



Flowers at Lower Hutchinson | M. Willson photo



Summer | 2023

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QUARTERLY

Interpreting the Park through Generations

by Jeremiah RisingBuffalo Maybee

My name is Jeremiah RisingBuffalo Maybee. I come from the Northern Arapaho & Seneca Nations, the Turtle Clan within my Seneca nation. I go by RisingBuffalo these days. I grew up with our Seneca people on the Cattaraugus Territory near Buffalo, New York. My Northern Arapaho Tribe is located on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming and Colorado is our traditional homeland. As the fairly new Eastern District Supervisory Park Ranger of Interpretation for Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), I am excited to serve where my Arapaho ancestors walked.

I never meant to become a park ranger. I never knew the park service existed growing up on the reservation. When I went to the University of Utah, I earned a bachelor's degree in Parks, Recreation & Tourism and discovered the National Park Service (NPS) and the beautiful sites that it encompasses. After college, I moved to a community in New Mexico called Candy Kitchen and became a seasonal park ranger at El Morro National Monument. There, I realized the beauty of protecting and stewarding public lands. I became intrinsically motivated to protect both the cultural and natural elements of NPS lands along with telling the history of Indigenous people.

While telling part of the story of the Zuni and Acoma at El Morro, I decided to dedicate my career to the NPS and pursue making positive changes in stewardship and interpretation. From El Morro, I went to New River Gorge National Park in West

Virginia. I then transferred to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument on the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona. Next, I worked at Mesa Verde in Colorado where I learned and interpreted the Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings. My time at Mesa Verde prepared me to become the Lead Park Ranger at Chaco Culture National Historic Site in New Mexico in 2019. All of these sites are on Indigenous lands, and recognizing these Tribes is an

acknowledgement to us all since we all live here on what is now the United States of America. Telling the story of Indigenous people, including both the good and traumatic events, tells the story of us all. We need to celebrate pre-contact America and heal from the horrific events which have occurred since. By doing so, we can start healing from the past and moving positively into the future.

For three years at Chaco, I lived 90 minutes from a grocery store and 13 miles down an unpaved road with five to six

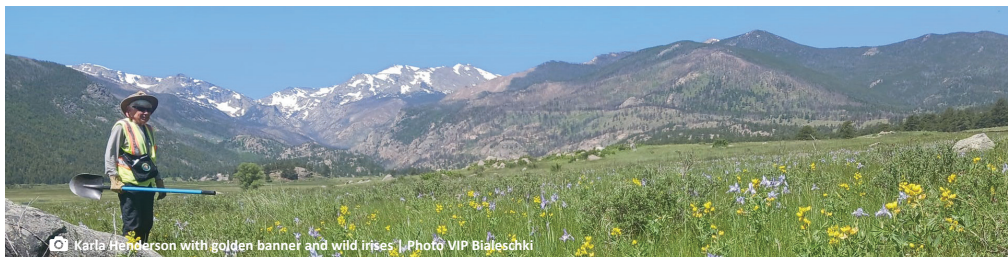
other park service employees. I was in the heart of Navajo and Pueblo country. I have a deep appreciation and respect for these nations, but when I saw this position at RMNP, I jumped on it. This was an opportunity to move to one of my homelands!

I had read about the Indigenous Connections project funded by Rocky Mountain Conservancy to preserve the history and share the stories of nine associated Tribal nations whose traditional homelands include RMNP.



Jeremiah RisingBuffalo Maybee | NPS photo

Golden banner and wild irises flourishing in Moraine Park this summer thanks to a wet spring and Weed Warriors' stewardship.



A Message from our Executive Director



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Dear Friends,

A cornerstone of the Conservancy's mission is the importance of sharing our love of nature and passion for stewardship of public lands like Rocky with our children and other young people in our lives. You can see the emphasis we place on this through our Next Generation Fund and the extensive education and outreach programs directed towards our children—our future.

Many of the features in this edition of the Quarterly demonstrate just how positive and life-changing it is for young people to experience the outdoors and our amazing public lands with their family and role models. The 50 years the Young-Pierce family spent vacationing together in a rustic cabin adjacent to the park instilled a fierce love of the environment and contributed to their decision to donate their land to the Conservancy and, someday, to the park, so it can be protected from development for future generations to enjoy. Berthoud Town Trustee Sean Murphy recalls how his father's stories of Glacier National Park and wildland firefighting led him to sign up for three summers with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy-Conservation Corps which literally changed his life. Our new Scholar-in-Residence initially found his way to the Rocky Mountains through stories shared with him by an instructor who served as a seasonal ranger at RMNP. And RisingBuffalo eloquently shares how elders create special memories in sacred places like RMNP with children who make more memories with their children which creates traditions that bind people together and to the land.

Let's continue to build on this powerful tradition of passing love and stewardship for Rocky Mountain National Park and other lands on to children and young people in our lives. It may be the best and greatest gift we have to offer.

Warmly,



Estee Rivera Murdock

Estee Rivera Murdock

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR


Ask the Conservancy

Quarterly Editor Anne Morris 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 Communications@RMConservancy.org or write: Ask the Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, PO Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517.

