



QUARTERLY

Spring | 2021



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We couldn't do it without you
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A Love Affair with Longs Peak

by Conservancy Member
Richard Hoffman

I have so many happy memories of traveling up and down the Longs Peak Trail. It all began for me in the early 1960s as a camper at Cheley Camps near Rocky. We climbed Longs Peak via the cables route on the north face when there were actual cables running through large metal eye hooks secured to the granite to guide intrepid climbers of the day. The hike didn't seem that difficult then. More recently, I've climbed up and down this route a number of times, and it's quite a bit more challenging without the cables, especially if there's ice or water dripping down the cracks from the snow patches above. Fortunately, the Park Service left the metal eye hooks in the rock, allowing today's climbers to grab them, or hook an ice axe through them, or rappel from them.

One of the main reasons I love Longs Peak is because there are many interesting routes to the top, and many that can be scrambled, rather than the more technical vertical face that Longs is known for — the Diamond. My favorite way to the top is from Glacier Gorge to the Longs-Pagoda saddle, with a traverse under the Narrows to the bottom of

the Homestretch. From the saddle, the summit of Longs looks completely different from the usual views. And until you reach the Homestretch, there are usually no people on the route. It can be hard on the knees going down this way (or via the Trough), but it's quiet and beautiful.

Another interesting way to the top is the original route led by John Wesley Powell up Keplinger's Couloir on the southwest side of Longs. From Wild Basin, you take the trail to Sandbeach Lake, and then begin improvising since there's no more trail. Do I ascend Mount. Orton, traverse along North Ridge and then descend across swampy ground to the bottom of the couloir? Or, do I bushwhack a mile through the alder bushes to the bottom of the couloir? From the summit of Longs, you can look southwest towards Mount. Copeland and see Sandbeach Lake — it looks far away, and let me assure you that when you're tired, it is.

I once owned a cabin on a private inholding in Wild Basin that has since

Continued on page 14

“We have a lot of work ahead of us, through the Conservancy education programs and as partners of Rocky Mountain National Park.”



A Message from our Executive Director



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Dear Friends,

We are happy to report that after more than a year of pandemic living, the majority of the staff at the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, and many of the Rocky Mountain National Park staff, have received their COVID-19 vaccinations, conferring a glimmer of cautious optimism about a more normal summer just around the bend. We’ve tentatively resumed some meetings with each other, and with you, our friends and donors, on patios and picnic tables around the park and in our communities. Even so, we’ll admit that we can’t wait for a time when we can meet together, AND not have to remind each other to do tick checks after the meeting (the true peril of outdoor meetings in Estes Park), and perhaps even give each other a true embrace or handshake.

Despite these minor complaints, I am energized by the momentum of the Conservancy Board’s ad hoc Education Committee, currently re-envisioning and planning the next iteration of the Field Institute, which, in the aftermath of the pandemic and wildfires, we expect to emerge like a phoenix, stronger than ever in delivering quality programming that is true to our educational mission. We have a lot of work ahead of us, through the Conservancy education programs and as partners of Rocky Mountain National’s Park Education Program, to address the “deferred education” of the many kids (and their teachers) we serve. In particular, we intend to focus on those we work with in Title 1 schools on the Front Range, ensuring that all kids in Colorado have equitable access to learning about the amazing public lands in their midst.

This summer, too, we are delighted to be scaling our Conservation Corps Program back to full operating levels in Rocky Mountain National Park and the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests, putting more than 40 young adults into the wilds to work in areas recovering from recent fires, and promoting forest health to help mitigate the potential of devastating fire in these wild places and communities in the future.

We hope to see many of your faces this spring or summer on the trails, or over a cup of coffee, so don’t be a stranger and stop by the office if you’re in the area. But please, don’t forget to check for ticks after our meeting.

Warmly,



Estee

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

Was there a lot of mortality among native bird species during the extended cold spell in early 2021? The question applies not only to the birds that overwinter in RMNP, but to those native species that migrate to Texas and northern Mexico. Will we notice a difference when spring arrives?

