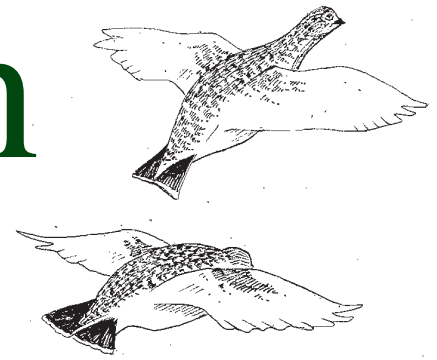


Ptarmigan Tracks



***The Newsletter of
Camp Denali,
North Face Lodge,
& Parkside Guest House***

**Vol. XXXII
November 2007**

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

Harnessing the Power of the Midnight Sun

In keeping with our mission to promote responsible stewardship of the natural world, we are lessening Camp Denali's dependence on petroleum-based energy systems and moving toward the renewable energy of solar power, hydroelectricity, and biodiesel. This summer, our alternative energy project comprised three major goals: to build a new powerhouse complete with photovoltaic panels, to install an energy-storing battery bank, and to run our electricity generators and passenger vehicles on a blend of biodiesel, rather than straight petrodiesel. Under the leadership of Luke Lohmuller, the operations crew set to work on May 10, and by summer's end we delighted in the silence of battery-powered electricity at night.



Luke (left) and John Kahle install photovoltaic panels.

Luke designed the new powerhouse to collect maximum solar energy. The steep, south-facing roof holds 16 solar panels at an optimal angle and direction to gather a potential 17 kilowatt hours per day, enough to supply about 25 percent of Camp Denali's daily electrical usage.

The powerhouse also houses an impressive battery bank and inverter system, which stores and distributes energy produced by the solar panels and the biodiesel-fueled generator. The batteries enable us to supply a portion of our daily electrical needs without turning on the generator. Only when the batteries begin to lose their charge does the generator kick on. All together, the photovoltaic panels, battery bank, and inverters allow us to reduce our generator use from 24 hours per day to as few as 8 hours per day.

To lessen the environmental impact of our generator and passenger vehicles, we started the season using B20, a fuel blend of 20 percent biodiesel and 80 percent petrodiesel. Though it makes up just one fifth of the fuel we use, the biodiesel component significantly reduces our greenhouse gas emissions. Using B20 also extends the life of our engines by offering better lubrication than the ultra low sulfur diesel available today. With biodiesel, we are investing in more efficient, longer-lasting equipment.

Our alternative energy project is not over with these accomplishments. In 2008, we intend to update our 25 year-old hydropower system, which generates electricity from the water flow in No Name Creek near Camp Denali. In recent years, less rainfall and snow melt, due to warmer, drier weather patterns, have decreased water flow in the creek. We plan to replace the old hydroelectric turbine with a new, smaller turbine to make better use of the decreased water volume. We are also exploring the use of passive solar energy to preheat incoming domestic water, which would reduce the use of fossil fuel to heat water for kitchen and shower facilities. We plan to pursue more innovative methods of improving our energy efficiency and reducing our carbon footprint in the years to come.



The new powerhouse with a dusting of snow in late September.

2007 Season Highlights

Alaska Grown

Diapers could be seen hanging on Camp Denali's clothesline this summer. They belonged to Danika Louise Hamm, born on March 10 in Anchorage. Dubbed the summer's mascot, she entertained the staff and amazed everyone with her rapid growth!

Audubon Board Meeting

This spring, Camp Denali hosted the Audubon Alaska board of directors, on which Simon serves, for their annual meeting. In exchange, they offered several fascinating evening programs. We especially enjoyed Matt Kirchhoff's presentation on the life history of Marbled Murrelets and Stacey Studebaker's "Kodiak Gray Whale Project," about the rearticulation of a skeleton of a Gray Whale found on Kodiak Island.

