

Ptarmigan Tracks

The Newsletter of Camp Denali & North Face Lodge

Providing active learning experiences and fostering stewardship of the natural world through a tradition of excellence, community, and place.



Celebrating 65 Years

Some readers may recall traveling through the Park when the Naturalist Guide paused the vehicle to share a friendly Hello with a familiar NPS Road Crew employee. Chuck Bale attained a rare milestone this summer: 45 seasons maintaining the Denali Park Road. Reflecting on his tenure, Chuck had this to say:

“The road is a community.”

Understated wisdom from one who would know. Indeed, one of the things we’re often reminded of, both in Alaska and at our lodges, is the profound value of community. Perhaps it has to do with the sparsity of humans in a state that boasts over a million acres for each day of the year, or the dependability of resourceful neighbors when the chips are down and it’s a long way to town.

What’s more, living and working here continually reminds us that it takes all kinds. As with many things, Camp Denali founder Ginny Wood said it first and best:

What you look like, whether you had money, whether your family was Boston Society or raised on a stump ranch – it didn’t matter. In Alaska you were accepted for what you were able to do and you were free to do many things.

As 2016 comes to a close, we are thankful for everyone near and far who enriched our community with a diversity of talents and camaraderie. We wish you the best in the New Year.

~Simon and Jenna Hamm



Denali National Park Celebrates 100 Years!

- ▶ On February 26th, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the creation of Mount McKinley National Park.
- ▶ Mount McKinley National Park was the first national park created with the purpose of protecting wildlife, specifically Dall sheep.
- ▶ In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act nearly tripled the size of the Park and officially renamed it “Denali National Park and Preserve,” in honor of the Koyukon name for the mountain.
- ▶ On August 30, 2015, Secretary Jewell issued an executive order to officially rename North America’s highest peak “Denali.”
- ▶ The USGS announced in 2015 that a more accurate measuring technique placed Denali’s summit at 20,310 feet, rather than 20,320 feet as measured in 1952.

2016 Project Roundup

Things got rolling early this year as two special deliveries arrived at the winter office in April: a full-size basketball backboard and a mounting plate for our tractor’s front-end loader. On this day Kubota-Ball was created. Simon mounted the backboard to the plate, enabling the whole unit to be lifted and moved by our tractor, turning any open area into a basketball court.

Between well-attended games of Kubota-Ball, capture the flag, and soccer, the operations crew had many other major accomplishments.

May began with many days painting the exteriors of North Face Lodge, Potlatch, and Avalanche, Permafrost and Bergschrund cabins. A wet July put painting on hold as road maintenance became a priority. This involved much handwork and the installation of several silt traps along the driveway. This allowed water to exit the roadway, protecting the fragile tundra from sediment.

Upgrades to the hydroelectric system at Camp Denali, paired with July rains, allowed the system to be used for most of the summer. Running our water-powered generator in tandem with our solar panels brought down the daily run time of our diesel generator from 20 hours to less than 10.

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In the fall the crew usually has about 10 days to perform tasks after we wave goodbye to our last guests of the season and before the snow forces everyone to clear out for winter. This year the crew tackled three major projects:

re-landscaping the Camp Denali lawn, leveling and repairing the floor of the Warehouse, and rebuilding the walls and floor of the Greenhouse. Grass seed is spread; the Warehouse is level; the Greenhouse is ready for soil and plants. And safely tucked away is a basketball hoop, ready to be mounted and put into service when we return next May.

Ptarmigan Tracks Newsletter

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Excerpts from Kim Heacox's *Rhythm of the Wild*

And what is the purpose of the mighty mountain? To collect the tender snowflake. And the purpose of the snowflake? To build a glacier. And the purpose of the glacier? To carve the mountain and melt into a river that rounds the stone that sharpens the mind of the hand that holds it.

~

In a time when we never have enough time, and our gadgets hoodwink us into thinking we are many places at once, it's nice to fully inhabit one place at one moment, right here and now, off-grid and off-line, hyper-connected to the present. That's why it's called a 'present.' That's why we have national parks and open spaces.

~

Go. There's a journey out there beyond what any of us know, daring and illuminating once taken, for once taken it takes you.

Special Sightings



6/5 Arctic Terns tilting above kettle ponds.

6/12 Golden Eagle swooping caribou calves.

6/17 One of dozens of sightings this summer of a sow grizzly bear with two spring cubs eating, napping and playing in Highway Pass.

6/18 Snowshoe hares everywhere!

7/7 Two Horned Grebe hatchlings in Reflection Pond: swimming, being fed and riding on parents' backs, with tiny, striped heads poking out from under parents' wings.