It won't be surprising if the extreme cold and snow in Texas and surrounding areas will have caused greater than usual bird mortalities. Insectivorous migrants particularly likely will have had a very tough time, especially if their energetic reserves were too depleted to allow them to fly to areas with more food sources. Regarding our summer residents, migration patterns from the e-bird website (<https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends/abundance-animations>) indicate that mountain bluebirds, kinglets, yellow-rumped warblers, American pipit, hermit and Swainson's thrushes, for example, were likely in substantial numbers in the impacted areas and thus at risk. Wilson's and MacGillivray's warblers, flycatchers and swallows are among species that probably hadn't yet arrived in the major storm areas to a great degree on their northward journeys. The annual Fish and Wildlife Service's Breeding Bird Survey, the crowd-sourced e-bird dataset and monitoring efforts by Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, may provide insight into the overall effect on bird populations in a few months, but other factors (long-term population declines, wildfires, last fall's dieoffs in SW Colorado, etc.) will confound an attempt to quantify effects of that storm specifically. Like all wildlife, bird species have evolved attributes (longevity, clutch size, etc.) that allow them to recover from periodic high mortality within the context of long-term normal variation of weather ("climate"). However, as science repeatedly and consistently shows, the abnormally extreme variation we see nowadays is cause for concern. Will species be able to evolutionarily adapt rapidly enough to win the race against this more unpredictable climate chaos in order to persist? — *Retired RMNP Wildlife Biologist Gary Miller*

What are the plans for the future of Cascade Cottages?

No decision has been made about the future use of Cascade Cottages. In 2018, the park engaged the public to find out what options for future use seemed viable, including Youth Conservation Corps seasonal housing, youth and volunteer outdoor education, mothballing the structures, and removing the structures entirely and restoring the site. Over the last few years, the park has been conducting inventories of the property, including studying cultural and natural resources and conducting condition assessments on the buildings and utilities. Rocky Mountain Conservancy board members and park staff have met several times to review the data and discuss options. The entire process slowed in 2020 due to COVID, fires and other more pressing issues. — *RMNP Park Planner Cheri Yost*

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Junior Rangers enjoy the fun activities available at the Junior Ranger Headquarters at Hidden Valley.



by
Shannon Roberts,
RMNP Education
Technician

Rocky Mountain National Park Junior Ranger Program News

Programming for 2021 is underway, with winter Junior Ranger activities already in place at Hidden Valley.



Rocky's new wooden Junior Ranger badge

Rocky Mountain National Park's Education and Outreach program is gearing up for a summer of fun family activities at the Junior Ranger Headquarters at Hidden Valley. This summer's COVID-friendly program plans will look different from past years, featuring self-guided adventures for family groups as well as engaging pop-up ranger talks.

As we all know, 2020 was a challenging year. And providing quality visitor services on the front lines of Rocky Mountain National Park was not exempt. And yet, while interacting with visitors looked different during this season, rangers were able to provide more than 15,000 Junior Ranger activity books and badges at informal contact stations throughout the park, all funded by our partner, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy.

And while Rocky's rangers were hamstrung from offering traditional youth programming at the Junior Ranger Headquarters, we were thrilled to provide the next generation of park stewards with supplemental Junior Ranger discovery packs. These green backpacks were filled with scientific tools to enhance exploring and investigations as the kids worked through their Junior Ranger books.

It was so fun to see these little green backpacks all over the park.

As frosting on the cake, the Rocky Mountain National Park Junior Ranger badge also received a makeover for 2021. The updated badge is made of wood instead of plastic, which is much more aligned with the park's environmental goals. Responses from Junior Rangers have been overwhelmingly positive about the new badge, and the kids seem to enjoy both the natural feel and the updated design.

Programming for 2021 is underway, with winter Junior Ranger activities already in place at Hidden Valley. Spring break brought families packed into cars, bundled up and ready to sled at Hidden Valley. Families were also given an opportunity to combine learning and exploration with recreation. Junior Rangers were greeted by park rangers and volunteers, who welcomed them to explore, learn and protect Rocky Mountain National Park by completing self-guided activities focusing on winter animal survival. Each group was loaned a winter detective kit containing thermometers, hand lenses, animal track identification guides, and activity guides. Working together, groups were able to

(Continued on page 5)

A Seasonal Ranger's Tale Making Dreams Come True

by Shelley Hall,
Conservancy Member



A new season and new beginnings are happening in Rocky Mountain National Park. Granted, 2021 may not involve the historically “typical” season planning, but certain elements, like seasonal hiring, remain the backbone of a successful season. Meet Zach Crowl, one of the new seasonal Visitor Protection rangers hired to work in Rocky this summer.

Zach hails from Hickory, North Carolina, where he received a degree in recreation management with a focus on parks and recreation from Appalachian State University, in Boone, North Carolina. There, he took specific classes that applied to his interest in parks, and after graduating, several certifications were required to be eligible for law enforcement positions in the national parks, which include the National Park Seasonal Academy and the Federal Law Enforcement Academy, each a five-month commitment. The Federal program, however, is only available to law enforcement seasonals who have worked at least one year, and who have since been hired in a full-time capacity, bringing the total training requirement to almost two years.