Founders Invited to Camp Denali for Film Opportunity

We are proud to announce Camp Denali's appearance in the forthcoming PBS program, "Great Lodges of the National Parks." In mid-August we welcomed a filmcrew of four from Oregon Public Broadcasting. Besides capturing the landscape that surrounds Camp Denali every day, they also caught two of our founders, Ginny Hill Wood and Morton "Woody" Wood, on film. The two



Woody and Ginny recounted their motivations for founding Camp Denali.

delighted us with stories of their own days at Camp Denali, as well as their subsequent travels and adventures. Tune in to "Great Lodges" next summer to watch interviews with Ginny and Woody, as well as many current staff members.

Farewell, Old Friend

After breakfast on September 10, the entire staff rallied to accomplish a huge task: demolish Potlatch, our 45 year-old dining room and kitchen, which suffered from a leaky roof, rotting joists, and an increasingly unstable foundation. Chainsaws held high and tractor engines revving, our excitement at an all-staff demolition project was appar-



Staff ripping shingles from Potlatch.

ent. We managed to quickly and safely get the structure down to the floor by dinner time. Now an even larger project loomed before us—rebuild it before next season! With the good fortune of favorable weather and experienced builders, the remaining crew of 14 convoyed over the park road just one month later, leaving behind a dry, insulated, weather-tight building. We plan to return by mid-April to finish the new dining hall for the 2008 season.

A Warm-Hearted Sendoff

After five summers of hard work in our kitchens, Food Service Coordinator and friend, Matt Mills, received a fond farewell this September. His delicious sourdough breads and thoughtfulness for friends and coworkers made him an integral and highly esteemed part of our community. Matt passes his role onto staff member, Ken Hockert. We thank Matt for countless hours of work, and wish him good luck as he begins a new career in eastern Pennsylvania.

Deneki Lakes Bed & Breakfast

Fritz Wittwer and Marianne Jakob, two longtime friends and staff members, are happily preparing for the opening of their Deneki Lakes Bed & Breakfast near

the park entrance. We will sorely miss Fritz's skill at guiding and carpentry work, and Marianne's graciousness as a host and talent at the sewing machine. We're excited, however, to recommend their new endeavor to prospective guests.

New Legs for the Cache

One of Camp Denali's original structures, the food cache that stands beside Nugget Pond, benefited from a new set of legs this summer. With the help of local restoration expert, Chip Barker, the operations crew replaced the old, rotten legs (last replaced in 1975) with newly harvested and peeled spruce logs. Though the cache has not stored food in many years, it reminds us of our unique history and our founders' pioneer spirit.

Megan and Matthew Tie the Knot

On a cloudless, sunny day in late August, staff members Megan Adams and Matthew Martz left their daily chores, exchanged their work clothes for finery, and climbed Cranberry Ridge to be married. Together for seven years, they had been waiting for the perfect day for a ceremony since their engagement near Wonder Lake this spring. The ceremony was simple and elegant, officiated by close friend and coworker, John Kahle.



Megan and Matthew celebrated their honeymoon on Amos Lakes, Alaska.

The couple is enjoying their first winter in the Denali National Park community. Matthew is a sled-dog handler for a local musher, and Megan is teaching at the school in Healy.

Special Sightings and Natural History Notes



“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds, the ebb and flow of the tides, the folded bud ready for the spring. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter. The lasting pleasures of contact with the natural world are not reserved for a scientist but are available to anyone who will place himself under the influence of earth, sea, and sky, and their amazing life.”

from Rachel Carson's
Sense of Wonder

This year we experienced the longest season in Kantishna in our history, beginning when the early crew flew in on May 9. We were able to drive in over the park road two days later. Then, with the assistance of a mild fall, the Potlatch building crew worked until October 8 and left by convoy over the park road on the 9th. The late stay in Kantishna granted us some spectacular autumn observations. We filled the final pages of our Special Sightings notebooks with notes on Sandhill Crane, Snow Goose, and Trumpeter Swan migrations, and the first permanent snow fall.

In recent years, visitors to Denali have been fortunate to regularly view the Grant Creek wolf pack, whose den lay just below the road near the Toklat River. This past winter, the alpha female and one of her adult pups were killed by neighboring wolves. Mid-summer we heard from the National Park Service that the pack had relocated and had a new litter of pups near the headwaters of Moose Creek. Though a lucky few of our guests observed wolves in the park this summer, sightings of the Grant Creek pack were far less common.



