



© Nanette Chisloim | Snow-whipped Hallett



# QUARTERLY

Winter | 2023



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## Confessions of a Snowbird

by Curt Buchholtz

I dream of blizzards. I love the howl of the wind. It speaks to me. And the deeper the snow gets, the more I enjoy winter. Truth be told, I am writing this in Tucson, Arizona, and most of what I recall about winter is now manufactured by my memory. I cannot blame my dear departed wife for suggesting that we retire and spend six months each year in this popular American Southwest paradise. I came here on my own volition, after her nudging.

She never liked the term “snowbirds” because it made us appear like we were “seasonal chickens,” afraid of the cold or sick of the wind. There are actual birds officially called “snowbirds,” an amateur ornithologist once told me. “The term applies to juncos,” he said, and that is verified by the National Audubon Society. Most (but not all) juncos tend to migrate south in the winter. Some live to be 11 years old. I wondered if southbound flights were Nature’s secret pathway to longevity. But seriously, some juncos stay up north, simply growing additional feathers and bulking up against the cold.

Feathered snowbirds aside, both my late wife and I used to enjoy Colorado’s annual change of seasons. After college, she left

her home in Minnesota to live in the Colorado Rockies. I had experienced the rigors of Wisconsin and Montana winters before settling in Colorado. Suffice it to say, we accepted the vagaries of Colorado’s winters — and both of us were well schooled in the appreciation of wintertime, including all the best winter sports: skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating, and the like.

To verify my claims, you could ramble through my personal slide collection. It reveals dozens of memorable trips outdoors. I have an amazing photo of wintertime on the Great Divide, taken from the ice-bound, snow-covered Loch. Here are scenes from snowy Bierstadt Moraine. Here she is ice skating. There we are on the coldest of January days cross country skiing along the Colorado River Trail. Every one of those photos, including scenes with friends and family, are worth a thousand words. Life in the winter could be very good.

But as we all know, winter is not always enchanting, abounding with glitter and sparkle. Its flip side has freezing temperatures, days of shoveling, weeks of icy roads, moments of slips and falls,

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*Additional housing is an investment in our organization, and an investment in the future stewards of our national parks and wild places.*



## A Message from our Executive Director



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Dear Friends,

It's that almost painfully bright, white, snowy time of the year in the Rockies, and a time when New Year resolutions just *might* be starting to falter. Perhaps we'd rather snuggle up by the fireplace than hike or snowshoe that extra mile? Here at the Conservancy, while we empathize with this sentiment, we're just hitting our stride on a goal we set our sights on quite some time ago, long before I arrived at the Conservancy.

With greater and greater urgency, we've wrangled with the very real challenges of workforce housing in our mountain gateway communities. During the last five years, the Conservancy has committed to addressing (some of) the needs for safe and affordable housing for Conservancy and Rocky staff, taking meaningful steps forward, thorough creative partnerships and funding mechanisms, to help replace uninhabitable housing in the park with new dorms and tiny houses. We've also been working with community partners to support regional housing initiatives. But, early in the New Year, we finally broke ground on our own workforce housing units for Conservancy and park staff and fellows, replacing some flood-damaged housing with new duplexes just outside the park on land that was generously donated to us by members of the incredibly generous Grant Family, who have supported our organization for decades and served on our board for multiple generations.

Dubbed "Rocky Terrace Cottages," expect to hear much more about this project during the next year and a half, but for now, suffice it to know that this chilly season marks an exciting turning point in the growth of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, unlocking a huge capacity for growth as we look towards the next century of impact that our organization can have on the public lands that we steward. Additional housing is an investment in our organization, and an investment in the future stewards of our national parks and wild places. With it, we can boost our recruitment of the best and brightest young fellows and highly esteemed researchers to conduct their work in the park, now that they can be guaranteed to have a place to lay their heads at the end of a long day in the field gathering data or leading Junior Rangers on a fieldtrip.

As you lace up your boots for your next adventure, as you glide over the snow on your skis or snowshoes, I invite you to think back to some goals that you set five years ago. Are those things still important to you? Have you moved the needle on one of these dreams? In whatever timeframe your hopes are cached, remember that Rocky is here for you, and it gives you the gift of itself and the wilderness it holds to reflect on these thoughts and plans. Rocky Mountain National Park will be in here in perpetuity, but let's make sure that future generations care about it just as much as we do today.

Warm wishes on a snowy day,



*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 [nancy.wilson@RMConservancy.org](mailto:nancy.wilson@RMConservancy.org), or write: Nancy Wilson, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, PO Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517.

## Shop Conservancy Nature Stores

For ALL Your RMNP Collectables

**Do huckleberries grow in Rocky?** As a species, huckleberries are found in the park, but these could also be called a whortleberry, or even a blueberry. Common names are hard since they can be used in so many ways, and these “huckleberries” are different than what you might see up in Glacier National Park, for example. All of these are in the genus *vaccinium*, but *vaccinium membranaceum*, specifically, is common in Rocky. The mature fruit of this species, also known as thin-leaf huckleberry and mountain huckleberry, ranges from red through bluish-purple to a dark, almost black berry about a centimeter wide. Each fruit contains an average of 47 tiny seeds. They are pollinated by bees. — *Scott M. Esser, Director, Continental Divide Research Learning Center, RMNP*

### Why have river otters evolved to inhabit primarily the west side of the park versus the east?

River otter were at one time extirpated from the park as a result of fur trapping in the 1800s and early 1900s. The park’s first wildlife biologist, Dave Stevens, in the ‘70s – mid-‘90s, instigated a lot of restoration work in the wildlife arena, and also played a major role in reintroducing the river otter into the Kawuneeche Valley, along with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, from 1978 – 1984. They released 43 otters into the park, some with radio collars, that came from Wisconsin, Louisiana, Minnesota, New York, Michigan and Arkansas. A viable reproducing population has established in the area since then, and even expanded down the Colorado River and into other tributaries. River otter have also migrated over the Continental Divide and into tributaries on the east side of the park, down the Fall River into the Big Thompson River, and into the St. Vrain River in Wild Basin. River otter have been documented in Estes Park, Forest Canyon and in the Indian Peaks drainage, plus other areas on the east side of the Continental Divide, but not in high numbers. Otter will thrive in most wetland environments, so it’s not surprising to see them spreading out where the water flows. And while they are presently well established in Colorado in many areas, the Colorado River and its lush environs has the highest numbers in the state. — *Retired RMNP Resource Management Specialist, Jeff Connor*

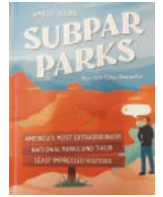
### Why does the park highlight the Lulu City site when there is virtually nothing left of that nascent mining town?