National park employees are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and interests. For Zach, it started in college. “I’ve always enjoyed action sports, and I saw a picture of a ranger on a snowmobile my freshman year of college,” he said. His first job as a ranger was working as a limited-commission ranger for two seasons with Colorado Parks & Wildlife at State Forest State Park in Gould, Colorado, issuing park passes, misdemeanors and fishing licenses. His second season there was on the trail crew.

He then went to the Niobrara National Scenic River in north-central Nebraska as a Visitor and Resource Protection Ranger where he worked as a river ranger. Next he worked at Sylvan Lake State Park in Eagle, Colorado, as a Park Resource Technician, and beginning on May 1 of this year, Zach started as a seasonal Visitor and Resource Protection Ranger in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Zach is into running, skiing and mountain biking, so this job in Rocky sounds like a good fit. He will be living and working in the Colorado River District on the park’s west side, and he’s looking forward to making some good



memories. “My first job experience as an NPS law enforcement ranger was rather comical,” he explained. “While patrolling (floating) the Niobrara River, I initiated a conversation with some fellow canoers who had dropped a water bottle that was floating away downstream. Upon retrieving the bottle with the intent to return it, I tipped my canoe, drenching not only myself but also all my NPS gear, including my radio, first-aid bag, maps, duty belt, boots, binoculars, lunch and more. There I was, standing in waist-deep water, soaked head to toe, handing the oh-so-valuable water bottle back to the canoers.” Despite (or maybe because of) this initial “submerging” into the real world of park rangers and visitor protection, he quickly fell in love with the job. Having a good laugh with the visitors and his co-workers at his own expense has proven to be a wonderful memory.

explore the natural wonders at Hidden Valley at their own pace. Tracks were in abundance, and explorers also found other animal signs and many holes in the snow. Junior Rangers and their groups then returned their borrowed kits and were invited to share their discoveries with the rangers — fun for all!

This coming summer season will bring exciting new pop-up style ranger programming to Junior Ranger Headquarters. Pop-ups are short interactions where visitors stumble on an opportunity to learn about a resource, share their experiences, and connect more deeply with a place. Beginning May 23, a team of rangers and volunteers will begin presenting

programs tailored specifically for Junior Rangers and their families, covering a wide variety of topics such as black bears, alpine tundra, forest fire ecology, and Leave No Trace ethics. The pop-up programming at Hidden Valley will be specially designed to be engaging for our youngest visitors.

As 2021 progresses and our lives are slowly getting back to normal, the staff at Junior Ranger Headquarters are grateful for our continued partnership with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. Together we are making it possible for Junior Rangers and their families to find fun and educational activities to enjoy their national park together.

For more information about these academies, check out the links listed below:

<https://bit.ly/2QC9nu1>

<https://bit.ly/3alen7f>

<https://bit.ly/3gGTxZG>

Learn more about the history of park rangers:

RANGER: The Journal of the Association of National Park Rangers
at: <https://bit.ly/3h2HCWD>

Mill Creek Trail bridge burned by the East Troublesome Fire that is slated for repairs

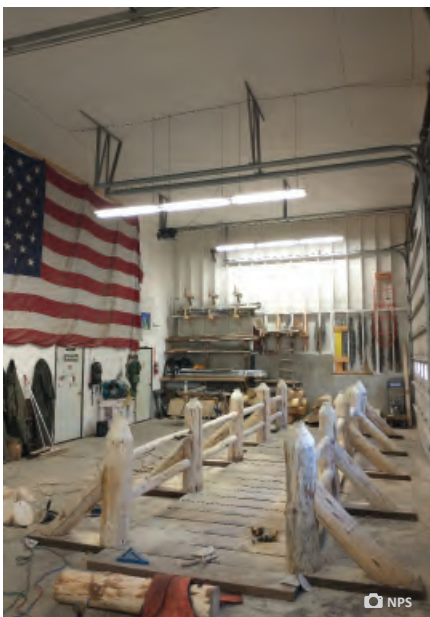


by
Doug Parker,
RMNP Trails Crew
Supervisor

East Troublesome Fire Fallout

Rocky's Trail Crew Gearing Up With Bridge Construction

A total of 18% of the park trails have been affected by the East Troublesome Fire burn, and some of those areas are very remote.



Corral Creek bridge partially completed in the Trail Crew Shop

The park's Trail Crew has had a busy winter season that has flown by as we prepare to tackle the immense workload created by the East Troublesome Fire event that occurred this last fall in the park.