From the 2007 Special Sightings Notebook

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|--|
| 5/11 | Northern Pintails, American Wigeons, Buffleheads, Green-winged Teals, and a Trumpeter Swan observed at Wonder Lake. | 8/14 | Cow caribou seen swimming across Wonder Lake. Two Peregrine Falcons engaged in aerial acrobatics near north end of Wonder Lake. |
| 5/22 | Lynx observed on road, hunting hares at Lower Caribou Creek. | 8/16 | Grizzly bear spotted two consecutive days running between berry patches, swimming through a flock of geese on a tundra pond, and continuing to run westward. |
| 6/7 | Ram skull with horns found in a pile of sheep hair near a former wolf den site. | 8/20 | Red Fox seen carrying a 12-inch Dolly Varden trout in its jaws at mile 81. |
| 6/13 | Two adult Common Loons attacked mature Golden Eagle on Wonder Lake in defense of nest with much shrieking, flapping, and tussling; the pair successfully protected two eggs. | 8/23 | Approximately 150 Sandhill Cranes seen in flight near mile 80. Migration beginning! |
| 6/20 | Grizzly pair seen copulating at Grassy Pass! | 8/29 | Juvenile Brown-headed Cowbird seen making itself at home around the lodges. Second known sighting in the park. |
| 6/29 | While watching a bear in a hail storm at Thorofare Pass, group glimpsed lightning strike with flash and smoke 150 yards from bus. | 9/2 | Bull caribou with blood-stained antlers crested Camp Ridge. |
| 7/4 | Another lightning strike observed near McKinley River. Gray smoke was blowing off the site within minutes. Fire burned for four days, consuming eight acres. | 9/6 | Juvenile Golden Eagles locked talons and cartwheeled in mid-air above Eielson Bluffs. |
| 7/22 | Sow grizzly seen nursing two spring cubs near Grassy Pass. | 9/23 | Thousands of Sandhill Cranes passed over Camp Denali & North Face Lodge. |
| 7/27 | Grizzly with saliva flying from lips and gums chased a cow moose with eyes and nostrils wide open at full speed on the road. Yearling calf made its get-away above the road. | 9/26 | Flock of Snow Geese observed on Wonder Lake. |
| | | 10/2 | Approximately 300 Trumpeter Swans hunkered down on Wonder Lake at dusk in low clouds and snow. |

Moose Creek Migration Station

Guests who have stayed with us during August or September in recent years may remember visiting the Moose Creek Migration Station, where Alaska Natural History Institute's staff and interns busily monitored Denali's songbird population. The station staff tagged each bird they caught with a uniquely numbered band and submitted the bird's measurements to a nation-wide bird monitoring database. The data was also compiled annually by the Alaska Bird Observatory (read reports at <http://www.alaskabird.org/ABOResearchHome.html#DIMS>). In its nine years of operation, the station captured, measured, banded and released approximately 10,000 birds. We recently heard some exciting news: On August 26, 2006, a hatch-year female Wilson's Warbler was caught at an Idaho Bird Observatory station. The warbler's band number revealed that the bird had been banded 20 days earlier and nearly 3,000 miles away at the Moose Creek Migration Station!

Unfortunately, due to the lack of a strong network of banding stations in Alaska, researchers determined that this station could not run as a stand-alone operation. The nine years of data have been summarized and should be helpful in assessing the feasibility of future banding stations in Alaska.

Recent Issues Facing Denali

Toklat May Become More than a Rest Stop

New plans from the National Park Service confirm that the Alaska Natural History Association (ANHA) bookstore located at the Toklat River Rest Stop may become a permanent fixture in future years. Since reconstruction of the Eielson Visitor Center began in 2005, Toklat Rest Stop has temporarily assumed many of the visitor center's roles. Whereas it used to consist only of outhouses, the expanded rest stop now offers an enclosed, heated wall tent with indoor interpretation, the ANHA bookstore, a separate bus dispatch office, and permanent toilet facilities.