We regularly see park staff and volunteers known as Weed Warriors in meadows taking on invasive weeds. What invasive species are they tackling in Rocky's ecosystems, and is it possible to beat the weeds back?

RMNP doesn't have the resources to eradicate invasive weeds everywhere, so the park manages the invaders by using solid data and prioritized strategies. Volunteers are trained and function as Rocky Invasive Patrol (RIP) teams that hike on and off trails to collect data throughout the park to show what invasives are prevalent and where. This information is entered into the park GIS system to create maps that determine Exotic Management Units (EMUs). From there, resource managers prioritize areas for treatment and the volunteer Weed Warriors get to work. While many invasive plants might be found in the park, musk thistle, bull thistle, mullein, and hound-tongue often top the Weed Warriors' list. Until late June, the warriors will use shovels to manually remove or to sever the roots of these weeds and leave the plant to decompose to return nutrients to the soil. When flower heads appear and begin to set seed, the warriors add clippers and collection bags to their gear to cut and collect the seed heads for ultimate destruction in the park's curtain burner. Last year, Weed Warriors collected more than 2,000 pounds of seed heads – literally more than a ton! With hundreds or thousands of seeds per head, that's an awful lot of weeds that will never grow in RMNP. **The problems with invasives include physically crowding out native plants and competing with them for nutrients and pollinators. For example, the showy musk thistle will draw bees and other pollinators away from native species such as our native wavy and elk thistles.** While Weed Warriors manually remove invasives, RMNP vegetation crews focus on other aspects such as spraying, revegetation, and restoration work in the never-ending battle against invasive plants. Weed Warriors enjoy the work, because they not only can see the effects of their labor over time, but can also see immediate improvement at the end of each day. So the next time you admire a meadow full of beautiful wildflowers and other native plants, remember the rangers and volunteers committed to helping it stay that way. – Deb Bialeschki, 8+ Year Weed Warrior Volunteer



 The WeedWarriors | Photo VIP Bialeschki

Shop Conservancy Nature Stores



www.RMConservancy.org/shop



TOTE BAG: RMNP CANVAS BLACK BEAR
A canvas tote bag with an image of an adorable momma black bear with her cubs! Show your love of Rocky wherever you go!
Item Number: 010975.

Price: \$12.95 ; **Member Price: \$11.01**



T-SHIRT: RMNP PARK VIEW
This heather forest green t-shirt features a colorful image of iconic Bear Lake and Hallett Peak. Item Number: 012176-012180.

Price: \$25.95; **Member Price: \$22.06**



HAT: RMNP TRI-PEAK
This olive-green hat features a leather embossed design of three mountains with topographic map lines and a cream-colored

mesh backing. Item Number: 011798.

Price: \$22.95; **Member Price: \$19.51**



BOOK: ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK NATURAL HISTORY HANDBOOK BY JOHN C. EMERICK

Published by the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. From

its geological origins to today's inspiring landscapes, a seasoned naturalist reveals the wonder of Rocky Mountain National Park in this natural history handbook. Striking images enhance the author's comprehensive descriptions of the park's ecosystems and the flora and fauna found in each. Discover the life in and around rivers and lakes, explore the alpine tundra, and learn about some of the issues facing Rocky. Softcover; 167 pages. Item Number: 1280. Price: \$16.95 ; **Member Price: \$14.41**

More memorabilia at
www.RMConservancy.org/shop
970-586-0108

Impressive granite walls of Hallett Peak. The Chaos Canyon rockslide, which occurred on one of Hallett's flanks, suggests changing environmental conditions have the potential to alter iconic landscapes that appear to be stable and timeless.



by
Shelley
Hall

Climate Change and the Day Chaos Canyon Lived Up to Its Name

Located above Lake Haiyaha between Hallett and Otis peaks, Chaos Canyon has been an internationally renowned bouldering destination since the 1990s. Bouldering is a form of climbing without ropes and harnesses. As the bulk of visitors around Bear Lake hike up to Dream and Emerald Lakes, on any given day, climbers with large crash pads secured on their backs make their way beyond the hiking trails to lower and upper Chaos Canyon.

On the afternoon of June 28, 2022, a major rockslide shook the ground in Rocky Mountain National Park's (RMNP) Chaos Canyon, with dust, debris, and mud rumbling down the cirque walls. In a matter of minutes, major geologic features known as the "Two Towers" had collapsed, and other landmark boulders were buried in mud and rock. The clear waters of Lake Haiyaha below turned an opaque shade of teal from fine sediment known as "glacial flour."

Climbers in Chaos Canyon, a popular bouldering area nestled between Hallett and Otis Peaks, captured stunning video of the event even as they scrambled to reach safe ground. Miraculously, no one was hurt.

Immediately after the rockslide, RMNP superintendent Darla Sidles requested technical assistance from federal government partners to determine the cause and to understand implications for safety and stability in Chaos Canyon area. Chaos Canyon west of Lake Haiyaha was closed to all users until further notice.

In the one year since, RMNP resource managers and scientists from the National Park Service

(NPS) and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have collaborated to study what caused the deformation. Their conclusion, in a scientific paper currently under peer review: "the rapid slide was induced by gradually increasing long-term air temperatures that thawed ice and increased pore pressures within the glacial debris." Or put more simply, the effect of climate change on alpine permafrost.