7/8 First ripe blueberries usher in one of the best, and hands-down earliest, berry seasons in memory.

8/4 Porcupette taking a break from chewing on cabins to snuffle about the top of Camp Ridge.

8/7 Breakfast delayed while guests and staff stood on the North Face Lodge porch watching and listening to a wolf howling in the morning mist.

8/14 Approximately fifty Gray-Crowned Rosy-Finches in Highway Pass

8/21 Two guests celebrated their birthdays by observing a wolverine stalk a marmot in Thorofare Pass.

8/25 First Sandhill Cranes fly over Camp!

8/28 Northern Hawk Owl perched at eye-level on balsam poplar branch next to road.



2017 Special Emphasis Series



Bird Migration and Conservation

Stan Senner, *Vice President for Bird Conservation - Pacific Flyway*

Stan Senner brings great passion and extensive experience with birds, conservation science, and public policy to his position with the National Audubon Society's Pacific Flyway Program. Field trips with Stan will focus on observing breeding birds in Denali's many habitats. Guests of all skill levels should find these outings rewarding. Stan's evening programs will cover bird migration, the natural history of Denali's bird life, and conservation efforts.

June 5-8 at Camp Denali

June 9-11 at Camp Denali



Bird Identification and the Art of Observation

David Sibley, *Ornithologist, Author & Illustrator*

David Sibley began seriously watching and drawing birds at age seven. A lifetime of traveling throughout North America in search of birds culminated in the publication of his comprehensive guide to bird identification, *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, in 2000. David is looking forward to exploring the birds of Denali and hopes that all participants, birders and non-birders, will come away with heightened curiosity and a deeper understanding of the natural world.

June 12-15 at Camp Denali

June 16-18 at Camp Denali



Writing on Alaska

Kim Heacox, *Author, Photographer, Musician & Climate Change Activist*

Kim Heacox is the author of more than a dozen books, including a Denali memoir, *Rhythm of the Wild*. He also wrote the official commemorative book for the National Park Service's 100th anniversary, *The National Parks*. Kim will share images of Alaska's inspiring beauty and how it colors and informs his writing. He will share some of his writings to discuss how he portrays his home in a voice that's both celebratory and cautionary, given the growing threats of climate change.

June 30-July 2 at North Face Lodge

July 3-6 at Camp Denali



When the Beasts Come Marching In

Rick Sinnott, *Wildlife Biologist, Writer*

Rick Sinnott is a retired wildlife biologist. His career with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game was devoted to understanding how to tolerate and appreciate wild animals in human-dominated landscapes. Rick will discuss how wild animals cope in human habitats and the unique challenges to human residents. He will also dedicate a program to the northern raven: its reputation as the original Trickster, Creator and sidekick of the arctic deities.

July 14-16 at North Face Lodge

July 17-20 at Camp Denali



The Qajaq: Hunting Craft in Arctic Waters

Fred Randall, *Qajaq Builder*

Fred Randall is an engineer whose passion for kayaking brought him to Inuit *qajaqs* 15 years ago. He has since constructed over 30 replicas of Inuit *qajaqs* for museums around the world. His programs will explore design and construction of the Inuit *qajaq* and the rigging of the *qajaq* to make it an effective hunting instrument. Fred will assemble a *qajaq* frame to highlight construction methods, and, conditions permitting, may even demonstrate rolls in our tundra pond.

July 31-August 3 at Camp Denali

August 4-6 at North Face Lodge

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© Marc Lombardi



Climate Change: Ice Ages to Global Warming

Dr. Alan Werner, Professor of Geology

Dr. Werner's research focuses on climate change during and since the last Ice Age. He specializes in interpreting glacier activity and climate change from sediment cores recovered from lakes. His programs will describe the science behind the ice ages and how repeated glaciation from Denali has sculpted the Park's landscape, leaving behind a rich record of past climate. He will also focus on what Wonder Lake has taught us about the last Ice Age.

August 11-13 at North Face Lodge

August 14-17 at Camp Denali



Centennial Celebration of Denali National Park

Dayton Duncan, Author/Filmmaker

Dayton Duncan is the author of 12 books, and for 25 years he has collaborated with Ken Burns, writing and producing popular PBS documentaries, including *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*. Using clips from his documentary film, Dayton will celebrate the Park's 100th birthday. He will tell the story of the people involved in its creation in 1917 and of the main figures who have helped in protecting and expanding Denali National Park over the last century.

