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QUARTERLY

Spring 2023



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RMNP Superintendent Darla Sidles Retires

by Darla Sidle

After more than 33 years with the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, I recently announced my retirement, and my last day as superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) will be June 30. What an adventurous journey this has been!

When I was growing up, Rocky Mountain National Park was the only national park I ever visited with my family, and I remember being thrilled to be here and amazed at the mountain scenery in every direction. Never in a million years did I dream of one day working in such a beautiful place. Many years later when I became Superintendent of Rocky, I felt like my life and career had come full circle. But as I soon learned, Rocky had a few more lessons to teach me!

Arriving in Estes Park in 2016, the RMNP staff and volunteers, the community, and everyone at the Rocky Mountain Conservancy (the Conservancy) gave me such a warm welcome. Just two weeks later, I was honored to help celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. Visitation was rising significantly, continuing to break records each year. I had previously assumed that managing the multitudes of visitors, especially those visiting between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. during peak season months, would be my greatest challenge here at Rocky.

Then, just before the holidays in December of 2018, there was a lapse in federal appropriations, and the federal government shut down for the longest period in its history — 35 days. Parks were instructed to keep the gates open, but only employ a handful of staff, which was woefully inadequate to manage the visitation. We were not authorized to retain staff to clean restrooms, empty trash, or maintain the roads in good order, not to mention any other services that visitors expected. Though that shutdown was the longest to ever occur, it was not an entirely new experience for me since there had been several during my career.

What I could not have predicted, though, was the COVID-19 pandemic. Looking back at it now, it's easy to forget how unprepared we all were and how little information we had as the crisis unfolded. In consultation with the regional and Washington, DC, NPS offices, health authorities, and the gateway communities of Grand Lake and Estes Park, the NPS made the difficult decision to temporarily close the park, as did many other national parks. The decision was made in an unprecedented blink of an eye, with the primary consideration being the safety of our communities, our visitors, and park staff.

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[Darla] has set a very high bar for leadership in our national parks and has made immeasurable positive impact on the multitude of public lands that she has been tasked with stewarding during her decades as a public servant.



A Message from our Executive Director



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Dear Friends,

It's a bittersweet spring this year as we celebrate the accomplishments of Superintendent Darla Sidles during her tenure at Rocky, as well as prepare to bid her farewell in June as she heads off into her new adventures in retirement. I have had the pleasure of working with Darla in various capacities over the past dozen years. She has set a very high bar for leadership in our national parks and has made immeasurable positive impact on the multitude of public lands that she has been tasked with stewarding during her decades as a public servant. She has also made a strong impression on her fellow NPS colleagues and nonprofit partners working alongside here, and I count myself lucky to have sat at the table with her to work through challenging management decisions together, both as an NPS employee and now as a Conservancy partner.

At the first Conservancy board meeting that I attended in February 2017, as incoming executive director in the park meeting space at McLaren Hall, I was struck by the prominent display of all the photos of past park superintendents that graces one wall. Over time, the photos progress from black and white to sepia hues and eventually to contemporary full-color photos, a sign of the evolving technologies in photography, yet what jumped out at me was that every single photo was of a male superintendent, over a century of exclusively male superintendents. As Darla departs, her photo will join this collection of esteemed predecessors, remarkable for its uniqueness, but also notable as another of the countless glass ceilings Darla has broken in her career.

As of this *Quarterly's* printing, I don't know yet who her successor will be, though I have confidence in the NPS leadership that is currently interviewing candidates for the position. Rocky is a gem in the National Park System, a top five most-visited park, with some hefty job expectations. And, at the risk of tooting our own horn here, with a very high performing nonprofit partner, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. I've no doubt of the competition that is broiling to sit as the new leader of this magnificent park.

I will miss working alongside Darla, but I'll have the pot of coffee on for the next superintendent. The staff of the park and the Conservancy will always be changing with time – that's how things work – but the Conservancy's work and its mission is never done. We have promises to keep and miles to go before we sleep.

Warmly,



Estee Rivera Murdock

Estee Rivera Murdock

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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 anne.morris@RMConservancy.org or write: Communications, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, PO Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517.

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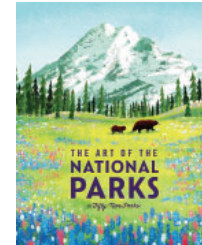
What are coyotes communicating when they start singing, first solo, then as a pack, and then as others join in from wherever they are that can hear them?

Because experimentally testing the “cause-and-effect” of vocalizations isn’t feasible, one can only make educated guesses about the motives of the inscrutable “song dogs” when they decide to cut loose. Among the most commonly suspected purposes, or evolutionary benefits, of vocalizations, across many species are resource partitioning (a fancy way of describing territoriality) and strengthening of social bonds. The late Dr. Phil Lehner, at Colorado State, used spectrographic analysis to identify 11 distinct coyote vocalization patterns, while other researchers have used the same tool to identify specific individuals by their barks, yips and howls. It may be, then, that coyotes can identify others with whom they are familiar (e.g., pack members) or, conversely, “strangers/trespassers” via auditory nuances. In this example, one of a number of hypotheses might be: pack members have become dispersed and one or two individuals have not encountered other “familiar” for a lengthy period. This triggers a “Where are you /here I am” howl which in turn elicits answers from other pack members, and also influences them to assemble. The ensuing group yip-howls could serve as a “roll call” of the individual pack members, reinforcing the integrity of the pack, as each member “reaffirms” its membership. As this intra-pack bonding reinforcement takes place, another pack, perhaps a half mile or more away, hears the vocalizations and responds with group yip-howls, announcing their territorial occupancy. This is an inter-pack information exchange, warning against trespassing. It also serves the purpose of keeping packs dispersed, which mitigates the potential of over-exploitation of the prey base within an area. (i.e. resource partitioning).

— Retired RMNP Wildlife Biologist Gary Miller

What evolutionary advantage does the crossbill finch gain with seems to be such an ungainly appearance?