"Climate change impacts are real, and we think this is one of the outcomes," said Scott Esser of the Continental Divide Research Learning Center, and one of the paper's authors. "We'd expect glacial movement, but things really began accelerating up there in the past several years."

But how to study the Chaos Canyon rockslide when the area itself is too dangerous to enter?

"Even we weren't allowed up there," Esser said. "Chaos Canyon is still fully closed, including to researchers." Esser and colleagues from the NPS Geologic Resources Division in Lakewood, Colo., and the USGS Geologic Hazards Science Center in Golden, Colo., turned to a variety of technology and research techniques for the investigation.

OTHER RESOURCES

Video can be seen at:



Personal climber account of the slide:



Esser credits his research partners for “going above and beyond to study these unique, time-sensitive questions.”

They applied for and received emergency authorization to use a drone in the park to remotely gather high-resolution imagery and collected historical satellite imagery for comparison. “We went back in time using photos and geo-referencing,” Esser explained. “We’d put a dot on the two towers and measure the movement over the series of images.” The resolution of the drone images also enabled researchers to identify the composition of much of the material in the runout and to look for evidence that the fallen slope contained permafrost.

Dr. Kate E. Allstadt, research geophysicist at the Geologic Hazards Science Center and one of the paper’s two primary authors, brought seismic analysis and numerical modeling to the study. She analyzed regional seismic activity before, during, and after the rockslide to look for possible correlations and to better understand the timeline

as the catastrophic event unfolded. Using a variety of data, including topographical and meteorological information and video of the slide, she also conducted three-dimensional simulations of the landslide behavior to break down slide dynamics and understand future hazards.

Allstadt said the Chaos Canyon rockslide was an event in the making since around the mid-2000s, but the deformation on June 28th took place over the course of hours. “One and a half hours before the main event at 4:34 pm, rocks were already starting to fall down the front of the slope, suggesting that slow sliding of the slope started earlier in the day. There were three larger failures, including the main event, which were energetic enough to generate seismic signals visible more than 18 miles away.”

The study found warming ambient air temperatures likely degraded the permafrost. Recurring temperatures above freezing in the slide area have occurred since 2006. Warming temperatures have accelerated since 2018, the warmest year

on record as recorded at the Bear Lake Snow Telemetry Station (SNOTEL). There is also continuing instability in the slide area caused by spring runoff and rainfall.

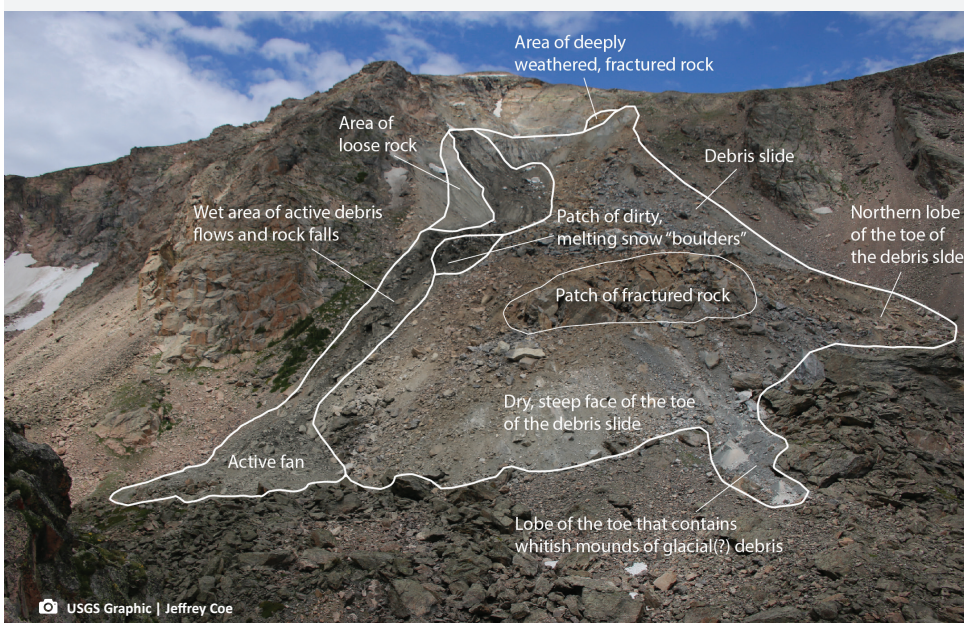
The researchers also determined that the peak velocity of the slide was approximately 11 mph, and the total volume was approximately 2.6 million cubic yards. The large Two Towers geologic feature slid downhill just over 656 feet.

With the research nearing completion, RMNP’s resource managers will have empirical data and analysis as a basis for future decisions regarding access to upper Chaos Canyon, as well as understanding what other wilderness areas in the park might be monitored for similar hazards.

RMNP Public Information Officer Kyle Patterson underscored that while there are inherent risks involved with recreating in any wilderness area, entering the closure area of upper Chaos Canyon is prohibited. “Visitors can still enjoy hiking to and around Lake Haiyaha, and the bouldering area in lower Chaos Canyon on the north and east shore of Lake Haiyaha remains open,” she said.

