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# QUARTERLY

Spring | 2022



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## A Magical Encounter

by Danny Basch, RMNP Deputy Facility Manager

Rocky Mountain National Park is a kaleidoscope of cultural and natural resources with unlimited benefits for all of humanity. (How's that for a grandiose statement? But it's TRUE!) Its existence is a testament to the rugged beauty and richness of this part of the world as well as the collective wisdom of the American experiment to preserve it in perpetuity. I have had the good fortune of growing up on its doorstep (*GO Bobcats!*) and have spent the bulk of my life in some form of service and/or recreation within Rocky's boundaries. I can attest to the ways in which living in the gateway community of an such an iconic national park can provide unique opportunities that spark an incredible connection with nature. As the moon waxes toward full and spring is hinting around the edges of winter, I wanted to share an extraordinary wildlife-viewing experience I recently had that renewed my appreciation for the gift that is Rocky Mountain National Park.

Anyone who knows the park — or has visited in winter — has experienced the winds that are common during certain seasons and with accompanying weather patterns. The evidence of the wind on the park's daily conditions, topography, and character are exhibited all around us. It scours and

deposits snow in fantastic contours, shapes the growth of trees and plays with spindrift like Jack Frost — but instead of decorating windows, it can turn a dusting of snow into surprisingly deep drifts. The winter winds sap your warmth, sand-blasts structures and windows, and can literally push you off your feet. I have actually been knocked off my skis by the wind at Many Parks Curve when the road was closed. In the winter when the wind doesn't howl, local inhabitants tend to notice. Case in point — a colleague once complained to me after a calm evening, "I couldn't sleep a wink last night — there was no wind!"

During a rare windless night this past January, I was taking the trash and recycling out to the shed and found myself noting the unusual calm. It was a clear night with a bright moon and the kind of deep quiet our fast-paced, screen-centric minds might overlook given the myriad competing demands for our attention. I paused a moment as the stillness settled on me. A slinking shape pawing its way across the firm snow in the front yard caught my eye. The moonlight revealed a furry, four-legged creature heading toward my neighbor's driveway. Having just seen one the other day, I thought to myself,



## A Message from our Executive Director



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Dear Friends,

This spring, I celebrated my 5th anniversary at the Conservancy. It feels like I was just enrolling my daughter in kindergarten and now she's enrolling in middle school! While it's easy to see the changes in our personal lives, it's sometimes a little harder to see the gradual changes in Rocky Mountain National Park these days, especially for those of us who visit the park more often.

Earlier this month, I was on the west side of the park meeting with park staff and exhibit designers of the soon-to-be re-vamped Kawuneeche Visitor Center, a Conservancy-supported project, and I noticed an exhibit installed in the 1990s that mentioned that the challenges of the burgeoning visitation in the park of over two million people. The park has far exceeded four million people in the last few years, even with timed-entry, and so one of the most interesting challenges to at the Conservancy has been balancing the needs of the visitors who are already coming to the park *and* the needs of those in our community who aren't visiting the park. We still have a long way to go, but know that this issue is a high priority for the foreseeable future.

And when those millions of people come to the park, the Conservancy wants to enhance the experiences all visitors can have in Rocky. Our work ensures that the Search-and-Rescue vehicle starts up on the first try, and that the staff have the state-of-the-art, highly specialized training that enables them to rescue someone off a remote cliff ledge. We want visitors to see remarkable wildlife and intact ecosystems, like the simulated beaver dam structures that the Conservancy is funding — we're happy to report that beavers have been observed at these sites, already improving watersheds. We've gleefully supported the park's efforts to re-introduction the endangered boreal toad tadpoles, and are fully behind the park's mission to reseed recently burned areas with our support of the park greenhouse. I can't wait to hike to Shadow Mountain Fire Lookout someday and safely stand on the top deck once it's been restored to its former glory as one of the most iconic lookouts in the entire national park system. And as a resident of the parks gateway communities, I sleep better at night knowing that the fuels reduction work we've enabled during the last few years will significantly reduce the chance of catastrophic wildfires.

Wherever your summer plans take you, think of how your experiences in Rocky have shaped you into the person you are today. And the values you pass on tomorrow.

See you on the trails!



*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.

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For ALL Your RMNP Memorabilia

### Is there any scientific data to support the idea that the winds in Rocky during the winter have been increasing in stamina and duration over the last decade?

Unfortunately, we do not have long-term surface wind data at sites within RMNP, which may be different from measured upper air or 500-millibar wind speeds elsewhere over Colorado. Such data may be available from the National Weather Service and provide some idea of trends in relative jet wind speeds above the boundary layer and Divide, but it would not be a substitute for actual data collected at the surface in RMNP. I believe that until or unless we establish such surface sites, we cannot ascertain any surface trends in Rocky. — *Dave Glidden, National Weather Service*

### Would Rocky ever consider some kind of light-rail system along the popular Bear Lake Road corridor as a potential solution to the high volume and impact of users in that area?

While alternative transportation systems such as light rail and the park's existing shuttle system can be effective in managing and addressing one of the park's major issues of parking and traffic congestion brought on by the increasing visitation, they do have downsides. The park is currently working through a long-range visitor use plan to address how to provide access to the park in the future to ensure that the park is meeting its mission of protecting resources while providing for the enjoyment of the public. That balancing act plays out in these types of systems, as they can be very effective at reducing vehicle congestion and moving lots of people into the park, the downside is that we can easily overrun what the resources can handle. With current increased visitation levels, the park is already seeing impact such as visitor-created trails, trail widening and impact to vegetation, impact to wildlife, water quality and human waste issues as well as impact to the visitor experience. Introducing more visitors through light rail would make the effects even greater. Alternative transportation will certainly have a place in our long-range visitor use plan, but we must carefully consider at what level it will operate. Implementing a light rail system for Rocky has some fundamental challenges: light rail systems cannot operate at more than a 6% grade, and to achieve that to Bear Lake would most likely require building through undisturbed areas in designated Wilderness; the cost of light rail is enormous. For example, Denver's latest light rail project cost \$46.5 million per mile. — *RMNP Management Specialist — Visitor Use Planning, Visitor Transportation, Commercial Services John Hannon*

### What is the current population of mountain lions in the park, and does Rocky have any particular management program or current research related to them?