I am not sure the park has really ever “highlighted” Lulu City. Over the years, it has been possible to observe a few remains of the ghost town as it slowly melded back into nature. A hundred and thirty years ago there was a “village” there. Twenty years ago it was possible to find the remains of a few cabins and a bear trap. Today, even less remains. The historic site is what it is, and fast fading. Those who seek out the site can still revel in their imaginations without having any expectations for restoration. — *Curt Buchholtz, author of RMNP: A History.*

#### SUBPAR PARKS

ILLUSTRATED BY AMBER SHALE

*Beautiful illustrations celebrating the incredible majesty and variety of America’s national parks juxtaposed with the clueless one-star reviews posted by visitors on Instagram. Example: millions of travelers each year enjoy Glacier National Park, but for one visitor, it was simply “Too cold for me!” Another saw the mind-boggling vistas of Bryce Canyon as “Too orange! Too spiky!” You get the idea.*



Price: \$24.00; **Member Price: \$20.40**



#### RMNP THRU THE TREES HOODIE

*This misty blue hoodie will be a favorite for your next hike. Includes two drawstrings, blue and white; 55% cotton and 45% polyester. Price: \$44.99; **Member Price: \$38.24***

#### RMNP PENDELTON COLLECTABLES

##### Pendleton Mug

*Enjoy a favorite beverage with this 18-oz ceramic mug with the RMNP Pendleton design. Dishwasher/microwave safe. Price: \$19.50; **Member Price: \$16.58***



##### Pendleton Wool Throw

*This colorful wool throw will be a welcome on road trips, picnics and for all your adventures. Includes leather carrier for easy portability. 54" x 72"; 90% wool, 10% cotton; dry clean only. Price: \$199.00; **Member Price: \$169.15***



##### Pendleton Collection Knit Hat

*Cozy up in this soft knit hat with the RMNP Pendleton design. 100% acrylic; hand wash inside out; block to dry; one size. Price: \$29.50; **Member Price: \$25.08***



**More great RMNP items at [RMConservancy.org](http://RMConservancy.org), or, Call 970-586-0121 to order.**

Rocky Mountain Conservancy  
— Conservation Corps hard  
at work on the Tonahutu  
Trail Improvement project



by RMNP  
Trails Supervisor  
Doug Parker

## RMNP Trail Projects Update: 2022 and 2023

*The Spruce Lake Trail experienced significant burn effects during the East Troublesome Fire in which the first half mile of the trail was significantly damaged*

*A completed section of the new paver-style trail improvement method on the Longs Peak Trail. This project has been generously supported by Dr. Richard Hoffman over a period of three years — and counting.*



The past year for the Rocky Mountain National Park Trails Program was both productive and successful with ongoing fire recovery projects while continuing to repair and improve trails parkwide.

### Colorado River District — 2022

#### Tonahutu Trail

For the Colorado River District of the park, crews spent much of the season camped out in the backcountry repairing the Tonahutu Trail. This trail was almost entirely burned during the 2020 wildfire event, and crews spent much of the summer repairing a couple of key areas that were rapidly eroding as a result of the fires. This work involved camping out for 8 days in a row and required the assistance of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Conservation Corps Crew to complete the work. Highlights of the work included:

- Two large staircases (80 retainer bars total) repaired to retain the trail tread and mitigate erosion
- 480 square feet of multi-tier stone retaining walls built to stabilize the trail in steep areas
- 315 square feet of trail tread re-established and rehabilitated that was destroyed in the fire

#### Green Mountain Trail

The second large recovery project within the Colorado River District was the re-opening of the Green Mountain Trail. This project also included the assistance of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, which fund \$30K toward the project, plus loaned us the Conservation Corps crew to rebuild five water crossing bridges through the wetland area of the trail, in addition to removing a lot of debris. The bridges are an important

protection component of the trail as they keep users out of the wetland area and protect those sensitive natural resources. Additionally, to plan for the future of the Green Mountain Trail, time was spent with a professional trails planner to lay out new sections of trail that experienced significant trail infrastructure loss in the fire event.

### East District — 2022

#### Fern Lake Trail

Primary efforts were centered on deeply rutted and eroding sections of the Fern Lake Trail in 2022. The park partnered with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Conservation Corps Crew, which was instrumental in solidifying the most damaged sections of trail. Rip-rap pavers were installed to both mitigate future erosion and to protect historic rock walls that outline the trail.

#### Spruce Lake Trail

The Spruce Lake Trail experienced significant burn effects during the East Troublesome Fire in which the first half mile of the trail was significantly damaged. This past year, crews rebuilt 78 feet of log crossings through wetland areas, delineating the first mile of the trail that had become difficult to locate after to the fire event.

#### Longs Peak Trail

The last several years on the East District have been dedicated to improving the conditions of the Longs Peak Trail, and that continued this past year. Crews were productive this season, installing the 400 linear feet of rip-rap pavers between Battle Mountain Junction and Chasm Lake Junction along the trail. The work on this trail is significant in that

it will be sustainable, long lasting and should ensure that the social trailing, rutting and trail widening that has been prevalent ends.

### **Cub Lake Trail**

A highlight of the season was concluding a four-year project along the Cub Lake Trail. Areas of the trail that were eroded, braided or had widened due to poor trail alignment have been repaired. This work has spanned from the trailhead to the lake, improving one of the more popular trails in the park.