The focus this winter has been the replacement of the 20 park bridges that were lost in the fire. The winter trail crew has been gathering materials and using data records and photos to rebuild the bridges in the park's trail shop. Once the bridges were completed in the shop, the crew then applied an environmentally friendly preservation treatment to ensure that the bridges will last for many years to come. After this preservation treatment, the crews disassembled the bridges and bundled them into loads for transportation by helicopter. This summer, all major bridges will be flown into the park wilderness to be rebuilt onsite. This process will increase efficiency toward re-opening park trails and providing safe water crossings for users.

Unfortunately, the Colorado River District Trail Crew lost their barn and tool-storage buildings in the fire. Quite a bit of planning and

thought has gone into how we will replace our tool, camping and equipment inventory and how we will ultimately store these items. Until a permanent barn structure is built, the crews will operate out of two 40' Conex boxes, a setup that features a large shade structure between them. This will allow an area for the park's animal packing operation storage, and an area for Trail Crew storage, in addition to the hay for livestock which will be stored between the boxes.

Going into the summer and to begin the process of assessing and reopening park trails, the crew's focus will be to hike all trails and remove fallen trees and any other obstructions on the trails, replace bridges and stabilization control for structures where most needed. Assessments will enable us to formulate a plan moving forward post-fire. Most of the burned trails were unable to be properly assessed post-fire due to the snow and other weather that occurred following the fire in the fall, and we anticipate some additional damage that may occur on the trails after spring runoff.

Visitors hiking in the park this

summer can expect to see park crews begin their post-fire recovery project work on the Fern Lake Trail, Cub Lake Trail and Mill Creek Basin areas on the east side of the park, and the North Inlet Trail on the west side.

Other Planned Work

Despite the huge fire recovery workload, there are still other priorities and projects that the trail crew is planning to take on this year. On the east side, crews will continue improving the Longs Peak Trail. Two crews will be camped on the mountain this summer, making improvements between Battle Mountain Campsite junction and Chasm Junction. There will also be some finishing work completed near the Boulderfield from the previous year's project.

The Colorado River Trail Crew will

make improvements to the Colorado River Trail on a severely rutted and failing switchback just a few hundred yards from the trailhead. This work will take place later in the season once visitation has slowed and crews can focus on the repairs, post-fire assessments and stabilization.

A total of 18% of the park trails have been affected by the burn, and some of those areas are very remote. We don't yet have a defined workload, but the uncertainty brings anticipation. We have hired full Park Service crews, and we also will have four conservation corps crews in our teams, including a Rocky Mountain Conservancy – Conservation Corps crew assisting us this year, so we are fully staffed and ready. We look forward to the challenge and opportunity of repairing and improving these trails for the future.



Burned Green Mountain Trail Bridge on the park's west side

Conservancy Helps Fund RMNP Graphic Designer

Welcome back to Aubry Andreas, who, as a previous Conservancy-supported Community Volunteer Ambassador through AmeriCorps Stewards, has rejoined Rocky's staff as a Conservancy-funded graphic designer.

Aubry grew up in Buena Vista, Colorado, and graduated from the University of Denver with a degree in International Studies, French and Geography. During her time at Denver University, Aubry completed international research courses that piqued her interest in conservation and sustainable tourism, and her love of photography was nurtured studying abroad in Paris.

After graduation, Aubry worked in the horticulture division at the Denver Zoo before moving to France to teach English for a year. She then returned to the States and accepted a media internship at Shenandoah National Park. Her next adventure was as the Community Volunteer Ambassador at Rocky where she created a series of training modules for the park's volunteer supervisors.

In her new role with Rocky, Aubry will be assessing, reviving and replacing interpretive wayside panels throughout the park to enhance the visitor experience. "I also hope to make the signage more accessible, so that people from all walks of life can more readily learn about the park," she said.

Aubry is also a big fan of ferns, so imagine her excitement when she learned there was a Fern Lake in the park!

Rocky Education Ranger
Kathleen Ferguson
presenting an education
video for students



by Katie Phillips,
RMNP Education
Program Manager

Rocky's Distance-Learning Education Program Thrives in Pandemic Conditions

Rocky's Education program is proud to be able to continue to connect with students, Rocky's future park stewards, that otherwise may never have had the opportunity to visit Rocky Mountain National Park or participate in any field trips this school year.

**Support the park's
education program through
the Next Generation Fund
[RMConservancy.org](https://www.rmconservancy.org)**

Distance learning programs are a fresh, fun and interactive take on the traditional classroom setting. Through this medium, Rocky rangers challenge students to get up and move while they learn, collaborate with their peers, and explore their national park together. Teachers across the country rave about the level of engagement presented through the screen by rangers.