At this time in RMNP we do not have population data or current research for mountain lions. We believe we have a healthy population of mountain lions based on observed prey killed by mountain lions, occasional sightings, evidence via tracks, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife information from outside of the park. The park's only management is moving prey killed by mountain lions away from developed areas of the park to reduce the potential for lion – human interactions. — *RMNP Wildlife Biologist Mary Kay Watry*



#### ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDFLOWERS POCKET GUIDE

by David Dahms

*This handy guidebook is a pocket-sized*

*pictorial field guide to wildflowers of the Rocky Mountains covering 119 common species. Each page has a color photo and a concise description of one flower. Since its introduction in 1999, this book has become a regional best-seller. Softcover, 120 pages*  
Price: \$6.95; **Member Price: \$5.91**



#### DANEEN POTTERY PIKA MUG

*There's no better way to enjoy your morning coffee than in one of these exclusive design pottery mugs. These*

*ceramic mugs are handthrown in the USA and feature large handles for a comfortable sipping experience. Each mug is individually handmade. Dishwasher and microwave safe.*  
Price: \$21.95; **Member Price: \$18.65**



#### RMNP COMFY T-SHIRT

*This super-soft and colorful T-shirt is sure to become a favorite. Navy heather; unisex; 65% poly/35% cotton; designed in USA.*

Price: \$21.95; **Member Price: \$18.65**

#### THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS CHARLEY HARPER PUZZLE

*This puzzle was created for Rocky and was one of ten posters for which Harper was commissioned to create for the National Park Service. This intricate, 1000-piece interlocking jigsaw puzzle*



*combines superb color reproduction and sturdy construction to delight all puzzle workers.*

Price: \$24.99; **Member Price: \$21.24**

**More memorabilia at  
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Figure 3. CSU researchers using backpack electroshockers to survey trout. The electroshockers introduce a mild current into the water, which makes the fish easier to catch. The trout are then weighed and measured before release back into the stream where they were caught.



by Dan Preston, Landon Falke and Yoichiro Kanno, Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology, Colorado State University

## Trout Populations and Stream Webs Impact in Rocky after Wildfires

*A team of researchers [is] investigating how the wildfires of 2020 are affecting populations of trout in RMNP streams, as well as the food webs in the streams and surrounding riparian areas.*

Figure 1. Hazeline Creek is a small stream in the northern part of Rocky Mountain National Park. The Cameron Peak Fire dramatically altered the surrounding riparian habitat and caused a large disturbance to stream organisms.



2020 was an exceptional fire year in Colorado and throughout the Western U.S. An estimated 51,000 individual fires burned over 10 million acres in 2020. The three largest wildfires that have been recorded in Colorado state history all burned in 2020, including the Cameron Peak Fire (209,000 acres), the East Troublesome Fire (194,000 acres), and the Pine Gulch Fire (140,000 acres). The Cameron Peak Fire burned mostly to the north of Rocky Mountain National Park but did extend into the park near the headwaters of the Cache la Poudre River watershed. The East Troublesome Fire burned a section of the park northeast of Grand Lake. Visitors to the park entering from the south on highway 34 are now met with a dramatic landscape of burned conifer trees as a result of the East Troublesome Fire.

While the fires have significantly altered the forests of the park, their effects on aquatic ecosystems are not immediately obvious to visitors. In general, wildfires can affect stream habitats by causing increased inputs of sediment and ash from burned hillsides, as well as increased light levels and increased wood inputs from the riparian area. Wildfires may also cause die-offs of trout and stream insects, which then typically recover in the following months and years. The streams in the park have been affected by wildfires to differing degrees, with some streams experiencing a total loss of canopy cover and large inputs of ash (Fig. 1).

A team of researchers from Colorado State University (CSU), with funding from the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, RMNP National Park Service Inventories Program, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Colorado Water Center, are investigating how the wildfires of 2020 are affecting populations of trout in RMNP streams, as well as the food webs in the streams and surrounding riparian areas. The northern section of the park that burned is particularly important trout habitat because it lies within the Poudre Headwaters Project, which is a large, collaborative cutthroat trout re-introduction project. This project is the largest reclamation effort conducted in Colorado to date. In this area, managers will be removing nonnative brook trout to re-introduce native greenback cutthroat trout, and it is especially important to understand how the wildfires are affecting trout populations and stream habitat within this area.

The team of CSU researchers, led by Dr. Dan Preston and Dr. Yoichiro Kanno from the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology at CSU, are using stream surveys of trout and aquatic macroinvertebrates to understand the multi-layered effects of the 2020 fires. Researchers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and from CSU have conducted stream surveys of trout populations for multiple years prior to the 2020 wildfires. In 2021, the CSU team re-surveyed sites that had data from before the fires (Fig. 2). The

CSU team also surveyed stream sites outside the fire perimeter. This allows comparisons of trout populations before and after fire, as well as in burned and unburned areas. The survey methods included using backpack electroshockers, which put a mild electrical current into the water to stun the fish temporarily making them easy to catch (Fig. 3). Students from CSU then anesthetized the trout, weighed and measured them, and allowed them to recover before release back into the stream (Fig. 4).

To understand how trout populations re-colonize streams after wildfires, the CSU researchers also took genetic samples from fish at some sites that had genetic data prior to the fires. Additionally, in related projects, the CSU team is also measuring how the wildfires have affected aquatic invertebrates, consumption of insects by trout, and the flux of energy into and out of streams that is caused by movement of insects. Together, these projects will help managers in the park and surrounding lands to understand how the wildfires are affecting trout populations that are

important for angling opportunities or conservation initiatives.

The results of this work are still in progress, but the initial findings indicate that the wildfires caused a decrease, in trout population abundance but an increase in the average size of trout at the burned sites. Most sites still contained trout, so that is some good news, but the densities were often very low. The remaining trout were generally larger and older individuals, potentially because they are more resistant to the effects of wildfire, or they recolonized the burned sites first.