Perhaps you find their appearance ungainly, but work is work, and this species is well-equipped to do its daily tasks. Imagine your favorite birds carrying a tool kit: what would be in it? Whippoorwill’s gaping beak (see the net?) to catch flying insects; snipe (probe) and wriggling worms in the mud; pelican (bucket or net) and speedy fish, warbler (tiny tweezers) for small seeds, hummingbird (narrow straw) and delicate nectar ... can you see it? A duck can’t eat a mouse, and a hawk can’t slurp flower nectar — each species has the beak and tongue specially adapted to eating its own type of food. The crossbill is ingeniously adapted for its work: opening conifer cones to get to the seeds inside. They start at the bottom of a cone and spiral upward, prying open each scale and removing the seeds with their tongues. The bills can cross in either direction, and the direction of the cross dictates the direction that the bird spirals up the cone. Their scientific name is *Loxia curvirostra*, meaning “finch with curving front beak.” These birds are usually spotted flying in small groups from tree to tree in subalpine forests. In the spring, watch for them in the Upper Beaver Meadows parking lot, where they often gather in the morning to pick up grit from the gravel lot. — Retired RMNP Interpretive Naturalist Kathy Brazelton



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The first Conservation Corps Crew in 2003 with crew leader and program designer Anna Lindstedt (center) and the brand new members.



by Curt Buchholtz,
former RMNA
executive director

You CAN Make a Difference

In 2003, [we] proposed a new program for the park.

We suggested creating a “conservation corps” specifically for Rocky Mountain National Park.

The idea was similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s, except philanthropy, not the government, would drive the program.

Curt giving the 2005 Conservation Corps some perspective with a history tour in the park.



It was August 16, 1988. Massive forest fires were burning in Yellowstone National Park. As a former firefighter, I followed news of those fires for weeks. I felt penned up in my office at Rocky Mountain National Park’s headquarters, but I no longer worked for the government. I had left my firefighting duties in Montana a couple years earlier and accepted a job partnering with the Park Service, serving as director of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, today’s Rocky Mountain Conservancy. Yet on that particular day my past caught up with me.

The phone rang in my office. I was delighted to hear a familiar voice — it was one of my old firefighting buddies. He was still working for the government, specifically at the Park Service regional office in Denver. “We need your help,” he began. “I’m putting together an overhead team and you’ve got more than twenty years’ experience — we need you now!” As you would expect, that was music to my ears. Phone in hand, I now found myself standing up, as if getting ready to leave for Yellowstone momentarily. Without me asking, he added, “I can pay you \$3,000 for two weeks’ work.” I thought I was dreaming, now casting aside any plans I might have had for the rest of August. “Holy catfish!” was all I could say.

Coming back to earth, I hesitated, “Let me check with my wife.” But I already knew what she would say, “Absolutely, go to it!” she would say with a smile.

She’d seen me rush off to fires before, over two decades worth. I knew she’d enjoy seeing that fat paycheck for only two weeks work. Truth be told, she hated the smell of smoke. I knew she’d make me undress outside, not allowing that stink in the house. But she knew the drill. I would be gone for a while, but I was sure of her affirmative response.

But then I thought I better check with Jim Thompson, the park superintendent, so in answer to my buddy, I balked. Though Jim was not my boss, we did work together. I felt obliged to tell him I’d be gone for a couple weeks. Yet, in my mind, I was collecting my gear, heading out the door, excited to tackle those blessed fires.

Jim Thompson is a quiet and thoughtful guy, as savvy as park superintendents can get. He was entering his final decade of public service before retiring, and together we were completing a complex land acquisition project, expanding the park. That deal was in its final stages, and to my way of thinking, the project was wrapped up. My job was to raise the funds, and a final \$20,000 was all that was needed. He didn’t need to remind me about my role. “You are our only fundraiser,” he said. Government folks are not allowed to ask donors for money. “You don’t want to go to Yellowstone,” he began, in a hypnotizing voice. “You’ve been on big fires before,” he said, knowing my history, “You know they are no fun.” Yes, I knew that. “They are total chaos,”

I agreed. "They are the pits!" My plan to fight fires started shattering as I recalled the worst of the bad old days. I retorted, "They're offering \$3,000, and I could really use the cash. We are trying to buy a house."

"You're just turning fifty," Thompson replied. "You have plenty of time to buy a house. Forget those fires. That's just a short-term problem. They don't need you up north. You've got to be thinking long term." He was quiet for minute or two, allowing me to envision the benefits of long-term thinking. He added, "Adding land to the park is a lot tougher than fighting a fire. The opportunity comes along maybe once in a lifetime. We've got to get this deal done or we'll lose it. We're almost there," as if I needed reminding of that final \$20,000 still needed. "Furthermore," he added, "you've done enough fighting fires." He paused, as if for dramatic effect, trumping Yellowstone fires with five words I never forgot: "You can make a difference."

As it turned out, raising that final \$20,000 for the land acquisition took only about a week. The national park gained a sizeable addition of land adjacent to Highway 7, and I enjoyed knowing that the final \$20,000 of funding capped the entire multi-million-dollar project. Indeed, Thompson was right: his long-term focus kept the project on track. Other fire fighters, along with rain and snow, put out those Yellowstone fires. Thompson's appeal for assistance at just the right moment made me feel like the Lone Ranger of fund raisers, there just in the nick of time to save the day.

Fifteen years later, in 2003, philanthropist Bruce Dines and I proposed a new program for the park. We suggested creating a "conservation corps" specifically for Rocky Mountain National Park. The idea was similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of the 1930s, except philanthropy, not the government, would drive the program. We proposed raising \$50,000 to employ a team of six students for a summer of work in the park. Like the CCC, they would tackle a host of projects, like fixing trails, repairing structures, or whatever the park needed. "We expect them to work hard," said Bruce, "Creating sweat equity for the park." Students



2015 Conservation Corps Crew

would learn lessons about conservation in general, government service in particular. Earning a "generous" wage ensured the students could continue their college education.

Raising money for this new program was not difficult and Bruce and I dealt with those details. But, we knew selling this new program to the Park Service would be a challenge. We produced an innocuous proposal as a "pilot program." Our nonprofit organization would recruit and provide the park with six able-bodied college students for a summer's work and pay their wages. The park offered its staff as mentors, provided lodging for the crew, and a six-passenger truck for transportation. The Park Service welcomed this concept as an experiment.