Although funding for a permanent bookstore at Toklat is not yet available, we are concerned that the National Park Service finalized this plan without any formal public input. Nancy Bale, President of the Denali Citizens Council (DCC), sagely notes that a permanent retail business at Toklat diverges from the 1997 Frontcountry Environmental Impact Statement and the 2004 Eielson/Toklat Environmental Assessment (EA), both of which designate the area as a rest stop only. The '04 EA states: "unlike the temporary facilities necessary to replace the Eielson functions during visitor center construction, the permanent facilities at the Toklat Rest Stop will not include a bus dispatch office, interpretation office or structure for book sales." A blatant change to this statement calls for public comment.

A permanent bookstore in the heart of wilderness does not seem necessary or appropriate, especially in light of the newly expanded ANHA bookstore at the park entrance. The Toklat River offers visitors a stunning closeness to Denali's backcountry Wilderness. The scenery is dramatic, and the valley is an important wildlife corridor. A permanent bookstore—or any enclosed structure—could render the meeting of backcountry and frontcountry a discordant boundary, where visitors are more apt to peruse retail options than observe the outdoor environment.

To read more about the Toklat project and other issues facing Denali, visit the DCC website, www.denalicitizens.org.

What it Takes to Go Local and Organic

Along with our efforts to reduce carbon emissions and to rely less on petroleum powered technology, we are also transitioning from conventionally raised and harvested food to more local and organically grown food. Since our



A staff member showcases hand-picked wild blueberries.

founding in 1952, we have supplemented our purchased items with garden greens and wild berries. Our greenhouse, expanded in 1993, now produces most of our salad greens and many of the tomatoes, cucumbers, herbs, and edible flowers that we serve.

In recent years we have increased our commitment to organic and local farms. We seek purveyors who share our ethic of healthy, responsible stewardship of the land. New this season was our partnership with Delta Meat & Sausage Co., who provide us with beef, yak, hams, and reindeer sausage from herds and farms in eastern Alaska. We also continue to serve wild Alaskan halibut and salmon.

Unfortunately, the large scale commercial purveyors that make food deliveries to the park entrance do not offer local or much organic food. Going local and organic, therefore, requires developing direct, working relationships with independent, small-scale growers and suppliers. We look forward to working with organic vegetable growers right here in Interior Alaska next summer.

Interested in Working in Denali?

The enthusiasm of our staff is often what makes the guest experience at Camp Denali and North Face Lodge so memorable. One of the most frequently asked questions is, "Where do you find such a fine staff?" Often the answer is, "From you." Many of our staff members hear about us from former guests or staff, or were guests themselves. If you know of someone who would be a good fit for our organization, encourage him or her to view the employment page of our website (www.campdenali.com) or email Martha at jobs@campdenali.com.

General staff positions are available for the 2008 season, as well as the following professional positions:

Breakfast & Dinner Chefs - seasonal

Parkside Guest House Hosts - seasonal, in Anchorage

***RNs are encouraged to apply
for any of our seasonal positions.*

Looking Back...

Notable Excerpts from the *Tundra Telegram* and *Ptarmigan Tracks*

1957 (50 years)

The events of the season of '57 are strikingly similar to those of '07. Like Danika, Ginny's daughter, Romany—nicknamed "Small"—sprung onto the scene, entertaining all and introducing Ginny to diaper duty. Then there was the "rather ambitious plan for buildings and improvements," which certainly sounds like our plan to demolish and rebuild Potlatch! And the 2007 spring opening crew, who hosted Aussie hikers Kymber and Toby, might smile to read that 50 years ago "Woody picked up two hitchhiking Australians at the Toklat River." They were put to work immediately, and "by summer's end the whole staff was talking with Australian accents."

One major event of '57 did not reoccur this summer: the surging of the Muldrow Glacier. None of this summer's excursions to Anderson Pass witnessed "bizarre seracs" of ice towering above the ridge at Glacier Creek as Ginny and Celia did in 1957.