During the next few years, the CSU researchers will collect more data to understand the changes in trout populations over time. Because there are many connected populations of trout, some of which did not experience die-offs, it is likely that recolonization will occur in the coming years and trout populations are expected to rebound. Most of the burned sites also had significant populations of aquatic invertebrates, which is also encouraging because they provide food for trout.



Figure 4. Brook trout that were caught in Hague Creek within Rocky Mountain National Park in an area burned by the Cameron Peak Fire. The fish are anesthetized, which makes them easier to weigh and measure. After being anesthetized, they are allowed to recover in stream water before being released. These fish came from a site towards the downstream end of Hague Creek, where there is a large meadow surrounded by burned forests. This site had fewer trout in 2021 than in 2020, before the fires, but the meadow may have helped buffer the impact of the fire.

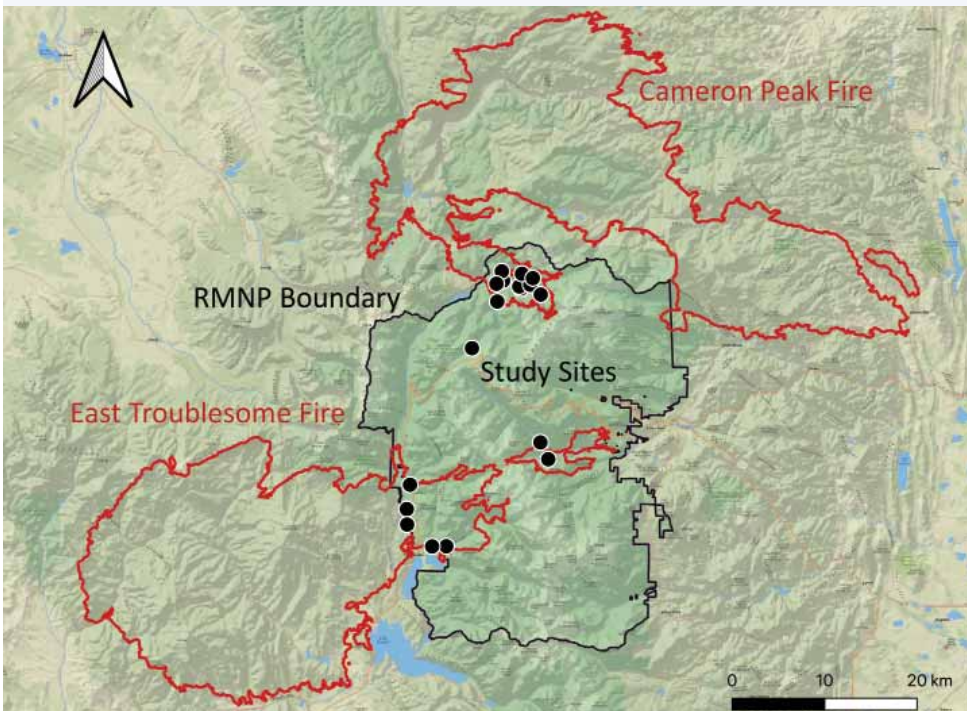


Figure 2. This map indicates the perimeters of two fires that burned in and around Rocky Mountain National Park. The Cameron Peak Fire burned primarily to the north of the park, and the East Troublesome Fire burned to the west of the park. The dark circles indicate the locations of stream surveys carried out by the CSU researchers in 2021.

*These projects will help managers in the park and surrounding lands to understand how the wildfires are affecting trout populations that are important for angling opportunities or conservation initiatives.*

**Support Rocky's Research and resource management programs by donating to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy at [RMConservancy.org](https://RMConservancy.org), or call 970-586-0108**

2018 Rawah  
Conservation  
Corps Crew



by  
Ian Stafford, Rocky  
Mountain Conservancy  
Stewardship Director

## The Conservation Corps Season Is Upon Us!

*Starting the week after Memorial Day weekend, the Conservancy – Conservation Corps will welcome 56 individuals from more than 25 states to this year’s program.*

As the snow continues to fly in the mountains, the emergence of pasqueflowers in the high country means spring has officially hit the mountains. Spring means that the Rocky Mountain Conservancy-Conservation Corps is ready to kick into full gear, and the 2022 season is primed to be our largest group in the program’s history.

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy’s Stewardship team has been busy recruiting and programming through the cold winter months, and starting the week after Memorial Day weekend, the Conservancy will welcome 56 individuals from more than 25 states to this year’s program. This year, we will be resuming all of our crews at full capacity. With a full orientation and education week programmed that pairs with the on-the-ground work the Corps will achieve, the Conservancy will be able to provide a comprehensive learning experience for every member of the Corps. The 2022 Conservation Corps program will be working in both Rocky Mountain National Park and U.S. Forest Service areas primarily in burn-impact areas and improving access to recreational resources for different user groups.

Throughout the summer, the crews will be working in the following areas:

### **Rocky Mountain National Park**

- **Moraine Trail Crew**

Working primarily in parks on the east side of Rocky. This crew will work on hundreds of miles of the park’s most heavily impacted trail systems. Along with performing invaluable maintenance

to trails, they will also be working in the burned areas of Fern Lake.

- **Historic & Preservation Crew**

*(Reintroduced for the first time since 2019)* Partnering with the park’s facilities team, this crew will be working to make sure buildings and other historic structures meet the high-quality and safety standards that visitors expect when they come to the park.

- **Rocky Fire Crew**

In its second year, this crew has been expanded to better mirror the park’s own fire crew. The eight members of this crew will work in partnership with Rocky Mountain National Park’s Fire Management Office to become certified wildland firefighters and perform critical mitigation efforts in the Deer Mountain area.

- **Kawuneeche Trail Crew**

This crew will be working exclusively in the Colorado River District of the park, focusing their efforts on re-establishing and restoring trails that were badly damaged by the East Troublesome Fire.

### **U.S. Forest Service**

- **Boulder Ranger District**

Working in the Indian Peaks Wilderness, this crew will be working in a broad range of areas restoring trails, building trail infrastructure, and enhancing recreational access for hikers and climbers.