Whether the corps continued in the future depended entirely on its success or failure that summer of 2003. I recall that June day when I met crew leader Anna Lindstedt and members of her crew of five. I was very direct, explaining the importance of that pilot season, warning that this new program would likely be abandoned if something went wrong. Its future was in their hands. And I remember saying those magic words, "You can make a difference." That band of students took the challenge seriously. They completed every project as assigned, and donors were delighted. Park officials were pleased. The second and successive years followed. In 2023, the conservation corps at Rocky Mountain, including its expansion in numbers and inclusion of neighboring national forests, celebrates its 20th season of conservation work. Ensuring its future even more, an endowment fund is the best way to support a continuing program.

A postscript to this story includes the whereabouts of Anna Lindstedt. After leading the first Conservation Corps, she moved to Driggs, Idaho. For the last 19 years, she has worked with Friends of Teton River, a nonprofit conservation group nationally recognized for its scientific rigor and collaborative approach to watershed restoration and water resource management. She started as their education director, transitioned into a fundraising role, and is now their grants director (or CFO — "Chief Financial Oracle," as she likes to say), responsible for securing more than \$2 million in grant funding for watershed improvements each year.

Remarkably, she has kept in touch with some members of that first crew. She noted that one is a horticulturist in Oregon, one served with the Fish and Wildlife Service, another became a K-12 outdoor science educator, and one an environmental engineer. Outcomes like that assure us of the positive power of service work in the outdoors, and the conservation ethic (and life's work) that result. Anna and her crew (as well as every crew since) will be making a difference for a long time to come!

**Support the
Conservation Corps
with your donations to
the Rocky Mountain
Conservancy at
RMConservancy.org, or
call 970-586-0108**



Peter Claussen | Moonscape over the Divide in Rocky Mountain National Park



by Anne Morris,
Conservancy
Communications
Associate

New Communications Team Boosts Conservancy Staff Efforts

“A professional communications team is necessary to share Conservancy events and news consistently and with more depth than the current staff had capacity.”

— Brian Ross, Board President

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy achieved a strategic plan milestone this winter by adding an official Communications department to the Conservancy team.

“One of the best things we can do for our donors and members is to keep them engaged and show how their contributions are being used to protect and enhance our beloved Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP),” said Brian Ross, president of the Conservancy’s Board of Directors.

Keeping the Rocky Mountain Conservancy running as a “lean, mean, conservation machine” in support of Rocky Mountain National Park takes vision and tight hands on the fiscal reins.

This was, as they say, a no-brainer. “A professional communications team is necessary to share Conservancy events and news consistently and with more depth than the current staff had capacity,” Ross added.

Kaci Yoh was hired as the communications manager. Yoh comes to the Conservancy with a background in philanthropy and extensive education and experience in communications, including new media and grant writing. Her most recent position was director of communications at the Estes Park Health Foundation where she oversaw their rebranding, developed a donor stewardship program, and wrote grants.

Assisting Yoh is part-time Communications Associate Anne Morris. Morris served as a public affairs officer in the U.S. Air Force for 26 years. She has a PhD in mass communication and diverse experience

ranging from strategic communication to media relations.

The two began working with the Conservancy in February. Since they started, staff began transitioning responsibilities for the Conservancy website, social media, advertising, print materials, the annual report, media relations, employee communications, and public outreach, including regional and national speaking opportunities.

Yoh and Morris will work to provide information about major Conservancy projects ranging from land acquisition and protection to Conservation Corps rebuilding trails and backcountry campsites lost to the East Troublesome Fire. The team will also promote educational and other quality products available through the Conservancy’s retail department and outlets.

Executive Director Estee Rivera Murdock has high expectations for the new team. “We’re looking for deeper coverage of Conservancy initiatives,” she said. “Not just what’s happening, but also exploring the impact and importance in the ‘big picture’ of RMNP’s environment and visitor experience.”

“Another priority will be to expand our outreach beyond the Front Range and the park’s west side communities,” said Yoh. “We know Rocky is important to people across the country, especially places like the Midwest and Texas where families have long histories of park visits.”

Yoh and Morris can be reached at communications@RMConservancy.org, or 970-586-0108 ext. 128.

Anne Morris (left) and Kaci Yoh



Long-time Conservancy Staff Member Nancy Wilson is Moving On!



After 30+ years with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, formerly the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, it's no surprise that Nancy Wilson has decided that it's time for something new that may (or may not) involve sailing the Great Lakes, camping in remote locales and being a grandma to one firecracker of a toddler.

Nancy has worn a variety of hats at this organization since 1990; in her most recent iteration as the director of publications and communications, Nancy has been developing new books, guides and other park-related, informative publications, both for kids and adults. She has also been the in-house designer for myriad printing and communications projects to help promote the organization. Her most consistent project has been as the editor of the *Quarterly* newsletter since 1990. "It was so much fun to be a part of a growing organization with a mission that I could believe in and that really benefitted from the creative efforts of its staff," Nancy commented. "Over the years, this work has also kept me engaged with park staff and the stories they had to tell," she added.

Nancy's earliest responsibilities beginning in 1990 involved working with then-executive director Curt Buchholtz, along with then-seminar coordinator Patty Kayne, both of us in Curt's little office in park headquarters, to develop the nascent Rocky Mountain Seminars program, now the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Field Institute. Nancy helped develop the weekend and weeklong classes that were offered during peak summer season in Rocky. To supplement this, Nancy also worked as a sales clerk in the Nature Store at the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.

Gradually, as the seminar program grew, it required a more full-time effort, into which Nancy flowed seamlessly. Over time, she took on managing the membership program, and served as the de facto communications staff as well. She stepped in to help with grant writing and other fundraising efforts with the Rocky Mountain National Park Associates, including writing grants for the Field Institute building on Fall River Road. Project managing the organization's first website (of three permutations over the years) was a technical challenge of a different color, and meanwhile, the seminar program had grown to more than 150 course offerings each year.

After a hiatus in the early 1990s to start a family, Nancy returned to the organization to pick up the seminar program again, while also working with the publications manager, John Gunn. "John taught me everything I know about printing and book publishing — it was a wonderful way to learn on the job and then put what I learned to work," she said.

