

# Ptarmigan Tracks

Vol. XXXX, December 2015

*The Newsletter of Camp Denali & North Face Lodge*



This summer I learned a new parenting game: High-Low. Get your kids reflecting on the arc of their day, or a particular experience, by sharing their “highlights” and their “lowlights.” The game turns out to be a beneficial exercise, and not only for kids and parents: practice gratitude, celebrate success, and open the door to talk through anxieties and troubles. When applied to our summer at Camp Denali and North Face Lodge, the practice has been useful, as we might have otherwise been tempted to focus only on our hardship.

Among the summer’s “highlights” were June’s unseasonably hot days. Eight-year-olds Spencer and Danika lost count after their 45th dip in Nugget Pond. Heat and drought meant remarkably few mosquitoes, but also the state’s second largest recorded wildfire season at five million acres burned. Wild berry crops were, in the favorite refrain of our Camp kids, “epic!” Staff member, Theo, single-handedly picked over 40 gallons of blueberries, his efforts reflected in our two-year jam supply.

Just like life, however, the summer did not only dole out sweetness and warm, sunny days. Tragedy rocked our community on August 27th when staff member, KC Boehly, died in a backcountry drowning accident. The catastrophe occurred during the lowest low-pressure system of the summer with heavy rain, sleet, then a foot of snow and sub-freezing temperatures in the high country. Our grief and the unrelenting weather were one and the same. It was as if the storm itself had claimed our coworker and friend.

But just as the land is relentless and unfeeling, it is beautiful and restorative. Like Camp Denali founder, Woody, once said about wilderness, “[It has] marvelous power to bring healing to the human spirit.” So, too, did our spirits begin to lift with the first clear mountain day.

Essential to our collective healing was emotional support from each other, bolstered by an extraordinary outpouring of sympathy from Camp Denali friends and family near and far. When we questioned whether or not to carry on with our end-of-season festivities, everyone agreed that KC, an unfailing supporter of Camp’s traditions, would have expected nothing less. In the end, we will remember the summer of 2015 for profound tragedy but also for an unexpected window into the strength of our community.

Jenna Hamm





### *In Loving Memory...*

*Our summer season ended with deep sadness when staff member KC Boehly died in a backcountry drowning accident on August 27. KC was a cook at Camp Denali and North Face Lodge for five summers and studied business at the University of Washington in the off-season. A calm, confident presence in the kitchen, KC also delivered wicked wit with affection. One friend observed, "No one's eyes twinkled like KC's." She was a ringleader in our intimate community, finding any reason to celebrate and play hostess extraordinaire. It is hard to remember her with anything but her megawatt smile. KC was beloved by all, welcoming everyone into her company.*

### **Ptarmigan Tracks Newsletter**

Edited by Teresa Floberg  
Illustrations by William D. Berry

### **Denali National Park Wilderness Centers Ltd.**

P.O. Box 67  
Denali National Park, AK 99755  
(907) 683-2290  
info@campdenali.com  
www.campdenali.com

### **Photo Credits**

Cover page: View from Camp Denali (M. Cohen). Top left: KC Boehly (M. Stoutenburg), Center left: Running Caribou (D. Stogsdill) Right top to bottom: Trumpeter Swans (C. Louie), Willow Ptarmigan (P. Pinsky), Calf Moose (R. Devore), Grizzly Bear (S. Wylie), Denali from Wonder Lake (K. Willes)

## 2015 Recap

“Look at a day when you are supremely satisfied at the end. It’s not a day when you lounge around doing nothing; it’s when you’ve had everything to do, and you’ve done it.”

Margaret Thatcher may have unwittingly explained the fulfillment that our whole crew deserves to carry with them from the 2015 season. Opening projects got underway quickly, thanks to a drivable park road in early May. Pre-season projects included remodeling guest rooms and repainting the porches at North Face Lodge, as well as bringing a new well and water softener online.

Christine Byl and Gabe Travis of Interior Trails visited for a week in July to lead a workshop on trail maintenance. Many staff

jumped at the chance to learn from them while repairing trails on our property damaged by 2014’s heavy flooding.

These highlights were rounded out by the standard tasks of splitting firewood, painting cabins, and keeping the buses and vans spit-polished, restoring the staff cabin, Aurora, and more.