August 18-20 at North Face Lodge

August 21-24 at Camp Denali



Autumn Nature Photography Workshop *

Ralph Lee Hopkins, Photographer

Ralph Lee Hopkins is the founder and director of the photography program for Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic. Denali National Park is a nature photographer's dream, and Ralph's enthusiasm for the creative aspects of photography is contagious. Daily outings for participants will explore the colorful autumn tundra in search of wildlife, landscape compositions, and macro subjects.

August 28-31 at Camp Denali

September 1-3 at Camp Denali

* Additional participation fee applies



Curtains of Light: The Aurora Borealis

Neal Brown, Former Director, AK Space Grant Program

Dr. Neal Brown worked for NASA in the 1960s, inspiring his lifelong interest in auroral phenomena. 2017 marks his 31st year as a guest speaker at Camp Denali. Neal's evening lectures will explore the evolution of scientific understanding of the aurora. By early September, clear nights are finally dark enough to view the aurora. Join Neal in his enthusiasm for the north country's mystical night skies!

September 4-7 at Camp Denali

September 8-10 at North Face Lodge

Throughout the summer, we invite specialists to share their expertise in the field and through evening presentations. You may want to time your visit at Camp Denali or North Face Lodge to coincide with one of our guest lecturers. Our regular program of guided hiking occurs simultaneously.

In Memoriam

Florence Rucker Collins, 1921 – 2015

In 2015's *Ptarmigan Tracks* we missed honoring someone instrumental in Camp Denali's early years and a strong voice for Alaska land and wild-life conservation, Florence Collins. Florence died on November 4th last year at the Pioneer Home in Fairbanks. Longtime resident of Lake Minchumina, a road-less community 40 miles west of Camp Denali, Florence's plucky spirit and inquiring mind were a good match with that of our founders.

Florence married Dick Collins, the FAA station manager at Lake Minchumina. Together they led a subsistence lifestyle, which meant cultivating a giant vegetable garden, hunting, trapping and picking berries to survive. All the while Florence maintained her involvement in conservation and long advocated for the sustainability of subsistence resources as chair of Denali National Park's Subsistence Resource Commission.



Photo courtesy of Julie Collins
Celia and Florence re-fueling at Wonder Lake

Hildi Schläpfer, 1916 – 2016

Longtime Camp Denali friend, Hildi Schläpfer, of Kloten, Switzerland, passed away November 5th, not long after her 100th birthday in June. After visiting Alaska and Camp Denali in the late 1970s, Hildi returned in 1982 to volunteer for one month during berry season to pick blueberries for Camp Denali and North Face Lodge. We loved the help and she loved the experience, so it became a mutual affair for 16 summers until her final trip in 1998 when she was 82. Although our guests have long since consumed the jam from berries Hildi picked, we would like to think that the bushes around Camp Denali would remember her gentle fingers.

Lowell Thomas, 1923 – 2016

On a summer day in 1958, a small airplane banked low over Camp Denali – a signal for Ginny Wood to drive Camp's Jeep down to the Kantishna airstrip to fetch the arrivals. This particular plane, a red, black and white Cessna 180 nicknamed "Charlie," had arrived indirectly by way of Paris, Gibraltar, Marrakech, Dakar, Timbuktu, Zanzibar, Addis Ababa, Riyadh, Rawalpindi, Kabul, Tehran, Istanbul, Damascus, Cairo and Tripoli.



Thus began Camp Denali's most fortuitous association with Lowell and Tay Thomas and their family. Already a veteran of 11 expeditions, a B-25 instructor during WWII, and a personal (and lifelong) acquaintance of the Dalai Lama, Lowell and his family moved permanently to Alaska in 1960 where he served in the state senate as Lieutenant Governor and became a noted philanthropist and conservation advocate.

From 1981 until 1994, Lowell regularly flew Camp Denali guests around the mountain on scenic tours when not supporting climbers and assisting rescues on Denali. Many guests and staff were treated when Lowell would fill the back of his plane with ice cream and fly it over the range before it could melt. A pilot's pilot, Lowell logged more than a million air miles, made a record 13 landings at 14,200' on Denali, and survived seven forced landings, yet never put a single scratch on an airplane.

Blue skies and tailwinds, dear friend.