Patterson offers this suggestion for those who want to see the rockslide area for themselves: “Bring binoculars.”

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



USGS illustration of the debris slide activity. The area labeled “patch of fractured rock” is what remains of the rock formation, “Two Towers.”

Former Superintendent Darla Sidles and senior RMNP staff, along with Executive Director Estee Rivera and Conservancy board and staff, joined with members of the Young and Pierce families in 2022 to mark the donation of the land and 1948 cabin to be incorporated into the national park.



Conservancy photo



by
Conservancy
Communications
Associate
Anne Morris

For Love of RMNP and Nature, the Young-Pierce Family Donated Family Cabin

The Young-Pierce family members began discussing the future of the cabin and made the decision to donate their beloved property to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy and, ultimately, to Rocky Mountain National Park, so it will be conserved and protected in perpetuity.

Like many families in the late 1960s, Ralph and Louise Young and their three children discovered Rocky Mountain National Park and fell in love with the landscape, outdoor activities, and the Estes Valley. So in 1970, Ralph asked cousin Bertha Ramey, an Estes Park real estate agent, to help him find a cabin. She did, and Ralph and Louise purchased a rustic homestead on just under four acres out near the YMCA. They spent many summers as a family watching wildlife, hiking, and enjoying the Aspenbrook stream that runs through the property.



Jessica Pierce Madden and Roger Pierce | Conservancy photo

Roger Pierce, Alexandra's surviving spouse, and to Crawford's daughters Eva, Louise, Estelle, and Emily. The floods of 2013 had spared the cabin, but a raging Aspenbrook changed the geography of the deep canyon. The cabin also survived the threat of the 2020 East Troublesome Fire, but some family members started to worry climate change meant the cabin would always be at risk.

When Ralph and Louise's children, Alexandra and Crawford, started families of their own, they returned every summer for extended family time and rejuvenation.

"We'd drive out every summer from Wisconsin, visiting national parks along the way," recalled Emily Young, one of Crawford's four daughters. Alexandra and Crawford and their spouses and children developed a deep connection to the land that touched four generations. (Their brother, Ralph, Jr., made his life in England.)

The Young-Pierce family began discussing the future of the cabin and decided to transfer their beloved property to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy and, ultimately, to Rocky Mountain National Park, so it will be conserved and protected in perpetuity. The four Young family sisters each donated their ownership portions and the Conservancy bought part of Roger's portion and he donated the rest, another significant

Fast forward 50 years, and the Young-Pierce families were at a crossroads. Ownership of the cabin had passed to

Continued on page 14



Young-Pierce Family photos | Conservancy photo



Young-Pierce Cabin today | Conservancy photo

Taff Family
backpacking in
Haleakala NP, Hawaii



by
Conservancy
Communications
Associate
Anne Morris

Conservancy Welcomes Inaugural Scholar-in-Residence



Dr. B. Derrick Taff

Taff takes jokes about the focus of this line of research in stride because he recognizes the importance of the work.

Functional and aesthetic design in Longs Peak Trail waste collection structures.



The Rocky Mountain Conservancy and the Continental Divide Research Learning Center have selected Dr. B. Derrick Taff as the inaugural Scholar-in-Residence at Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). This initiative is modeled after the immersive Artist-in-Residence experience and connects scholars and scientists to the community and Rocky’s educational programming.

Taff will partner with RMNP and the Leave No Trace organization on two research projects. The first is to study human waste management in the Longs Peak trail corridor to identify and remove barriers to proper disposal. RMNP collaborated with the University of Colorado to design and construct attractive and functional privies which are serviced by custodial crews and llamas that physically haul the waste out of the backcountry. Taff will explore attitudes toward compliance and possible other strategies such as “wag bags” —poop bags for humans.

Taff takes jokes about the focus of his line of research in stride because he recognizes the importance of the work. “If people pass ten ‘toilet paper bouquets,’ they’re upset.

It’s an important issue for the preservation of the park, but also really hurts the visitor experience,” he said.

The second project will explore compliance with Leave No Trace principles among the RMNP bouldering community. This work revisits Taff’s studies from 2015 to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted education and to identify new strategies. For example, Taff found that climbers who learned bouldering in a park setting like Rocky were more likely to embrace Leave No Trace behaviors than those who were introduced to the sport in a gym. That insight suggests it may be beneficial to extend Leave No Trace educational outreach into Front Range climbing facilities.

While Taff’s roots are solidly in the South and he serves as an associate professor at Penn State University back East, Rocky Mountain National Park has held his heart since he was an undergraduate at the University of Alabama majoring in Wilderness Recreation. He was exposed to visitor use management and stories of Rocky’s backcountry from one of his teachers, who was also a

Continued on page 15



Beaver dam within RMNP

Courtesy photo



By
Kara Brunngraber
and Jeremy
Sueltenfuss

Busy beavers indeed:

Rocky Mountain National Park's "Ecosystem Engineers"

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy, as part of the Kawuneeche Valley Ecosystem Restoration Collaborative (KVERC), is working to restore and protect the unique and productive watershed of the Colorado River on the west side of Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). The Conservancy is funding beaver research to understand the current state of this mammal critical to RMNP's riparian ecosystems.

