



PutneyNatureImages | Hallett Peak Autumn



# QUARTERLY

Autumn | 2022

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*Let us tell you how you are helping the park with what you give*

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## Evolution

by Gary Miller, retired RMNP Wildlife Biologist

Wolves. Colorado's mountain parks and high mountain meadows and streams, and the elk, deer and moose that live there, are about to get some company. Voters resolved the controversial issue of whether or not to reintroduce wolves into the state with the passage of Proposition 114 in the 2020 election.

From my deck, I watch a cow elk leisurely strip an aspen branch, filling her rumen (the first of four stomach chambers) seemingly without a care in the world. Her calf, head and neck outstretched, dozes nearby. I think, "Oooh, Mama! How your life's gonna change a few years down the road." Thinking of how, in the coming years, she and her calf and their descendants won't be so calm and content. Little doubt their behavior will evolve to that of increased alertness, nervousness as they share the landscape with the new arrivals. She lies in the aspen's shade and ruminates. I mentally do the same, and my mind leaps to thoughts

of another evolution — that of the important, but different, roles of the citizen and the scientist that are reflected in the story of how this impending reintroduction of wolves to Colorado came to be.

Some 5 decades ago, my contemporaries and I were schooled in traditional wildlife science — "hard" science. Biology. Math and statistics. Critical analysis and experimental design. We graduated into a profession where wildlife professionals operated under the prevailing attitude that "biologists know best." Or, in the words of Bill Murray's *Ghostbusters* character, "Back off man. I'm a scientist." When controversies did arise, citizen involvement was typically through traditional political processes and via long-established conservation organizations (e.g., National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, Audubon, Wilderness Society).

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*"Many of the projects that we fund lack the compelling imagery to effectively tell the stories of the other, less photogenic ways we support the park and its visitors."*



## A Message from our Executive Director



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Dear Friends,

Snow tires have come out of hibernation, queuing the beginning of the busy holiday season, and for those of us in the nonprofit sector, the busy fundraising season. As we highlight the upcoming projects that our board voted to fund in support of the park in 2023, you might notice that this issue is chock full of charismatic wildlife photos and stunning scenery. But many of the projects that we fund and that we take great pride in often lack the compelling imagery to effectively tell the stories of the other, less photogenic ways we support the park and its visitors.

In 2023, we will be supporting a pilot Emergency Services Mental Health Support initiative for first responders in Rocky Mountain National Park. Emergency response personnel, including climbing rangers, Search and Rescue, Law Enforcement, and dispatchers may deal with dozens of traumatic incidents in any given year, sometimes involving their own colleagues, as was the case in a ranger-involved shooting last year and a beloved park volunteer's passing this year. By contracting a professional psychologist to confidentially support them after traumatic incidents, we can ensure that they are at their best, personally and professionally, for the visitors that they serve in the park.

We are also supporting an increased need created by high visitation in wilderness areas by providing and distributing free wag bags in the park to reduce human waste in sensitive areas. This not only helps reduce human waste nitrogen impact in waterways, it also reduces your odds of running across an unpleasant surprise on your backcountry adventures. I promise, we won't have any photos of this project in a *Quarterly* anytime soon. <Phew!>

Continuing our significant work in recent years with Indigenous connections initiatives and tribal collaborations, the Conservancy is also supporting a seasonal cultural anthropologist next summer to enhance the park's understanding of resources that have traditional and/or religious significance to the tribes that consider this part of their homelands, so that these places can be protected for future generations of indigenous communities. Because of the sensitive nature of these studies, the information is not widely dispersed beyond our tribal partners and secure databases, but the work is a high priority for the park and its native communities.

As we move into the coming year, we'll continue to work to shed light on the breadth of the Conservancy's work, while being mindful to not deprive you of charming wildlife photos, wildlife we steward through ecosystem-scale restoration initiatives, research, and reintroduction projects.

In the months ahead, may you find moments of peace in nature, and whether you live near or far, we are grateful for the care that you extend to help steward this national gem.

Warmly,



*Estee Rivera Murdock*

Estee Rivera Murdock

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





Quarterly Editor Nancy Wilson attempts to unearth answers to any questions asked by Conservancy members and park visitors. If you are curious about something in or about the park, email [nancy.wilson@rmconservancy.org](mailto:nancy.wilson@rmconservancy.org) or write: Nancy Wilson, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, PO Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517.

## Why do rufous hummingbirds arrive so late in the summer and leave so early in the fall, as compared to the broadtailed hummingbird?

Of the world's 361 hummingbird species, the rufous lives farthest north. Rufous hummingbirds nest from extreme southern Alaska to southern Oregon, and east just barely into extreme northwestern Wyoming. Neither the 1998 nor the 2016 *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* documents any nesting in Colorado. Most of them overwinter in Mexico with a few staying in southern California, and even fewer along the coastal Gulf of Mexico, from Texas to Florida. When they migrate in spring, they first move west then go northward mostly through California, Oregon and Washington, with no migration north through Colorado. After their breeding ends in late June, they start migrating south but do so mostly, though not entirely, more easterly, which brings them through Colorado in July. Because they are migrating, they do not linger, stopping at hummingbird feeders just long enough to rest and get some sugar for energy to keep flying. Most of them move out of Colorado by late August, with only a very few of them still here in early September. By comparison, broad-tailed hummingbirds nest throughout the western two-thirds of Colorado. They reach Colorado in late April, and a few will linger into early October. — *Naturalist Kevin J. Cook*

