



Shawn Whitney



QUARTERLY

Spring | 2025



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Rocky's Hothouse of Horticulture: Greenhouse and Nursery Team Keep it Natural

By Anne Morris | Communications Associate

Visitors are routinely awed by Rocky's mountain scenery and amazing wildlife. Underfoot and all around, however, is the park's unsung wonder: the flora—the trees, grasses, wildflowers, and other plants that color the landscape and provide vital food and habitat.

Stewarding this resource is a team of restoration ecologists, seasonal vegetation crews, greenhouse staff, and passionate park volunteers. One of their most important assets is a facility that very few of the park's annual four million visitors ever see: Rocky Mountain National Park's greenhouse and plant nursery.

The National Park Service mission includes preserving "natural and cultural resources unimpaired for future generations." Restoration mitigates soil disturbances resulting from construction projects or off-trail visitors. By law, any disturbance caused by development one acre or more in size

Plants grow and acclimate in the nursery.



Greenhouse Aide Trish Stockton and Greenhouse Manager Michelle Gibbons

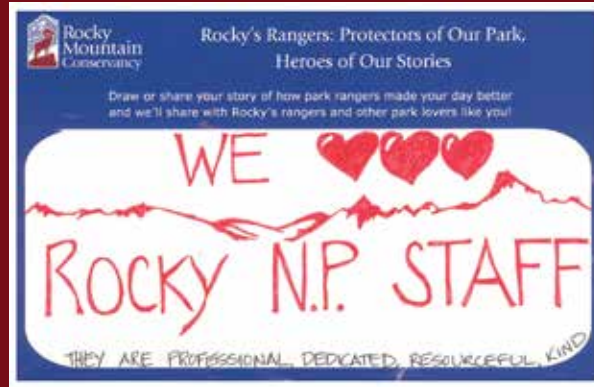
must be stabilized—usually by seeding and planting.

"We work to restore the native plant communities that were present before the disturbances," said Ann Mills, one of Rocky's restoration specialists.

There are two major components to restoring native vegetation and wildlife habitat. The first is monitoring and eliminating invasive species that compete with and can overcome natives. The second is keeping native plant communities healthy. This often means replanting native species in disturbance areas—and that's where the greenhouse and nursery come in.

"The greenhouse supports everything," Mills added. "We couldn't afford to buy all the plants we need from a commercial nursery and we also are careful to not introduce plants that weren't intended to be here."

Continued on page 15



Write a ranger using the QR code below. See more details on page 14.



A Message from our Executive Director



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Dear Friends,

This year started off with disruption and uncertainty for those who steward parks and other public lands. I'm asked all the time, with an edge of urgency, what the Conservancy is doing to support Rocky.

My answer is simple. The Conservancy is doing what it has done since 1931 and will continue to do: focusing on our core mission to steward the park through education and conservation. In concentrating on the lands before us, we fulfill our donor's intent and do what we do best.

In late 2024, our Board of Directors committed the highest amount of funding to Rocky for 2025 in our organization's history, over 90 years as the park's primary nonprofit partner, to maintain support for important, ongoing projects and priorities as well as continue to strive for excellence in new initiatives. We fund educational adventures for Rocky such as the Junior Ranger program (staffing, books, and badges!) and virtual and onsite field trips for thousands of school children annually. We support trails, historic preservation, and wildfire restoration through our Conservation Corps. We acquire lands to protect sensitive habitat and cultural sites, physically growing the park in sustainable ways.

I'm also asked, "What can I do?" The answer is different for everyone. What action will you take to protect and support this special place?

With Rocky in mind, you can continue to support the Conservancy and the Rocky Mountain National Park Fund/Best Use Fund. You can maintain your membership, make contributions, plan estate gifts for the future, participate in our Field Institute programs, shop in our Nature Stores, and order a Rocky Mountain National Park Colorado specialty license plate. If you want to show some love for Rocky's rangers and park staff, we've created some fun postcards for sharing your story (details on page 14).

All of us can share our stories of how public lands inspire us and enrich our lives. Maybe you remember a quintessential family vacation out west to visit national parks, a ranger-led campfire program under the stars, an unforgettable hike, or the joy of watching wildlife in nature. Find someone in your community to share these experiences with, so that collectively we are reminded how much we have in common as we experience the wonders that are our parks.

Warmly,



Estee Rivera Murdock

Estee Rivera Murdock
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ask the Conservancy



Have a question? Email Communications@RMConservancy.org or write: Ask the Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, PO Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517.

Shop Conservancy Nature Stores



Birdcast website provides real-time updates on bird migrations.

I'm hearing more and more about "dark sky" initiatives. Are there any birds or other animals that we know are affected by light pollution in the park?

Many animals in the park change behavior due to light pollution. This includes migratory birds

that cross this region, including Rocky Mountain National Park, as they travel between their breeding and wintering grounds.

According to the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, billions of birds migrate across North America every spring and fall. Eighty percent of these birds migrate primarily at night, using the night sky to navigate. **Light pollution from buildings, streetlamps, and homes can disorient these birds, leading to collisions with structures or disruptions in their migration paths.** Artificial light can also alter the timing of bird migration.

