky this summer through visitor contacts and conservation education. During the winter of 2016, Kim worked in the park as a volunteer for the visual information office — the same department in which she is currently fulfilling her internship through the Rocky Mountain Conservancy.

Kim has been able to use her photojournalist skills in the park to document this summer's unique circumstances of a park operating during a pandemic and as a national landmark that is increasing in general popularity. Kim has focused her photography on the following topics: limited park entry leading to fewer crowds and a better visitor experience with nature; COVID safety precautions (i.e. mask-wearing when in close proximity to others); showcasing the diversity of people who visit this park; highlighting Rocky's park rangers at work in the field, and creating a better virtual visit to the park through thoughtful social media posts.

Kim hopes to continue this protection and enjoyment of our public lands by pursuing a career with the visual information office in the future.



An example of an Instagram post created by Kim Grossman



## Colorado Gives Day 2020

Schedule your gift early!

### YOUR DOLLARS MATCHED

On Tuesday, December 8, your donation on to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy through [www.coloradogives.org](http://www.coloradogives.org) gets an extra boost thanks to help from the \$1 million Incentive Fund from Community First Foundation and FirstBank. This is a great opportunity to stretch your dollars a little farther to help protect and conserve Rocky Mountain National Park!

Last year, the Conservancy raised more than \$80,000 to provide critical support to Rocky Mountain National Park.

### SCHEDULE YOUR DONATION EARLY!

Colorado Gives Day is powered by [ColoradoGives.org](http://ColoradoGives.org), a year-round website that allows you to schedule your donation at any time before December 8. While your gift will not be processed until December 8, you can conveniently pledge and schedule your donation early with a credit card.

Give on Colorado Gives Day to support the Conservancy's work with trail improvements, Conservancy Corps, stewardship education, and so much more!



# Help Us Protect and Preserve Rocky Rocky Needs YOU!

Dear Friends,

It's fair to say that, like our beloved park, 2020 has had its share of peaks and valleys. It has been an unprecedented year, but because of your past support, the Conservancy has weathered the storm and made incredible investments in Rocky Mountain National Park. NOW we need your support more than ever to continue moving forward with planned improvements to protect and conserve Rocky.

Your support makes it happen: 155 miles of hiking trails in Rocky maintained last year, native habitats restored, beloved historic structures repaired, and young people learning what it means to become a public lands steward. This is the impact of your support. Even during a pandemic, the Conservancy is improving the park for visitors and for the living creatures that call the park home. Here are a few highlights:



The Conservancy spent more than \$1.5 million this year in support of Rocky, including priority park improvements, conservation programs, and much more.



First steps were taken toward restoration of the Shadow Mountain Fire Lookout.



Miles of heavily used trails were maintained and repaired.

Imagine hiking a trail that carefully guides you through Rocky's pristine tundra and to some of the most spectacular views in the park. With donor support, the Conservancy provided funding to help rebuild one of the Front Range's premier trails on Longs Peak. What remains is a 100-year trail, meant to last generations and guide adventure-seekers through the unimaginable beauty of the park.

Though 2020 was a year like no other, it was still a productive one at Rocky. And there is still more work to be done. The upcoming year presents many new challenges — and wonderful possibilities. The Conservancy stands ready to seize opportunities for land protection, stewardship of beloved park trails, and preservation of valued park resources so they may be enjoyed for years to come.

## Make a gift to support the park!

Thank you for your support to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. As people need nature to thrive, our park needs care and protection to endure. Your generous gift today is vital to our ability protect, preserve and enhance Rocky Mountain National Park – for everyone.

With gratitude,



*Estee Rivera Murdock*

Estee Rivera Murdock  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



You also can make  
a gift online at  
[RMConservancy.org](https://www.rmconservancy.org)

PO Box 3100 Estes Park, Colorado 80517 | Phone: 970-586-0108 | [RMConservancy.org](https://www.rmconservancy.org)

To make a gift to support Rocky Mountain National Park, visit [RMConservancy.org](https://www.rmconservancy.org), or call 970-586-0108





# Make a gift today to what is special to you



## ✓ Best Use

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



## ✓ Next Generation Fund

The Next Gen Fund is all about using your support to connect youth with nature. Your gift provides kids' learning experiences in the park and inside school classrooms, as well as the Junior Ranger program, park internships, publications, distance learning opportunities, and much more.