- **Sulphur Ranger District**

Housing two crews, the Sulphur Ranger District will have one crew that is dedicated to reestablishing multiuse trail systems in the burned areas of the

2018 Boulder crew building bridges





2019 High School Leadership Corps

## The High School Leadership Corps Is BACK!

by Nathan Morrow  
Conservation Corps  
Field Manager



For participants between the ages of 14-17, the Conservancy is reviving its High School Leadership Corps (HSLC), in which Colorado high school students are invited to spend 11 days living and working in Rocky Mountain National Park and its surrounding lands. Much like the Conservation Corps, the HSLC is a personal development program that accomplishes its goals through hands-on conservation work with a tight-knit community of diverse, conservation-minded people.

Emphasizing values of environmental stewardship and appreciation, personal leadership, and outdoor education, the HSLC is a truly immersive experience that will certainly be a highlight of any high schooler's summer. During the course of the 11-day session, students will assist in National Park Service conservation

projects, participate in a variety of leadership development trainings, and gain useful camping skills and experience.

Participants will receive a \$400 stipend upon completion of the program. Additionally, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy provides housing (camping), work clothing, and gear for the duration of the HSLC experience.

There are two different sessions of the 2022 HSLC: Session 1 is from June 20-30, and Session 2 will run from July 18-28. Learn more about the programs on the Rocky Mountain Conservancy website, [RMConservancy.org](http://RMConservancy.org), under "Work With Us — High School Leadership Corps."

We hope to see you around the park this summer!

2019 High School Leadership Corps learning the ropes



East Troublesome Fire. A second crew will focus their efforts in the Arapaho National Recreation Area to improve access for recreationists of all types.

• **Canyon Lakes Ranger District**  
Two crews will work in tandem within the Rawah and Comanche Wilderness area to reestablish trails in the Cameron Peak burn scar. Along with trail repairs, these crews will work on erosion control to prevent washout, and also visit a wide variety of backcountry campsites to help reopen these areas to the general public.

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy is delighted to provide these experiences to the young adults who will give their time and energy to serve the Corps this

season. If you see any of our crews out on the trail, be sure to say hello and thank them for their efforts. While the work is tiring, we have no doubt there will be countless smiles, sunsets, and stories to share throughout the summer.

If you are interested in supporting the Rocky Mountain Conservancy-Conservation Corps program, contact our Director of Stewardship and Policy, Ian Stafford, at [ian.stafford@RMConservancy.org](mailto:ian.stafford@RMConservancy.org).

These young people work hard and play hard in their brief summer season with the Conservation Corps.





© Lee Kline



by Matt Wallet  
RMNP Law  
Enforcement  
District Ranger

## Antler Collection a Stealthy Violation in Rocky

### Red flags and observation tips:

- ★ The same vehicle(s) is observed repeatedly in the same areas of the park
- ★ Someone is observed hanging out in less frequented areas of the park where animal herds often congregate
- ★ Individuals spotted in backcountry or more remote areas dressed in camouflage making them difficult to see
- ★ Individuals seen actively handling antlers or hiding/placing them in a vehicle

Spring in the Rockies is upon us, and summer is coming quickly, bringing with it many elements of new life as another harsh winter fades. Buds turn into leaves, animals give birth and begin raising their young, and rivers start to thaw and run wild as warmer days become more frequent. And for many of us humans, spring skiing becomes a thing!

Another event of nature Rocky encounters each year as the winter snows melt is antler shed season. From late winter into early spring, mammals that sport antlers throughout the summer and into the fall mating season drop them to prepare for the next season's growth. Antlers are heavy and bulky, and after the mating season not necessary for survival, and, in fact, the extra weight of these bony accessories can make it more difficult for animals to survive the winter as they are at their weakest during this time of the year.

When elk and deer drop their antlers, most often they land on the forest floor where they contribute to the never-ending cycles of nature and ultimately are returned to the earth. Antlers host insects that prefer them for laying their eggs, and small animals gnaw this calcium-rich material for a much-needed nutrient. Antlers, like anything else found in nature, give back to that from which they came.

Collecting and removing antlers are prohibited activities within Rocky Mountain National Park, year round. And since a number of areas in Colorado are open for antler hunting after April 30 each year, Rocky is frequently pressured by shed hunters who are looking for the same opportunity in this national park.

For some, antlers are a hot commodity for artistic and commercial ventures, such as

lamps, chandeliers, table bases, and chairs. Another big market for antlers is pet stores that sell them as dog chews, promoting them as a healthier chew option.

Not only are these practical uses appealing, but so is the money made by collecting and selling antlers to companies and collectors who do the repurposing. Elk antlers can run up to \$20 a pound, and given the average size and weight, the dollars can add up quickly, fueling excitement for the search.

In a national park, however, antler collection amounts to poaching. Beyond that, it's about natural resources and protecting the cycles of the natural world in our public lands.

This is where the park needs your help! Help curb this illegal activity inside Rocky by reporting suspicious activity and other observations you make while visiting the park. Hone your situational awareness skills and report any illegal activity, including antler poaching. Help save important park resources from being monetized and ultimately lost forever.

If you see any activity that could indicate antler poaching, contact the nearest staff member at any park visitor center, entrance station, out on the trail, or by calling Park Dispatch at 970-586-1204. Valuable information includes location, description of individual(s) and vehicle(s), license plate(s), unique vehicle identifiers, and behavior.

Antler poaching is a criminal activity inside the protected lands of Rocky Mountain National Park. Partnering together to protect and care for this national park enhances the long-term preservation goals for Rocky. Thank you for your support with keeping park resources safe for all to enjoy.



© Travis Walker





## Meet Rocky's New Lead Program Manager for Interpretation, Education and Volunteers, Kim Swift

by Kim Swift  
RMNP Lead Program  
Manager for Interpretation,  
Education and Volunteers

Thirty-three years ago, I landed in Denver, Colorado — straight out of my small hometown of Shelbyville, Kentucky — after three months living out of my car, camping and backpacking across the country. I had traveled coast to coast and visited numerous state and national parks; and when my savings ran out in Denver, I didn't worry. I felt I had found a new home.

I didn't get to stay very long in sunny Colorado, however — just enough time to learn some basic skiing skills and fall in love with Rocky Mountain National Park. I knew I would be back.