In Rocky, passerine birds (also known as perching birds) and waterfowl migrate at night and are particularly sensitive to artificial light. The **National Audubon Society maps light pollution and estimates that 105 species of birds in the region of Rocky Mountain National Park are affected, from the American avocet to the yellow-rumped warbler.**

Many bat species will have a nightly commuting route from their roost to their feeding grounds. These commuting bats include the five species bat in the *Myotis* genus that are found at Rocky. These bats can be forced to travel longer distances and expend more energy to avoid artificial light sources.

The behavior of mountain lions and mule deer may also be influenced by artificial light. The presence of artificial light affects the predator-prey relationship, with mountain lions avoiding well-lit areas, and mule deer seeking out light for protection.

With the support of Rocky Mountain Conservancy, the park has inventoried exterior lighting fixtures and will replace or retrofit fixtures to comply with dark sky principles. This can range from installing fixtures that direct light downwards to ensuring lights can be turned on and off or operated on timers. Area residents and visitors can also help reduce light pollution, keeping indoor light inside by using curtains and minimizing exterior lighting when not needed.

Chris Clatterbuck, Natural Resource Program Manager, Rocky Mountain National Park

The BirdCast website by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Colorado State University (CSU) uses weather surveillance radar to track migrating birds and produce multi-day migration forecasts.



HALLETT PEAK T-SHIRT

The back of this sage-colored t-shirt features a stylized view of Hallett Peak as seen from Dream Lake in a beautiful Rocky Mountain landscape scene.

Price: \$28.99

Member Price: \$24.64



MUG - DENEEN RMNP PIKA

This unique Deneen pottery mug features a proud pika design encircled with "Rocky Mountain National Park" script. Dishwasher and microwave safe; handmade in the USA. Price: \$24.99

Member Price: \$21.24



BEAR MOUNTAIN SOCKS

Enjoy your next adventure in these tan socks with bear and mountain graphics. Also features a blue cuff, heel, toe, and blue Rocky Mountain National Park text at the top. Price: \$14.99

Member Price: \$12.74



LULU AND ROCKY CHILDREN'S BOOK

Lulu and her cousin Rocky visit Rocky Mountain National Park! There are so many fun things to see and do, like hiking, camping, stargazing, and becoming Junior Rangers as they learn about treasures in the park. Price: \$16.99

Member Price: \$14.44



ROCKY RINGS SWEATSHIRT

This Neptune blue hooded sweatshirt highlights a colorful mountain sunset scene with shades of blue, yellow, and orange, and the words "Rocky Mountain National Park" in white, around the design. Price: \$49.99

Member Price: \$42.49

Find more great merchandise at www.RMConservancy.org/shop
970-586-0121

With its protected status, Rocky has been an important research site for studying and monitoring amphibian populations.

Two species of Rocky's amphibians: a chorus frog (left) and a wood frog (right).



By
RMC Staff

In Appreciation of Rocky's Amphibians

They may not be as majestic as an elk or as photogenic as a pika, but Rocky Mountain National Park is home to four amazing species of amphibians with unique characteristics: the boreal toad, the chorus frog, the wood frog, and the tiger salamander. With its protected status, Rocky has also been an important area for research to study and monitor amphibian populations.

The Oxford Dictionary defines an amphibian as a cold-blooded vertebrate animal with an aquatic gill-breathing stage typically followed by a terrestrial lung-breathing adult stage—they spend parts of their life cycle in water and on land.

The boreal toad (*Anaxyrus boreas boreas*) might be the most

Tiger salamanders are commonly found at Lily Lake near Estes Park.



familiar amphibian in Rocky because as early as the 1970s, scientists recognized a precipitous decline in population due to the deadly chytrid fungus. Resource managers and scientists from Rocky, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have collaborated in a multi-year effort to study and reintroduce breeding populations in the park. Reintroduction sites are carefully selected wetland areas that have specific habitat characteristics suitable for all life stages and are tested to ensure they are free of the deadly fungus.

As part of this effort, some toads have been fitted with passive integrated transponders so they could be identified over time (similar to pet owners having their pets "chipped"). Some toads were fitted with radios so they could be tracked. Captive-bred "sentinel toads" were released to

provide information on the suitability of specific sites for reintroduction.

In 2024, park staff and volunteers released 14,913 tadpoles at three different reintroduction sites.

Each year, portions of egg masses are collected from wild breeding populations, transported to a CPW research hatchery, and reared to tadpoles where their survival greatly increases in a protected hatchery environment. Just before metamorphosis into their terrestrial forms, the tadpoles are transported and released with hopes to initiate new breeding populations.

The Conservancy has provided financial support for this project since 2019 and has approved \$45,000 in 2025. These funds support disease sampling and tadpole release efforts at historic breeding ponds and reintroduction sites.

Much smaller than the toad, and a lot louder (boreal toads don't call), is the chorus frog. As its name implies, the chorus frog (*Pseudacris maculata*) has a distinctive call used in attracting mates. Some describe the sound like taking a fingernail and "strumming" the tines of a comb. One frog is loud; many together can be perceived as almost deafening. Despite their impressive vocalizations, at just an inch or less in length, the frogs are secretive and hard to find. The chorus

frogs in Rocky tend to be green or tan, but color can vary by location and population.