We are proud that Rocky Mountain National Park was already home to an existing and well-established Distance Learning branch of the education programming tree prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This past fall, as our local students could not safely crowd onto a bus and visit Rocky, it was distance learning to the rescue!

Through basic video conferencing platforms, 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 award-winning, 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 classroom or a student at home is to have access to a webcam, projector, and computer with a good internet connection.

Distance Learning programs are free, offered nationwide and worldwide, year-round. Prior to the worldwide transition to online learning, Rocky's distance learning programming was already serving thousands of learners each year and was primed for this school year to arrive. To date, this school year alone, Rocky's rangers have virtually visited more than 140 classrooms and seen more than 3,000 students in locations across the country and the world, including, Vermont, Colorado, California, Georgia, Wisconsin, Montana and British Columbia — just to name a few.

None of these experiences would be possible without the support of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Next Generation Fund (NGF). The Education Technicians and Interns funded through NGF assist with planning and presenting these exceptional distance-learning programs.

Rocky's Education program is proud to be able to continue to connect with students, Rocky's future park stewards, that otherwise may never have had the opportunity to visit Rocky Mountain National Park or participate in any field trips this school year. We look forward to continuing to expand the reach of these programs to continue inspire students — near and far.



Welcome to Conservancy Stewardship Director Ian Stafford



In early April, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy welcomed Ian Stafford to the team as its new stewardship director. Ian was born and raised in Charlotte, North Carolina, and growing up, like many kids in the Piedmont Region of the state, playing in creeks and deciduous forests was home. He obtained his undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, where he studied recreation management and focused on outdoor adventure and outdoor education.

Since 2005 Ian has worked in the outdoor industry in a number of capacities. He has taught outdoor education, built nature-based canopy tours, helped organize endurance events, and has focused his career on the goal of helping get as many people outdoors as possible. He brings strong experience in the field from his time with Sanborn Western Camps (SWC) for more than seven years. In that capacity he became well versed in backcountry trip development in Colorado, and helped develop a service-oriented program for high school leaders.

While working at SWC, Ian became aware of the importance of policy and advocacy as it pertains to public lands. In 2017, Ian enrolled at

Colorado University, Boulder, to gain his master's degree in Environmental Policy, focusing his work on how the outdoor industry can take a larger role in policy development at all levels of government.

Since 2017, Ian has worked with Outdoor Industry Association, the State of Colorado, and American Whitewater on different policy and access issues.

Ian is excited to be serving as the Conservancy's stewardship director because it will allow him to work closely with on-the-ground conservation work, as well as be involved in public lands policy. He has always been an admirer of the Conservation Corps, and is thrilled to work with young professionals entering the conservation workforce, as well as making a positive impact on the natural world through the different projects with which the Corps will be engaged.

Outside of his professional life, it is very common to find Ian outdoors on his bike, in a raft, or simply sitting under a tree plucking his banjo or reading a comic book. He has an insatiable penchant for southern cooking and has recently perfected his fried chicken recipe. He is a genuine people person, and always welcomes a conversation.

The 2021 Conservation Corps will work on a wide variety of projects this summer, including trail maintenance, wildfire mitigation, and recreational access. Along with the hard skills they will gain, they will also work on leadership and professional development to better prepare them for a future in the natural resources and outdoor industry.

**Support the Conservation
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Rocky Mountain Conservancy Park Puzzler

Across

1. A congregation of female elk during the mating season is called a _____.
5. Most woodpeckers have _____ feet with two toes facing forward and two facing backward.
7. In the winter, black bears enter a state of prolonged dormancy called _____.
8. Along with Yellowstone National Park, Rocky is one of two national parks with a Sound _____.
9. Passerines, also known as _____ or songbirds, are the most diverse group of birds in the park and include sparrows, finches, wrens, dippers, thrushes, warblers, crows, jays, swallows and more.
13. Most fires in Rocky are caused by _____. The second most common cause is lightning.
15. The western tanager is a _____ migrant. During the winter they can be found in Rocky's sister park, Monteverde Cloud Forest National Park, in Costa Rica.
17. At 11,796', the _____ Visitor Center holds the title as the highest-elevation visitor center in the National Park Service.
18. A whopping 94.9% of the park is designated _____, an appellation that can only be bestowed as an act of Congress.
19. A _____ pinecone will burst open in extreme heat, releasing seeds to replant forests after wildfires.