Camp Denali & North Face Lodge Staff

MJ AFT '07-'11, '16

Denali National Park, AK

ALEX AMBROS '06-'08, '11-'13, '16

Hartland, VT

THEO AMBROS '90-'93, '13, '15, '16

Hartland, VT

MARK ARDAGNA '14-'16

South Lake Tahoe, CA

ROBIN BAZAN '16

Madison, WI

COURTNEY BRYANT '16

Nashville, TN

ANDREA CATALDO '16

Long Island, NY

JIM COSTIGAN '16

La Grande, OR

STEPHANNIE DOTSON '12-'16

Marysville, OH

ADRIENNE DOYLE '14-'16

Tampa, FL

CARLEY DUNN '96-'16

Anchorage, AK

CODY FITZPATRICK '15, '16

Minneapolis, MN

TORI FITZSIMMONS '15, '16

Key West, FL

SIMON FITZWILLIAM '13-'16

Gainesville, FL

TERESA FLOBERG '13-'16

Healy, AK

**SIMON, JENNA, DANIKA & SILAS
HAMM**

Denali National Park, AK

ASHLEY & LAO HOWISEY-TURIYA '16

Seattle, WA

JANET HUDDLESTON '11-'16

Takaka, New Zealand

EMMALYN KAYSER '14-'16

Des Moines, IA

JUSTIN & KENDALL LAMB '13-'16

Bellingham, WA

CAITLIN LENAHAN '15, '16

Pittsburgh, PA

AMELIA LOHRENZ '16

Anacortes, WA

SADIE MACQUARRIE '12, '14-'16

Duxbury, MA

RYAN MARSH '16

Fremont, CA

MATTHEW MARTINEZ '16

Nevada City, CA

MATTHEW & MEGAN MARTZ

'05-'10, '16

Angola, IN

DREW McCARTHY '07-'16

Driggs, ID

TARA McCARTHY '14-'16

South Lake Tahoe, CA

MATT MILLS '03-'07, '10-'16

Walpole, NH

JENNIFER MOLDEN '15, '16

Morris, CT

CHRISTOPHER MULLINS '15, '16

Denton, TX

IRIS NEARY '15, '16

Juneau, AK

STEPHANIE NEILSON '12, '14-'16

Princeton, NJ

TESS NOEL '13-'16

Portland, ME

ELAINA O'BRIEN '16

New Rochelle, NY

KYOKO OKANO '16

Fairbanks, AK

MALLORY PRIMM '16

Yorba Linda, CA

BARB PROPST '04-'05, '14-'16

Centerville, ID

SHAWN & KELLY PUMMILL '11-'16

Koloa, HI

AUSTIN PURDIE '14-'16

Logan, UT

MARIANNE & SKY PURDY '14-'16

Islesboro, ME

ANDREW RECUPERO '07-'10, '14-'16

Ferrisburgh, VT

LAURIE SCHLUEB, CHUCK,

SPENCER & LEVI WAYLAND

'01-'03, '13-'16

Missoula, MT

ANNE SCHUSCHKE '15, '16

Kalispell, MT

JONATHAN STARKES '10-'16

West Haven, CT

KRISTEN VAWTER '10-'16

San Francisco, CA

Short Term Staff

DIANA BERRY

DUKE BRADY

TESSA HULLS

BRIAN MCCORMICK

FRITZ WITTWER

Now Hiring!

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

Skilled Operations Staff

Naturalist Guides

Experienced Chefs

Housekeepers/Servers

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.

Our staff community's collective knowledge, talent, and warm hospitality are what make our guest experience so memorable.





Denali National Park Wilderness Centers, Ltd.
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to receive our newsletter electronically.*

Thank you!

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Planning for the Future

We often use our annual newsletter to urge you to provide public comment on upcoming park planning documents or to contact your legislators on issues affecting conservation in Alaska. This year, things are quiet on the planning front in Denali. NPS has conducted some preliminary public scoping about trails management and development in the Park that will inform future planning. Continuing to manage the Park as a trail-less wilderness is unrealistic; formal and informal trails exist throughout the Park. Trail use must be recognized then balanced with protection of the wilderness experience visitors come here to enjoy. Stay tuned.

We keenly await the Alaska Board of Game's reconsideration of hunting and trapping limits of wolves on state land across the Park's northern boundary. This will be a topic at the Board's February 2017 meeting. The ability to view top predators such as wolves and bears is a major draw for Alaska visitors. While hunting and trapping of wolves is hardly the only reason for a major drop in the Park's wolf population, the take of wolves just beyond the boundary has a significant impact.

In 2017, as we celebrate Denali National Park's 100 years as a sanctuary for native wildlife and wilderness, we hope that our nation will not forget to look forward as Denali's visionaries did. With so much uncertainty about the future of our nation's commitment to climate change science and environmental protections, now is the time to maintain that vision for areas currently protected and those that still warrant protection.