## What happened at Lake Haiyaha to cause the water color to become milky green? How long will the water be milky?

On June 28, 2022, a large debris slide event occurred on the south slope of Hallett Peak, resulting in rock sliding and falling into Upper Chaos Canyon. Based on initial observations taken June through August, 2022, the debris flow contained a wide range of sizes of material, from small clay to large boulders, which mobilized existing debris and the overlying snowfield, and stripped the slope down to bedrock in some areas. This grinding action transported a lot of silt and clay downhill quickly and into Lake Haiyaha, similar to what happens with glaciers over long periods of time. Glaciers grind and pulverize rocks along valley floors and walls, producing a powder of silt and clay called "glacial flour." At Lake Haiyaha, however, the grinding of happened more suddenly, resulting in a pulse of "rock flour" that was transported to the lake. The particles of rock are so fine that they are slow to sink to the bottom of the lake, remaining suspended in the water column instead. When sunlight hits the water, these particles absorb the shortest wavelengths, the purples and indigos. The water itself absorbs the longer wavelengths of reds, oranges and yellows. That leaves primarily blues and greens to get scattered back to our eyes, which is what makes Lake Haiyaha appear a milky sea-green color. It is unknown how long the lake will look like this, but many factors play a role in this process, such as how much more rock flour slides into the lake, and how long it takes for the fine silt and clay particles to sink to the bottom, a process that depends on particle density and shape, wind turbulence and lake depth. — *RMNP website*

<https://bit.ly/3TCY6V4>

## Shop Conservancy Nature Stores



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### COLUMBIA RMNP BACKPACK LIMITED EDITION

*This backpack features a faux leather base and contoured padded shoulder straps, and dual main compartments with a padded laptop sleeve to fit most 15" laptops. A front-zippered pocket and vertical stash pocket will keep sundries in line, and a draw cord side pocket. 13" L x 17" H x 7½" D, 35L, 600D polyester. Select blue or green.*

Price: \$48.95; **Member Price: \$41.61**

### THE MOUNTAIN STANDS

by Amy and Jeremy Shellhorn

*This is a children's book about the wild places that serve as a constant touch point for kids during their changing lives in an unpredictable world. This unique book give a sense of perspective that the Mountain can offer.*

Price: \$16.95; **Member Price: \$14.41**



### GEOBEAR CREWNECK SWEATSHIRT

*This indigo blue crewneck sweatshirt features a graphically distressed, colorful design to remind you of the mountains*

*and wildlife in Rocky. 55% cotton and 45% polyester. Price: \$39.99; **Member Price: \$33.99***

### BLACK BEAR MUG

*Short claws make black bears expert tree climbers. Living mostly in forests, black bears are seen by Native Americans as healing creatures representing strength, solitude, confidence, and courage. She is awaiting the ripening berries and fishing in the river. 15 oz. capacity white ceramic.*

Price: \$18.99; **Member Price: \$16.14**



**More memorabilia at  
RMConservancy.org or  
Call 970-586-0121 to order.**



by  
Jonathan Lewis,  
RMNP Amphibian  
Program Lead

## In Search of Wood Frogs in the Kawuneeche Valley Post 2020 Fire

*He (Scherer) determined that frog populations were resilient despite the large changes to the watershed dynamics in the Kawuneeche Valley, but that habitat was more segmented than was historically thought.*

Researcher Jonathan Lewis out in the field with a resident wood frog in hand.



The high elevation wetlands of Rock Mountain National Park (RMNP) are home to a select few amphibian species whose distribution and abundance can be sensitive to environmental changes.

Among these is the wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*), which mainly exists in the northeastern United States and Canada, persisting in small portions of Colorado as an isolated remnant of glacial recession. Within the boundaries of RMNP, wood frogs are exclusively found along the Colorado River and nearby tributaries in the Kawuneeche Valley (KV). It is designated as a species of concern by the state of Colorado.

Historically, the expanse of wetlands created by centuries of beaver colonies provided contiguous breeding habitat throughout the valley for wood frogs. Over the past 100 years, however, the richness of seasonal wetlands in the valley has diminished. Land-use changes, including homesteaders diverting or destroying many networks of dams to create cattle pastures, beavers trapped and nearly extirpated from the ecosystem, and water diverted from the valley with the creation of the Grand Ditch, all resulted in less surface water and wood frog habitat.

In 2006, Colorado State University researcher, Rick Scherer, set out to survey wood frog habitat and occurrence in this highly impacted landscape. He determined that frog populations were resilient despite the large changes to the watershed dynamics in the Kawuneeche Valley, but that habitat was more segmented than was historically thought. Scherer's work provided baseline data for comparison with future survey efforts by establishing monitoring sites at nearly 100 potential wood frog breeding wetlands where he observed 160 wood frog egg masses at 19 of these wetland sites. In 2020, the East Troublesome Fire burned through roughly 50% of known wood frog locations and habitat, prompting the park to visit a subset of sites post-fire to confirm continued presence of wood frogs using visual encounter surveys.

In 2021, 44 sites were visited though an existing partnership with Conservation Science Partners. Due to post-fire safety concerns, crews were not allowed to survey until after most of the wood frog breeding season was complete. Breeding was not observed, and only two individual wood frogs were found at two different sites.



These results were concerning, but also recognized as potentially misleading since surveys occurred at a suboptimal time of year when the probability of detection was low.

Subsequently, in 2022, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy funded work to expand on the 2021 efforts and survey more sites during the breeding season. RMNP researchers teamed up with Conservation Science Partners to revisit all of Scherer's wood frog breeding sites, nearly half of which had been severely effected by the 2020 East Troublesome Fire. Researchers evaluated breeding site viability by searching for all life stages of wood frogs, including adults, egg masses, and tadpoles. While traveling to these sites, any new wetland that appeared to have wood frog breeding habitat characteristics were surveyed to see if breeding sites had shifted in the past 15 years.