American beavers (*Castor canadensis*) have earned the title "ecosystem engineer" due to their ability to create and manipulate a riparian ecosystem through dam building, flooding, and abandonment. It's long been appreciated that beavers support the growth of willows and other plant life important to Rocky's wildlife and geography. In the aftermath of the historic Cameron Peak and East Troublesome wildfires, scientists are observing that beaver ecosystems are more resilient to natural disasters because their habitats serve as natural firebreaks and buffers.

Through the construction of dams and subsequent flooding, beavers raise water tables, which leads to the creation of wetland complexes. These disturbances change dry land into aquatic ecosystems that impact the local wildlife populations and also organic matter and nutrient availability. Beaver herbivory is another method of disturbance to wetland ecosystems and can influence the structure—size and growth form—of resprouting plants. While the term "disturbance" typically has a negative connotation, beavers actually help

to maintain a healthy, species-rich system. As beavers harvest trees for dam or lodge building, they not only change the water level within the riparian ecosystem but also change the forest structure and its net primary productivity (a measure of how productive the vegetation is during photosynthesis). Beaver modifications increase habitat diversity, providing many different types of habitat for birds, plants, amphibians, and even macroinvertebrates within the water.

Beavers' "engineering" can even increase the resistance and resilience of an ecosystem to other disturbances, such as fires or floods. The increase in water levels across the floodplain can act as a fire break, slowing the progression of forest fires, while at the same time slowing water down and reducing the changes of downstream flood events. Ecosystems diverse in landscape and species are better able to avoid severe damage from large scale disturbances compared to ecosystems with little to no habitat diversity. Diverse forests, for instance, are more resilient to windstorms than single species tree plantations.

Beaver: Ecosystem Engineer



More recently, the ecosystem engineering capabilities of beavers have been harnessed to help restore damaged and degraded wetlands within the arid west. As riparian ecosystems are increasingly threatened by climate change and degraded by human land use change, beavers can promote the necessary disturbance regimes to re-establish wetland complexes and restore wetland ecosystem services.

Beavers historically covered much of North America but suffered greatly from overexploitation for their fur during early European colonization as well as eradication efforts of early ranchers, leading to near extirpation of populations across the U.S. However, since the 1920s, beaver populations in the U.S. have rebounded due to reintroduction and protection efforts and are now present in most of their original habitat range, though still at dramatically lower numbers.

Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) has a long history of human use including the Ute, Arapaho, and other associated Tribal Nations. These Native peoples were primarily hunter-gatherers, moving seasonally with the migrations of the game species and primarily living and working within the natural cycles of the ecosystem.

Human impacts to beavers came about beginning in the 1800s following the gold rush within what is now the park's boundaries, leading to an active homesteading and ranching community. Homesteaders modified large valleys on both the western and eastern side of the park by draining wetlands for ranches and farms, constructing irrigation ditches, and, in the case of Moraine Park, even building golf courses.

RMNP also has a long history of beaver trapping, both for the fur trade and as a way for ranchers

to stop the animals from flooding valuable grazing land. Beaver trapping occurred well into the 1940s and decimated the local beaver population. Aerial imagery from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s shows a dramatic decline in wetland systems and beaver ponded areas as the beaver populations declined. Willow populations also declined as drainage lowered ground water levels.

The negative impacts of colonial human land use continue to this day. Due to draining natural wetlands and beaver extirpation, ground water tables have yet to reach their historical levels, threatening willow population recovery. Lower water levels also enable elk to travel farther into the wetland to browse on the willow stands, reducing annual growth and seed production, but also decreasing food for the current beaver population. Willows are now facing the added stressor of moose foraging. Moose feed on willows almost exclusively, and since moose have been introduced to Colorado in the 1970s, their populations have expanded dramatically.

This summer, Colorado State University researchers are conducting beaver census surveys throughout the Kawuneeche Valley to identify the size and location of current beaver populations and evaluate the quality of their habitat. The data will provide resource managers insight into where and how to manage beaver reestablishment elsewhere within the park.

Restoration of degraded wetlands is imperative to reestablish healthy ecosystems. Promoting beaver habitat and encouraging an expansion of the current beaver populations within the wetland valleys can leverage the beaver's ability as an ecosystem engineer to strengthen these ecosystems and promote their resilience.



© A beaver food cache forming in Fall River, located in Horseshoe Park, RMNP | Courtesy Photo

Research will also explore the competition for food sources between beaver and moose within the Kawuneeche Valley. Currently, both elk and beaver competitively forage for willows; however, there is limited research on the impacts that moose have on beaver establishment in degraded wetland ecosystems. This research may help managers understand how the interactions between these beaver and moose are impacting the wetland vegetative community, and how this will influence the efficacy of beaver reestablishment and wetland restoration goals.

Philanthropy makes this and other wildlife studies possible. For more information or to support research, go to www.RMConservancy.org.

Left:
Sean Murphy near Timber Creek
Campground | RMNP 2008

Right:
Anna Pranger at Lake
Haiyaha | RMNP 2008



By
Sean P. Murphy
Berthoud Town
Trustee

Appreciation for Life-Changing Seasons with the Conservation Corps

Editor's note: The Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Conservation Corps is celebrating its 20th anniversary season this summer. The Conservancy was delighted to receive this letter reflecting on how the Corps experience shaped Sean Murphy's life.