Down

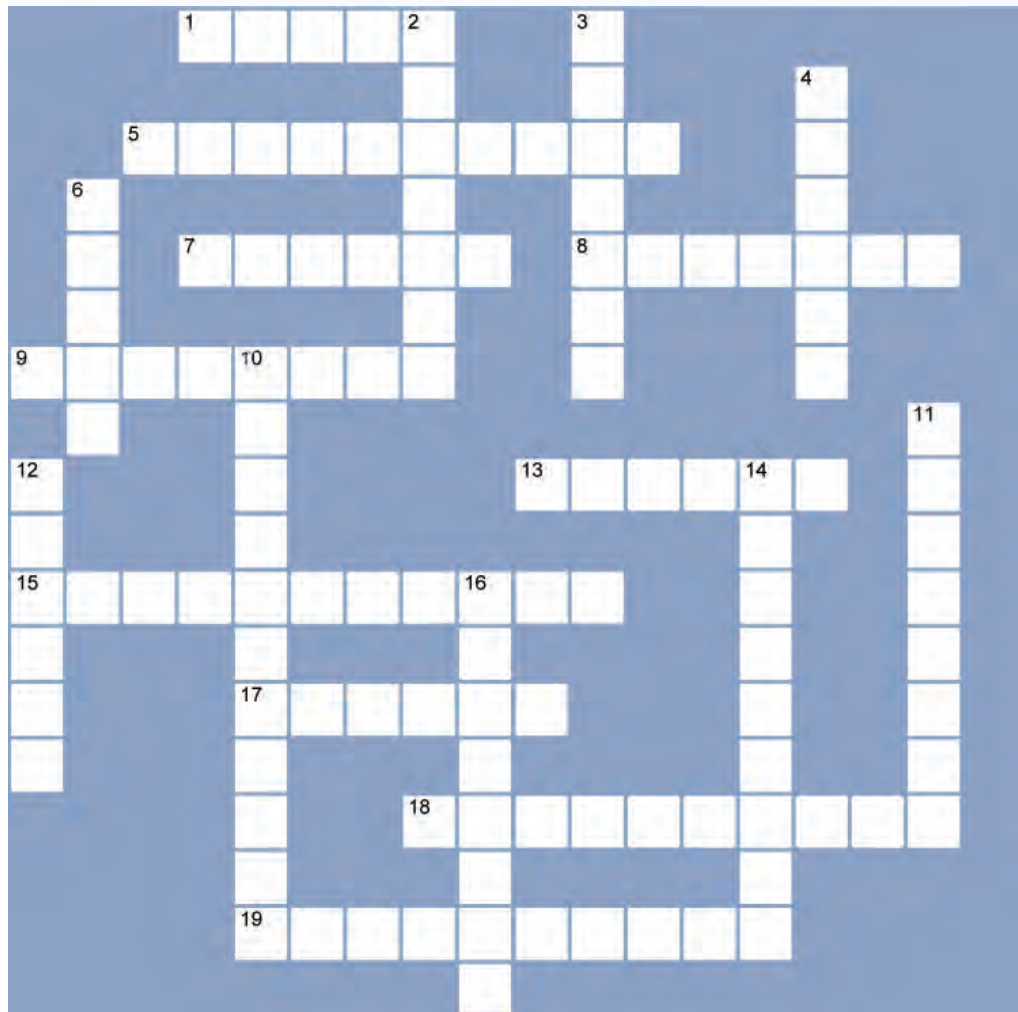
2. Many Parks Curve on Trail Ridge Road is named for the "parks" or _____ that can be seen

from the overlook. These include Horseshoe Park, Upper Beaver Meadows, and Moraine Park.

3. The brightening of the night sky over inhabited areas known as _____ affects 80% of the world's population. Remote parts of Rocky, however, offer opportunities to escape light pollution altogether.
4. The Conservancy now has a fun interactive _____ Map on its website to highlight past fundraising projects accomplished.
6. After giving birth, a mother elk will eat surrounding dirt, placenta, and even her young's _____ to hide any scent from predators.
10. Marmots are true _____ that

can sleep for up to 200 days a year, taking a breath only once or twice a minute.

11. _____, structures built by the historical Ute and Arapaho, are the oldest human-made structures in Rocky.
12. April 17 is an annual fee-free day in the park to celebrate National _____ Ranger Day.
14. Bighorn sheep are known to gather at Sheep Lakes to obtain _____ from this natural mineral lick.
16. The three miles leading up to Chasm Falls on Old Fall River Road were built by state _____ using only hand tools.