There is also cause to celebrate this year with several of our staff getting hitched! Hannah Wagenaar and Chris Noel got engaged on the last day of the summer, while taking a walk through the woods; Jan Tomsen eloped with her sweetheart in September along the banks of the Nenana River; and Marianne Cataldo and Sky Purdy tied the knot in October on the coast of Maine.



*Contra dancing has never had a backdrop quite like this...*

# 2016

# CAMP DENALI DANCE CAMP

*presented by the*

# GREAT BEAR TRIO

**(907) 683-2290 to make a RESERVATION**

**HIKE**  
*by day*

*June 2-6*

**DANCE**  
*by night*

# From the Special Sightings Notebook

- 5/4 *Wood Frogs already croaking at Nugget Pond the afternoon of our arrival to Camp Denali*
- 5/13 *A beaver in Reflection Pond! (it didn't stay for the summer, unfortunately)*
- 6/7 *Greater White-fronted Goose goslings on Ranger Pond*
- 6/11 *75 bird species recorded by Stan Senner during birding week*
- 6/20 *An estimated 500-700 caribou cows and calves observed in the Pirate Hills*
- 6/27 *Female Black Scoter with deformed bill around mile 75 kettle ponds, the same individual seen in 2014*
- 6/30 *American Dipper adults feeding their chick invertebrates and small fishes along Moose Creek*
- 7/2 *Newly hatched Common Loon chicks riding on parent's back in Wonder Lake*
- 7/7 *Grey Wolf near North Face Lodge*
- 8/11 *Sandhill Cranes overhead in Wonder Lake area, the first of the season*
- 8/15 *Several alpine azalea, bell heather, anemone, and primroses in second-bloom on Camp Ridge amidst riotous fall foliage of bunchberry and bearberry*



## What's in a Name?

Teresa Floberg

I have referred to Denali as “Mt. McKinley” only once while living in Alaska – during my job interview with Simon and Jenna Hamm. When they corrected me mid-thought, I was not sure why I had been interrupted. I had been in Alaska for only three days, and had not yet witnessed Alaskans’ preference for the mountain’s original name.

Many natural landmarks in this country have been named for figures of the time. So what made years of persistent dedication to change Mt. McKinley’s name to its original roots worthwhile, or even valid? Perhaps it is the compelling meaning of the name, “Denali.” Native Alaskans named it literally for what it is: “The High One,” or “The Great One.” And yes, there is also the reason that the naming of “Mt. McKinley” in 1896 was happenstance. President McKinley had no historical connection to the highest peak in North America; he never even visited his namesake mountain.

Denali is not like other natural landmarks. Its meaning has a deeply personal association for many who have gazed upon it. The Athabascan people revere Denali, for its size, splendor, and greatness (Kari, 1987). This mountain is something that should be honored, and the name Denali does just that. Its name represents what this mountain is: awesome.

By executive order from the Secretary of the Interior, North America’s highest mountain was finally “re-named” this summer. After over a century of Denali being referred to as something other than it is, the controversy is settled.





## Bird Migration and Conservation

**Scott Weidensaul**, *Author, Field Researcher and Bird Enthusiast*

June 6-9 and June 10-12 at Camp Denali

Scott Weidensaul is the author of more than two dozen critically acclaimed books on natural history. A native of the Pennsylvania Appalachians, Mr. Weidensaul's passion is birds, especially bird migration. Evening presentations will explore the wonders and dynamics of bird migration, and a light-hearted look at his field research – a lifetime spent, as he says, “messing around with birds for fun and science.”



## Denali Dinosaurs

**Pat Druckenmiller**, *Earth Science Curator, University of Alaska Museum*

June 13-16 at Camp Denali      June 17-19 at North Face Lodge

Dr. Patrick Druckenmiller is Associate Professor of Geology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In his role as museum curator, he oversees the largest collection of Alaskan fossils, ranging from Ice Age mammals to polar dinosaurs. Druckenmiller's programs will focus on dinosaurs and ancient landscapes in Alaska and Denali, as well as the Park's diverse geology.



## Wildflower Week

**David and Barbara Murray**, *Botanists*

June 20-23 at Camp Denali      June 24-26 at North Face Lodge

Dr. David Murray is Professor of Botany and Curator Emeritus at the University of Alaska and specializes in flowering plants. Dr. Barbara Murray is a research professor at the University's Museum of the North and specializes in mosses and lichens. Hikes will emphasize identification of flowering plants and common mosses and lichens.