### **St. Vrain Bridge**

A project that had been planned for several years but delayed by fire recovery efforts was the replacement of the St. Vrain Bridge in Wild Basin. The bridge decking was deteriorating, and the railing heights were too low, so crews built the entire structure of the bridge, except for handrails, in the park Trail Shop. Then, animal packers transported all materials with pack stock to the bridge site. The only materials for the bridge that were sourced in the field are the handrails. Due to the fabrication of the bridge in the Trail Shop, the deconstruction of the old bridge and construction of the new bridge took less than one week to complete.

**Heading into the next season, crews once again will have ambitious goals to accomplish for fire recovery and parkwide trail repairs and maintenance.**

## **Colorado River District — 2023**

### **Green Mountain Trail**

The Trails Crew will begin extensive repairs to the Green Mountain Trail this summer. Repairs will include fortifying the bridge water crossings for stock use and re-aligning the trail that is currently failing due to poor trail layout. These improvements will open the trail for more users and ensure that the trail is more resilient in any future weather- and fire-related events that may occur.

### **General Maintenance of the District**

With the significant attention that has been required on burned trails the past couple of years, crews will be spending time catching up on other bridge and trail maintenance issues within the district. Expect to see crews spending time clearing trees, brushing the trail corridor, and maintaining trail drainage structures throughout the North Inlet area, Never Summer trails and Colorado River Trail in 2023. Crews will also replace a large, deteriorating bridge on the Onahu Trail as well.

## **East District — 2023**

### **Fern Lake Trail**

Trail repairs that are needed as a result of the fire will continue this summer in areas that are experiencing erosion and deterioration. Retainer bars, rip-rap pavers and water bars will be built to retain the trail and mitigate other issues.

### **Longs Peak Trail**

Continued repairs to the Longs Peak Trail will be occurring this summer. Crews will be staged both below and above Battle Mountain Junction and will be repairing the trail with similar rip-rap paver structures as have been used during the past several years. As in past years, to increase production, it's currently planned to have the Rocky Mountain Conservation Corps Crew assisting park crews on this project.

### **Ouzel and Bluebird Lake Trails**

Crews will kick-off a new project this year in the Ouzel Lake-Bluebird Lake trails area. Rutting, trail braiding and failed trail structures are common throughout this area due to the popularity of these trails, and crews will begin repairing those issues. To increase efficiency, crews plan to camp out in the area throughout most of the summer.

### **Sprague Lake Boardwalk**

The most complex project that is being taken on this year will be the replacement of the 210-foot accessible boardwalk on the Sprague Lake Trail with a new boardwalk. This will involve removal of the current structure and a full replacement. The current bridge is failing due to being unlevel, rotting wood components and helical piles not staying plumb in the ground. New helical piles will be installed along with a steel I-beam substructure and new decking. A helicopter will be used to transport all materials to the location, so expect a one-day closure for the helicopter flights and a closure of the boardwalk area during construction.

### **Sandbeach Trail**

Two years of work are being planned on the Sandbeach Trail. Most work will occur on the first mile to repair failing trail infrastructure and improve conditions of the trail overall for the busy Wild Basin trail.

We hope you have a chance to check out some of these trail projects to see for yourself what a big effect your support has on these important recreational resources in Rocky. Happy Trails!



*The new and improved Green Mountain Trail bridge*



*The finished Spruce Lake Trail bridge*

**Support Rocky's Trail and Resource Management programs by donating to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy at [RMConservancy.org](https://www.rmconservancy.org), or call 970-586-0108**

*Most classes involve some hiking over rugged terrain, so be sure to come prepared!*



by Conservancy  
Education Director  
Carlie Bangs

## Conservancy Field Institute Now Open For Educational Adventures

*As always, Conservancy members receive a 15% discount on Field Institute courses, and this year, we're offering a special Early Bird Discount of 20% off if you register before April 30, 2023. Get your calendar out and start booking your courses — registration opened February 1!*

*Field programs make the most of the park, with professional instruction in a one-of-a-kind setting.*



Whether you're enjoying the outdoors by snowshoeing, taking a winter hike, ice skating, or appreciating the weather by staying warm inside, winter is a special time to connect with majestic Rocky Mountain National Park.

The Conservancy's education crew is eagerly awaiting warmer days and the faster pace of summer, while trying to savor this slower season to reflect on what we've learned this fall when we flew several new types of courses, developed some innovative programs, and had the opportunity to test out new processes for running these new offerings more efficiently.

Our family snowshoe hikes have been a huge hit this winter, and we've also been offering intermediate snowshoe courses for those whom have mastered the basic skills but enjoy the added educational experiences offered by our exceptional cadre of instructors. Keep an eye out for new series programs this spring.

### 2023 Plans

A wide range of summer courses are in the works as well, promising culturally relevant, historical and ecologically focused field courses — registration for the 2023 season opens soon!

Be sure to check out the summer programs that will be posted on the Conservancy's "Upcoming Courses and Events" page where you will be able to easily view and register for classes. You can also check out the Conservancy's educational programs online at Eventbrite (<https://bit.ly/3ZUWJ8x>), which has made registration and record

keeping easier and more efficient, while helping to advertise the programs we offer.

Additionally, we are now offering our popular "Bettie Courses" throughout the year. Bettie Courses were inspired by the work of Dr. Beatrice "Bettie" Willard, whose brainchild the seminars were in 1962. Her research conducted on Rocky's alpine tundra in the 1950s has been instrumental to the field of mountain ecology, and her advocacy throughout the state of Colorado left a legacy for all women who value land stewardship and conservation.

The Bettie Courses focus on providing accessible programs that introduce women, and individuals who identify as women, to the outdoors. The courses emphasize science and ecology, as well as outdoor skills and confidence building. To make Bettie Courses even more accessible, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Board members created a scholarship fund in the name of longtime board member and friend of Bettie Willard, Jan Robertson. The Majestic Mountain Women Scholarship Fund is available to offer discounted registration and full scholarships for participants in all Bettie Courses.

We are grateful for the strong reputation and success of past programming that laid a strong foundation, giving us the ability to evolve and adapt as needed. And now we are primed to bring it back and make it better. It's going to be an exciting year, and we can't wait to see you in the park!