Nancy was excited to be part of the publishing team working with park staff to develop the Junior Ranger activity booklets that are still in high demand today. She was also involved with the development of a number of other book publishing projects, like *Mountain Valley Journals*, and *Running Wild: The Adventures of Two Raindrops*, *Field Guide to Wildlife Viewing*, and the *Rocky Kids Explorer* newspaper. Later, after Gunn left the organization, Nancy took over the publications program. She is very proud of the many publications she developed along with various authors and artists that still grace the Nature Stores today, such as *Guide to Trail Ridge Road*, *Mammals: Wild and Watchable Wildlife*, *Rocky Mountain Natural History Handbook*, *Cimarron the Bighorn Sheep*, *Lulu City and the Colorado River Trail*, *Wild Basin: A Legacy of Wilderness*, *ABC Rocky* and *Wild Inside Rocky Mountain National Park*.

"Working with all the seminar instructors to develop field programs and getting to know the participants over the years was a highlight for me," said Nancy. "And then publishing was a whole new skin that I could embrace that I really, really enjoyed." Other high points in her work with the Conservancy include the development of the Conservancy logo and the associated branded items, meeting all the folks that supported the organization as donors and members over the years, and working with some incredible park and Conservancy staff along the way.

All in all, the education and experience that this organization offered her was very unique. "Taking this job soon after college with a double major in biology and English, I had no idea just how very applicable this focus would be in my life!" she said.

Through the years, the access to the park was the icing on the cake. "Some of my most vivid memories and wild experiences were on hikes in Rocky with my family," she said. "Or, when my daughter and I would get up before dawn for distant high-country destinations. She and I both enjoy the lakes most of all; I remember one summer when we hiked to Junco Lake,



Grammy Nan is looking forward to spending more time with her favorite (and only) grandson, Finley.



Directionally challenged, but very adventurous duo: daughter Madeline and Nancy in 2015 at Junco Lake.

Fay Lakes, Twin Lakes and to Lion Lakes — rarely following expected routes, but having experiences that were all the more memorable for it," she added. With adventures like these, the fodder for work just fell in her lap.

"Who stays at a job for more than 30 years these days? ALMOST NO ONE— that's who" Nancy declared. "I consider myself lucky to have found a job that has given me so many fabulous opportunities to learn and grow, with plenty of wild adventures and wonderful people that have shaped who I am today."

Nancy left the organization at the beginning of May. The Conservancy staff is sad to see their longest-tenured team member leave the fold, but we certainly are excited to see what Nancy does next!

Proof in the pudding: before and after effect of Howard and Mary Jo on the Onahu Trail.



by Doug Parker,
RMNP Trails
Supervisor

Behind the Scenery:

RMNP Volunteer Sawyers Keeping the Trails Open

Communication from Howard Pomranka to Doug Parker:

“On Friday afternoon, September 16, once the rain let up, Mary Jo Beagh and I cleared 16 downed logs from a segment of the Colorado Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST). That segment goes one and a half miles from the Bowen Road junction with Trail Ridge Road to Onahu Trail. Starting at [the] Onahu Trailhead, we found three tenths of a mile of Onahu Trail in excellent condition to the junction with the CDNST.

At the junction we met two through-hikers who reported three or four downed logs on [KA-02] and some more downers on the segment of CDNST between RMNP boundary and the Colorado River. Instead of three or four downed logs we found and cleared 15 downed trees and one leaner. At the site of logs 13 and 14 we left a log across the trail as a dry step.

Unless directed otherwise, weather permitting, Mary Jo and I will return to the West side to scout and clear the segment of the CDSNT as far up Bowen Gulch as is practical.

We are pleased to think that we may be helping to clear a notable if seldom traveled route through RMNP.”

Howard Pomranka

Everyone’s heard of volunteers working in the park — there are myriad ways that people can join in to assist with various divisions in the park, but it takes quite a bit of stamina, brawn and commitment to be in the group of volunteer sawyers that take to the trails to assist with removing dead and downed trees from the trail corridors to keep them clear for hikers year after year.

Since 1999, Howard Pomranka has been volunteering with the park’s trail program, and he was the first to engage with the efforts to keep the trails cleared of downed trees. Since then, others have joined, including James Swaney, Bill Payden, Mary Jo Beagh, Carl Hanes and the late Bill Chokla, who just passed away last summer.

This hardy bunch doesn’t look for a way around a gnarly tree that has fallen across the trail — they whip out a handsaw from their backpack and get to work. Most of these volunteers currently are working on the east side of the park, but occasionally they will be available for some work on the west side as well. They tend to focus on front country trails, like Bierstadt, Sprague Lake area, Fern-Cub Loop, first several miles of Lawn Lake Trail, and the Wind River area, but have been known to go as far in as six miles to remove a downed tree.

The work they do is invaluable — not only from a trail-clearing perspective, but also because it allows the park trail crew to focus on other maintenance tasks such as bridge repair, removal of larger, more complex trees, and allowing the park crew to focus on more comprehensive trail repair projects such as the Longs Peak Trail project, that has been funded almost entirely by one Conservancy donor, Dr. Richard Hoffman of Boulder, Colorado.

This volunteer sawyer team also acts as the roving eyes and ears of the Trail Crew by alerting us to broken backcountry signposts, or other problem areas and issues that need attention along the trail system. This is especially helpful in the winter when the park trail crews are smaller and focusing more on prepping for the upcoming season.

Take a moment to thank any of these folks for the generous “behind the scenery” service they are giving as they wander through the park. Many such invisible tasks would just not be prioritized if not for park volunteers. Sign up to become a park volunteer yourself at www.volunteer.gov.



© Jim Ward | Pygmy owl

Planning Your Charitable Gifts: Bequests

by Mia Axon
Development Consultant

This second installment of the Conservancy's Financial Giving Strategies Series, we will discuss charitable bequests.

The most straightforward way to make a testamentary gift is by a charitable bequest: a provision included in a will or trust directing a gift to a charity upon the death of the donor. There is an almost endless variety of ways in which a charitable bequest can be structured. Some of the most common forms are:

Specific bequest — an exact amount, or a specific item, is left to charity.

- "I bequeath the sum of \$100,000 to ..."

Percentage bequest — a percentage or fraction of the estate is left to charity, often used with a remainder or residue provision.

- "I bequeath 50% of my estate to ..."
- "I direct my Executor to distribute one-half of the remainder to ..."

Bequest of remainder or residue — directs what is left (if anything) after other distributions should be given to charity, expressed as a percentage.