## Wild Music

**Stephen Lias**, *Adventurer-Composer*

July 4-7 at Camp Denali      July 8-10 at North Face Lodge

An active international composer, Stephen's passion for wilderness and outdoor pursuits has led to a growing series of compositions about U.S. national parks. Stephen's multimedia-rich presentations will take you into the composer's internal processes: explaining how wildlife, scenery, culture, and personal experiences can serve as inspiration for musical compositions.

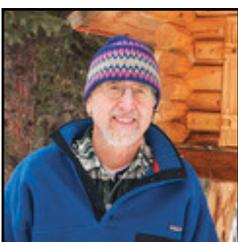


## Alaska, and Why the Arctic Matters

**Fran Ulmer**, *Chair of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission, Former Lieutenant Governor of Alaska*

July 18-21 at Camp Denali      July 22-24 at North Face Lodge

Fran Ulmer is chair of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission, appointed by President Obama in March 2011. Secretary John Kerry appointed her Advisor for Arctic Science and Policy in June 2014. Ms. Ulmer will present two evening programs, “Why the Arctic Matters” and “Everything You've Always Wanted to Know about Alaska, but Were Afraid to Ask.”



## Gold, Cold, and Sourdoughs

**Tom Walker**, *Writer, Photographer, Historian*

July 25-28 at Camp Denali      July 29-31 at North Face Lodge

Tom Walker has resided in Alaska for 50 years. He has been a conservation officer, wilderness guide, wildlife technician, log home builder, documentary film advisor, adjunct professor of journalism, and a freelance writer and photographer. Walker will tell tales of miners, hunters, explorers, climbers, and adventurers of all stripes - the people who pioneered the wilderness of Denali.

# emphasis Series



## Ground Truth Trekking

**Erin McKittrick and Bretwood Higman**, *Scientists and Conservationists*

August 1-4 at Camp Denali

Erin McKittrick and Bretwood Higman combine adventure, science, and conservation in their work as directors of the small nonprofit Ground Truth Trekking. They are veterans of over 10,000 miles of wilderness expeditions, primarily in Alaska. Hig and Erin have devoted their time to exploring, researching, and educating the public about important environmental issues in Alaska.



© Cable Risdon

## Centennial Celebration of the National Parks

**Ken Burns**, *Filmmaker*

August 6 at Camp Denali

Ken Burns has been making documentary films for more than 35 years. He has directed and produced some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, filmed in part while staying at Camp Denali. Ken's evening presentation will be in celebration of the 2016 Centennial of the National Park Service.



## Owls: Natural History and Conservation

**Denver Holt**, *Wildlife Biologist*

August 8-11 at Camp Denali      August 12-14 at North Face Lodge

Denver Holt is founder of the Owl Research Institute and the Ninepipes Wildlife Research Center in Montana. Since 1978, Holt's focus has been owls and their ecology. He spends summers in Barrow, Alaska where his study of Snowy Owls is in its 24th year—the second longest study worldwide. Holt's evening programs will focus on owl adaptations and Snowy Owl breeding ecology.



## Painting in the North

**Kesler Woodward**, *Artist, Professor of Art Emeritus, University of Alaska, Fairbanks*

August 19-21 at North Face Lodge      August 22-25 at Camp Denali

One of Alaska's best-known artists, Kesler Woodward is equally well known for his work as an art historian and curator. Evening programs will explore the key role artists played in the rise of the conservation movement in America and in the establishment of national parks. He will be available to collaborate with guests as they work on their own paintings and drawings of the Denali region.



## Autumn Nature Photography Workshop

**Mark Kelley**, *Photographer*

August 26-28 and August 29-September 1 at Camp Denali

Award-winning photographer Mark Kelley has built his career around the place he calls home – Alaska. Participants will join daily field trips to explore the wonders of Denali – from the landscape, to wildlife encounters and the intimate details of tundra. We will explore the artistic elements of composition, finding the decisive moment in each image, and discovering your own creative vision.



## Curtains of Light: The Aurora Borealis

**Neal Brown**, *Former Director of Alaska Space Grant Program and Poker Flat Research Range*  
**Ron Murray**, *Photographer, Filmmaker, Aurora Guide*

September 2-4 and September 5-8 at Camp Denali

2016 marks Brown's 30th year at Camp Denali lecturing on the aurora, its myths and science, sun dogs, noctilucent clouds, and other atmospheric phenomena. Murray joins this year to provide spectacular visuals with photos and video of the aurora borealis.