Fast forward to 2021. Applying for the job as the Lead Program Manager for Interpretation, Education & Volunteers (formerly the Chief of Interpretation title) here at Rocky was an easy decision. I feel blessed to have been selected for this dream job — one that I believe was meant to be, bringing me full circle in my life and career.

I have had a lot of fun adventures between the two bookends of my adulthood. I served as a Peace Corps volunteer for two years in rugged Papua, New Guinea, teaching people who still live in thatch houses with little contact with the outside world, specifically about health, nutrition and gardening. I learned so much more than I taught, of course.

I didn't imagine myself becoming a park ranger, even after such a life-changing career move as the Peace Corps. I had intended to get a teaching certificate after returning from the South Pacific, but instead, luck and fate would have me see a poster for the Student Conservation Association and submit an application

on a whim. I was selected to work at Shenandoah National Park with their new environmental education program. The graceful Virginia Blue Ridge Mountains taught me that the outdoor classroom was where I belonged.

The good folks at Shenandoah connected me to Indiana Dunes National Park, which was near my post-Peace Corps residence of Chicago. I was able to use my Peace Corps eligibility and landed a permanent position at Indiana Dunes in 1992. I didn't work in another park until I landed back in the Rocky Mountains in December!

My years at Indiana Dunes, though, have been life changing and transformative. I raised two amazing kids who grew up exploring sand dunes, peat bogs, prairies, and the cold waters of Lake Michigan in their backyard. It was a wonderful place to live, work and have a family. The Dunes provided a large interpretive and education program to grow within, serving thousands of primarily inner-city kids on field trips each year. I learned the importance of partnerships first-hand, working as the park's liaison to the Dunes Learning Center which is a residential environmental education facility within Indiana Dunes National Park.

Besides my work experience, I come to Rocky with a passion for photography, hiking, camping and travelling, especially to places that satisfy my deep appreciation for the natural world of which we are a part. I look forward to learning more about the natural and cultural resources of these mountains, circling back and picking up where I left off 33 years ago.



*I come to Rocky with a passion for photography, hiking, camping and travelling, especially to places that satisfy my deep appreciation for the natural world of which we are a part.*

**Support Rocky's Interpretive and educational programming at [RMConservancy.org](https://RMConservancy.org), or call 970-586-0108**



# Rocky Mountain Conservancy Park Puzzler

## Across

**2.** Every year on April 22, \_\_\_\_\_ marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement that began in 1970. *(Two words)*

**4.** The purpose of the recently installed \_\_\_\_\_ beaver structures built in three strategic sites in Rocky was to raise the water level in the channel to determine if raised water levels would lead to raised ground water levels in the floodplain, subsequently improving willow growth.

**6.** On Colorado Gives Day, December 7, 2021, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy capped off one the single biggest \_\_\_\_\_ days in the Conservancy's history. In all, nearly 600 online donors gave through ColoradoGives.org.

**10.** Rocky Mountain National Park's Interpretation and Education Division has partnered with a number of different educational partners on a project aimed at promoting better representation of native \_\_\_\_\_ nations at the national parks.

**12.** The Conservancy Team is jumping for joy with the successful Search-and-Rescue replacement \_\_\_\_\_ campaign that was generously supported by Conservancy donors to the tune of \$75,000 to finish the project.

**13.** Early park visitors, nicknamed \_\_\_\_\_, were on their own in most instances.

**16.** Remember this one? \_\_\_\_\_ flowers are the first blooms of the season and a harbinger of spring

**18.** The first "rangers" in national parks were U.S. Army Cavalry and Buffalo Soldiers who were dispatched to keep an eye on things and discourage \_\_\_\_\_.

**19.** \_\_\_\_\_-centered learning is an interpretive teaching approach that includes the visitors and their opinions, values and experiences in the actual building and presentation of a program.

## Down

**1.** The partnership between the park, the Town of Estes Park, and the Rocky Mountain Conservancy has completed the construction of a 1.5-mile \_\_\_\_\_

trail connecting the historic Fall River Hydroplant, along Fish Hatchery Road with Aspenglen Campground in Rocky Mountain National Park.

**3.** While increased water levels may have a limited impact on willow growth, these SBSs may still be a valuable restoration tool for the restoration of the entire \_\_\_\_\_ ecosystem.

**5.** Bear boxes have been positioned in \_\_\_\_\_ campground to optimize food safety storage potential. *(Two words)*

**7.** \_\_\_\_\_ is the practice of sharing the stories of a place in order to connect visitors and their experiences to our nation's natural and historic resources.

**8.** \_\_\_\_\_, composed of many different species in the genus Salix, are the foundation species for mountain floodplain ecosystems as the dominant plant type in the community.