Preliminary results from the spring surveys in 2022 revealed that wood frogs were detected at seven new sites and five of Scherer's established sites. A total of 41 egg masses were observed at nine ponds. Field observations and data suggest that there are fewer areas occupied by wood frogs and less reproduction than in 2006. No historic wood frog sites within the burn area had wood frogs or breeding observed. However, it is unknown if the lack of breeding observed was a result of the 2020 fire, or if wood frogs had previously stopped breeding at those sites. In addition, it is likely that the hydrology of unburned areas of the Kawuneeche Valley has shifted and changed the distribution of wood frog breeding habitat. The analysis of the data is in progress, and it is anticipated that results will articulate current habitat, population dynamics, and habitat distribution in the Kawuneeche Valley.



*Two examples of wood frog egg masses*



## Become A Member of the Conservancy!

### Why Join?

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

### Join Annually, or Monthly!

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

**[RMConservancy.org](https://RMConservancy.org)**

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

Superintendent Darla Sidles handles the crazy scissors that officially signify the receipt of the donated land.



by Zoe Woods,  
Sessel Family  
Education Fellow

## Brand Family Gifts 40 Acres to Rocky Mountain Conservancy

*"We are so pleased that with their generous land gift, the Brand family and their long-sighted conservation vision have expanded the park and protected the land for future generations."*

— Estee Rivera Murdock

Vance Brand and Conservancy Executive Director Estee Rivera Murdock share laughs and treats at the ribbon-cutting event at the property in early September.



After years in the making, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy is able to celebrate the addition of Vance Brand's gift of 40-acres of open land to Rocky Mountain National Park!

This property is located near Lily Lake and will act as a buffer to the Estes Cone, Storm Pass, and Eugenia Mine trails. The property itself is situated above 9,000 feet elevation, and it will give protection to the fragile ecosystems near the high alpine.

Vance Brand is bit of a Colorado legend, having grown up in Longmont, Colorado, and attending CU Boulder before joining NASA as an astronaut. At NASA, Brand served as a commander for three space shuttle missions and logged 746 hours in space. Brand spent time during his youth hiking, camping and mountain climbing in Rocky, and was inspired by these experiences to purchase the land in 1967. He described this donation as "payback to the American people in appreciation for the wonderful times and many benefits that I received from great experiences in RMNP" in a letter to Senator Cory Gardener.

Extending the boundaries of a national park is not an easy process, however. After Brand donated the land to the Conservancy in 2019, the park boundary had to be formally expanded. In 2020, Senator Michael Bennet, Representative Joe Neguse,

and Senator Cory Gardener introduced a bill to add Brand's land to Rocky Mountain National Park.

In January 2021, Congress authorized the expansion, and this summer, the National Park Service and the Rocky Mountain Conservancy were able to properly celebrate this addition to the park. Representatives from the NPS, including Superintendent Darla Sidles, and Conservancy Executive Director, Estee Rivera, gathered with Vance Brand and his family to officially commemorate this amazing event for Rocky.

Said Conservancy Executive Director Estee Rivera Murdock, "We are so pleased that with their generous land gift, the Brand family and their long-sighted conservation vision have expanded the park and protected the land for future generations." She continued, "It was an honor to work with an esteemed astronaut who has served our nation in space on a wonderful terrestrial project!"

"My family and I sincerely hope that this donation to the national park will keep the land in its natural state for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations of Americans," said Brand.

Thank you to the Brand family for their generous gift and their dedication to Rocky Mountain National Park!





*Military families  
enjoying a day flyfishing  
at Sprague Lake*

## Conservancy Field Institute Hosts Fly Fishing Day for Military Service Members and Families

by  
Conservancy Brown  
Family Education Fellow  
Olivia Gonzales



On August 27, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Field Institute partnered with the National Park Trust, the National Park Service, Our Military Kids, and Trout Unlimited to bring military service members and their families to Rocky Mountain National Park for a day of fly fishing on Sprague Lake.

The National Park Service awarded funds to the National Park Trust in a grant which partnered with Our Military Kids to provide National Guard and Reserve service members and their families access to recreational fishing opportunities in national park sites all over the country. The program was designed for Denver metro-based families to teach them how to fly fish and connect with their local national park in a deeper and more meaningful way, without financial or access barriers.

Upon arriving at Sprague Lake, Rocky Mountain Superintendent Darla Sidles presented each family with a

2022-2023 Interagency Military Pass for use in the park. The pass provides free entrance for one year to more than 2,000 federal recreational sites for current military members and their dependents, veterans and Gold Star Families.

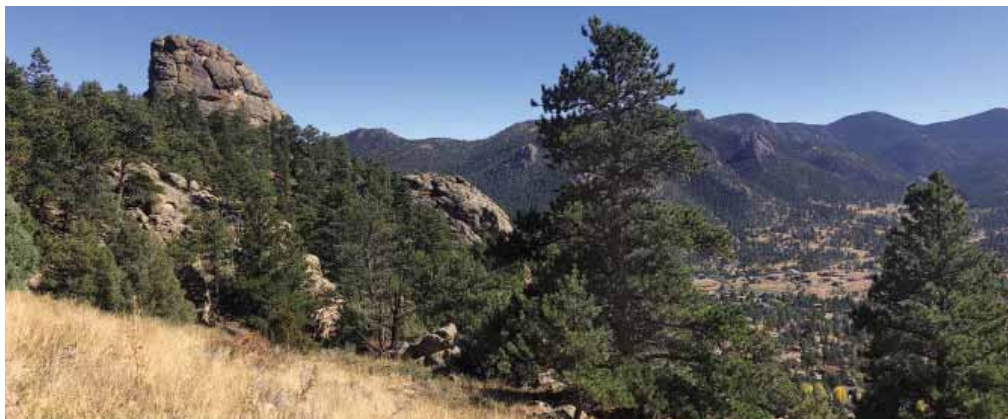
Representatives from Trout Unlimited came to help guide these families and provided instruction on casting, flies and technique. After a quick lesson in fly fishing, the families were able to put their new skills to the test on the water. Each family member was also able to go home with their own fly-fishing kit, complete with rod, reel and flies so that they can come back and fish again.