Wood frogs (*Rana sylvatica*) are bigger than chorus frogs (up to about 3.3 inches), and they add to the soundscape with a chuckle-like call. They occur only on the park's west side at elevations of 7,900-9,800 feet. These frogs are known as "glacial relicts" because they are believed to have survived in pockets of refugia as glaciers developed, covering most other parts of their large range.

A National Park Service online article referred to these frogs as a "biological miracle" due to their unique winter adaption for hibernation. Unlike most frog species whose body temperatures may drop to, but not go below, freezing, **wood frogs' superpower is the ability to literally freeze solid for up to eight months.** Boreal toads and chorus frogs also hibernate, but not to the extreme of physically freezing.

The NPS describes the incredible process: "At the beginning of winter, ice quickly fills the wood frog's abdominal cavity and encases the internal organs...At the same time, the wood frog's liver produces large amounts of glucose that flushes into every cell in its body. This syrupy sugar prevents the cells from freezing and binds water molecules inside the cells to prevent dehydration. So on the one hand, the wood frog's body allows ice to form around the outsides of cells and organs; and on the other hand, it prevents ice from forming inside the cells, thus avoiding lethal damage."

In spring, the wood frog thaws from the inside out, starting with the heart, brain, and finally the legs that start to move. With a short season for reproduction, the frogs immediately migrate to a breeding pool.

Another interesting amphibian superpower scientists have recently found is that many biofluoresce. In 2021, researchers Erin Muths, Benjamin LaFrance, Andrew Ray, and Amanda Kissel were interested in whether Rocky's tiger salamanders (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) also shared this ability to "absorb visible and ultraviolet light and re-emit it at a lower energy level."

Their challenge was to capture highly mobile salamanders underwater at twilight. Photographing the salamanders under white light and under blue light did reveal biofluorescence. Scientists continue to investigate this phenomenon, with some hypothesizing that biofluorescence may enable the nocturnal salamanders to detect each other more easily.

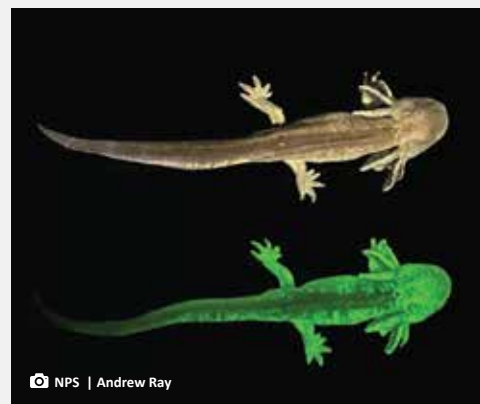
Rocky was previously home to the northern leopard frog which can live at elevations as high as 11,000 feet. The species has been extirpated in the park and its populations have been declining throughout Colorado—a reminder of the need to monitor and support micro-fauna.

If Rocky's amphibians are a special breed, so, too, are the biologists and resource managers that study and work to conserve these populations. Like their amphibian subjects, researchers often need to be "nocturnal," working in the chilly overnight hours in ponds and wetlands tracking creatures that can be hard to find, track, and capture. For one USGS biologist studying Rocky's amphibians, that meant searching for toads one night a week at each study site in the park from June through October!

At the direction of Congress, the USGS established the Amphibian Research and Monitoring Initiative (ARMI) in 2000 to study the status of amphibians on federal lands.

ARMI, along with multiple federal partners, including NPS, recognizes May 4-10, 2025 as "Amphibian Week" to celebrate these creatures whose attributes are not just fascinating, but have medical relevance for humans in areas such as treatment of diabetes and pain relief.

More information is available on CPW, NPS, USGS, and Rocky's websites.



Under the wavelength of blue light, this tiger salamander displays its ability to biofluoresce.



Boreal toad surveying his wetland habitat.



Conservation Biology Program Manager Jonathan Lewis with a boreal toad.

Wildlife and aquatic species are dependent on the water quality and health of the Colorado River as are the ecosystems and human communities down river.



By Paige Lambert,
Continental Divide
Research Learning
Center

Going With the Flow: New Location and Upgrades for Important Colorado River Stream Gauge

Editor's Note: This story updates an earlier Quarterly news note about plans to replace and improve a vital, but outdated, stream monitoring station.

This summer, with the financial support from a generous couple, research partners at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) upgraded an important stream gauge site on the Colorado River on Rocky's west side. The site, known as "Colorado River Below Baker Gulch," is part of a nation-wide USGS stream gauge network that monitors water levels, streamflow, and water quality in river systems.

Data collected from this site informs management of the downstream Three Lakes System that provides water to approximately one million users east of the Continental Divide.

Because of its location below the Kawuneeche Valley restoration initiative, this stream gauge site helps monitor changes in water quality potentially associated with restoration efforts.

Established in 1986, the Colorado River Below Baker Gulch stream gauge site has historically measured water surface elevation used to calculate real-time streamflow. More recently, precipitation and real-time water quality instrumentation were added to the site. The water quality instrumentation measures water temperature, specific conductance,

dissolved oxygen, turbidity, and pH. These data are remotely transmitted from the site in 15-minute increments and create a long-term dataset that is available for researchers, managers, and the public.