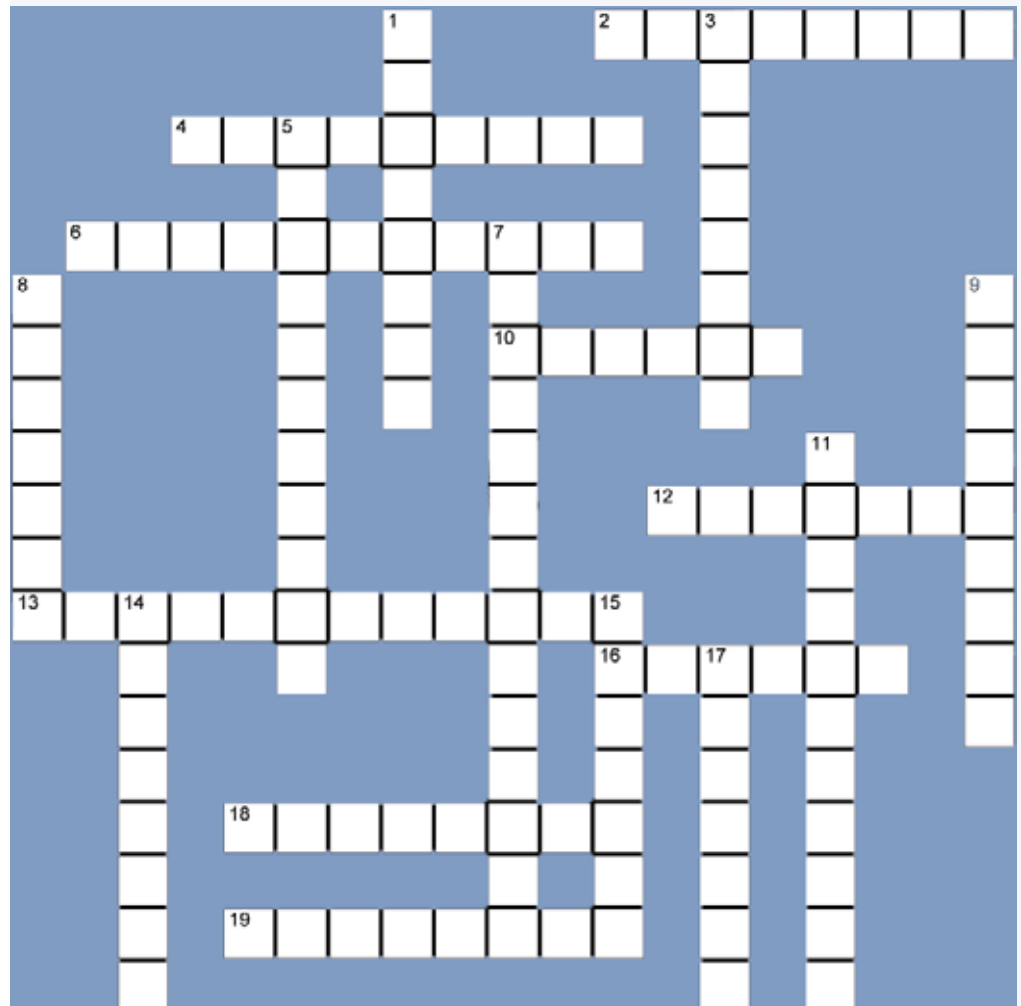
**9.** We bid our favorite park naturalist Kathy \_\_\_\_\_ happy trails after her remarkable 35 years in the NPS.

**11.** Small birds wintering in northern areas accommodate severe weather in a number of ways, including fluffing feathers, growing extra feathers for winter, communal roosting, even some changes in their \_\_\_\_\_ system.

**14.** Stephen Mather, the first director of the NPS, coined the interpretive term "\_\_\_\_\_" which means to understand profoundly and intuitively.

**15.** The best way to improve the status of the boreal toad is to establish more populations, which is now underway at the Boulder Brook wetland located immediately west of \_\_\_\_\_ Lake.

**17.** It's a proven fact: Bear-proof food \_\_\_\_\_ lockers in Rocky's campgrounds improve visitor safety and prevent bears from accessing human food.



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 Stephen Zornes, Denver, CO  
 Howard and Faye Zuckerman, Dexter, MI  
 Joel Zwick, Denver, CO  
 Microsoft Matching Gifts Program, Princeton, NJ  
 Apple Inc.  
 The Clorox Company, Oakland, CA  
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 National Park Foundation, Washington, DC  
 Hewlett Packard Enterprise Foundation, Washington, DC  
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 The Boeing Company Gift Match Program, Princeton, NJ  
 Chevron Corporation, Princeton, NJ  
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 Parks Project, LLC, Marina Del Rey, CA  
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 Walt Disney Company Foundation, Lake Buena Vista, FL  
 Sky Pond Photograph and Video Production, Inc.,  
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 State Farm Companies Foundation, Bloomington, IL  
 Texas Instruments Foundation, Dallas, TX  
 Hintz Targeted Marketing, LLC, Asheville, NC  
 Phillips 66  
 Equitable Foundation Inc, Syracuse, NY  
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 Concept360, West Jordan, UT  
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## GIFTS IN MEMORY/HONOR

Sandra Basanavage, Yardley, PA: In memory of Vincent Basanavage  
 Marla and Brian Biggs, Paola, KS: In memory of Stella Valentine  
 Molly Bockmann, Boulder, CO: In memory of George Ellis II  
 Carrie Cisek, Mahtomedi, MN: In honor of Bob Jamieson  
 Brian Conde, Dayton, OH: In memory of Becky Howard  
 Karen and Alan Ford, Seattle, WA: In memory of Jason Cotter  
 Lillian Franklin, Hattiesville, AR: In memory of Emily Barry  
 Julie Gettings, Overland Park, KS: In memory of David Balke  
 Brenda Gibb-Moore and Terrance Moore, Doylestown, PA: In memory of Janice Gibb  
 James and Christine Glenski, Overland Park, KS: In memory of John A. Morgan  
 Patrick and Carla Grant, Denver, CO: In honor of Hallidie Grant Haid  
 Susan K. Harris, Estes Park, CO: In memory of Jenna Olschlager Williams  
 Susan K. Harris, Estes Park, CO: In memory of Linda Hollingsed  
 Karla Henderson, Estes Park, CO: In memory of Nina S. Roberts  
 David Hewitt, Castle Rock, CO: In memory of Michael Hewitt  
 Irene Hinz, Cape Coral, FL: In memory of Christine Metzger  
 Kristine Holien, Estes Park, CO: In memory of Rich "Ironman" Bray  
 Marilyn Irwin and Steve Fry, Estes Park, CO: In memory of Karen Menz  
 Robert and Mary Ann Jackson, Houston, TX: In memory of Dr. Alan Herrington  
 John and Cynthia Johnson, Alexandria, VA: In memory of Mary and Harry Shuemaker  
 John Kirk, Altadena, CA: In memory of Robin Mason Kirk  
 Richard Kiskey, Charlotte, NC: In memory of Dawn and Victor Kiskey  
 Rhonda and Kevin Kness, Albia, IA: In memory of Don Richard  
 Garland McAulay, Paris, TX: In memory of Sue McAulay  
 Greg and Julie McDonald, Lawrence, KS: In memory of Peter Hierl  
 Michael and Patricia McKinney, Estes Park, CO: In memory of Walter "Mac" McCausland  
 Ruth E. Medak, Portland, OR: In honor of Vivian and Herman Medak  
 Marla and Jerry Meehl, Boulder, CO: In honor of Teresa and Mike Shibao  
 Marla and Jerry Meehl, Boulder, CO: In memory of Allen Heitschmidt  
 Pat Mickelson, Eagle Grove, IA: In memory of Keith A. Mickelson  
 Judy Mieger, Camano Island, WA: In memory of Seth Goldstein  
 Lauren Miller, Highlands Ranch, CO: In honor of Miller/Fairbanks Wedding Guests  
 Debbie Morgan, Humeston, IA: In memory of Don Richard  
 Park Quilters: In memory of Rich "Ironman" Bray  
 Robert Powers, Mickleton, NJ: In memory of Elizabeth Kirkland  
 Stephen Prucha, Virginia Beach, VA: In memory of Richard Prucha  
 Robert and Christy Rahn, Mt Morris, IL: In memory of Joe Appler  
 Judith Richardson, Shawnee, KS: in honor of Mary Kay and Earl Hasz  
 William and Margaret Rowe, Saint Louis, MO: In memory of Kathy Bowers  
 Norman and Mary A. Schlesener, Manhattan, KS: In memory of Daryl Pacino  
 Werner Schroder, Arvada, CO: In memory of Holly Schroeder  
 Mary and Todd Sessel-Glassberg, Orange, CT: In appreciation of Marcus and Joan Sessel  
 Kelli Slattery, La Canada, CA: In memory of Robin Mason Kirk  
 Kristy Stark, New Castle, CO: In memory of Wilburn Boyd Rowland  
 Ned Steele, Sunnyside, NY: In memory of Judy Steele  
 Lynn and Michael Stover, Edwardsville, IL: In memory of The Great Escape  
 Karen Thomas, Houston, TX: In honor of Carole Taxis  
 Nancy P. Thomas, Estes Park, CO: In memory of James B. Thomas  
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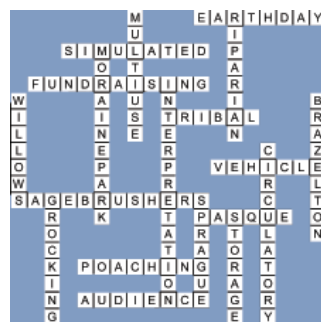
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 Dorothy Kalfa, Cerritos, CA  
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 John and Susan Tibbs, Middletown, IL  
 Brandon and Becky Tomson, Salina, KS