*The information is not intended as legal or tax advice. For such advice, please consult an attorney or tax advisor.*

## Planned Giving Can Help YOU and Rocky Mountain National Park

### Happy New Year! And let's dive right in!

As 2023 settles in, be sure to keep the Rocky Mountain Conservancy in mind for asset contributions as well as cash gifts. Think about making a stock gift as the market ascends, or making the Conservancy a beneficiary of a retirement plan. With Conservancy Field Institute classes back and endless ways to enjoy the park, 2023 is a great year for providing the Conservancy with an asset gift. We greatly appreciate you considering these gift options:

### Donate Your Tax Refund

ReFUND CO gives you an opportunity to directly support a local nonprofit that is doing important work in your community. If you get a refund, you can decide if you want to donate some or all of it, and choose exactly which Colorado-registered charity will directly benefit. You will need to include the organization's ID on the Voluntary Contributions Schedule (DR 0104CH) of your Colorado Individual Income Tax Return. To make a refund gift to support Rocky Mountain Park, you need to provide our organization name and our CO Secretary of State registration number as follows:

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONSERVANCY,  
20063004207

### Make the Rocky Mountain Conservancy the beneficiary of a retirement plan

It is simple to name the Rocky Mountain Conservancy as beneficiary of all or a percentage of your IRA or company retirement plan. Write in:

Rocky Mountain Conservancy,  
Tax ID #84-047-2090,  
P.O. Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517

when you choose or change your beneficiaries. No attorney fees required! Because the Conservancy is tax exempt, upon your passing, the organization can withdraw the assets from the retirement account without having to pay income taxes on the withdrawal. In comparison, any individuals named as beneficiaries of the retirement account must pay income taxes at the current rate on any distributions they receive.

Due to changes of tax law, most IRA beneficiaries will now need to withdraw all funds from retirement accounts within ten years of the account holder's death. This change in the law limits the ability of most beneficiaries (other than a spouse, minor child, or disabled or chronically ill individual) to "stretch out" retirement account distributions, limiting the ability to continue tax deferral, and compressing income taxes over a reduced period of time. Hence, the best income tax result is to benefit a charity from the retirement account and your loved ones from other assets that will not be subject to income tax when they receive it. Additionally, any amounts left to a charity at death would also receive an estate tax charitable deduction, thus reducing any applicable federal estate taxes.

### Place a bequest for Rocky Mountain Conservancy in your will or trust

It's also easy to provide for Rocky Mountain Park through your will. You can designate a particular asset or a percentage of your estate to the Conservancy by including a bequest provision in your will or revocable trust.

You can do this while creating your will or trust, or you can amend an existing one with a simple document. The Conservancy can be either a primary or a contingent beneficiary. If you plan to restrict the use of your bequest (designating to a specific area or program), you should 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. Informing the Conservancy of your intent also helps our planning to ensure that your wishes can be fulfilled. This is especially important for gifts of real estate, business interests or other specialized property. The Conservancy then receives the gift after your lifetime and applies it to the purpose(s) you specified.

At the Conservancy, unrestricted charitable gifts are used to support top Rocky Mountain Park priorities. Your distribution is fully deductible for federal estate tax purposes, and there is no limit on the deduction your estate can claim. In addition, the gift is usually exempt from state inheritance taxes.

If you would like to set up a bequest for the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, this is the language 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:  
84-047-2090.

*Let us know if you would like to learn more about making a gift through your will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance policy or other account. Contact Madison Abbott, Donor Services Manager, at 970-586-0108 ext. 105, or [madison.abbott@RMConservancy.org](mailto:madison.abbott@RMConservancy.org) for more information.*

Orientation session in which the crew members learn about the tools they will be using



by Ian Stafford  
Stewardship  
Director

Growing, nurturing and passing it on...

## Conservation Corps Celebrates its 20th Anniversary in 2023

*During the course of its 20-year history, the Conservation Corps has invited more than 500 young adults to spend their summers working, learning, and growing in Northern Colorado's public lands.*

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy is thrilled to announce that we are celebrating the Conservation Corps' 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary throughout 2023!

The Conservancy's Conservation Corps has provided valuable assistance toward the missions of Rocky Mountain National Park and surrounding areas since 2003. The mission of the National Park Service is to "preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations." As Rocky Mountain National Park's primary nonprofit partner, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy's mission is to "promote stewardship of Rocky Mountain National Park and similar lands through education and philanthropy."

During the course of its 20-year history, the Conservation Corps has invited more than 500 young adults to spend their summers working, learning, and growing in Northern Colorado's public lands. Beginning with a single crew of six people, the inaugural 2003 Conservation Corps worked in Rocky Mountain National Park on trail restoration. This additional capacity the Conservancy Corps provided the park proved invaluable in completing the long list of restoration projects the park planned for its vast landscape.

In 2006, the Conservancy expanded the program to partner with the U.S. Forest Service in the Arapaho-Roosevelt

National Forest (ARNF). Working within the ARNF's Canyon Lakes and Sulphur Ranger districts enabled the Conservation Corps to further expand its capacity to support 24 members that worked in the national forest Districts adjacent to Rocky's gateway communities of Estes Park and Grand Lake, while participating in the Conservation Corps program in Rocky.

*"Through our conservation efforts this summer, I took home more than a few good pictures and some dirt under my fingernails. I have now developed a deeper love for public lands and understand my personal responsibility to help them thrive. After multiple backpacking trips, I learned hikers' etiquette and proper Leave No Trace techniques, both of which begin with a respect for the great outdoors."*

— Lauren M., Crew Member, 2007

In 2014, the Conservation Corps added a trail crew in the ARNF's Boulder Ranger District, increasing the Conservancy's partnerships to supporting three different national forest districts surrounding Rocky Mountain National Park. This brought the total Conservation Corps capacity to 36 Corps members in six different crews, split evenly between the national park and the national forest. In 2016, the Corps became an officially accredited AmeriCorps program. This accreditation allowed the Corps to again increase capacity by providing education awards through the AmeriCorps program to every member who successfully completed their season.