Through time, however, changes to the landscape and landscape management warranted a closer look at the site's functionality and durability. Shifting stream channel morphology was causing bank instability near the stream gauge site, while downstream beaver activity posed potential challenges for accurate streamflow data due to ponding. In 2009, 95 percent of Rocky was designated as Federal Wilderness, which elevated the potential visual effects of the equipment at this site.

USGS staff performed upgrades to address these concerns in August 2024. Structural improvements include downsizing support structures from metal A-frames to posts and replacing the permanent cross-stream cable car used for conventional method measurements and sampling with a seasonal pulley system deployed only during high-water season. These changes improve site stability and minimize visual effect in Designated Wilderness.

Scan this QR for
USGS water data for
this Kawuneeche site



Equipment upgrades include new sensor housing, solar panels, antenna, and the relocation of existing data collection instrumentation.

Conservancy funding also allowed for the installation of an Acoustic Doppler Velocimeter, a sub-surface sensor that provides real-time velocity data used in the calculation of streamflow.

“This new equipment provides additional data that could improve streamflow accuracy during changing conditions like ice formation or beaver

activity, while helping prevent gaps in our measurements,” said Tanner Chapin of the USGS. “These enhancements allow us to provide more reliable water data to the people who depend on this river system, while preserving the valuable long-term record from this location in Rocky Mountain National Park.”

Thank you, Rocky Mountain Conservancy members and donors, for your continued support of science and research in Rocky Mountain National Park!

*The Below Baker Gulch stream gauge site **prior** to upgrades.*



*The Below Baker Gulch stream gauge site **after** Conservancy-funded upgrades.*



WATER REFERENCE TERMS

SPECIFIC CONDUCTANCE

A measure of the ability of the water to conduct an electrical current. The value gives researchers information on the amount of dissolved material in the water which can affect the suitability of water for domestic, industrial, and agricultural uses.

TURBIDITY

Measures water clarity, or the extent to which light is scattered by particles in the water, making it appear cloudy or opaque. Turbidity affects the amount of light that penetrates the water which can affect aquatic plant and animal life.

DISSOLVED OXYGEN

A measure of how much oxygen is dissolved in the water and available to living aquatic organisms.

pH

A measure of the water's acidity which, when tracked over time, can indicate chemical changes reflecting increased pollution or other environmental factors. The pH of water determines the solubility and biological availability of chemical substances (which can include nutrients or heavy metals). The pH level can affect organisms living in the water.



Increasing Accessibility for School Field Trips to Rocky

Rocky's Environmental Education team has a new winter accessibility tool to enable students who use wheelchairs to enjoy field trips in the park along with their classmates.

Stellar Elementary, located in Thornton, is one of several schools who participate in Conservancy-funded snowshoe field trips to Rocky each year. When Cathy Zensen, third grade teacher, and Naomi Williams, special education teacher, began planning for Stellar Elementary's field trip to Rocky Mountain National Park, they wanted to make sure all their students could attend the trip. Zensen and Williams reached out to Danielle York, Rocky's education specialist, to inquire about options for one of their students who uses a wheelchair, and an exciting partnership began.

York set to work gathering input from school staff and paraprofessionals to identify what equipment might make a difference. Her research led the education team to order a wheelchair sledge from European manufacturer Lugicap at a cost of about \$3,000, and the Conservancy stepped in to pick up the tab.

"We didn't want any children to miss out on experiencing the beauty and wonder of Rocky in winter," Baze said. "The sledge helps enable students of all physical abilities to



Education team members trained using the sledge and took turns guiding, controlling the braking, and riding the sledge.

participate in the park's curriculum-based learning programs such as winter wildlife, snow science, and winter safety."

The sledge is a platform and skis with an adjustable brake to maintain control over varied terrain, and can be pushed and pulled across the snow. It accommodates most manual wheelchairs and enables users to remain in their own mobility devices without the added risk of physical transfers. The sledge is light weight and can be broken down for storage and easy transport. Rocky's education team trained on and practiced with the sledge at Hidden Valley.

On a sunny day in late March, and with a great deal of excitement for everyone involved, Youla, a third-grade student from Stellar



Elementary School in Thornton, joined her classmates on a winter explorers program at Bear Lake. To ensure the field trip was safe and successful, Youla was accompanied by her paraprofessionals and a physical therapist. Education Ranger Kent Mauney served as the lead for Rocky's team and Youla's teachers praised Mauney for "how kind and intentional he was interacting with her."

"The teachers and administration at Stellar Elementary could not have been more supportive in making this special day possible for Youla and her family—and for us," said Baze. "We learned much from this first experience and look forward to more students like Youla experiencing a winter field trip in the park."

[Editor's note: Youla's family gave permission for her school and the park to take photos and report on her field trip experience.]

As classmates donned their snowshoes at Bear Lake, Youla's chair is secured to the sledge. A short time later, Youla is off to the woods to explore.





Launching a Career in Conservation and Environmental Education



Courtesy Photo

Prasser (left) and her supervisor at Rocky.

One of the Conservancy's focus areas is inspiring the next generation of public land stewards. Rosa Prasser had just graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with a major in Nature Interpretation/Environmental Education when the Conservancy hired her in 2011 as an intern to work at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center. We caught up with Rosa at a recent Public Lands Alliance conference and asked her how her career has progressed.

Where are you from?

I'm from Lola, a small town in central Wisconsin.