- "I bequeath all of the rest remainder and residue to my estate to ..."
- "I direct my Executor to distribute one-third of the remainder to ..."

Contingency bequest — a contribution is to be made only if certain other things happen first (e.g., my spouse dies before I do).

- "If my spouse dies before I do, then I bequeath ..."

Donors often wish to provide instructions or restrictions as to how their charitable bequest should be used. These restrictions can become problematic if the direction is unclear, or if it is impractical. To avoid problems, please contact the Conservancy while drafting your will or trust to ensure that your wishes can be met. The more narrowly you restrict the use of your bequest, the greater the risk that the program you want to benefit today won't be as vital or as relevant when your gift is received in the future.

Note: You should always seek the advice of your legal counsel concerning the details of your bequest.

If you would like to set up a bequest for the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, here is some information you should use:

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy, a nonprofit corporation, with principal business address of: P.O. Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517. Our tax identification number is: 84-0472090.

Please let us know if you would like to learn more about making a gift to the Conservancy through your will. Contact Madison Abbott, Donor Services Manager, at 970-586-0108 ext. 105, or madison.abbott@RMConservancy.org for more information.

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© Jim Ward | Yellow-rumped warbler

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Rocky Mountain Conservancy Park Puzzler

Across

- 4.** During the summer of 2021, the year after the devastating fires that seared the park, Conservation Corps crew members who stayed for fire season in the fall were able to earn their basic wildland firefighting _____ during this extended season.
- 5.** Clark's _____ are frequently seen in campgrounds in the park and known to swoop in for the piece of popcorn that dropped out of the bowl. It's no surprise that their less flattering moniker is "camp robber."
- 7.** As part of the NPS Museum Management Program, the _____ at Rocky Mountain National Park provide researchers access to materials that relate directly to the park while preserving the artifacts and specimens for future use. These objects document human use of the land and the natural history including the alpine tundra ecosystem.
- 8.** _____ watching is rated the number-one activity by a vast majority of Rocky's three million annual visitors.
- 9.** As a _____ of the Conservancy, you can receive discounts at the Nature Stores and with some of the Field Institute programs.
- 10.** A berry with many names that is found in Rocky, sometimes called huckleberries, blueberries and _____.
- 11.** _____ was an historic mining town on the park's west side that burst into life in the late 1880s like a flare star, burning out just as quickly when it was found that the sought-after silver ore was low grade. *(Two words)*
- 12.** "Snowbirds" is term used to describe those people of a certain age who head to southern climes during the cold and windy months of the year. Technically, the term applied to _____ who are known for this very clever avoidance technique.
- 15.** First Trails are corridors that were used for transportation back in the day. These corridors connect waypoints, such as archeological sites which often evolved as transportation changed. The Santa Fe Trail and the Mormon Trail are examples of this type of corridor-trail. In Rocky, the _____ is the best representation of this category. *(Two words)*
- 17.** The first director of the NPS, Stephen Mather, advocated _____ design within parks as early as 1918 believing that buildings should blend with their natural surroundings. With wood shingle roofs, log framing, stone foundations, exposed rafter tails, and dark-stained siding, many buildings within Rocky exemplify this design philosophy.
- 18.** _____ slides are positive transparent photographs made on glass and viewed with the aid of a "magic lantern," the predecessor of the slide projector. The park has a collection of over 1,100 slides, most of which are images from the 30s and 40s, with a few even older copies of photographic prints dating to the late 1800s. Many of the black and white images

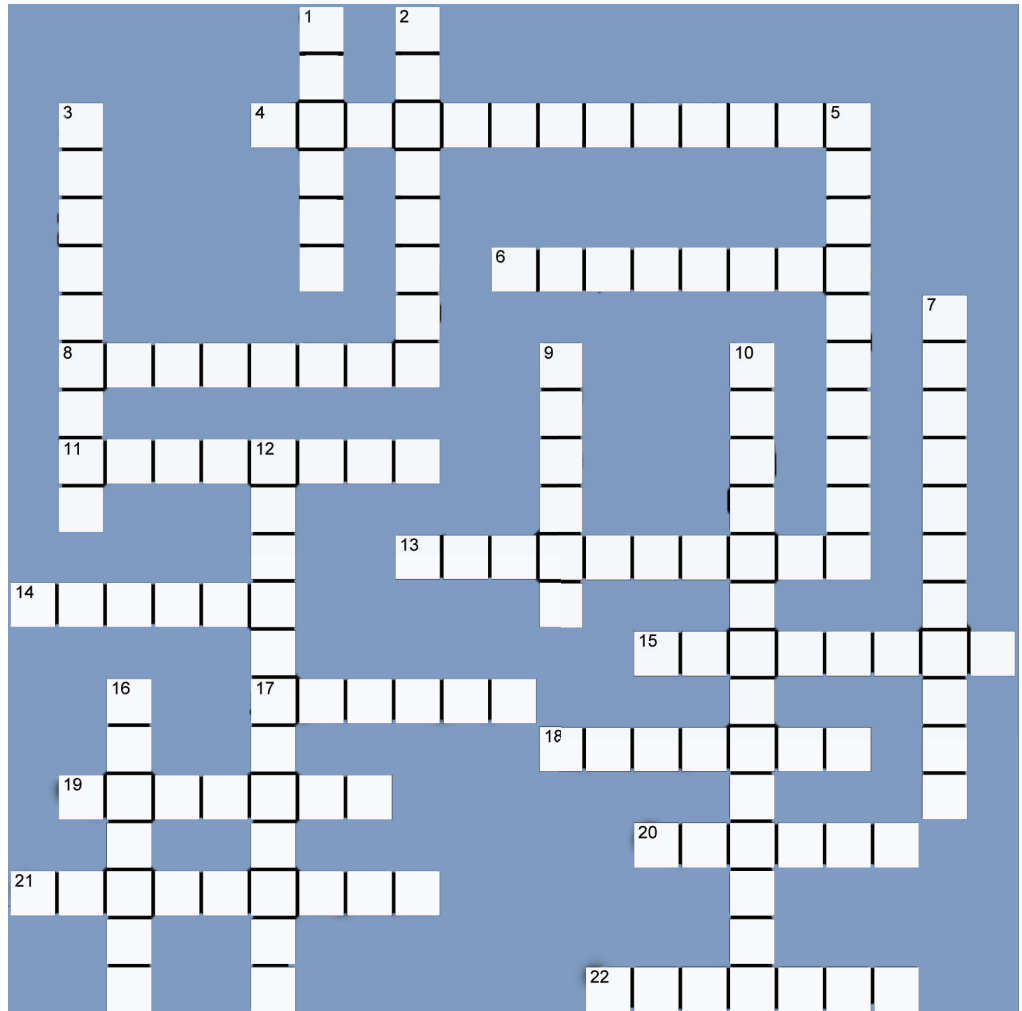
have been hand colored. It is assumed that the images were used for campfire programs.