**The Alaska Range (J. Schultz)**



Photos from left: Balsam Poplar (T. Dietrich), White Spruce (D. Stogsdill), Dwarf Dogwood (P. Neer), Fall Tundra (R. Devore)

## Conservation Round-Up

---

**P**ark managers here in Denali are currently working on a Trails Plan, soliciting input on how best to manage formal and informal trails. Overdue for attention is the murky issue of “social” trails, paths that often began as wildlife trails now frequented by hikers. Traditionally managed as a trail-less wilderness, Denali’s managers must adjust to a new reality. Stay tuned to this and other planning efforts in Denali: <http://www.nps.gov/dena/getinvolved/planning.htm>.

**Denali Citizen’s Council** has had fingers to keyboard commenting on the Trails Plan and helping to craft land management policies for Borough-owned land surrounding the Park. The possibility of a natural gas pipeline necessitates foresight and careful planning for Denali’s gateway communities. DCC also continues to advocate for Denali’s wildlife, notably for the protection of the

Park’s declining wolf population. Wolves are vulnerable to liberal hunting and trapping policies effective on state land. When wolves cross out of the Park onto state land to follow their caribou prey, they are no longer protected. Watch for this fall’s update on Denali’s wolf population: <http://nps.gov/dena/learn/nature/wolves.htm>.

**National Parks Conservation Association** recently saw success with their #UnBearable campaign, which highlights fundamental differences between state and federal wildlife management in Alaska. This fall the National Park Service published regulations for sport hunting in national preserves overruling Alaska’s endorsement of baiting and other intensive predator control practices.

Together with Subaru and the National Park Service, NPCA is embarking on a zero-landfill

initiative in three parks: Grand Teton, Yosemite and Denali. We hosted the partners this summer and anticipate that the initiative will extend to concessioners like ourselves, providing expanded opportunities to reduce and recycle our waste.

**Audubon Alaska** celebrated a win for Wilderness and wildlife protection at Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in September when a US District Court upheld a federal decision to reject the long-fought-for road project through Izembek Wilderness. Situated in Southwestern Alaska, Izembek NWR is critically important for numerous migratory bird species during their global transits. From the Tongass to the Arctic, Audubon Alaska is a leader among state conservation groups for their forward-thinking use of mapping technology to guide conservation decisions.

# Camp Denali & North Face Lodge Staff

*Spend summers at Camp Denali*

**THEO AMBROS** '90-'93, '13, '15  
Hartland, VT  
**MARK ARDAGNA** '14, '15  
South Lake Tahoe, CA  
**KC BOEHLI** '09-'10, '13-'15  
Seattle, WA  
**DUKE BRADY** '12, '14, '15  
Olympia, WA  
**MARIANNE CATALDO** '14, '15  
Islesboro, ME  
**STEPHANIE DOTSON** '12-'15  
Marysville, OH  
**ADRIENNE DOYLE** '14, '15  
Tampa, FL  
**CARLEY DUNN** '96-'15  
Anchorage, AK  
**CODY FITZPATRICK** '15  
Minneapolis, MN  
**TORI FITZSIMMONS** '15  
Key West, FL  
**SIMON FITZWILLIAM** '13-'15  
Gainesville, FL  
**TERESA FLOBERG** '13-'15  
Healy, AK  
**CHRIS GOCHENOUR** '06, '09-'15  
Glacier, WA  
**SIMON, JENNA, DANIKA, & SILAS HAMM**  
Denali National Park, AK  
**JANET HUDDLESTON** '11-'15  
Takaka, New Zealand  
**TESSA HULLS** '14, '15  
Seattle, WA  
**IAN JOHANSSON** '13-'15  
San Diego, CA