*The Rocky Mountain Conservancy expresses special thanks
to the following people for their donations supporting Rocky
Mountain National Park: January 13, 2021 – April 16, 2021*

Total gifts: 627 | Total donations: \$260,540



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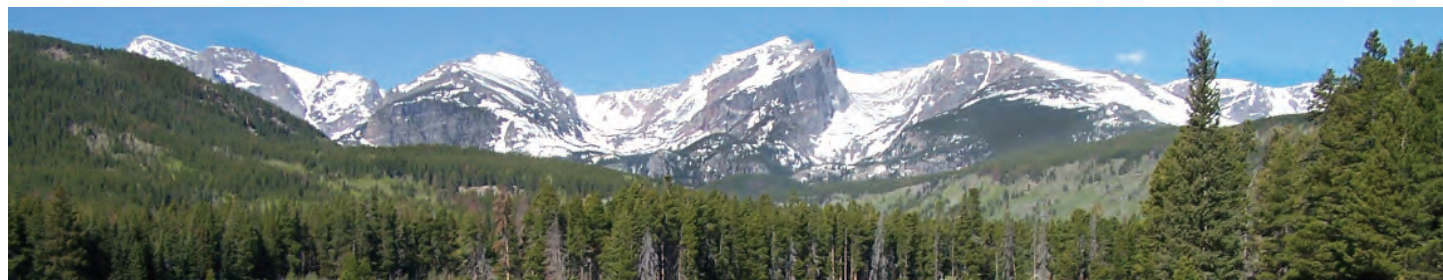
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Longs Peak Love Affair

Continued from page 1

been acquired by the Rocky Mountain Conservancy and the Wilderness Land Trust and gifted to the park. From there, I ascended Longs by starting at the normal trailhead, climbing from the Chasm Lake Trail to the Loft, then following the Clark's Arrow route to the base of the Homestretch. I descended via Keplinger's Couloir, traversed over to Mount Orton and Sandbeach Lake, then walked down the hill to where I could cut to my cabin. I walked in the door, had a seat, and drank a beer. That was the best way to end that long day.

Of course, the Longs Peak Trail also leads to Chasm



Lake and to Mount Meeker. Starting in the middle of the night, from Chasm Lake you can circle around to the base of Lamb's Slide, and from there to Broadway and on to either Kiener's route or the Notch Couloir route. These two routes are thrilling. I once went by myself up Lamb's Slide and took a break in the early morning sunshine on a boulder at the beginning of Broadway. My plan was to climb Lamb's Slide all the way to the Loft, and then hop over to Meeker. I had thought that Broadway was the top of Lamb's Slide, but it turned out it's only about 2/3 of the way up. By the time I



Photo: Jon Kedrowski

started again, the sun had transformed the snow from nighttime Styrofoam to a soft, slushy consistency. It was neither easy nor straightforward ascending the final 1/3 of the route to the Loft. When I arrived there, I needed a long rest stop with plenty of liquids to regain my strength. The path from the Loft to the summit of Meeker looks like a short uphill bicycle ride, but with wobbly, tired legs and a low internal battery, one definitely needs some willpower to make it.

Another route I've found quite interesting is the Northwest Couloir. From the Keyhole on Longs, you follow the conga line almost to the bottom of the Trough but turn east just before reaching it — "See you soon, fellow standard route climbers!" You enter a quiet and broad couloir that steadily narrows as you ascend. Climb a series of ledges until you reach a seven-foot step and claw your way up the step and then crawl on your knees (after taking off your backpack) through a five-foot tunnel in the rock. A short scramble leads you to the northwest Keyhole ridge and the final scramble to the far western edge of the summit plateau in bright sunshine. Walk east to the expected crowd around the summit cairn where you can frequently observe 40–50 people, each on their cellphone saying some variation of "Guess where I'm at? Where? I'm on top of Longs Peak!"

I've always wished I could observe more wildlife on Longs Peak. So far, I've only seen pikas and marmots and a few birds. One time I descended the Trough all the way



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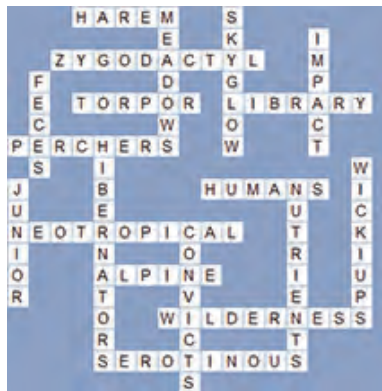


to the upper Glacier Gorge basin beneath Spearhead and suddenly found myself in the middle of 15–20 large elk that I carefully skirted around. Another time I was coming down the gentle west-northwest side of Taylor Peak, where I encountered the same herd just above Andrews Glacier. Fortunately, they parted for me, and I quietly walked down to the head of the glacier.