“We welcome the opportunity to collaborate and connect our military families with opportunities to recreate in and enjoy their national park,” said Rocky Mountain National Park Superintendent Darla Sidles. “This is one small way to thank them for their service.”

*RMNP Superintendent Darla Sidles  
meets and greets the families attending  
the flyfishing course.*



View of the Thumb on  
Prospect Mountain  
from the south



by  
Charlotte Graeve,  
Grace McMahon and  
Nathan Morrow,  
Conservation Corps Staff

## Conservancy Partners with Town of Estes Park to Improve Access on Thumb Open Space

*As the world of outdoor recreation evolves and grows and includes users of more diverse abilities and interests, the physical infrastructure that supports these activities must evolve as well.*

Conservation Corps crew members  
clearing and stabilizing the trail to  
the Thumb.



### PAST

First climbed in the 1940s by Tom Hornbein, the namesake “Thumb” is a large, free-standing spire of rock on the southwest side of Prospect Mountain in the heart of the Estes Valley. The Thumb Open Space was officially purchased by the Town of Estes Park in May of 2021, following years of meetings, discussions and collaborations between local governments, private landowners, and nonprofit organizations. Prior to the Town’s recent purchase of the land, hikers had only been able to access this trail area through a trail easement across private property. The Town’s acquisition of this area has ensured that hiking and climbing access is protected for the future. Rocky Mountain Conservancy became involved in this process during the acquisition period and saw the benefit of this addition to the Estes Valley Community. By supporting this acquisition, the Conservancy pledged to support the protection of this area through the Conservation Corps program. Now that the Thumb Open Space is a publicly managed landscape, people of all ages and abilities are invited to responsibly enjoy and connect with the natural sights and sounds of these lands.

### PRESENT

For four weeks from late September to early October of 2022, a crew of three Rocky Mountain Conservancy staff members worked in collaboration with the Town of Estes Park to improve

the Thumb Open Space trail. The crew was primarily focused on clearing and widening the trail corridor to allow easier access for hikers and climbers, with a particular focus on electric-assist hand-cycle users, for whom a wider trail and less debris would make accessing the Thumb possible. The Conservancy crew, with tremendous help from volunteers and organizations such as the Access Fund, the National Park Service, Estes Valley Land Trust, and the Boulder Climbing Community, was able to clear 3,696 feet of corridor, widen 1,057 feet of tread, build 55 feet of rock wall, and install 40 feet of stone pavers and armoring.

### FUTURE

As the world of outdoor recreation evolves and includes users of more diverse abilities and interests, the physical infrastructure that supports these activities must evolve as well. The long-term vision for the Thumb Open Space Trail is to be fully hand-cycle accessible. Trail requirements for hand-cycles include a 36-inch-wide trail surface, flat paver-like stones placed throughout the trail for increased tire traction, and a fairly mellow grade to ease navigability. Once these final improvements can be made to the Thumb Open Space trail, it will be one of the first of its kind: a trail usable for hand-cyclists to share in the breathtaking views from this iconic point in Estes Park.





## Your Gift to Colorado Gives Day Supports Rocky, Too!

Colorado Gives Day has grown to be Colorado's largest giving movement, raising more than \$362 million for Colorado since it began in 2010. Every year, individuals like you come together with the common goal of strengthening the community by helping power nonprofits. You don't have to live in Colorado for your donation to count.

Please consider making a tax-deductible gift to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy through this online event. Your support and generosity is appreciated now more than ever.

With your support, we can continue to provide wildfire recovery, trail stewardship, Conservation Corps, educational opportunities and much more.

Donate at [ColoradoGives.org/organization/RMC](https://coloradogives.org/organization/RMC) **OR** scan the QR code below — it will give you a link that you can tap to go directly to the Conservancy's donation page on the ColoradoGives site.

*Thank you for your support!*



*Hover your cell phone camera over this black-and-white code until you see a web link appear, then click on the link — go ahead — try it!*

## Making the Most of Your Year-end Gift to the Conservancy

As the holiday season heralds in the end of the year, you might be thinking about making a donation to the Conservancy (we hope!), and that the easiest thing to do is write a check. **Hold on!** That might not be making the most of your year-end gift, or even the most efficient way to give.

Here are some other options to consider:

### Appreciated Stock

If you donate stock you've held for at least 12 months, you can deduct the full value of the investment without having to pay any capital gains on the appreciation. The current fair market value of the stock is deducted from your taxable income. In fact, you could consider gifting your biggest winners, which maximizes your savings on capital gains taxes, and then buying back the same stock if you want to keep it in your portfolio.

### Qualified Charitable Donation

If you need to take a required minimum distribution (RMD) from your IRA, you can instead transfer up to \$100,000 tax-free, per year, to a charity and decrease your RMD by the same amount. Note: You must be 70½ or older to take advantage of this strategy.