## ✓ Trail Improvement Fund

Rocky's beloved trails are always in need of repair and maintenance. and the need for sustainable trail management has never been greater. With your support, in 2021, the next phase of work on the Longs Peak Trail will occur, as will ongoing efforts to rebuild other popular trails throughout Rocky.



## ✓ Conservation Corps

Last year, the Conservation Corps restored 155 miles of trails, improved five popular campgrounds, restored native habitats, and preserved historic buildings in Rocky and the surrounding national forests. With your gift, crews will continue to protect our public lands, improving trails across the park, including improving trail access to Cub Lake.



## ✓ Kawuneeche Visitor Center Exhibits

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

## Your contributions at work

### 🔨 Conservation Corps Snapshot



*Each summer, young adults from all walks of life spend 10 weeks living and breathing public lands stewardship. Here's a snapshot from the Boulder Crew's work in the Arapaho National Forest this year:*

*The Boulder crew honed their rock work skills by constructing a monowall on the Forsythe Canyon Trail. Through their work on this project, the Boulder crews developed their rock-working skills. But most importantly, they fine-tuned the art of working together, channeling passion and newly learned skills to make the trail more sustainable and to guide hikers through a landscape with care and intention. And, less tangibly, they also learned lessons about life that can never be taught in a classroom.*



# Rocky Mountain National Park Puzzler

## Across

1. Rocky is home to one snake species, the western terrestrial \_\_\_\_\_ snake (*Thamnophis elegans*), which is one species of snake that can tolerate cooler temperatures.
3. 70 million years ago, the Rockies began to form with the first stages of \_\_\_\_\_ uplift.
7. Cheatgrass, woolly mullein and Canada thistle are all examples of \_\_\_\_\_ plant species in the park.
11. President that signed the Rocky Mountain National Park Act in 1915.
12. A decrease in the abundance of butterflies and other flying insects is known as the \_\_\_\_\_ phenomenon.
15. Lime-colored \_\_\_\_\_ grows on rocks in the park, although the urine of small mammals can turn it orange.
18. The Conservancy donated the Arrow Gold GIS to Rocky to enhance plowing \_\_\_\_\_.
20. Animals that remain active in RMNP during the winter are called \_\_\_\_\_.

21. In the mid- to late 1800s, there were two main guides in the Estes Park region. One was named Griffith Evans, and the other, a reportedly dashing gentleman who is described in Isabella Bird's writings, was commonly known as Rocky Mountain \_\_\_\_\_.

22. Large \_\_\_\_\_ clouds are formed by the heat and winds from fires.

## Down

2. Hi-tech backcountry \_\_\_\_\_ were installed at Chasm Junction this summer, with funding courtesy of the Conservancy.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ is a type of rock found in the park that is capable of storing natural gas.