Shannon, Kate, Patrick, and Anna
at Wild Basin | RMNP 2021



My name is Sean Murphy and I want to congratulate and thank all of you for 20 years of excellent work undertaken by the Conservation Corps. I am where I am today thanks to my three seasons working with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy and its impact cannot be underestimated.

My story begins with my father, Dennis Murphy. He worked on a hotshot crew in Glacier NP under the lead of former executive director Curt Buchholtz in the early 1980s. He filled me with stories of his adventures in the outdoors from an early age. When I was just coming off one of the best summers of my life as a backpacking guide in New Mexico, I was eager to try something new and my father recommended I apply with the Conservancy (Rocky Mountain Nature Association at the time) in Colorado.

I was lucky enough to join the Estes crew in 2008 and had an amazing season exploring the park for the first time with a crash course in trail construction, resource management, botany, mountaineering, and a dozen other subjects. The best part was meeting a group of people that worked

hard, loved nature, and served and cared for this national treasure with unmatched commitment.

The next year I came back for more, serving as the Estes crew lead. I expected more trail work and elk encounters. I didn't expect to meet the love of my life, Anna Pranger. She spent her first year on the Rawah crew and we hit it off pretty quickly. Early dates involved sport climbing, an introduction to Nepalese food (my favorite now), and multiple 14er summits. When the summer ended, we still had our love of outdoors and each other. We did three years long distance until we both finished college. I left Minnesota to settle down with her in Berthoud, CO, just a short drive from the park. We're still here; we've been married nine years and have three young kids now. We still go hiking in Rocky regularly.

The third season, I led the Red Feather Lakes crew. We had the unique opportunity to blaze brand new trail in the area and work independently to shape and plan our projects. I went back to college and added a Natural Resource Management minor and decided that leadership and service had to be a fundamental

Continued on page 15



Rocky Mountain Conservancy Park Puzzler

Across

- 3.** The National Register of Historic Places designated two of Rocky's trails, the East Inlet and the Fern Odessa, as this type of property.
- 5.** Sprague, a local homesteader, was the first person to pay the \$3 RMNP entrance fee in 1939.
- 8.** The state black bears enter in winter marked by decreased breathing, lower heart rate and metabolism.
- 11.** Trail Ridge Road or Highway to the Sky is the highest paved road of this type in the nation.
- 12.** Native peoples used this pine tree as an early form of chewing gum and it is one of the most common trees in the park.
- 14.** First female superintendent of RMNP who retired in June 2023 with more than 31 years of service with the NPS.
- 16.** An outbreak of this bark loving insect has taken a toll on the conifers in the Rocky area.
- 18.** The northernmost mountain in RMNP which borders on Roosevelt National Forest.
- 19.** Nancy Wilson and her daughter were shown hiking to this lake in the last issue of The Quarterly.

Down

- 1.** Colorado's only alpine toad, listed as an endangered species in 1993.
- 2.** This squirrel is distinguishable from other squirrels in Rocky by their prominent ear tufts.
- 4.** Name the anniversary season of the Conservation Corps.
- 6.** In 1803, land encompassing RMNP was acquired during this purchase.
- 7.** This type of footwear is listed by the Field Institute as one of the ten essentials for participants.
- 9.** These service days are back in RMNP. Invest your time and energy for a meaningful cause.
- 10.** One-third of the national park is above tree line creating this tundra ecosystem.
- 13.** When neither organism can thrive on its own, a symbiotic relationship between fungi and algae develops.
- 15.** This trail to a mountain peak is where Enos Mills honed his naturalist skills and prepared him to be a vocal advocate for the creation of RMNP.
- 17.** Rocky Mountain Conservancy offers what type of scenic bus tour that is appropriate for all ages?



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The Rocky Mountain Conservancy expresses special thanks to the following people for their donations supporting Rocky Mountain National Park: March 23, 2023 – June 27, 2023

Total gifts: 567 | Total donations: \$725,407



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In Memoriam Pieter Hondius

February 10, 1923 - May 9, 2023

Pieter Hondius recently passed away at age 100. With a direct bloodline to influential early European settlers who ranched and homesteaded the Estes Valley and what would become lands in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), Hondius was a modest man and active civic leader.

Hondius' father, Pieter Hondius, Sr., emigrated from Holland in 1895 and settled in Estes Park to ranch and farm, buying property in Horseshoe Park and Beaver Meadows. This made the Hondius family the largest private property owner — or "in-holder" — in what in 1915 became RMNP. Pieter's mother, Eleanor, was the daughter of Elkhorn Lodge founder, William James.

Hondius grew up in Estes Park, and served in the U.S. Navy during WWII, graduated from the University of Colorado, and worked 35 years in Denver in real estate and development. It was there he met his beloved Helen, a passionate advocate for children. They were married for 47 years until her death in 2020.

As president of the Colorado Mountain Club, Pieter leveraged the CMC's influence to persuade Congress to appropriate \$4 million to preserve MacGregor Ranch, one of the historic treasures of the Estes Valley. Hondius also worked to protect the Indian Peaks area and was a board member of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association (now Rocky Mountain Conservancy) from 1983-1986. During this time, he once again made his home in Estes Park.