Conservancy Conservation Corps in 2010





*“Working with the Conservation Corps taught me a greater appreciation for service work. I feel like the mountains, along with its good people, give so much for the public to enjoy its many trails and rivers. I strongly believe working with RMC-Conservation Corps has taught me how it’s more important to give rather than receive.”*

— Gustavo B. Crew Member, 2016

After the devastating Cameron Peak and East Troublesome wildfires of 2020, increased personnel to assist with wildfire preparation and mitigation was needed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conservation Corps was able to maintain a six-crew model (two national park, four national forest) in 2021, along with the addition of the Rocky Fire Crew, which increased the Conservation Corps to 41 total members. Working with the Rocky Mountain National Park Fire Management Office, Conservancy Fire Crew members earned their basic wildland fire fighting certifications during this extended four-month season. Crew members spent most of their field work doing fuels mitigation in the prioritized Deer Mountain region of the park, as well as clearing defensible space efforts within the eastern corridor of the park.

Last year, in 2022, the Conservation Corps had its largest season with a record 52 Corps members. The new Kawuneeche Trail Crew was established to work in the Colorado River District area of Rocky – specifically, with the Green Mountain and Tonahutu trails rebuilding efforts. The Corps also expanded crew sizes in the Sulphur and Boulder Ranger districts of Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest, and reestablished the NPS-partnered Historical Preservation crew, which had been suspended during the pandemic.

The summer of 2022 proved to be the most productive season in program history, allowing our partners in the National Park and U.S. Forest Service to reopen recreational resources that had been closed due to wildfires and floods. During all this, the Conservancy programmed more than 120 hours of education and professional development opportunities for its crew members.

*“After this summer, I feel much more confident in navigating federal positions, in terms of knowing which jobs I want with the*

*NPS or U.S.F.S. and how to apply to them. I have a much clearer picture of what careers I want to pursue after I graduate. The people I worked with this summer changed my life, and I love having family all over the country who I share a deep connection to the outdoors with.”*  
– Claire Sneed, Crew Leader 2022

It’s clear that the first 20 years of the Conservancy’s Conservation Corps have been wildly successful and that the program has made a significant impact in the public lands that are so important to visitors and residents alike. In total, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy-Conservation Corps program has:

- Provided opportunities for more than 500 Corps members to explore careers in the conservation field
- Provided more than 170,000 hours of service work across Northern Colorado
- Improved over 3,000 miles of trails
- Removed more than 11,000 trees from trails
- Installed more than 18,000 pieces to improve trail infrastructure (check steps, drainages, stairs, etc.)
- Restored more than 150 backcountry and dispersed camp sites

We can’t talk about the success of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy-Conservation Corps without recognizing the direct link to the support of the Conservancy’s amazing members and donors. Since the program’s inception in 2003, with this steadfast support, the Conservancy has been enabled to go above and beyond in developing the Conservation Corps program. Each season, the Conservancy provides benefits that many other conservation programs are unable to provide, such as a weekly stipend for crew members, reliable housing and private campsites, full uniforms, from the hats on their heads to the boots on their feet, and free rentals for all backcountry gear (e.g., tents, sleeping bags, cooking equipment) to give the young people the best chance at success.

This summer, the RMC-Conservation Corps program will be working with four crews in Rocky Mountain National Park and five crews in the surrounding national forest. Crews will focus their efforts on:

- Trail restoration on high use trails, within wilderness areas and on Longs Peak
- Assisting in wildfire restoration areas within



*Cameron Fire Crew — the first fire Conservation Corps crew in 2021*

the East Troublesome Fire and Cameron Peak Fire burn scars

- Working with the park’s Vegetation Program to remove invasive species and reintroduce native plant species within the eastern corridor of the park
- Partnering with the park’s facilities program to assist with the reconstruction of Moraine Park Campground following a water maintenance project
- Installing critical erosion infrastructure to prevent trail washout and standing water
- Working to reroute and redesign the Green Mountain Trail after the damage of the 2020 wildfires

The past 20 years have provided enough lessons to fill an entire volume of books, but most importantly, the Conservancy is grateful to be able to provide this incredible opportunity to inspire so many young adults. We follow the adage “We need more long lookers if we are to look much longer” by providing a life-changing opportunity for young people to find inspiration and a sense of place through hard work, camaraderie, and shared love of the outdoors.

Throughout 2023, we will continue to share experiences from the Conservation Corps, and we look forward to another incredible 20 years of nurturing young people and the impact and memories that will help to protect this landscape for future generations.

**Support the Conservancy’s  
Conservation Corps at  
RMConservancy.org, or  
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# Rocky Mountain Conservancy Park Puzzler

## Across

**3.** Through the Conservancy, the Vance Brand Family donated 40 acres to the park to add a scenic natural buffer between private lands and three popular trails: Estes Cone, Storm Pass, and \_\_\_\_\_ Mine trails.

**7.** The Conservancy Field Institute is officially relaunching its \_\_\_\_\_ Adventures in 2023.

**9.** A winter and spring event in the mountains caused by four factors: a steep slope, snow cover, a weak layer in the snow cover and a trigger.

**11.** Soil \_\_\_\_\_ is when soil organic matter decomposes, releasing carbon dioxide.

**13.** A \_\_\_\_\_ is a crevasse that forms where moving glacier ice separates from the stagnant ice or granular snow above it.

**16.** Over the past 100 years, the richness of seasonal wetlands in the Kawuneeche Valley has diminished, which has resulted in less surface water and \_\_\_\_\_ habitat (*two words*).

**17.** Granular snow that has not yet been compressed by a glacier is called a \_\_\_\_\_.

**18.** Of the few remaining \_\_\_\_\_ in Rocky, those that remain tend to be found in high-elevation east/northeast facing cirques where they benefit from additional wind-blown snow input and reduced melt due to shading by surrounding peaks.

**19.** The Conservancy Field Institute initiated a new program in 2022 to teach flyfishing to \_\_\_\_\_ families' kids at Sprague Lake.

**20.** The Thumb Open Space partnership between the Conservancy and the Town of Estes employed the Conservation Corps' skills to make the trail \_\_\_\_\_ for off-road wheelchair use.

## Down

**1.** A study in 2022 in Rocky detected 41 wood frog \_\_\_\_\_ (*two words*) at nine different ponds on the park's West side.