5. The original Cree word that gave the park its "Rocky Mountain" moniker.

6. The park \_\_\_\_\_ is an essential tool for restoration projects and ecosystem preservation in Rocky.

8. For 25 years, the park has been conducting research on this most fluttery of species in the park.

9. Elizabeth \_\_\_\_\_ became the first woman nature guide to Longs Peak.

10. A popular ice-climbing destination that can be reached from Fern Lake Trailhead.

11. In the early 1900s, \_\_\_\_\_ and grizzly bears were hunted to local extinction.

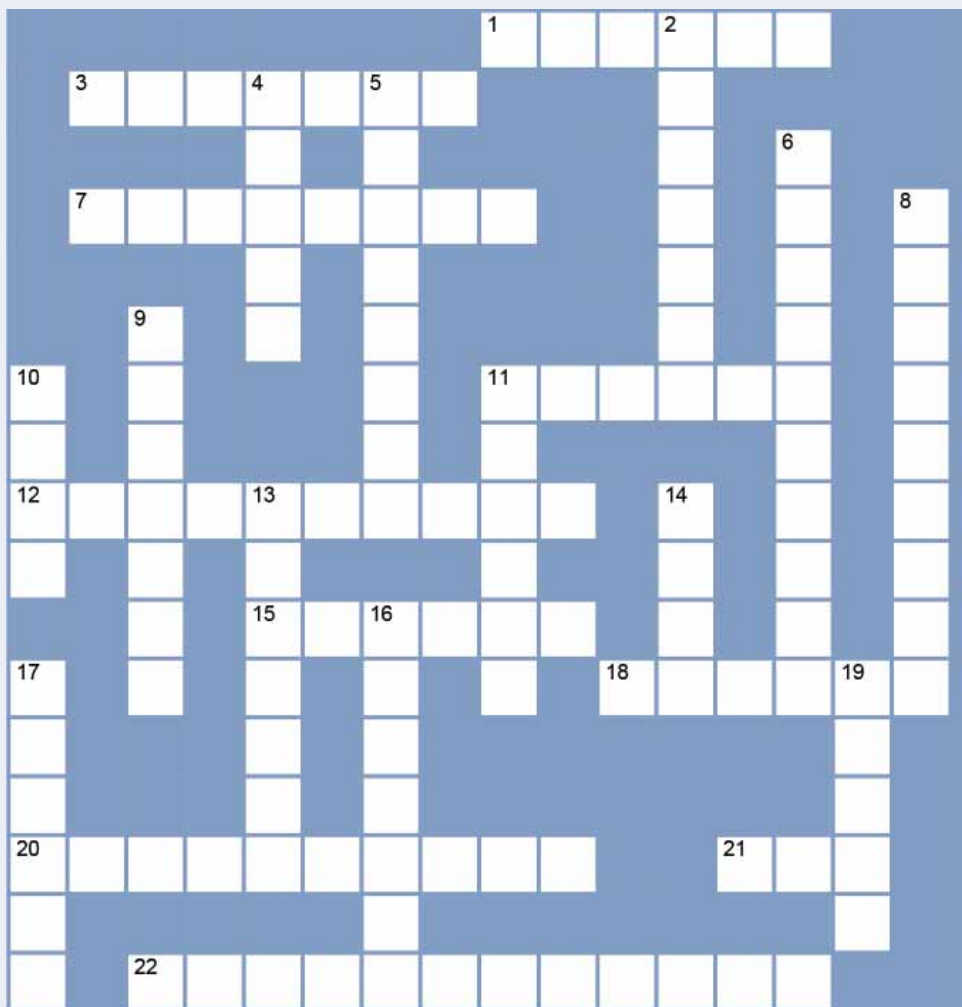
13. The closest hot springs to Rocky where Native Americans might have relaxed, is Hot \_\_\_\_\_ Springs, in Kremmling, Colorado.

14. The infamous character Pikachu was based on this small mammal.

16. The white-tailed ptarmigan exhibits camouflage in its plumage, otherwise known as \_\_\_\_\_ coloration.

17. These sites measure the snowfall and other winter conditions to assess water supply and management throughout 11 western states, with 6 in RMNP.

19. The \_\_\_\_\_ trail is located outside of RMNP in Estes Park that the Conservancy's Conservation Corps crew worked on this summer as part of the Conservancy's mission to provide stewardship opportunities to youth during the COVID pandemic.



*The Rocky Mountain Conservancy expresses special thanks to the following people for their donations supporting Rocky Mountain National Park: June 25, 2020 – September 29, 2020*

**Total gifts: 416 | Total donations: \$121,071**



## **BAILEY RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP FUND**

Leslie Fidel Bailey Charitable Trust, Denver, CO

## **BEST USE**

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Patrick Albritton, Colorado Springs, CO

Mary and James Alfred, La Grange Park, IL

Shannon Allen, Northglenn, CO

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AmazonSmile Foundation, Seattle, WA

Courtney Appel-Sadler, Parker, CO

Peter Argendorf, Arvada, CO

Robin Arguedas, Pueblo West, CO

Carol Arnold, Estes Park, CO:

**In memory of Rachel Williams**

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Randy and Nina Cleveland, Fort Worth, TX

Andy Bachmann, Boulder, CO

Tyler Behunin, Fort Collins, CO

The Benevity Community Impact Fund/Apple, Inc.