Hondius' full obituary can be found online, and more information will be available in a forthcoming book by Dr. Jim Pickering, Conservancy board member and past president, on the life of Pieter Hondius, Sr.

RisingBuffalo

Continued from page 1

Through Indigenous Connections, and in consultation with these nine traditionally associated Indigenous Nations, we are creating a cultural program that includes interpretative training and educational materials for RMNP, Conservancy staff, and other organizations. I am honored to be a part of a team focusing on ways to interpret associated Tribes, include Tribal history and culture in the park, reach out to Native people, and mentor future Indigenous park rangers. Eventually, the program will include dance and art demonstrations. Collaborating with Tribes will allow a more authentic representation of our communities, sharing our stories “in our own words and on our own terms.” Through cultural education and appreciation, we start healing our differences and generational trauma from the past. We are all connected as human beings. Through understanding and learning each other’s culture, we can lift each other up rather than tear each other down.

This year, the Conservancy funded an outreach table at the Denver Powwow. Indigenous NPS rangers spoke with over 2,000 Indigenous people about life as a Native park ranger. This is one example of how RMNP is strengthening ties to associated Tribes, and one way



in which we can bring more of our Indigenous people back to the land where our ancestors have walked for many, many centuries.

I believe that one of the most powerful tools in protecting the park is to provide opportunities for visitors to make emotional and intellectual connections to RMNP. When someone has a special connection to a place like RMNP, such as a favorite hike, then a memory and connection is created. We may recreate and repeat these memories with various people creating a modern-day tradition. Imagine hiking a trail as a child, then taking your children, and your children’s children on the same hike as an elder. Now, imagine 100 years from now our descendants hiking the same trail, proudly stating how their ancestors walked these trails. We will be those ancestors of which they speak. That, to me, is sacred and makes RMNP worth protecting and preserving. I look forward to serving RMNP, our Indigenous people, and all human beings during my time here.

Young-Pierce Family Cabin

Continued from page 6

philanthropic gift. The donation was completed last summer, but the story of the cabin continues.

Along with the national park, the Conservancy will work to ultimately dismantle the cabin and prepare the land for addition to the park. In the meantime, the cabin is housing the inaugural Scholar-in-Residence (see page 7) and field coordinators for the Conservancy’s Conservation Corps program.

“One of the unique aspects of this gift was the number of family members and co-owners involved who shared the vision of protecting the property from development,” said Estee Rivera, executive director of the Conservancy. “Another unique aspect of this gift is the family itself.”

The legacy of Ralph and Louise Young lives on in their descendants and in the values of hard work, education,

accomplishment, and love of nature that they instilled. Ralph served in academia and in multiple presidential administrations as a senior advisor to the Federal Reserve. Matriarch Louise Merwin Young earned her doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania in 1939 and promoted women’s participation in the political process through her scholarship and leadership in the League of Women Voters at the national and local levels.

Ralph and Louise’s children continued the tradition of excellence. Alexandra was an accomplished musician, composer and educator, with some of her notable musical pieces inspired by the Rocky Mountains. Son Crawford was a renowned political scientist at the University of Wisconsin.

Alexandra and Roger’s daughter, Jessica Pierce Madden, joked that in their family, the children were expected to earn advanced degrees in the same way children in most families were expected to graduate high school or college. Among the grandchildren are numerous PhDs and master’s degrees.

“We’re deeply grateful for all the important work the Rocky Mountain Conservancy does to protect and enhance the whole area around RMNP,” said Emily Young. “We hope that others are inspired to give their property. More people can help give nature a chance, enhance access to the park, and support future generations.”

“We are always open to meeting with individuals and families to discuss options for selling or gifting property or other assets to the Conservancy to support Rocky Mountain National Park, and as with the Young-Pierce family, we have many options for structuring donations,” said Rivera. “Our highest priority for land acquisitions are in-holdings or properties adjacent to the park, but we’ve also worked with donors on all sorts of land gifts to support the Conservancy and the park, even sometimes with land that isn’t adjacent to the park.”

Scholar-in-Residence

Continued from page 7

seasonal law enforcement ranger in the park. Taff hounded RMNP's human resources department until he was offered a summer seasonal position (an approach, he said with a laugh, that he doesn't recommend). Taff completed his PhD in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources at Colorado State University in 2012.

"Derrick's research will help us to better understand visitors' perspectives and barriers to properly dealing with human waste," said Mike Lukens, RMNP Wilderness and Climbing Program Supervisor. "Results from this research will inform future educational outreach efforts and management strategies by the park. Overall, the research will help us to better protect the pristine landscape and amazing wildlife in the park."

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Scholar-in-Residence program provides a small stipend as well as housing in a rustic cabin adjacent to RMNP.

"Philanthropy from the Young-Pierce family helps make this unique opportunity to conduct research in Rocky possible," said Estee Rivera, executive director of the Conservancy. "The donation of their cabin property

enables us to offer housing to scholars in the short term until the cabin is eventually removed and the land incorporated into RMNP."