### Donor Advised Fund

Like a family foundation but with fewer administrative responsibilities, a donor-advised fund can also take appreciated stock — but that's not its only tax advantage. When you donate to a donor advised fund, you can take the tax deduction now, even if you haven't yet identified the charity to which you want to contribute. You can also bunch the contributions during a high-income year to maximize the deduction, and then parcel out the donations over time as the assets inside the fund grow tax-free. Community foundations and many financial institutions can help you establish your own Donor Advised Fund.

Writing a check is the easiest way to contribute but taking a little more time to plan your gift can benefit both you and the Conservancy. For more information on these and other giving options, please contact the Conservancy philanthropy team at 970-586-0108.

**Make your gift today at  
[coloradogives.org](https://coloradogives.org)  
and search for the Rocky  
Mountain Conservancy**



# Rocky Mountain Conservancy Park Puzzler

## ACROSS

3. The Alpine Visitor Center is a busy place during the summer, with masses of tourists, dramatic weather, and the occasional \_\_\_\_\_ by ambulance or helicopter.
9. An NPS \_\_\_\_\_ management approach that continually incorporates the most recent and relevant scientific information into actions and policies.
10. To understand visitor impact to natural resources, Rocky's Continental Divide Research Learning Center uses \_\_\_\_\_ science volunteers to document various effects on the environment.
11. An early iteration of the Fall River Entrance Station was located at the western edge of \_\_\_\_\_ Park.
16. With increased visitation in the RMNP, there is a corresponding increase in \_\_\_\_\_ emergencies that will benefit from the new SAR vehicle funded by the Conservancy.
17. Soils represent the largest reservoir of active terrestrial \_\_\_\_\_.
18. Many trails in RMNP are within designated \_\_\_\_\_ which provides unique opportunities for recreational opportunities and solitude.

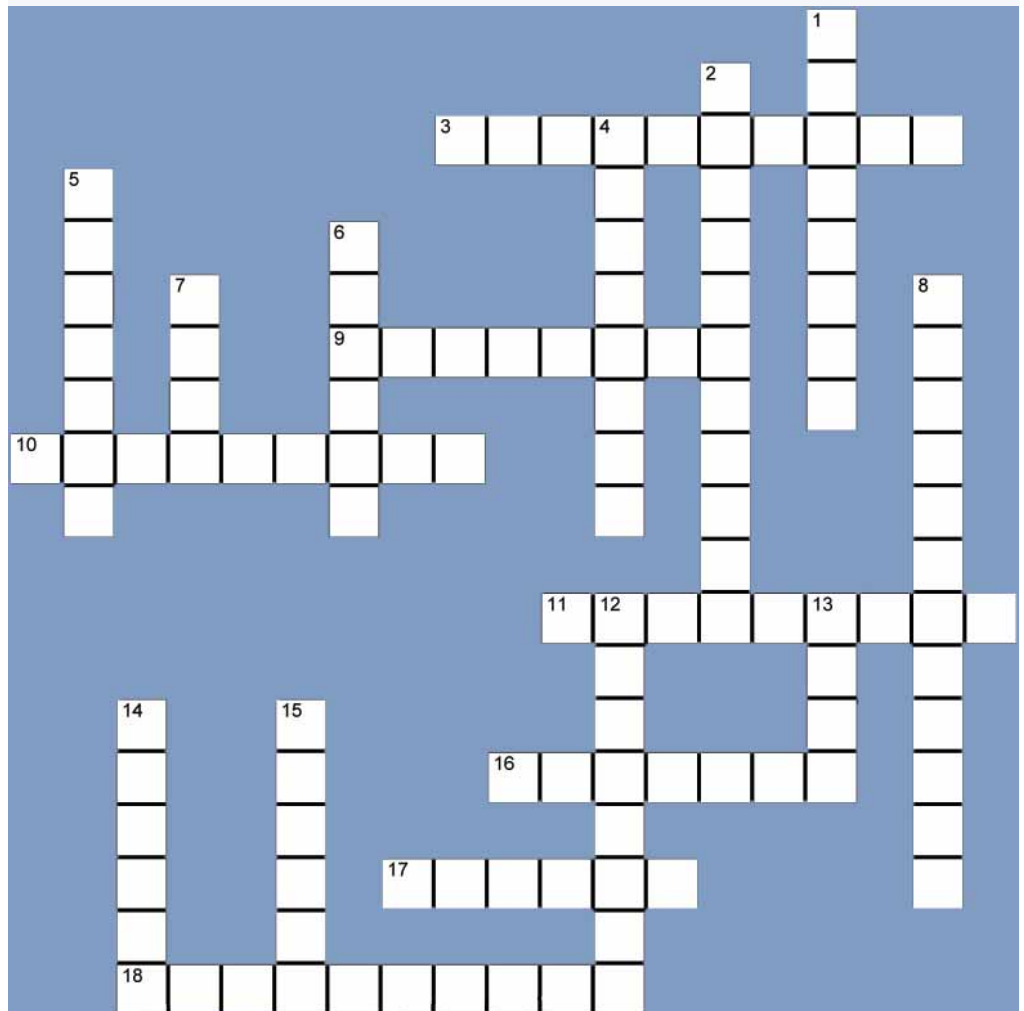
## DOWN

1. On the alpine tundra, the release of excess stored organic carbon is closely connected to annual temperatures and the \_\_\_\_\_ content that accumulates in the soil.
2. Stay tuned for upcoming new Field Institute programs that are being developed by \_\_\_\_\_ (*two words*), the Conservancy's new FI director.
4. Despite the park's efforts to manage the number of visitors with the timed-entry system, the Bear Lake \_\_\_\_\_ remains the most popular – and most crowded – hiking destination in the park.
5. In 1966, the National Park Service initiated a nationwide program to modernize park facilities for increasing visitation and aging infrastructure called \_\_\_\_\_ 66.