- 19.** "Bettie" Courses are new course offerings of the Field Institute and were inspired by the work of pioneer tundra biologist Dr. Beatrice _____.
- 20.** Aspects of the park (and throughout much of Colorado) that are challenging during _____: snow packed and icy roads, temperatures that frequently drop below freezing, and seasonal road closures.
- 21.** White-tailed _____ are some of the most sought-after birds in Rocky Mountain National Park, are common but difficult to spot.
- 22.** _____ 66 was a park building program that began in 1956 with the goal of transforming the National Park Service to meet postwar conditions, including modernizing visitor facilities. Beaver Meadows Visitor Center embodies National Park Service modern architecture.

Down

- 1.** To preserve unimpaired for this and future generations the beauty, history and wildness therein, I pledge to protect Rocky Mountain National Park, so says the official Rocky _____.

- 2.** The new and improved Fall River _____ to RMNP is under construction with only one lane open, and the park recommends using the Beaver Meadows Entrance for the duration. Weather and resources depending, the project should be completed by late June.
- 3.** The most complex project that is being taken on by the Trails Crew this year will be the replacement of the 210-foot accessible _____ on the Sprague Lake Trail with a new one.
- 6.** There are ten backcountry buildings listed in the National Register of _____ Places, including the Keyhole on Longs Peak, Willow Park, Lawn Lake, Shadow Mountain Thunder Lake and Twin Sisters.
- 12.** Beginning with a single crew of six people, the inaugural 2003 _____ Corps worked in Rocky Mountain National Park on trail restoration.
- 13.** Occasionally found where waters flow, the Colorado River has the highest number of _____ in Colorado due to its lush environs. *(Two words)*
- 16.** All areas in Chaos Canyon to the west of Lake _____ remain closed to all users due to a rockslide that occurred in the summer of 2022.



The Rocky Mountain Conservancy expresses special thanks to the following people for their donations supporting Rocky Mountain National Park: December 31, 2022 – March 22, 2023

Total gifts: 753 | Total donations: \$877,596.65



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The Wee Wayfarer

by David Oliver

Upon slight
and unfledged feet
he ventures down the
unknown path

Eagerly scanning
and absorbing all the
beauty and mystery of
this wild place.

Stopping frequently,
kneeling with all the
thoroughness of a scientist,
examines and collects.

Small hands
touch, lift and display
Nature's wonders before
intently puzzled eyes.

A wrinkle
streaks across a small,
sun-reddened forehead;
a prelude to a questioning
upward gaze.

Floating downward,
a reassuring voice bestows upon
the vivid yellow object a name;
"that's a dandelion."

As recognition
replaces confusion, a love of,
a desire for life, nature, knowledge

grows within a young soul.

Reaching out,
a little dusty hand finds
refuge within a larger,
his mother's.

Awkwardly short
legs bear the small traveler
down a twisting, living
path through nature,
into forever.

Temporarily consumed
by anxiety for the
unknown, the small
grip tightens.

The clasp
of his mother's tightens,
anxiety yields to wonder
instilled with desire, the
small traveler heads down
the living path.

Giant eyes
gaze upward, his
mother smiles, the path
bends, a faint smile streaks
across a tiny face.

(3/11/99)
*David Oliver was born and grew up
living in, exploring and adventuring
in Rocky Mountain National Park.*

To make a gift to support Rocky Mountain National Park, visit RMConservancy.org, or call 970-586-0108



The Boulder Crew in 2022 worked across the entire Boulder Ranger District improving low-impact climbing access and providing critical support to trails, campsites, and other recreational areas

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONSERVANCY - CONSERVATION CORPS NEWS

Summer is Coming and Big Plans are Afoot

by Ian Stafford,
Conservancy Director of
Stewardship and Policy



During the last 20 years, millions upon millions of visitors have enjoyed the pristine vistas, world-class trails, picturesque landscapes, and unparalleled solitude of Rocky Mountain National Park and Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest. Partnering with Rocky behind the scenes of this splendor and glamor is a hard-working group of young adults that make up the Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Conservation Corps.

In 2022, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy expanded the Conservation Corps program more than 30% and provided record amounts of accomplishments across public lands in Northern Colorado. Through our efforts, we were able to:

- improve 309 miles of trail
- remove 1039 fallen trees from across trails
- add 1832 pieces of trail infrastructure to mitigate erosion and promote drainage
- restore 24 backcountry campsites
- construct 139 slash piles

In 2023, the Conservation Corps will be celebrating its 20th anniversary by hosting its largest Conservation Corps crew in program history. This season, 55 individuals across nine separate crews will be working in three different U.S.

Forest Service Ranger Districts, and four different departments in Rocky Mountain National Park — including the National Park Greenhouse. In the upcoming season, the Conservation Corps will be working on the following projects:

Rocky Mountain National Park

- The Moraine Trail Crew will provide trail maintenance, including installation of rock pavers to protect the trail from erosion, on the Longs Peak Trail.
- The Kawuneeche Trail Crew will continue to reconstruct the Green Mountain Trail after it was destroyed in the East Troublesome Fire in 2020.
- The Historic Preservation Crew will work with Rocky's Facilities division to improve dozens of campsites and protect riparian areas in the beloved Moraine Park Campground.
- The Vegetation Crew will remove thousands of invasive species and plant just as many native plants within Horseshoe and Moraine parks.

Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest

- Two Canyon Lakes Trails Crews will be working throughout the Canyon Lakes Ranger District working within the Cameron Peak Fire burn scar to reopen trails, install erosion mitigation infrastructure, restore backcountry campsites, and ensure that Wilderness areas in the Ranger District are

maintained for recreational use.