## Park Puzzler Solution



Kay Vowels, Chapman, KS  
 Pamela Whitmore, Topeka, KS  
 Neodesha High School Senior Class of 1968

### ALL IN MEMORY OF ERNEST A. HELLMER

Jason Bogner, Omaha, NE  
 Rosie Donahoe, Bellevue, NE  
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 Lisa Juhl, Shelby, IA  
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 Deb Smolinski, Omaha, NE  
 Terry and Glen Zimmermann, Gretna, NE  
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### ALL IN MEMORY OF HARRY C. HERSHEY

Amanda Albrecht, Norborne, MO  
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 Manhattan, KS  
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 Mustafa Alwash  
 Dave Delano  
 Jennifer Fisher  
 Jen Flynn  
 Suzie Franklin  
 Christopher Giles  
 Margo Girardi  
 MaryAnne Horta  
 Weena Joshi  
 Jo Joshi

Priya Khanijou Shah  
 Praveen Kumar  
 Judd Lather  
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 Megan Lim Blair  
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 Dyana Rice Harrelson  
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## A Magical Encounter

*Continued from page 1*

“Wow, that’s a big bobcat.” Then I noticed a length of rope trailing off its rear. “Wow, that’s a long tail — for a bobcat,” I said to myself, realized the conflict as I said it, and quickly followed with “Wait, bobcats don’t have long tails — but mountain lions do!”

My reality instantly changed, and I morphed from a citizen engaged in everyday domestic chores to simply another animal on the landscape. Having lived, worked and played in Colorado and the area in and around the park for most of my time on the planet, I have seen plenty of signs and a few ephemeral glimpses, but never an up-close observation of a cougar. I heard not a sound from this animal. I was in awe.

I think my breathing stopped while my entire being became enthralled with what my senses were perceiving. The trash and recycling evaporated from my consciousness as time slowed. The cat quickly crossed the open area and entered a small grove of trees between the yards. It disappeared, then reappeared in silvery contrast against the fresh white snowpack of the neighbor’s driveway. By this time my brain had caught up to my perception, and I realized how lucky it was for me to be outside at that exact moment and place to experience this encounter. This made me wonder, what else have I missed right outside my front door? Options for a doorbell cam flashed through my mind, although I’d consider it a puma-cam in this case.

I watched with curiosity as the lion seemed to float up toward the house, then down the drive toward the road. It went up and down several times. Seconds passed, and I tried my best to remain motionless and silent. Just as I thought it may have absconded through the trees, things got even more thrilling as two figures suddenly emerged from



© Lee Kline

the moon shadows cast near the house. I could hardly believe it! My first real mountain lion sighting, and now there are two! What comes after awe? That’s where I was at.

I watched as the two interacted with coordinated movements — they seemed to be engaged in equal parts hunting and playing at the same time. Their stealth and precision astonished me — at first I didn’t see anything else, so I don’t believe they were actively pursuing their prey but were most definitely on the prowl.

The pair made their way around the side of the house, leapfrogging along the sidewalk I have shoveled many times for our aging neighbors. One moved quickly up the walk and disappeared. I craned my neck to keep them in my field of vision and must have made enough sound and/or motion to alert them, as the second one climbed the stairs and stopped, fixing its gaze in my direction. It looked at me for what felt like two minutes but was probably two seconds. I became acutely aware of my exposure. Forget being a citizen engaged in domestic chores, I was now suddenly an unarmed primate in the food web!

The plasticity of time kicked in, and several thoughts flashed through my mind. Where did the other one go? Is it circling around to flank me? Am I safe here — should I stay, or go in? Are they related — is one the mom of the other? Would they take a rabbit — is that what they’re after? Are they en route to the other neighbor’s chicken hutch? I should know more about

their diet — where’d that first one go again?

I certainly would have felt more vulnerable if I hadn’t been just two steps from the safety of my garage door, but I was feeling plenty small with a large wildcat staring me down in the moonlight. The whole encounter was a matter of seconds, but I will never forget the thrill and the rush of emotions caused by the grey outline of its head against the silver-white snow. I can see in my mind those proud ears standing at alert — scanning in my direction until drawn off to the side by some other stimulus — I could see those ears twitching! I blinked, and the magical creature vanished down the walk, joining its companion somewhere in the shadows of the trees.