The Benevity Community Impact Fund/

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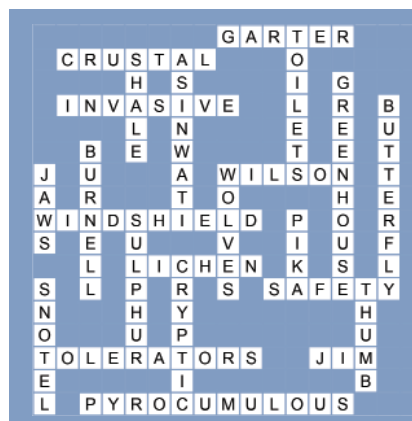
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## Park Puzzler Solution



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## Window to the World

Continued from page 1

*“Having a family ups the urgency to try and make this world a better place for my kids because I think beyond my own lifetime now.”*

— Tommy Caldwell

temperature, 3.4 degrees within the last century, is taking its toll on the park’s fragile ecosystem. Tommy sees less green on the rock face of the Diamond these days. The warmer and drier climate has shortened the growing season for native plants while creating more favorable conditions for invasive species. And then there are the dead trees. With warmer winters, the cycle of beetle infestations has become more intense and has affected huge swaths of the forest, leaving heavy loads of fuel for wildfire. Should temperatures exceed 70 degrees in the park’s alpine tundra at 11,000 feet, the long-term survival of the pika will forever be at risk.

At Yosemite Valley, home to the famed granite monolith where Tommy captivated the world with his tenacious free climb of the Dawn Wall at El Capitan, and later breaking the two-hour speed record on the Nose route, Tommy has witnessed the profound effect of climate change here as well. The prime climbing season has shifted from October to November, and snow rarely blankets the valley floor. Instead, he sees the desert taking over. Elsewhere in the world, Tommy warns of mountains that are thawing out for the first time in human history, making them unstable for climbing.

“Climate change is a big threat that is going to accelerate drastically throughout my lifetime,” he says. “In some ways, the higher altitudes and more fragile landscapes will see these effects disproportionately.”

By the time Tommy and climbing partner Alex Honnold set out from Tommy’s home in Estes Park in July to establish a new 17-peak, 35-mile alpine challenge from Mount Meeker to Notchtot Mountain, Tommy’s Instagram following had surpassed 750,000. His posts are filled with powerful images of outdoor adventures

from near and far. Interspersed within those images are alarming accounts about the effects of global warming.

Tommy’s foray into environmental activism took hold about five years ago when he was invited to participate in Climb the Hill, a two-day lobbying surge on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The event was sponsored by the Access Fund, a nonprofit organization based in Boulder, Colorado, that brings together climbers, along with representatives from the outdoor industry, to advocate for environmental causes. “When they asked me to go the first time, I said ‘politics is the last thing I want to get involved in,’” Tommy recalls. He told them he lived his life in the outdoors and that he hated wearing a suit. Still, curious, Tommy decided to attend the event and says it opened his eyes to the monumental impact policy decisions can have on the environment, especially public lands. From there, he was hooked.

Today, the climbing aficionado serves as a global sports activist for Patagonia and regularly joins the American Alpine Club, Access Fund, and Protect Our Winters organizations in advocating for policy changes in Washington. Together,



Tommy Caldwell speaking before the U.S. Senate in DC.

Photo courtesy Access Fund/Stephen Gosling



Tommy and his family: from left, Ingrid, Rebecca, Fitz and Tommy.

Caldwell Collection

## Conservancy Publishes Spanish *Wild Inside: RMNP*

these organizations have given the climbing community a powerful platform to advocate for climate protection and to speak out against global warming.

Tommy takes great pride in nurturing relationships with both Democrats and Republicans, and is especially impressed with this year's bipartisan passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, which will fully fund the government's Land and Water Conservation Fund and direct critical dollars toward maintenance backlogs at RMNP and the other national parks. He has since been entrenched in efforts to protect the National Arctic Wildlife Refuge and Bears Ears National Monument from oil and gas extraction. He brings deeper meaning to these causes by taking part in adventure-based outings to these public lands where his larger-than-life, first-hand accounts are leveraged to help advocate change.

Closer to home, outings in Rocky Mountain National Park have become more reflective, especially when he, and wife Becca, are with their young children, ages four and seven. "Having a family ups the urgency to try and make this world

a better place for my kids because I think beyond my own lifetime now," says Tommy. One of the family's favorite daytrips is on the trail to Emerald Lake and on up to Chaos Canyon where Tommy and his dad helped revolutionize the sport of bouldering. "One great thing about climbing is you spend all day in these places, and then you go back to the same place day after day and even year after year, so it really creates a deeper intimacy, and it's cool that it has fostered that in our kids, too."