How did you learn about the Conservancy internship opportunity?

I discovered the internship through my college's job board and decided to apply.

What were some of the highlights?

The kindness and mentorship of the staff and volunteers made a lasting impact on me. They took the time to teach me about the environment, share valuable skills, and guide me in working with the public as a park

ranger. The wildlife and scenery were breathtaking, and I fell in love with the Rocky Mountains. I also had many first-time experiences, like hiking and camping solo, learning to navigate the backcountry, and deepening my passion for the outdoors.

What is your current job? Any other notable roles along the way?

I am currently the Education Specialist at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area with the Southern Nevada Conservancy.



Courtesy Photo

Enjoying the sights at some of Yellowstone National Park's geothermal pools.

After Rocky, I worked as an interpretive ranger and education technician in Yellowstone National Park for several seasons. I then served as a stewardship manager for Friends of Black Rock-High Rock and as a park interpreter for Nevada State Parks at Valley of Fire. I also spent a season as an interpretive ranger in North Cascades National Park near the Canadian border. Before my current role, I worked in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area as an interpretive naturalist, program manager, and site operations manager with the Southern Nevada Conservancy.

How did your internship influence your career path?

The experience gave me a deeper understanding of the federal public lands system and how government

agencies operate. It helped shape my career by reinforcing my passion for conservation and environmental education.

Where do you hope your career in conservation will take you?

I can't imagine doing anything outside of conservation. My biggest passion is connecting people to their public lands so future generations can enjoy them as we do today. Living in a rapidly growing city like Las Vegas, I've seen firsthand that many local kids have never explored beyond the city limits. I'm honored to support underserved communities and create opportunities for everyone to experience and connect with nature, regardless of their background.

What advice would you give young people considering a career in conservation?

Stick with it. A career in conservation can feel daunting at times, but educators play a crucial role in shaping the next generation. Even if your programs don't directly inspire kids to work in the outdoors, you may influence them to become engineers, policymakers, or advocates who contribute to a more sustainable future for all.



Courtesy Photo

Prasser helps some young visitors appreciate the life cycles and recurring patterns found in nature at Red Rock Canyon.



Conservancy Welcomes Diane Goddard and Darla Sidles to Board of Directors

Diane Goddard and Darla Sidles were elected the newest members of Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Board of Directors at the annual meeting in Estes Park.

"We're delighted to add Diane and Darla to the Conservancy leadership team as we look ahead to the financial and operational challenges facing Rocky Mountain National Park and our other public lands," said Walt Borneman, board president. "Each brings lifelong experience and passion in leading beloved public organizations and serving their constituencies."

Goddard joined the board as a member and treasurer. Her extensive experience in strategic planning and financial management comes from more than 36 years in leadership positions at the University of Kansas including comptroller, vice provost for Administration and Finance, and chief financial officer. Some highlights from her past work include successful initiatives to generate revenue and cost savings of \$51 million and overseeing a \$350 million project to construct new infrastructure including science facilities, dormitories, a student union, and a central power plant.

Originally from the state of New York, Goddard graduated from Southern Connecticut State University with a bachelor's degree in economics and earned a master's degree in business administration from the University of Kansas. She retired from the university in 2020 but advises campus leaders on budget reviews and optimization practices with



Diane Goddard

the National Association of College and University Business Officers.

Diane, husband Stephen, and their three children vacationed in Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park every summer for 35 years. Because of their love of Rocky and the many outdoor activities in the park and connection to the Estes Valley, they purchased a home in Estes Park in 2016 where they now live full time and regularly enjoy hosting their lifelong friends.

"We enjoy watching our four grandchildren discover all the magic of Rocky Mountain National Park and develop their own deep love of nature as well as the understanding of the need to protect and conserve this amazing natural resource," said Goddard.

Former Superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park Darla Sidles' introduction to the park came as a 9-year-old traveling with her family to their first National Park Service (NPS) experience. After more than three decades of a rewarding career with the NPS, she came full circle back to Rocky and completed her federal service in Colorado in 2023.

Sidles began her federal career as a Student Conservation Association (SCA) volunteer in the North Cascade mountains in Washington State. She



Darla Sidles

worked summers as a U.S. Forest Service wilderness ranger while obtaining her business degree at the University of Texas at Arlington and then completed graduate school at Western Washington University.

Sidles' 37-year career spanned numerous national parks and sites across the country including Arches and Zion in Utah; Big Bend in Texas; Denali in Alaska; NPS headquarters in Washington, D.C.; Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia; Golden Gate National Recreation Area in California; Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument and Saguaro National Park in Arizona; and, finally, the last seven years at Rocky where her leadership was critical in navigating challenges including the pandemic and historic wildfires.

Sidles and her husband reside primarily in Arizona but regularly return to the Rockies where she says, "the park and its communities remain firmly in my heart."

Joining Borneman as returning board president and Goddard as the new treasurer, are Christina Kraft serving as vice president and Rich Fedorchak returning as secretary. In addition to Sidles, other board members are Brian Ross, Greg Danielson, Timothy Davis, Liza Grant, Laurie Mathews, Claudine Perrault, Jim Pickering, Kim Skyelander, and Zachary Wiebe.