- Two Sulphur Crews will be working in the Sulphur Ranger District on the western portion of the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest on multi-use trail systems, the Continental Divide Trail, and myriad trailheads to repair nearly 100 miles of trail, remove fallen trees from trails, and ensure trail heads are properly maintained to withstand the crowds that visit them.
- The Boulder Crew will be working throughout the Boulder Ranger District to provide trail maintenance and restore campsites in the area. Along with that work, they will partner with the Boulder Climbing Coalition to improve rock climbing access in both front country and backcountry settings.

The work that will be accomplished during the 20th anniversary season of the Conservation Corps will improve the experiences of millions of visitors to the area, and preserving this much beloved landscape for future generations. The 2023 season is going to be here before you know it, and the Rocky Mountain Conservancy is looking forward to having a jam-packed season of high-quality stewardship, education, and volunteer programming we have been able to provide for more than 90 years.

To make a gift to support Rocky Mountain National Park, visit RMConservancy.org, or call 970-586-0108

Darla

Continued from page 1

Just as my life was changed by that first SCA intern position, I feel strongly that engaging young people to work and volunteer on public lands is critical, not only for the conservation of our public lands, but for the value these lands provide to us as people.

*Out in the field:
Darla with volunteer Weed Warriors on
Operation Thistle Extraction detail*



*Out in the field:
Darla with Conservancy
and park staff
at Chasm Junction*



Collaborating with the leadership of the gateway communities and other governmental and public health officials through the COVID-19 lockdown, it became clear that it would be difficult to reopen the park to millions of visitors without potentially overwhelming the hospital, water/sewer systems, emergency responders, and other partners who were also greatly affected by the burgeoning pandemic. During this time, we wrestled with how we could increase park access while still ensuring a reasonable expectation of safety. The guidance from our DC office was changing frequently, sometimes several times a week, and it was very difficult to keep up.

Prior to COVID, we had been experimenting with various ways to manage the increasing visitor use and congestion and had already committed to a long-term visitor use management plan. The significant increase in visitation during peak periods was having severe negative impact on the visitor experience, the park's natural and cultural resources, staff and visitor safety, and the limited park infrastructure. Social trails, vegetation impact, human waste, and vehicle/trail congestion were increasing, and visitors were growing increasingly frustrated with long lines and the inability to access their destination. During this time that the park was closed due to COVID, we made the decision to implement a temporary timed-entry permit system that would allow us to reopen with measured visitor access and a reasonable expectation of safety and social distancing.

We reopened the park just prior to Memorial Day, with a new normal of social distancing and everything that entailed, from limiting occupancy in park visitor centers and park housing, to painting bear pawprints on sidewalks to spread out people waiting to board capacity-limited shuttle buses. Park staff recognized the importance of keeping Rocky accessible and safe, going to extraordinary lengths to make that possible. Managing the park during that

time took a tremendous effort, and I'm very proud of the job everyone did to keep folks updated, including our gateway communities and interagency emergency response groups.

The temporary pilot timed-entry system was then carried forward beyond the COVID-19 mandates, as we continued to experiment with how best to manage visitor congestion and crowding. Since 2016, we have learned a lot from these various strategies and pilots, and this information is now being used to inform our Long-range Visitor Use Management Plan. We engaged the public through meetings and formal comment periods in May of 2021, and again in December of 2022, and the park is currently drafting alternatives on which the public can comment this fall.

Addressing the challenge of visitor use management at Rocky has been one of the focal points during my time here, and I am proud that we have been on the forefront of this challenge that so many other public lands and national parks are now facing. And while we don't yet know what the final proposal or outcome will be, I am grateful to the park staff that are helping to contend with these challenges, and to Estes Park, Grand Lake, and partners like the Conservancy who support the park and its long-term vision.

Because COVID and the visitor-use management challenges weren't quite enough, during the summer of 2020, the park had the opportunity to embrace some new challenges in the form of the Cameron Peak and East Troublesome wildfires. The fires burned nearly 30,000 acres inside park boundaries — almost 10% of the park. While the Cameron Peak fire developed over the course of many weeks, the East Troublesome fire was swift. The belief that the Continental Divide would serve as a natural firebreak was shattered one windy night in October as the massive fire jumped the Continental Divide — 1.5 miles over alpine tundra! — into the park's east side. Much of the park and Estes Valley were at

risk. The park's west side and the Grand Lake area had already been ravaged.

When people ask me what my most memorable moment at Rocky has been, my mind immediately goes to the evacuation of Estes Park and the following day when I joined hundreds of firefighters, law enforcement staff, and an Incident Command Team (ICT) to manage the oncoming East Troublesome Fire. I will never forget how eerie the orange, smoke-filled skies became, how desolate and empty Estes Park felt as I drove through downtown on my way into the park, and the ominous feeling of not knowing exactly where the fire was or where it might go. I am eternally grateful for how well all of the various jurisdictions, community, park, and the ICT worked together. While the losses were devastating, especially on the park's west side, the decades of fuel treatments by park staff, actions of the firefighters and ICT, and a lucky break in the weather are to be credited for preventing further spread of the fire.

Our fire recovery efforts continue even today, and the Rocky Mountain Conservancy's partnership and on-going support has been instrumental; from helping fund critical post-fire research, to the summer conservation crews conducting fire mitigation and restoration work. When I see these crews working so hard out in the field, it reminds me of my first job with the Forest Service in the North Cascades of Washington State as a Student Conservation Association (SCA) volunteer. That experience was transformational! It changed the course of my intended career in business to working for public lands management.

Over the next three decades, I served in positions ranging from trail crew, wilderness ranger, dispatcher, biological science technician, vegetation manager, and park planner prior to my first park

manager position in 2001. I have been so fortunate to work in some of the most awe-inspiring parks and places in the country, including the North Cascades, Arches, Big Bend, Denali, Zion, Grand Canyon-Parashant, Washington, DC, Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia, Golden Gate, and Saguaro just prior to my tenure here. Every one of these parks is so special with unique resources, people and stories, and I am forever grateful to have had the chance to be part of them.