6. After the elk rut ends in October, it is very likely that many of the cows will have been impregnated and be \_\_\_\_\_ throughout the winter, spring and into early summer of next year.
7. A variety of soil types are found in Rocky, including \_\_\_\_\_, a soil found in cool and damp areas, such as the riparian and subalpine ecosystems, that is comprised of a mixture of three mineral types – sand, silt and clay – resulting in well-drained and permeable soil that holds a lot of organic matter and nutrients.
8. Abundantly inhabiting Lily Lake this spring, the \_\_\_\_\_ tiger salamander newts were easy to spot on the bottom of the lake because of their pale color, and resemblance to small dinosaurs with the characteristic flare of gills.
12. The Great American \_\_\_\_\_ Act was passed in 2020 which provided 1.9 billion

dollars in annual funding to modernize facilities and address maintenance backlog in national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, recreation areas and American Indian Schools.

13. A ubiquitous but highly significant substrate found all over the world called \_\_\_\_\_ which allows plants to take root, providing water and nutrients to nourish development, all with the help of some even more ubiquitous microorganisms.
14. When looking into a bank of fog, as is common in RMNP when there is an inversion, a weather phenomenon that creates a white rainbow called a \_\_\_\_\_ (*two words*) can sometimes be seen.
15. The \_\_\_\_\_ family of birds embraces 133 species and includes some of the most intelligent of the birds (*from a human perspective, anyway*), including crows, jays, magpies and the raven.





*The Rocky Mountain Conservancy expresses special thanks  
to the following people for their donations supporting Rocky  
Mountain National Park: June 29, 2022 – October 13, 2022*

**Total gifts: 538 | Total donations: \$706,288**



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

Sven Aas, South Hadley, MA  
Nancy Abbott, Kremmling, CO  
Steve and Lois Jean Abernathy, Ballwin, MO  
Joycelyn Acosta, Aurora, CO  
Robert Adams, Montrose, CO  
Christine Adams, Boulder, CO  
Teresa and Steven Ahrenholz, Cincinnati, OH  
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*A Colorado native! As Coloradoans debated gray wolf restoration, two wolves from Wyoming crossed the border into North Park, found each other and produced a litter in 2021. This pup was among the first Colorado-born wolves known since the species was extirpated in the early to mid-1900s.*



## Evolution

*Continued from page 1*

*Methodologies for assessing and recovering at-risk species and addressing issues at a multi-species and landscape scale while also accommodating social engagement were not part of traditional wildlife science — not in anyone's playbook.*

At the start of my career, as scientists identified threats to public lands, waters and wildlife, citizens flexed their collective muscles. Lawmakers responded to public outcry by passing laws calling for broader ecosystem, as well as societal, perspectives in natural resource decision-making. Notably among these were the National Environmental Policy Act (1970) and the Endangered Species Act (1973).

Scientists struggled to learn how to deal with these expanded expectations. Methodologies for assessing and recovering at-risk species and addressing issues at a multi-species and landscape scale while also accommodating social engagement were not part of traditional wildlife science — not in anyone's playbook. Positing theoretical frameworks and testing potential applications took time. As some scientists considered such novel attributes as extinction probabilities and minimum viable populations, species richness/area relationships (leading to understanding the negative implications of habitat fragmentation), and trophic cascading, others mined the social science disciplines to figure out how to incorporate social interests into decision-making. All this was new ground for the scientist.

Meanwhile, for the public, perhaps like the dog that catches the car, seizing these new opportunities to influence natural resource decisions was confusing. The line between fact and opinion was fuzzy. Coupled with competing values, controversies arose.

Understandably, the early focus was toward litigation (think James Watt in the 1980s). Organizations such as the Environmental Defense Fund, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the Natural Resources Defense Council came to the forefront with injunctions and lawsuits, as did commercial interests. Scientists sometimes came under pressure to give “professional opinions” to support or oppose particular positions, even though doing so, absent firm data, put their scientific objectivity, and therefore their credibility, at risk. And sometimes they were ignored. In the case of Colorado wolves, the state's Wildlife Commission, a governor-appointed policy body, passed multiple policies or resolutions prohibiting wolf reintroduction from the early 1980s to as recently as 2016 (since rescinded) without any scientific analysis or consideration.

As knowledge increased due to the efforts of biologists and ecologists such as E.O. Wilson, Michael Soulé, Jared Diamond, and many others, it coalesced and evolved, by the turn of the century, into the now well-accepted discipline of Conservation Biology.

The arguable “professional opinion” now often can be replaced by the “scientifically defensible” in conservation deliberations. The scientists' role, then, is clarified to be strictly that of objective information provider for a particular issue — identifying the full range of actions that CAN be done and the ecological consequences of each (as well as the consequences of inaction).



Meanwhile, those scientists exploring the underpinnings of public attitudes toward wildlife decisions were likewise busy, analyzing case histories of controversial issues to tease out the hierarchy of human concerns and values embedded in those controversies. Led by Cornell's Dan Decker, Shawn Riley of Michigan State, John Organ of the Fish and Wildlife Service and others, this work found that competing interests were more likely to find common ground, and decisions had broader support and were more persistent (i.e., successful) when citizen desires and values were articulated and incorporated into deliberations as desired outcomes (vs. processes, or "how to's"). This new field of work — the Human Dimension of wildlife management — has more clearly defined the importance of the citizen's role in decision-making. Once given the conservation scientists' findings of what CAN be done, it is appropriate, indeed the responsibility, of citizens — the owners of the public resource — to apply their values and desired outcomes to decide what SHOULD be done.