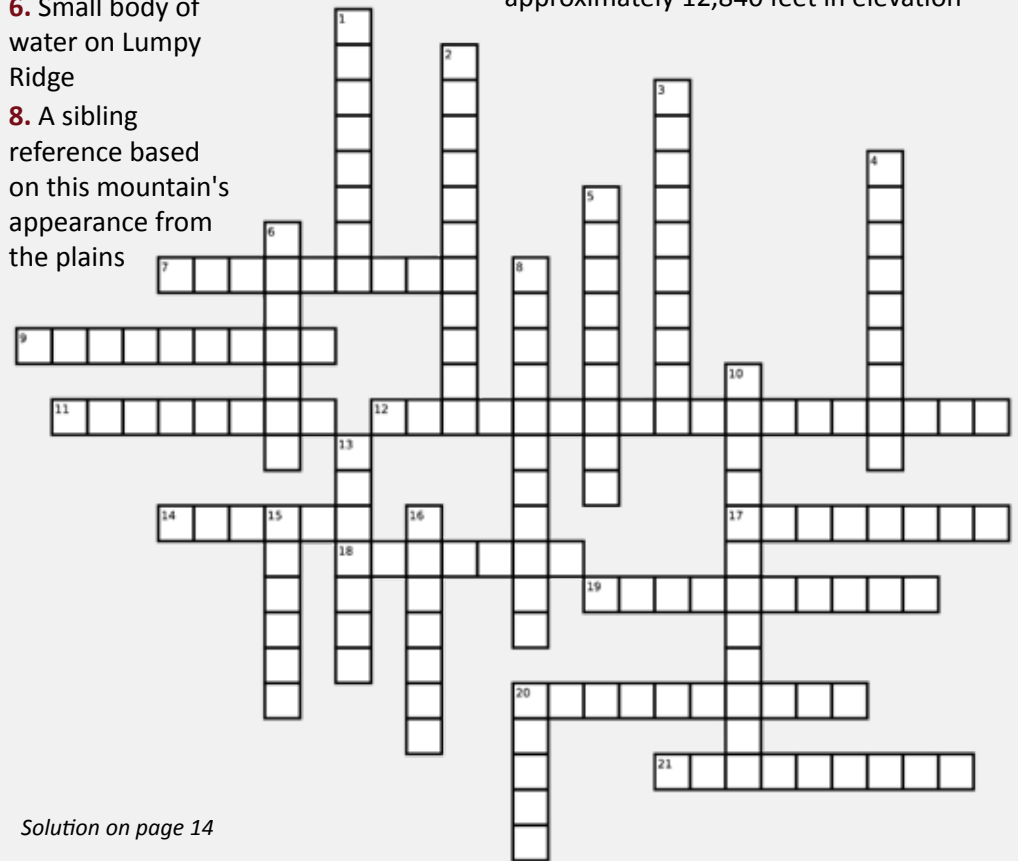
Rocky Mountain Conservancy Park Puzzler "Beloved Trails and Landmarks Edition"

Across

- 7.** Nearly a 7-mile hike will bring you to this, the largest water body in the East Inlet drainage
- 9.** Small "Park" named for a rancher who brought cattle from Loveland to graze in the high country
- 11.** Famous as the source of floodwaters in July 1982
- 12.** This rock structure located beneath the Key Hole is named for an ill-fated climber
- 14.** The profile of this peak may remind some of Japanese architecture
- 17.** This peak towers above Black Lake on the east and Lake Powell on the southwest
- 18.** Prominent lake in the Wild Basin area named for a weather feature
- 19.** The Arapaho name of this west side stream means "warms himself" and refers to a horse known for sneaking up to campfires
- 20.** A chain of mountains from Chapin to Dickinson which had been called "White Owls" by Indigenous Peoples
- 21.** Wild Basin lake once dammed and used as a reservoir for Longmont

Down

- 1.** A destination in Wild Basin named after a type of fruit
- 2.** Site of a major rockslide in 2022
- 3.** A popular waterfall along the Cow Creek Trail
- 4.** Mountain named in honor of a three-term governor of the state of Wisconsin
- 5.** The trail to this feature begins at Bear Lake Road and can take you to Moore Park
- 6.** Small body of water on Lumpy Ridge
- 8.** A sibling reference based on this mountain's appearance from the plains
- 10.** The trailhead for this popular hike is located at an intersection of US highways 34 & 36
- 13.** Adjacent to Hallett peak, this mountain is reached from the Bear Lake Trailhead
- 15.** Lake named for the daughter of the builder of Fern Lake Lodge
- 16.** Popular hiking loop destination usually accessed from trailheads in Moraine Park
- 20.** Peak just west of Milner Pass that is approximately 12,840 feet in elevation



Solution on page 14

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Thank you to the following donors who gave gifts in memory of or in honor of others. A complete list of donors will be available in the Conservancy's annual report.



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In memory of Jean Fischer

Ann O'Leary: In memory of George and Margaret Guthrie

Stacy Oshinski:
In memory of Julie Gwynn



Each year a limited number of memorial benches, like this one at Bear Lake, are available to honor loved ones.