While the pandemic has kept him closer to home, Tommy has been making the most of it. "It's crazy, after having lived here for almost 30 years that I'm still seeing parts of the park that are so beautiful." A new linkup adventure is being contemplated that will take him from Longs Peak across the Continental Divide to Nederland. It's called the LA Freeway. "I think you've got to love the world before you want to save it, and places like Rocky Mountain National Park are the best classrooms for that." For Tommy Caldwell, it has been his window to the world.



The Conservancy is delighted to announce a new publication: *Silvestre Por Dentro RMNP!* Through a unique partnership, this edition was translated by students at the Estes Park High School. The first English board book was published in 2016, and it was a natural segue to make this book available for Spanish-speaking kids as well. Stewardship begins early, and the introduction of nature and Rocky Mountain National Park to all kids is our goal. *Silvestre Por Dentro RMNP* is available in our Nature Stores in the park, and online at [RMConservancy.org](http://RMConservancy.org).

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# Rocky Mountain Conservancy

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*Pint-sized social distancing on the Sprague Lake accessible trail*

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## Nature Notes

An early cold snap with enough snow to be alarming (seriously? September 8?) caused many hummingbirds to wait impatiently for feeders to be put out, according to former RMNP Wildlife biologist Gary Miller • Conservancy Administration Director Carolyn Carlson and her husband Kent were hiking the Ute trail one morning in August after catching the sunrise at Rainbow Curve and found spectacular clusters of snowy white columbine just off the trail near Tombstone Ridge. They also found some dense groupings of purple fringe and cornflower blue sky pilot wildflowers that were tucked in the rocks of Ute meadow. This definitely ranked as one of their favorite wildflower hikes of the season • RMNP Colorado River District Interpretive Ranger Alicea Powell was hiking with her husband on the Colorado River Trail, and they were using *Seek*, an iNaturalist app, to help identify plants and wildflowers along the way. She spotted something that looked like some animal hair that had gotten snagged on a stick, but upon further investigation discovered that it was a unique lichen appropriately named *burred horsehair lichen* • Conservancy Development Assistant Victoria Johnson spotted a loyal Conservancy member at an Estes Park gas station who was sporting a Conservancy hat and a Conservancy face mask. What a thrill to see this species out in the wild! • On an early morning hike to Lake Haiyaha in late summer, Interpretive Ranger Kathy Brazelton stooped to closely inspect a wildflower, and a dark-eyed junco flushed, nearly hitting her smack on the nose. Unwittingly, she had come upon a nest with three nestlings tucked into the undergrowth • On the same

hike, Kathy and her husband, former RMNP Wildlife Biologist Gary Miller, watched a female northern three-toed woodpecker and her fledgling foraging on a tree trunk. Well, the female was foraging and capturing larvae, then feeding them to her youngster. The young 'un mimicked mom's tapping on the trunk but didn't appear to know why • Gary has also been seeing substantial signs of recent beaver activity off the Kaley Cottages road in the Cub Creek elk enclosures through the summer • In early September, on a hike to Sky Pond, Conservancy member/donor Marlene Borneman observed a number of pika scurrying around with various plants in their mouths to add to their haypiles. One of the most ambitious of them was scurrying back and forth carrying large arrowleaf ragwort stems in its mouth, with the stems so much bigger than the pika itself. It nonetheless somehow managed to get them in its haypile • On a backpack trip near Hutcheson Lakes, Marlene and her Conservancy board member husband Walt observed several pairs of Wilson's warblers feeding on arrowleaf ragwort seeds and wax currants. They were thrilled to see these lovely birds fluttering about • Conservancy member Phyllis Holst was driving on Old Fall River Road in early August where she spotted four bighorn rams that were licking the road. One of them was three-legged lame, not bearing any weight on the right rear. When she got home and reviewed the photos, she noticed that one of the rams was missing the hoof on its right rear. Eventually the four rams started to go up the rocky slope along the road. The lame ram



Conservancy Development Assistant Victoria Johnson was asked by a neighbor whom to contact for an injured bird — turns out the bird was a great-horned owl that she had spotted by its fluttering in the brush. Scott Rashid, founder of CARRI (Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute), collected the bird, and he later reported that it had most likely been hit by a car and that its shoulder had been shattered. The bird was soon thereafter euthanized.

was slow to get up the incline, but the other three rams lined up on the top of the ridge and waited for him to catch up • Wishing health and well-being and kindness to all!