I ran upstairs and grabbed my family and returned to the spot as quickly and quietly as we could. We didn’t see them again, but I was impressed that my teenage son stood there with us for several minutes, not speaking, not looking at a screen, just listening, and perceiving. No wind. Just being. It was great.

Whether you live in a city or the country, near or far from a national park, I encourage everyone to get outside and try to focus on Just Being. You never know what you might find.

Please be sure to properly secure your solid waste and recycling according to local ordinances — your actions at home or abroad can protect wildlife and humans!



## Donor Highlight: Joan Eaton For the Animals — With Love

by Conservancy  
Donor Services  
Manager Madison  
Abbott

Every day we go through the mail to process donations our generous donors have sent to support the Conservancy's programs to support the park. With each gift, I get to know the donor a little bit more as I sort through which fund they chose to support. I feel a small connection as I read the notes included with their donations, and I am reminded of loved ones when a donation comes in tribute to somebody who loved the park as we do. With how important all this is to the Conservancy, and with how much darkness has surrounded the world of late, we wanted to shine some light on members and donors who have had a positive impact on the park and our staff.

We were originally inspired by our first featured donor - Joan Eaton. Joan didn't know that every month I looked forward to receiving her gift. She always dedicates it "To the animals" and always signs it "With love." Maybe she doesn't think twice about it once she's written it, but this small note from a donor has become a regular reminder as to why we are here - to conserve our public lands and the species within it for current and future generations to enjoy.

Joan is a Colorado native with a deep love for northern Colorado, specifically Rocky Mountain National Park. Growing up immersed in nature, she always felt a connection with the land and animals, and especially the elk and their song-like bugles. Now that she feels she is in a place that she can give back, she wants to make sure she makes an impact on

something she has deemed a priority. Joan believes that "the animals are a sacred part of the park and should be treated that way — they were here first. We owe it to them to help maintain their natural environment to the greatest extent possible."

The species we aim to protect have been here, and have cultivated this system with the earth that allows a natural ebb and flow of contained order and disorder. With human impact, that flow can be disrupted. "Loud music, loud voices, loud car noise and fumes are not a natural part of their environment, so I worry a lot about the negative impact our unintentional behavior has on them," she said. Instead of working alongside our wildlife siblings, it's generally believed that other wildlife is inferior because it acts mostly on instinct and cannot talk (like people). When, really, we are a moving part of it all, and we have a responsibility to take care of and respect one another. Each of us showing respect for [the park's] beauty and leaving it the way we found it goes a long way, but perhaps there could be other solutions we can come up with as well." Joan feels it is our duty to listen.

For two years now, Joan has focused her giving on what she deems most important. She wishes she could give to them all, but she believes "a gift is not a gift if not from the heart," and we at the Conservancy get a glimpse into Joan's heart every month — we could not be more grateful for people like her.

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## Rocky Mountain Conservancy

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

*'Tis the season for wild iris in Moraine Park.*

Visit [RMConservancy.org](http://RMConservancy.org)  
or call 970-586-0108

## Nature Notes

**All around us the joys of spring are blooming, and bursting, and yelling out loud! The winter winds are loathe to give up the ghost, but warm temps are teasing, aspen buds are popping, and the birds are courting and singing to beat the band**

• In early February in Estes Park, Conservancy members **Janet** and **Dick Coe** noticed a dead wild turkey in their backyard as they were preparing their breakfast. Turkeys were not uncommon in the neighborhood, and they had several in their yard every day. That afternoon, their neighbor came over to visit and said “What’s that big bird in your backyard?” I could see the golden feathers on the back of its head and knew right away it was a golden eagle. The eagle was startled by their movements and flew off, but about a half hour later it returned and continued to feed on the dead turkey that it had probably killed earlier in the day for the next 20 to 30 minutes. As a birder, it doesn’t get any better than that • Except for ... that evening, Janet noticed that the cat was interested in something outside, so Dick went out to investigate the turkey carcass with binoculars and a flashlight — and there was a bobcat dining on the remains. The next morning, all that was left were feathers • Retired RMNP Wildlife Biologist **Gary Miller** noted that beavers have been recolonizing in most of the streams on the east side of Rocky - especially in the enclosures where willows have

been allowed to rejuvenate • Estes Park resident **Dean Martinson** observed a gaggle of Canada geese as they navigated an extremely truncated landing on a very small pond in his Carriage Hills neighborhood • Conservancy Publications Director **Nancy Wilson** watched a red-tailed hawk appearing to be giving hunting lessons to a juvenile red-tailed hawk. The dissent from the youngster was most audible • Rocky Mountain National Park’s most beloved and photographed bull elk since the immortal Samson — who was poached by a bowhunter more than 25 years ago — has died. Known as the Big Kahuna, Bruno, Big Thirds and Incredibull, this elk was estimated to have lived around 10 years and was found dead in the park in early April. It was surmised that the elk possibly had been taken down by a mountain lion, as tracks were found surrounding the area where the elk was found. Later in April, the park was notified of an elk skull that had been found with only one attached antler. It is believed that his other antler had been shed before his death. During the investigation, it was learned that the skull had been relocated after being cut from the carcass. This is an ongoing investigation • Conservancy members **Marlene** and **Walt Borneman** were over in Grand Lake the first weekend of April to hike/snowshoe to Lone Lake. The usual spring trail conditions prevailed — i.e. mud, ice and snow. On the way they followed huge bear tracks for about two miles but did not spot the bear. But that evening,



a store owner in Grand Lake showed them a video of a bear in his back yard the day before — that clinched it! They knew that spring had officially arrived • Conservancy Development Associate **Victoria Johnson** watched in delight as two American pelicans flew overhead near Grand Lake. The sky was Delta blue, and winter white aspen tree trunks set off the white pelicans so beautifully • Trail Ridge Road spring opening operations are underway as of April 20, and plowing operations on the west side began a few weeks earlier — get ready for another great summer in Rocky!