1967 (40 years)

Rain fell hard and abundantly in 1967. During the course of one July weekend, three inches of rain fell at Wonder Lake. Streams turned to torrents of muddy water, and "between the Toklat and Eielson Visitor's Center, the park road was cut by a dozen washouts." Many visitors found themselves stranded inside the park. "Both our guests and the scores of campers marooned in the Wonder Lake end of the park accepted the situation with good humor and equanimity...Rangers George Perkins and Gordon Haber opened the 'Eielson Hilton,' with floor space on a first-come, first-served basis. Rangers and campers pooled their food for

community pot-luck suppers, and evening folk sings and poetry readings were held in the observation room. In fact, there were more than a few who were almost sorry when the park bulldozers finally pushed through the rubble that had once been a road and escorted 32 vehicles out in convoy."



The summer of '67 had some sunny spots, too: for Wally Cole and Jerryne Berglund, a weekend at Camp Denali "cinched their union"; they were married in December.

1977 (30 years)

In 1977 Bradford Washburn returned to Denali National Park with his wife, Barbara, to continue mapping the McGonnegal Pass Trail and the Muldrow Glacier. They also celebrated the 30th anniversary of Barbara's ascent of Denali with some of the Camp Denali staff. Hers was the first ascent by a woman. "The celebration was complete with a decorated cake flown in from Anchorage by helicopter and homemade ice cream made with ice from the Muldrow Glacier!"

After the summer of '77 ended, Ronnie McKinney stayed on as Camp Denali's winterkeeper, causing Wally and Jerri to write, "[we] wish it were possible to throw away the telephone, mail and typewriter so we could join him!"

1987 (20 years)

Much of the summer of '87 was spent deliberating about the purchase of North Face Lodge, which the Coles ended up acquiring in late summer. "It is a saga too long and melodramatic to recount here but it was far from a simple 'cold-turkey' business acquisition. Five acres of private land for sale in the heart of Denali National Park within view of Mt. McKinley, the parcel was subject to excessive development and increased vehicle pressure on the park road. The National Park Service stood by in silence, incapable of carrying out its own management plan to acquire the land if it was available for sale. There was little evidence to suggest that future entrepreneurs of North Face Lodge would enhance this still pristine, spectacular area of the park." After purchase, the staff and friends of Camp Denali set to work on some "badly needed renovations."

1997 (10 years)

In 1997, Camp Denali was featured in the public television series, *The Great Alaska Train Adventure*, which still airs from time to time around the country and lures many travelers to Camp Denali and North Face Lodge.

1997 will also be remembered as "a summer of spectacular wildflower displays and an abundant berry crop. It was easy collecting for both humans and bears."

Join in Our 2008 SPECIAL EMPHASIS SERIES at Camp Denali

offered to guests at Camp Denali only

June 9-12 & 13-15
Bird Migration and Alaska
Wildlands with Scott
Weidensaul, Acclaimed
Author, Field Researcher,
and Bird Enthusiast

June 16-19 & 20-22
Wildflower Week with Camp
Denali Staff Naturalists and
Guest Lecturers

June 30-July 3 & July 4-6
Painting in the North with
Kesler Woodward, Artist
and Professor of Art
Emeritus at University of
Alaska, Fairbanks

July 11-13 & 14-17
Renewable Energy:
Technologies and Strategies
in Alaska and at Home with
Johnny Weiss

July 18-20 & 21-24
Alaska's History of Reindeer,
Saami, and Indigenous People
with Margie Brown, President
& CEO of Cook Inlet Region,
Inc. and June McAtee, Vice
President of Lands and
Natural Resources, Calista
Corporation

August 1-3 & 4-7
Arctic Communities and
Climate Change with
Dr. Henry Huntington,
Independent Researcher

August 15-17 & 18-21
Protecting America's Marine
Ecosystems with William
Chandler, Vice President of
the Marine Biology
Conservation Institute

August 25-28 & 29-31
Autumn Nature Photography
Workshop with Jim
Brandenburg, Professional
Nature Photographer

September 5-7 & 8-11
Aurora Borealis: Curtains
of Light with Dr. Neal
Brown, Acting Director,
Alaska Space Grant Program

2007 Camp Denali and North Face Lodge Staff



MJ AFT '06, '07

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Hartland, VT

MARSHALL AMBROS '01, '02,
'05-'07 Hartland, VT

ANNE BARKER '06, '07
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JOSEPH BARRACK '07
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HAMM**

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30% post-consumer waste