**2.** The Green Mountain Trail has finally been reopened following its destruction during the 2020 wildfires in Rocky.

**4.** The Never Summer Igneous Complex represents the easternmost manifestation of the so-called "\_\_\_\_\_ flare-up," a volcanic event that affected much of western North America during the mid-Tertiary (40 to 20 million years ago).

**5.** \_\_\_\_\_ lakes are oxygen-rich, nutrient-poor, with very low algal productivity — features that coincide with clear water and minimal aquatic vegetation.

**6.** A dramatic debris flow that occurred in \_\_\_\_\_ Canyon turned Lake Haiyaha into a milky green lake reminiscent of lakes in the northern Rockies, like Glacier and Banff.

**8.** The Conservancy was pleased to fund a study in 2022 that studied the impact of fires on \_\_\_\_\_ populations in the park.

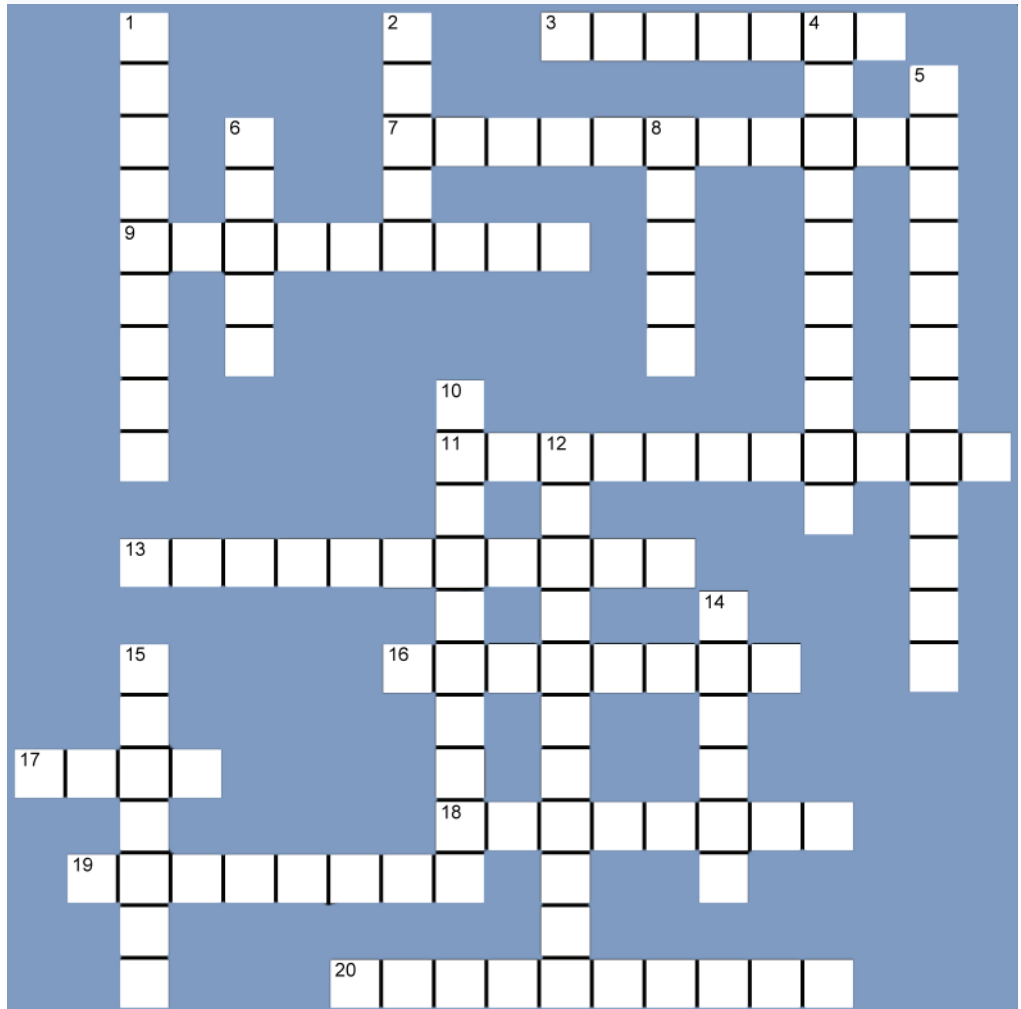
**10.** The ongoing ice patch \_\_\_\_\_ study

in the park has found a variety of items that were preserved by the ice until its recession gradually revealed their contents. Some discoveries included spruce logs nearly 4,000 years old, Native American artifacts, and the remains of bison.

**12.** An extensive set of more than 200 \_\_\_\_\_ is now part of the RMNP Sound Library collected by Dr. Jacob Job who has made numerous expeditions to accessible and remote areas of the park. The collection includes songs and calls of more than 60 bird species, numerous wildlife species, and more than a dozen non-living (e.g. wind, rain and thunder) sounds from around the park.

**14.** Colorado recently voted to reintroduce \_\_\_\_\_ into the state — a decision that has been debated for years.

**15.** A mass of hardened snow hanging from a mountain ledge is called a \_\_\_\_\_.



*The Rocky Mountain Conservancy expresses special thanks to the following people for their donations supporting Rocky Mountain National Park: October 1 – December 31, 2022*

**Total gifts: 1,860 | Total donations: \$831,626**

*These numbers reflect total gifts for this quarter — not just those listed here.*



*We're going green(er)! To reduce the length of our printed Quarterly, only Tribute Donor names will be listed in Quarterly newsletters. Going forward, the full donor list will be included in the digital annual report each year.*

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### Why Join?

Rocky is that place you visit for stunning views of wilderness, where you hike with friends, or join your family for picnics and outings. It's where the kids become Junior Rangers, and where you all go to watch wildlife. It's a special place that makes a difference in your life, and Rocky needs help. Your membership helps to fund the Conservancy's work to preserve and protect the park and its many treasures and resources that we all enjoy. As a member of the Conservancy, we'll keep you informed about park issues and events, and provide exclusive ways for you to stay connected to this beautiful and inspiring place.