Conservation Corps

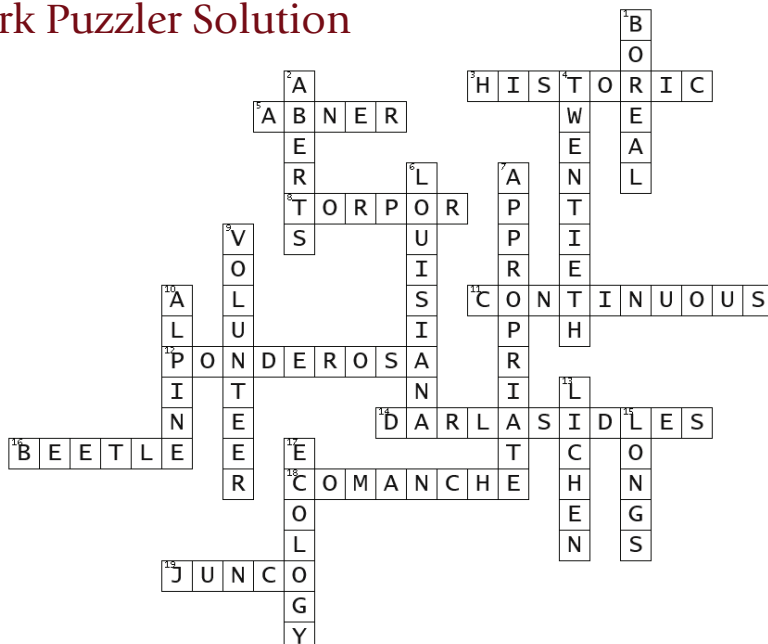
Continued from page 10

part of my career as well as resource management and protection. I still carry those ethics and values learned in the Conservation Corps. As an architect, I have worked to conserve resources and minimize impact on the environment. As Berthoud Town Trustee, I strive to help our community protect water and land as well as tree canopy and natural habitat.

The skills I gained from those three seasons on the job and off the job have affected me profoundly. Not a day goes by where I am not thankful for the experience. I know that I am not the only Corps member that feels that way. You've changed well over 500 lives with this program and I'm proud to be among them. We've forged an indelible connection to Rocky, nature, and each other through this program that cannot be broken.

Congratulations and thank you for your service and donations that make this incredible program possible!

Park Puzzler Solution



Save the Date

Rocky Mountain Conservancy 2023 Holiday Gathering

Saturday,
November 4th, 2023
5:00-7:30 pm

RMNP Fall River Visitor Center
open house format with no formal program

RSVP by Friday, October 27:
[RMConservancy.org/RSVP](https://www.rmconservancy.org/RSVP)
RSVP@RMConservancy.org
970-586-0108

Questions? Contact Madison Abbott at Madison.Abbott@RMConservancy.org or 970-586-0108



Philanthropy makes great things happen in RMNP and similar public lands! For more information, go to [www.RMConservancy.org](https://www.rmconservancy.org).

Becky Swearingen



The bluebird didn't land on this bluebird.

Visit RMConservancy.org
or call 970-586-0108



Rocky Mountain Conservancy

Estee Rivera Murdock, executive director
Anne Morris, Quarterly editor
PO Box 3100
Estes Park, CO 80517
(970) 586-0108



Nature Notes

• **Katie Marie** and her friend watched an angry pair of robins yell at an elk as she pulled their nest out of a tree at Glacier Gorge Trailhead. She wasn't sure if the elk wanted the branch the nest was sitting on or something else, but, wow, those robins were mad! • On the Fern Lake Trail, **Carol Murin** saw aster, columbine, golden banner, and pussytoes. She also saw a beautiful Western Tanager, many Broadtail Hummingbirds, approximately 40 elk in a herd crossing the river in the woods, and several young bucks. • On a perfect weather day in June, **Sean Murphy** and his family saw a yellow warbler, several hummingbirds, and a family of Canada geese with healthy goslings at Sprague Lake. • **Nancy Wilson** saw baby salamanders transitioning from water to land shape at Lily Lake at the beginning of summer. • **Kaci Yoh** watched a female drake mallard waddling up the Cub Lake Trail, which was interesting because she was still over a mile from the lake. Appears the duck was on its own adventure hike! • **Robin & Gary Williams** saw a very large mushroom (see photo)

in the park utility area. • The first person to correctly identify this mushroom by email to Communications@RMConservancy.org wins an RMNP Parks Project hat. • A bobcat has been roaming around the **Rocky Mountain Conservancy Headquarters** located in RMNP, oftentimes taking shade under one of the Conservancy's vehicles. • **Marlene Borneman** spotted rare and endangered Yellow Lady's Slipper Orchids (see photo) on the eastern borders of RMNP. These orchids are the largest native orchids in Colorado and grow to between 6-14 inches tall. Borneman also spotted an Osprey nesting near the Shadow Mountain Lookout on the west side. • Conservancy member **Kathy Long** witnessed the miracle birth of twin mule deer fawns in her Carriage Hills yard this spring. • **Kevin and Joanne Zagorda** watched six river otters grooming on a sunny rock while kayaking in Shadow Mountain Lake. The otters weren't amused by the mule deer swimming nearby. • **Barbara Ayres** appreciated listening to a mother give her young children a pre-hike talk in Beaver Meadows about Leave No Trace principles.