Jim and Debbie Paddock: In memory of James W. and Ruth Ann Paddock

Sharon E. Rice:
In memory of Roy C. Rice

Darleen Robertson:
In memory of Mickey McBee

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In memory of Judy Steele

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In memory of Bob Lovgren

Lynn and Michael Stover:
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In memory of Robert Greeley

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Ashley Tetreault:
In memory of Judd and Peggy Baker

Richard Tusa:
In memory of Joanne Tusa

Carol Wagner:
In memory of Dr. G. Hulse Wagner

Melanie Whittington and Thomas Rogers: In memory of Donald Taylor

Cynthia Wittek:
In memory of Sarah K. Kelly

Roger and Deborah Wolfe:
In memory of John Wolfe, Gary Wolfe, and Jim Disney

Deborah Wurdack:
In memory of Paul Wurdack

Debbie Youngblood:
In memory of Cecil D. Lewis

Mike and Debbie Zeleznik:
In memory of Charlie Zeleznik

John M. Zenner:
In memory of William "Bill" O'Halloran

IN MEMORY OF MILT HASSEL

Bonnie Akan and Dick Rifleman

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Diane and Larry Plamann

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Cyndi Dave Holden

Mark MacDougall

Robin Remy

IN MEMORY OF FREDERIC NIEMAN JOSEPH

Thomas Bagby

Jack Joseph

Linda J. Klaassen

Lesli Laanui

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Randy and Jocelyn Shields

In Case You
Missed It



Conservancy Round-Up

National Trails Day Volunteer Event at Rocky

Rocky Mountain National Park will celebrate National Trails Day June 7, 2025 with a volunteer clean-up event at Hidden Valley. No registration is required and volunteers of all ages are welcome, although youth volunteers must complete additional paperwork with a parent or guardian.

Hidden Valley sees heavy traffic throughout the year from sledders, skiers, hikers, and families visiting the Junior Ranger headquarters. With wind and snow, trash accumulates over the winter. With the snow melting, the park welcomes help in getting the area cleaned up for summer visitors.

Volunteers can drop in anytime from 8 to 11 a.m. at the Hidden Valley parking lot and should come dressed ready for hiking (some work areas will include woods and some locations may be muddy). Please note that timed entry for the park starts at 9 a.m. Fee waivers and timed entry permit waivers are not provided for this event.

For more information, contact the park volunteer office by email at romo_volunteers_in_parks@nps.gov or by phone at 970-586-1330.



Education Coordinator Katie Colson, Finance Associate Connor Brewer, and Human Resources Coordinator Lisa Long model headwear for Conservancy interns and fellows.

New “Uniforms” for Conservancy-Funded Fellows and Park Interns

Conservancy-funded fellows and interns have a new look this year with a selection of branded headwear, shirts, and outerwear to identify their association with the park and the Conservancy. In the past, many interns and fellows were outfitted with the same tan and dark brown uniform items provided for Rocky’s Volunteers-in-Parks. Look for the new clothing on this year’s cohort of fellows and interns!

Registration Continues for Summer Field Institute

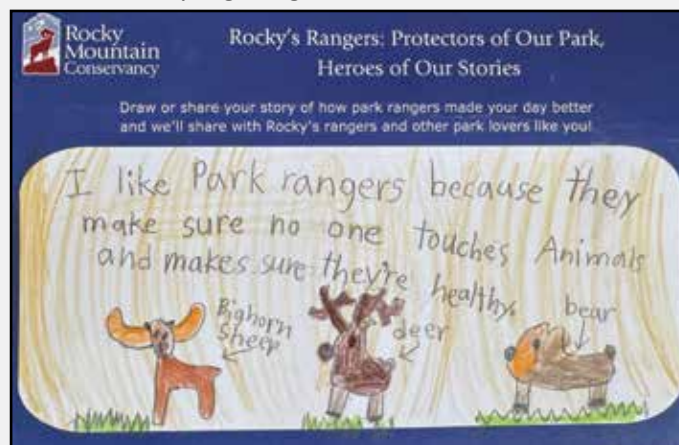
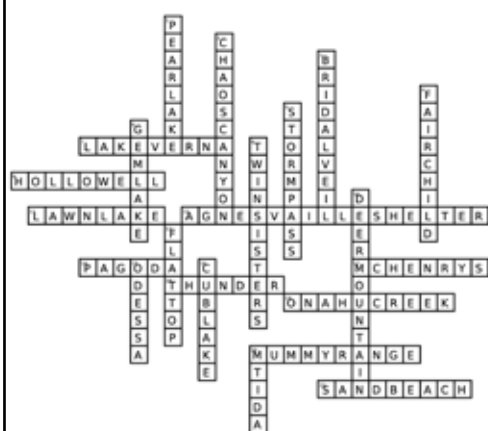
Check out listings for summer Field Institute courses, scenic ecology bus tours, and other educational opportunities on the Conservancy’s website under “Learn With Us” or by scanning this QR code.



Show Your Appreciation for Rocky’s Rangers

The Conservancy has printed postcards that people can use to share their stories of how Rocky’s rangers and staff made their day or park visit better. The messages will be shared with park staff and other park supporters. Postcards have been distributed to Conservancy mailing lists and are available at park visitor centers. You can also share your story digitally at rmconservancy.org/ranger.

Park Puzzler Solution



Kate Murphy of Berthoud, Colorado, shared this postcard.

Got a
Ranger story
to share?
Scan this
QR to share
your story.