**EMMALYN KAYSER** '14, '15  
Des Moines, IA  
**JEFF KLAKOVICH** '11-'15  
Bootjack, CA  
**JUSTIN & KENDALL LAMB** '13-'15  
Bellingham, WA  
**JEANIE & PAT LAWLEY** '15  
Mt. Olive, AL  
**CAITLIN LENAHAN** '15  
Pittsburgh, PA  
**SADIE MACQUARRIE** '12, '14, '15  
Duxbury, MA  
**TOM McCARRAN** '11-'15  
Amherst, MA  
**DREW McCARTHY** '07-'15  
Driggs, ID  
**TARA McCARTHY** '14, '15  
South Lake Tahoe, CA  
**MAX MILLER** '11-'15  
Indian River, MI  
**MATT MILLS** '03-'07, '10-'15  
Walpole, NH  
**JENNIFER MOLDEN** '15  
Morris, CT  
**CHRISTOPHER MULLINS** '15  
Denton, TX  
**TESS NOEL** '13-'15  
Portland, ME  
**JOHN NORDSTROM & EVA-MARIA SCHARNOW** '10-'15  
Rockport, MA  
**ERIC O'KEEFE** '13-'15  
North Potomac, MD  
**ASHLEY PHILLIPS** '08, '10, '14, '15  
Tallahassee, FL

**BARB PROPST** '04-'05, '14, '15  
Centerville, ID  
**SHAWN & KELLY PUMMILL** '11-'15  
Koloa, HI  
**AUSTIN PURDIE** '14, '15  
Logan, UT  
**SKY PURDY** '15  
Islesboro, ME  
**ANDREW RECUPERO** '07-'10, '14, '15  
Ferrisburgh, VT  
**LAURIE SCHLUEB, CHUCK, SPENCER, & LEVI WAYLAND** '01-'03, '13-'15  
Missoula, MT  
**ANNE SCHUSCHKE** '15  
Kalispell, MT  
**JONATHAN STARKES** '10-'15  
New Haven, CT  
**MERI STOUTENBURG** '13-'15  
Des Moines, IA  
**JAN TOMSEN** '03, '04, '06-'15  
Denali National Park, AK  
**KRISTEN VAWTER** '10-'15  
San Francisco, CA  
**HANNAH WAGENAAR** '10-'15  
Denali National Park, AK  
  
Short Term Staff  
**DIANA AND HANNAH BERRY**  
**LEE DRURY**  
**JOAN FOOTE**  
**STEPHANIE NEILSON**  
**KYOKO OKANO**  
**FRITZ WITTWER**  
**LAURI LARSEN**



## *Now Hiring!*

*We are currently seeking qualified applicants for the following seasonal-professional positions:*

- **Personnel Manager**
- **Facilities Manager**
- **Executive Chef**
- **Naturalist Guides**

*If you know someone who would be a good fit in our community, encourage him or her to view the employment pages of our website.*

*The collective knowledge, talent, and warm hospitality of our staff are what make our guest experience so memorable.*



2015 Staff (M. Stoutenburg)



Denali National Park Wilderness Centers Ltd.  
Camp Denali, North Face Lodge, & Parkside Guest House  
P.O. Box 67  
Denali National Park, AK 99755

*Contact us to unsubscribe, or if you wish  
to receive our newsletter electronically.*

*Thank you!*

*907-683-2290    [info@campdenali.com](mailto:info@campdenali.com)*



[www.campdenali.com](http://www.campdenali.com)

## *Looking Back....The Coles Purchase Camp Denali*

This fall marked a significant milestone in Camp Denali history. Forty years ago September, Wally and Jerri Cole purchased Camp Denali from two of its founders, Ginny Wood and Celia Hunter. A down payment of two of Wally's handmade, wood-and-babiche rocking chairs sealed the deal. Wally and Jerri Cole would make Camp Denali, and starting in 1987, North Face Lodge, their life work for 35 years.

*This is our 24th—and last—edition of the Tundra Telegram. Next season will find Camp Denali under new management. Ginny Wood and Celia Hunter, the founding mothers, are turning the helm over to Wally and Jerri Cole of Deneki Lakes. Last September, when we finished putting Camp in mothballs for the winter, eased our heavily-loaded vehicles down our switchbacks,*

*and closed the gate at the bottom of the hill behind us on the summer of 1974, a quarter of a century, almost to the day, had passed since we had staked and filed on our 70 acres along the ridge above Moose Creek.*



*...We knew that someday someone else would be operating Camp Denali, and that someone had to be special: someone who had the same feeling about being caretakers, not exploiters of the land; someone with no ambitions or delusions about making it big at the expense of the clients or the environment; someone with manual skills and mechanical resourcefulness; someone who liked people.*

*...Camp Denali will, of course, reflect the personalities of Wally and Jerri, rather than Ginny and Celia, but those of you who return will feel at home.*