The Colorado wolf reintroduction issue exemplified that evolved refinement, and the critical importance, of the scientists' and the citizens' roles. Proposition 114 was not "ballot-box biology" since it built on conservation science that was quite unassailable. Colorado, with by far the largest elk populations (i.e., prey base) of any state, with roughly 1/3 of its lands in public ownership, adequate connectivity of habitat as well as gene flow, and

proven translocation techniques, CAN support a viable, self-sustaining wolf population, with a more naturally functioning, healthier ecosystem as an outcome.

Predation on private livestock and other disproportionate impact on citizens are among the expected consequences. Proposition 114's authors crafted it carefully, first by posing the question as an implied outcome, followed by addressing the social consequences such as compensation for livestock loss, equitability of funding (general funds, not license fees), and protection of private landowner rights. Proposition 114 kept fairly well to whether or not we SHOULD have wolves, functionally absent for more than 100 years, once again on our Colorado landscape. By less than a two percent margin, citizens decided we should.

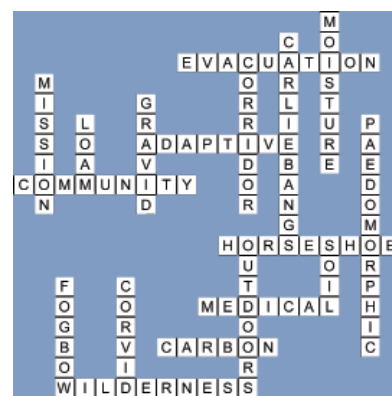
What of the future? Might the evolved roles of the citizen and the scientist in applying research-derived conservation science and human dimensions principles resolve future issues earlier and at much lower political temperature, before they reach the courthouse or ballot box? Will continued research in both fields see society's abilities to make wise natural resource decisions evolve even further?

Which brings my thoughts to that other key role of the citizen — that of supporting continued research and the ongoing acquisition of critical knowledge.

The cow and calf rise. Mama glances briefly and disinterestedly in my direction. For now.

*Meanwhile, those scientists exploring the underpinnings of public attitudes toward wildlife decisions were likewise busy, analyzing case histories of controversial issues to tease out the hierarchy of human concerns and values embedded in those controversies.*

## Park Puzzler Solution



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## 2023 Project List – We Can’t Do it Without You!



### ✓ Best Use

Help the park where support is needed the most. This option allows the Conservancy the flexibility to respond quickly when new or urgent needs arise in the park, including trail repairs, wildfire recovery, and land protection.



### ✓ Land Protection Fund

Since the early 1980s, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy has assumed a leadership role in acquiring many important parcels of land, both in Rocky Mountain National Park and in the adjacent Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, transferring land to these federal agencies for permanent protection. To quickly respond to acquisition opportunities, the Conservancy raises funds to have at the ready to preserve additional lands for public lands.



### ✓ Next Generation Fund

Passing the stewardship of our park onto the next generation is a task as big as its signature mountains. The Next Generation Fund is all about using your support to connect youth with nature. Your gift provides meaningful learning experiences for kids, such as the Junior Ranger program, park internships and much more.



### ✓ Trail Improvement Fund

Rocky’s beloved and spectacular trails are always in need of regular repair and maintenance, and the need for sustainable trail management is ongoing, ad infinitum. In 2023, we will continue the next phase of work on the Longs Peak Trail, and continue improvements to other popular trails, including the Sprague Lake boardwalk.



### ✓ Conservancy Conservation Corps

In 2023, the Conservancy-Conservation Corps program will bring in 54 young professionals to work in Rocky and surrounding national forest areas. The project priorities include: repairing 200+ miles of hiking trails, controlling invasive plant species, reopening trails that were damaged by the wildfires, and installing erosion control methods in burned areas. The Conservancy will also be hosting its High School Leadership Corps to inspire marginalized youth to be the next generation of public land stewards.



### ✓ Wildlife Conservation Fund

Next year, we have several wildlife-focused projects planned, including important research and reintroduction efforts to ensure ecological integrity in the wake of the 2020 fires, including continued work with relic wood frog populations. Rest assured that your gift to the Wildlife Conservation Fund will help to protect and conserve our furry, feathered and scaly park inhabitants.

## Your contributions at work

### ✚ Conservation Corps Snapshot



*The Rocky Mountain Conservancy Conservation Corps will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2023. This program has inspired more than 750 young adults to become public land stewards, and to pursue careers in the conservation and natural resources fields. Each year, this program partners Corps members with professional staff to learn best practices around trail management, historic preservation, and wildfire mitigation.*

*“I want to work one day in the field of environmental conservation, and I think this is a great place to start. I believe it taught me important skills that will help me to be a better steward of the earth, as well as help me develop leadership and communication skills that will serve me well, no matter where I end up in the future.”*

— Katherine P., 2022 Corps Member

# Make YOUR gift to support the park today!



Please give a gift  
to Rocky using the  
handy envelope  
attached.

Dear Friends,

Greetings from the Rocky Mountain Conservancy! As the Conservancy takes stock of its 2022 accomplishments and looks ahead to the new year, we sincerely thank you for your ongoing generosity.

Since 1931, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy has been supporting Rocky Mountain National Park by educating visitors – recognizing that across the ages and in all cultures, time spent outdoors is the foundation for young people to build familiarity and a lifelong love of nature. However, in recent decades, childhood has moved indoors, leaving many young people disconnected from the natural world. Today's children spend half as much time outside as they did 20 years ago, and low-income families face additional barriers to visiting public lands.