With all these memories of great experiences on Longs Peak and its surroundings, it was easy to give back to this amazing place by contributing to the Conservancy. This time, I'm supporting Rocky's work to improve the busy trail to Chasm Lake and the Boulderfield, as well as numerous other trail improvements. What a thrill to be part of that effort.

Dr. Richard Hoffman is a former member of the Conservancy's Board of Directors. He has been a lifelong advocate for Rocky, and a generous supporter of the park over the years.

Park Puzzler Solution



Rocky Mountain Conservancy

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES THESE PROJECTS HAPPEN!

• PROJECTS PLANNED FOR 2021 •

- FIRE RESTORATION** (Icon: Tree and flame)
- LONGS PEAK TRAIL IMPROVEMENT** (Icon: Hiker)
- CONSERVATION CORPS** (Icon: Pickaxe and shovel)
- BEAR-PROOF FOOD LOCKERS AT MORaine PARK** (Icon: Bear)
- NEW WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FUND** (Icon: Deer)
- REDESIGN KAWUNEECHE VISITOR CENTER EXHIBITS** (Icon: Visitor center)
- UPGRADED SEARCH AND RESCUE AMBULANCE** (Icon: Ambulance)
- REPAIR AND MAINTAIN POPULAR HIKING TRAILS** (Icon: Shovel)
- BOREAL TOAD REINTRODUCTION** (Icon: Frog)
- FIRST STEPS TO REFURBISH SHADOW MOUNTAIN FIRE LOOKOUT** (Icon: Lookout tower)

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It's never too soon to be thinking about wildflowers — especially the Colorado columbine.

Visit RMConservancy.org
or call 970-586-0108

Nature Notes

It's been a long and winding road to get where we are today, but spring is coming to the mountains and indeed, it's a harbinger of hope • Colorado River District Interpretive Ranger **Alicia Powell** reported that while pine martens visit the Kawuneeche Visitor Center from time to time, she hadn't seen one since the fire, so when she spotted one of these elusive creatures curiously watching her as she raised the visitor center flag, she was elated! • In mid-April, **Rich** and **Sheri Fedorchak** spotted an American kestrel perched on the bighorn sheep wooden cutout that leans against the volunteer kiosk at the Sheep Lakes pull-off • Just as she was reaching to open the door to go out on her deck in Estes Park, Conservancy Publications Director **Nancy Wilson** looked down to see a juvenile bobcat snoozing in the sun on the doormat just outside the door. She watched it for awhile as it groomed itself, familiarly regal, and then it got up and turned in circles before repositioning itself comfortably on the doormat. After a while, another bobcat came onto the deck to check things out, and the sleepy juvenile got up and joined its companion to walk off into the wilds •

Conservancy Development Assistant **Victoria Johnson** and her son Sage were walking in the woods near Estes Park when she felt like they were being watched. She finally spotted a backlit cat silhouette high up on the rocks above them. She immediately put her son on her shoulders and slowly backed away while singing loudly. Once safe, she got in her car to investigate and found the cat still lounging on top of the rocks — and with the help of binoculars discovered it to be a healthy bobcat surveying its territory • RMNP Facility Manager **Danny Basch** has been seeing a plethora of hawks out and about this spring, screaming in the early morning, at dusk, and all day in between, and seeing them circling way up high, battling crows, and feasting on prey • Conservancy Member **Marlene Borneman** was hiking along the edge of Prospect Mountain and noticed that she was not alone. A large group of turkeys followed her in a single line, enjoying their own group hike, it would appear • Rocky is developing a restoration strategy for the Colorado River corridor of the Kawuneeche Valley. The goal of this initiative is to restore riparian hydrology and willow vegetation. Restoration



Conservancy Staff Victoria Johnson

Three-year-old Sage Johnson examines recent tracks in the snow. He's also intrigued by birds of all kinds, and can identify 17 birds by sight, including chickadees, flickers, osprey, great-horned owls and Stellar jays. What an amazing Junior Ranger he is becoming!

will support wildlife habitat, increased biodiversity, and improved water quality and sediment retention. In addition, it will also contribute to drought resilience, flood buffering, natural exotic plant control, and an overall wetter landscape more conducive to managing wildfires • Bluebirds are back and thrilling us all with sudden high contrast flashes of brilliant blue against a drab, wintry background. Here's to SPRING!



Conservancy Member Marlene Borneman