Greenhouse Story

This includes maintaining the genetic integrity of native plants. Spruce trees are widely available commercially but those in the park have evolved to adapt to Rocky's specific elevation, climate, and growing season. All plants grown in the greenhouse and nursery originated with seeds or plant material collected within the park.

Rocky is just one of 14 national parks known to have a greenhouse. **The greenhouse was constructed in 1995 with a gift from Ed and Janet Hagen.**

Over the years, Conservancy and donor-supported upgrades have included replacing the irrigation system, outer panels, and dehumidifier; adding a thermal curtain; and purchasing a refrigerated seed storage unit. A Conservancy endowment funds a greenhouse intern annually.

The greenhouse has the capacity of propagating 20,000 to 36,000 plants, and the surrounding nursery can house up to 60,000 plants. Fencing is set 18" into the ground to keep out hungry animals that could quickly decimate the growing plants.

The heart of the operation is a dedicated group of volunteers who lend their green thumbs to support Rocky's plant life. Most have volunteered 10 years or more and have mastered transplanting, and seed collection and cleaning. A small group of permanent and seasonal staff manage volunteer coordination, greenhouse and nursery maintenance (irrigation, pest control, weeding, soil mixing, facility upkeep), park-wide seed mapping and collection, and seed cleaning and cataloging. Summer seasonal park staff and Conservancy Conservation Corps crews are also

Thousands of various plants can grow in the climate-controlled greenhouse.



Long time volunteers Cindy Sisson, Deb Green, and Vicki Papineau support Greenhouse Aide Trish Stockton and Greenhouse Manager Michelle Gibbons, and are essential team members.

essential, accomplishing most of the arduous field work.

The park's greenhouse team keeps meticulous records. Detailed plans specify plants needed for every project and the timing for their propagation. Every germination trial is tracked to improve seedling survival. Staff and volunteers follow precise protocols from an array of binders and databases to sort, weigh, seal, log, and store plant material. Restoration sites are closely monitored.

"We know what mix and quantity of seed we use, and we know how many plants we can expect that to produce," said Michelle Gibbons, greenhouse manager. With Rocky's harsh environment and short growing season, little is left to chance.

Experimentation can improve outcomes, though some methods may be more scientific than others. Once a staff member collected a pile of bear scat to learn what plants the bear had consumed. Those seeds produced thousands of Oregon grape plants.

As any gardener understands, operations follow the calendar. Planning and seed germination begin in the winter. As spring approaches,

Seeds from throughout the park are used to maintain the native vegetation in the park.



volunteers transplant seedlings from flats to reusable cones. By early June, most plants have been moved outside to acclimate to the rapid weather and temperature changes in the park's high elevation environment. Restoration projects will run throughout the summer. Seed collection around the park usually starts in July and runs into September.

"Timing is everything. To collect seeds from trees, we need to wait for the pinecones to open but can't wait too long or seeds will have already been dispersed," said Gibbons.

Major projects have included restoration of a rerouted segment of Bear Lake Road (when part of the road was rerouted away from the Big Thompson River) and projects to restore tundra damaged by social trails. Current initiatives are restoring burn scars, revegetating construction sites such as the Fall River Entrance and west side housing area, bolstering the park's limber pines population, and extensive work reestablishing native willow as part of the restoration of the Kawuneeche Valley.

"It's very rewarding what we can make happen," said Trish Stockton, a former park seasonal staff member who worked 11 years in the greenhouse before signing on as the greenhouse aide. "The public doesn't know the extent we go to in preserving the park and keeping native species healthy." And she's right. When the restoration ecologists succeed at their job, everything just looks...natural.



Rocky Mountain Conservancy

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

Along with the return of mountain bluebirds, cactus blooms are a reliable sign that spring has arrived in the Rockies.

Visit RMConservancy.org
or call 970-586-0108



Nature Notes



- **Estes Park elementary school students** enjoying a winter snowshoe field trip in the Bear Lake area in February got a special treat when they encountered this red fox.
- The infamous high-country wind may have kept some people out of the park this winter, but **Walt and Marlene Borneman** experienced mostly calm as they broke trail cross-country skiing between Bierstadt Lake and Bear Lake. "First tracks are a good thing," said Walt.
- Conservancy member **Lisa Kaczmarczyk**, visiting from California, also was undeterred by winter conditions as she enjoyed a "sometimes grueling but thrilling hike through fresh snow along Mill Creek Basin Trail." With a backpack full of camera gear, Lisa stopped frequently to take photos, such as this shot in the Fern Lake fire burn scar, but relied on a wayfinding app in other trail sections where deep snow obscured the way.
- Park Volunteer Specialist **Jordan Downie** enjoys photographing wildlife and seems to have a gift for catching "elk with attitude."
- Skies over Rocky remained clear just long enough for intrepid visitors to experience a total lunar eclipse and blood moon in

the overnight hours of March 13-14th. Some visitors watched from Horseshoe Park. **Charlie Brumbaugh**, who regularly hikes during full moons, soloed into the backcountry for the experience, encountering three snowshoe hares along the way. Conditions were perfect, he says: no wind with the temperature just below freezing and hard packed trails. Waiting by frozen Mills Lake as the ice creaked and groaned, the scene went from moonlit and bright to eerie and very, very dark.