Just as my life was changed by that first SCA intern position, I feel strongly that engaging young people to work and volunteer on public lands is critical, not only for the conservation of our public lands, but for the value these lands provide to us as people. National parks are places of recreation, respite, contemplation, personal challenge, and awe. These special places belong to all of us, and everyone should feel welcome in their parks, right?

It is in this vein that the park and the Conservancy initiated a new Diversity Intern Program in 2022. The Diversity Program interns form a cohort across various park work teams to learn about park management and gain exposure to public lands career paths. Underrepresented populations must be able to see themselves as equally valued park staff and volunteers in order to feel included, and through this program we can provide a platform for professional development and mentorship. Even if the Diversity Intern Program participants don't end up following a career path with the NPS or other public lands, the goal is that they leave the program with a greater land and environmental ethic.

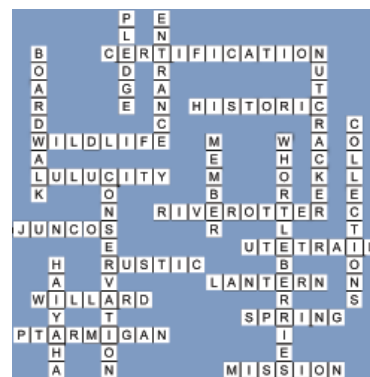
During my time here, the Conservancy has been a wonderfully supportive and

dedicated partner, key to the success of Rocky. Funding support and investments in key park projects and priorities have expanded dramatically, and we have collaborated on several key land acquisitions, while conservation crews have helped maintain our resources and infrastructure, and the interpretive and education support for the park has grown in leaps and bounds.

During all of these unprecedented events and every day, I am so grateful for the staff, volunteers, the Conservancy, partners, and surrounding communities whom all work so well together to help us achieve the NPS mission for Rocky, making our communities such a wonderful place to live and work. I am honored to have had the opportunity over these last seven years to serve this park, and am so grateful for the support of the Conservancy's members, donors, staff, and Board members for their commitment and support.

Thank you for everything you do to help Rocky be a better place; it is working!

Park Puzzler Solution



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Rocky Mountain Conservancy

Estee Rivera Murdock, executive director
Nancy Wilson, *Quarterly* editor
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Conservancy Nature Store Clerk **Pat Person** captured this picture of a living mountain lion exhibit outside the Kawuneeche Visitor Center in mid-winter.

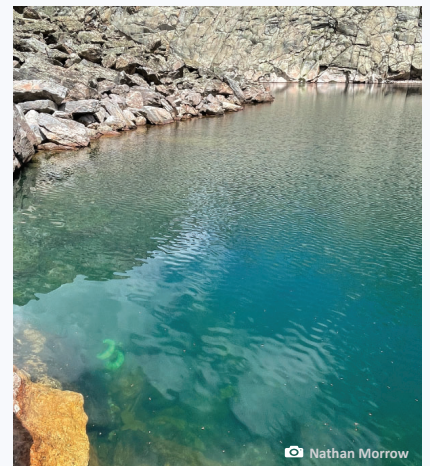
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Nature Notes

Hooray! The mountain bluebirds are back, chirping their eerie, hollow song to announce that spring is coming. These birds sometimes return as early as February, so it's no small thing at that time of year. The northern lights, also

known as the aurora borealis, are a rare sight in Colorado, but in the darkness of February 27, northern Coloradoans were treated to some stunning colors that graced the night sky. Occasionally, energy from solar flares pushes the aurora away from the North Pole and towards the far northeast, upper midwest and Washington state. And in some very rare cases, it is visible in Colorado, just for future notice • Conservancy member/donor **Erik Stensland** reflected that the autumn colors of the aspen trees seemed less vibrant than they were the previous autumn, but other plants more than made up for it. Nearly everywhere he went, from the high mountain lakes to the low valleys, he found brilliant reds, oranges and yellows in other flora nearly everywhere. It was a glorious autumn and as always, it seemed to vanish far too quickly • Conservancy Conservation Corps Field Manager **Nathan Morrow** was climbing the Four Aces on Blitzen Ridge near Mount Ypsilon with a friend last summer, and they were above Spectacle Lakes when some weather started to move in. They stopped climbing and hiked back down to Spectacle Lakes. After jumping around on the boulders around the lakes, they found a nice spot and decided to take a little dip while the sun was still out. That's when they noticed a kind of spiral-shaped white thing, kind

of like a twisted rain gutter at the bottom of the lake, maybe about seven or eight feet beneath the crystal clear water. They didn't really register what it was until after the swim when they were basking like lizards on the warm rocks — that spiral shape down there beneath the water was a bighorn sheep skull. Nathan wished he had goggles so he could have gone down to take a look, but once he connected the dots, it was obvious what it was. He figured it must have been decaying beneath the water for a year or maybe more (*see photo, right*) • Intrepid hiker and Conservancy Member **Marlene Borneman** reminds everyone to keep an eye out for a couple of the rare orchids in the park; the coralroot orchid (*Corallorhiza wisteriana*), that blooms in late May/early June, as well as the fairy slipper orchids (*Calypto bulbosa*) both of which are highlights of spring in the highcountry • RMNP Sign Maker **Cory Johnson** and family observed a juvenile red-tailed hawk for a couple hours while its mother appeared to “park” it in a tree while she went off to hunt. She returned with some breakfast after a while and they flew off together • Cory also has seen more great blue herons this spring than he ever remembers. One evening he saw five or six grouped together on a sandbar in Lake Estes • Former RMNP Wildlife Biologist **Mary Kay Watry** highlighted that the bat field activities in RMNP that were completed with partial funding through the Conservancy by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (with researcher Jeremy Siemers) in 2019 and 2020. These efforts and the continued years of monitoring have provided valuable baseline of Rocky's bat species diversity, distribution and habitat use. This is especially important because



Visions in the deep

White Nose Syndrome has been detected at multiple Colorado sites this year (not confirmed at Rocky) and, unfortunately, the disease has finally reached Colorado. It's not yet clear how this will impact bat populations in the park, but this kind of baseline information is an important reference for future changes. Bat research has continued in 2021 and 2022 and is currently planned for 2023 • Artist-in-Residence Intern **Mikayla Moors** reported a large mountain lion crossing Highway 7 along the southern park boundary in early April • **Be well — it's been fun!** Nancy 