### Join Annually, or Monthly!

A small amount each month can add up to a big impact over time. Just choose a monthly amount that fits your budget and it will automatically be charged to your credit card each month. You can always cancel your monthly commitment at any time, no questions asked. In appreciation of your support, you'll receive the same base benefits as a regular yearly member.

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Florida: A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE, WITHIN THE STATES, 800-435-7352 (800-HELP-FLA) OR BY VISITING [www.FloridaConsumerHelp.com](http://www.FloridaConsumerHelp.com) REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. Florida Registration #CH47404. Georgia: A full and fair description of our programs and our financial statement summary is available upon request at our office and phone number indicated above. Colorado: Colorado residents may obtain copies of registration and financial documents from the office of the Secretary of State, 303-894-2860, [www.sos.state.co.us/](http://www.sos.state.co.us/) Reg. No. 20063004207. Maryland: For the cost of copies and postage, from the Office of the Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401. Michigan: MICS #54862. Mississippi: The official registration and financial information of ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONSERVANCY may be obtained from the Mississippi Secretary of State's office by calling 888-236-6167. Registration by the Secretary of State does not imply endorsement. New Jersey: INFORMATION FILED WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL CONCERNING THIS CHARITABLE SOLICITATION AND THE PERCENTAGE OF CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHARITY DURING THE LAST REPORTING PERIOD THAT WERE DEDICATED TO THE CHARITABLE PURPOSE MAY BE OBTAINED FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY BY CALLING 973-504-6215 AND IS AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET AT: <http://www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/charfrm.htm>. REGISTRATION WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT. New York: Upon Request, Attorney General Charities Bureau, 102 Broadway, New York, NY 10271. North Carolina: Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available for the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 919-807-2214. This is not an endorsement by the state. Pennsylvania: The official registration and financial information of ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONSERVANCY may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. Virginia: State Division of Consumer Affairs, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, PO Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23218. Washington: Secretary of State at 800-332-4483 or <http://www.sos.wa.gov/charities/>. West Virginia: West Virginia residents may obtain a summary of the registration and financial documents from the Secretary of State, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305.

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

# Confessions of a Snowbird

Continued from page 1



Clatworthy Historic Collection: Hand-colored by Cheryl Pennington

endless gusts of wind. All of us can tell a tale of trouble dealing with winter: I will never forget driving through a blizzard, heading toward Billings, Montana, staying tight behind an intrepid trucker for a hundred miles, seeking safety in his wake in my old VW bug. Nor will I ever forget my son, watching as I drove into a blizzard near North Platte, Nebraska, saying to me, “Dad, can we please stop? I’m too young to die.” We spent the next couple of days playing cards in a North Platte motel.

Winter has a way of surprising us, sometimes appearing malicious, or unpredictable, like a wildfire in December. How could that be possible, we ask. It is just the weather, you say. You can’t control it. Wild weather is a hard pill to swallow.

Once in a while, winter presents a pleasant surprise. Back in 1985, as I was finishing my ranger job in Glacier National Park, one of my last tasks was conducting a snow survey. Every other week, February through April, I’d drive fifteen miles to Marias Pass, put on my old-fashioned snowshoes, tramp a mile into the woods, dig a snow trench five- or six-feet deep, and measure the snow layers to collect data for the state-wide avalanche safety program. As

those weeks turned toward spring, snow began melting, acting like glue. On my very last trip, those old snowshoes felt like forty-pound blocks of lead. I threw them in the bed of my truck, declaring, “I will never have to do that again!” About a decade later, after I made my move to Colorado, a friend asked if I wanted to go snowshoeing. “Hell, no,” I replied. “I’m too old for that stuff.” And I explained why. But my friend informed me of the new models now made with a much lighter materials and fabric, and with family-friendly models for kids. The old-style wooden trapper snowshoes were history, and, almost overnight, winter sports welcomed a new way to explore and enjoy the park – requiring a lot less grit, but enhancing a lot more wintertime fun.

Over the years I have sensed a change (perhaps in myself, if not in others) regarding the concept of grit. “Toughing it out” was simply expected, rarely discussed. It was a silent badge of courage, and if you weathered a whole winter in Montana, or northern Minnesota, well, that took grit. Only the softies drove to Florida or southern California. You would overhear it in the coffee shops or bars, “So you spent a winter in the Yukon? You must be one tough cookie.”

A couple of years ago, I was invited to take a winter trip through Yellowstone National Park in January. I will skip the details, but as far as the concept of grit was concerned,

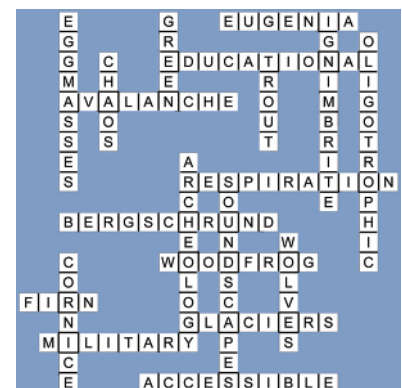
Winter skiing in the park in earlier times

this was very gentle wintertime experience. We had comfortable transportation, the food abundant, and the lodging cozy. Guides were knowledgeable and wildlife was abundant. Even the geysers were active. The weather was chilly, of course (mostly sub-zero), but there was no grit needed. We explored a world of snowstorms and blizzards, a place of majesty and memorable moments. But it is entirely possible that another person who took that exact same trip may have found the journey too cold, too uncomfortable, too scary, or terribly disappointing. It’s true — the appreciation and application of grit ranges widely in the human population.

I still dream of blizzards in Colorado. I hear the wind, and I see the snow swirl and drift. The roads are closed and staying at home is all a person can reasonably do. There will be no escape to Arizona this day. Or the day after. Only later will snow shovels come out when grit finally takes over. Outside, as if this were the wilds of Yellowstone, wildlife ambles about as wildlife always does, taking a blizzard in stride. Nature rules while the wind polishes the grit.

But long before that blizzard hit, the wise old snowbirds flew away south. Like all the juncos, they know what they are doing.