With this in mind, and as an integral part of our mission, we re-launched our Field Institute programming this fall, bringing back much-loved classes along with innovative educational ventures to reach new and diverse audiences. Additionally, this past summer, the Green Mountain Trail was successfully re-designed and re-opened to hikers, thanks to donor support and the hard work of the Conservation Corps crews. The Conservancy also enabled park archaeologists to assess cultural resources at Sun Valley Trail sites newly exposed by the East Troublesome Fire. And, the Conservancy made the park a bit safer for visitors by providing a customized Search and Rescue support vehicle.

In 2023, a new Conservation Corps crew will be dedicated to helping the park remove noxious plant species – a particular concern in post-burn areas, and Conservancy Greenhouse Fellows will help park volunteers nurture seedlings to plant in damaged areas. Other exciting initiatives are on the horizon – including historic preservation projects and the next phase of restoration work in the Kawuneechee Valley.

You can see the impact of your gift on the landscape, on the trail, or when you experience the wonder a Field Institute program inspires. Please – we need your support now more than ever to maintain our momentum.

With gratitude,

Estee Rivera Murdock  
Executive Director

Make your gift online at [RMConservancy.org](https://RMConservancy.org)

**OR:** Fill out the form below and send it in to us!

**OR:** Use your smartphone to scan the QR code below

**Thank you for your support!**

**YES!** I want to support the  
Rocky Mountain Conservancy!

☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like my gift to support:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Best Use             | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Corps    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Protection      | <input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife Conservation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Next Generation Fund | <input type="checkbox"/> Search and Rescue     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Improvement    | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Preservation |



Scan with your  
smartphone to  
Donate Now!

- ☐ Check enclosed (*Payable to Rocky Mountain Conservancy*).
- ☐ I will request a grant from my Donor Advised Giving Account.
- ☐ I have included the Conservancy in my will.
- ☐ I would like information about making a planned gift.

PLEASE NOTE: *Donations cannot be combined with membership.  
Your donation is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

**Please acknowledge my gift as:**

☐ In Honor ☐ In Memory

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address for acknowledgment letter: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your email to receive news and updates.\*

\*We never share or sell your contact information.

Please charge my credit card:

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_ CSV \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_





**Winter has arrived! The Continental Divide is cloaked with snow more often than not, and patchy snow persists throughout the park from periodic earlier snow dumps that occurred**

• Conservancy donor **Marlene Borneman** reported in mid-September that as she was driving home from the park on Marys Lake Road from her VIP job at Junior Ranger Headquarters, she caught a rare sight of a mountain lion starting to cross the road ahead as she rounded a curve. It had two front paws on the road and turned and looked at her, then quickly turned around and disappeared in the willows. Marlene had stopped the car on the curve to watch, feeling lucky that no cars were sharing the road with her at that moment •

**Marlene** also noted the presence of a very active chickaree squirrel, A.K.A. pine squirrel, in their yard this summer; it was particularly active in August and September, and she was convinced that it had de-coned every conifer in their yard. While she hasn't yet found the squirrel "midden" (squirrels create their middens at the base of good cone-bearing trees. A squirrel climbs the tree and climbs out to a branch to perch. There, it holds a cone with its front feet and rapidly gnaws off the cone scales to get to the seeds inside. The scales pile up on the ground below, forming a midden), the squirrel also leaves in its wake clumps of tree branch tips where green cones once were attached • Conservancy Board

Secretary **Walt Borneman** spotted a snowshoe hare on the west Ute Trail heading down to Poudre Lake, and then saw an additional three snowshoe hares on the way to Sky Pond on another hike that week • Raspberries were notably abundant in the park this year, perhaps due to the early summer rains. Conservancy member **Sage Johnson** was excited to find some at Lily Lake at a Conservancy volunteer event in early October • In early October, Conservancy staff member **Carolyn Carlson** and her husband **Kent** went to Endovalley to take photos and came upon a partially chewed moose paddle. They returned a week later in the hopes of getting some video and pictures of a moose, and had just shut down their camera from a damp spot mid-stream, when not two minutes later a bull moose walked through that exact spot • Two mountain goats were spotted at Lake Haiyaha in mid-August • A flock of pelicans was observed flying over the park toward Lake Estes in late October • RMNP Sign Shop seasonal **Matt Haliday** was up doing some work on Thunder Pass in the Never Summer Mountains in early October and is pretty sure he saw a long-tailed weasel darting in the rocks • On an early October hike to the summit of Hallet Peak, RMNP Administrative Officer **Jason Watkins** spotted a family of ptarmigan just off the trail. The chicks were nearly full grown and the whole group was still in their summer plumage •



*Conservancy Member **Marlene Borneman** was hiking down from Ptarmigan Tarns when she came upon a large flock of turkey hiking down the trail ahead. What looked like four hens and their brood seemed unphased by the humans trekking behind them. This continued for about a mile before the turkeys dispersed into the woods.*

Estes resident **Dean Martinson** reported multiple sightings of a group of healthy coyotes in an open meadow in Estes Park in late fall— most likely also responsible for many evening coyote songs and chatter among the pack members • **It's time to make your year-end gift — might we suggest the Conservancy as a partner of Rocky Mountain National Park as a great option? Happy Holidays to All!**



*These feisty little lagomorphs (relatives of rabbits) are preparing for a long, cold and windy winter ahead — they don't hibernate, but tunnel under the snow and rocks to stay protected from both weather and predators.*



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