## Park Puzzler Solution





*Kathy's super smart cats, Mills and Hallett*

## Rocky Mountain Conservancy Donor Highlight: Kathy Marlow

Each year, when year end comes into view, we at the Conservancy anticipate the arrival of our annual cat photos from long time supporter, Kathy Marlow. Strangely enough, it's become a tradition, and through this connection, it's become clear that Kathy's love and appreciation for Rocky is a definite priority in her life.

Kathy grew up on a farm in Iowa where she would walk fields of beans and corn for her father, but after experiencing the Colorado mountains for the first time around 1980, those field walks quickly became mountain summits. Whether hiking with friends or by herself, Kathy has enjoyed Rocky Mountain National Park for decades, keeping record in journals of completed summits and hikes, and naming her cats after her favorites. Kathy eventually earned her doctorate in nursing and has lived in Iowa her whole life.

But living so far away has never been an unsurmountable hurdle in the face of her love of Rocky. Kathy has hiked to 41 lakes and glaciers, has climbed 16 mountains (with the summit of Chief's Head still eluding her). She has even hiked tens of miles

over multiple days with a broken rib without realizing it.

Kathy has seen much change in the park over the years, and, like many, she is concerned about the over-crowding on the trails and the increase in trash that is left behind. Social trails, and trail damage have become big problems, but ones that each person can take part in making positive change. Like the butterfly effect, both positive and negative changes in behavior and attitudes can have a huge impact when applied to so many people.

Kathy routinely gives gifts to the Conservancy for park trail improvement, with the hope that her nephews will one day get to walk to some of the same amazing sites in Rocky that she has. And she hopes future generations of her family will someday be able to be awed by the same wildlife and reap the same benefits that she's received from the natural beauty this park provides.

And so she gives to support the park through love: love of the spirit of this land and the love she has for her family's future.



### Colorado Gives Day Helps Conservancy 2022 Campaign Efforts

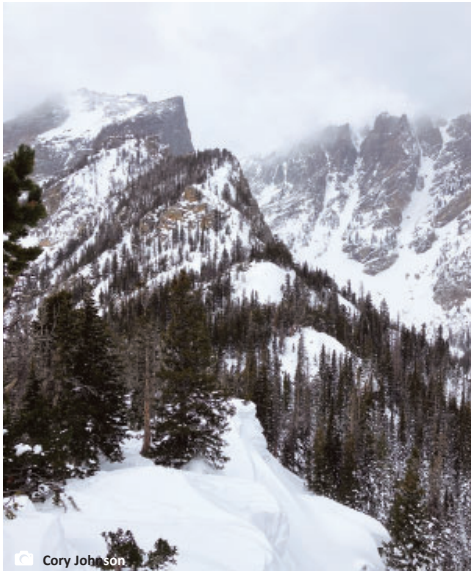
Colorado Gives Day 2022 brought in nearly \$100,000 in contributions for the Rocky Mountain Conservancy.

**Thank you to those of you who participated!**

Colorado Gives Day has grown to be Colorado's largest 24-hour giving event. In 2022, more than 3,000 Colorado nonprofit organizations participated in this broad community initiative.

Just like our other campaigns, your contributions on Colorado Gives Day will be used for the Conservancy's work to protect and preserve Rocky Mountain National Park, as specified when you made your gift.

There are many ways to support the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. Learn more about the Donor Advised Fund, IRA Charitable Distributions, and Stock Gifts, by contacting Madison Abbott at 970-586-0108 ext. 105, or [madison.abbott@RMConservancy.org](mailto:madison.abbott@RMConservancy.org).



# Rocky Mountain Conservancy

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A winter backcountry view of Hallet Peak

Visit [RMConservancy.org](https://RMConservancy.org)  
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## Nature Notes

**The quietude of winter is a welcome calm after the hustle and bustle of high season in Rocky Mountain National Park. The subtle beauty of the dried grasses, the frozen streams and the Continental Divide shrouded in blowing snow display a delightful contrast to appreciate this time of year.**

Conservancy Members **Lisa and Bill Payden** spotted a bobcat near their home in Estes Park that was calmly surveying a field of grazing mule deer. The deer became aware of this burgeoning threat and started to move, becoming increasingly agitated as the bobcat moved to follow them. The deer eventually organized as a herd and left the area, and the bobcat turned to waiting for smaller prey under the snow • Conservancy Executive Director **Estee Rivera Murdock** was looking out her kitchen window in Estes Park when a bobcat ran across the snow-covered yard followed by two mule deer in full pursuit • RMNP Wildlife Biologist **Mary Kay Watry** noted that bat research with Jeremy Siemers with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program that had begun in 2019 has been ongoing through 2022 and is planned to continue in 2023. These efforts and the continued years of monitoring have provided valuable baseline information of Rocky's bat species diversity, distribution and habitat use. This is especially important because "White-nose

syndrome (WNS) has been detected at multiple Colorado sites this year (not confirmed at ROMO) and unfortunately the disease has finally reached Colorado. Researchers call the disease "white-nose syndrome" (WNS) because of the visible white fungal growth on infected bats' muzzles and wings. The park doesn't yet know how this will impact its bat populations, but this kind of baseline information is an important reference for future changes. The Rocky Mountain Conservancy helped fund this study with \$30,000 in 2020 • Conservancy Member and Donor **Erik Stensland** was out photographing the backcountry this fall and noticed that while this year the aspen trees seemed to be less vibrant than they were last autumn, other plants more than made up for it. Nearly everywhere he went, from the high mountain lakes to the low valleys, there were brilliant reds, oranges and yellows to be found nearly everywhere. All the other plants seemed more spectacular than he'd seen them in a long time. As always, it seemed to vanish far too quickly • Conservancy Donor and Member Services Associate **Victoria Johnson** spotted a coyote outside the Conservancy office in late December • Estes Park resident **Dean Martinson** watched three coyotes hunting for voles or mice under the snow, striking the characteristic hunting pose before pouncing on the prey they heard scurrying under the snow • **Timed Entry will be in place again this season, so be sure to make your hiking and camping plans ahead!**



*The long-tailed weasel is found almost throughout North America and in much of South America. In the northern parts of its range, it turns white in the winter. That's what happens in Rocky, too.*



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