

Ptarmigan Tracks

The Newsletter of Camp Denali & North Face Lodge



Fostering Connections, from A[rgentina] to Z[imbabwe]

Of the many rewards inherent to running Camp Denali and North Face Lodge, one of the uppermost is welcoming the world through our doors. Camp Denali has long celebrated visits of foreign guests by hoisting their colors from our flagpole. We currently have 39 country flags, all of which have flown on the Alaska breeze at one time or another.

Like the migratory birds that visit Denali each summer, every continent is represented in our collection, including a US flag that has flown at South Pole Station, Antarctica, and last summer, a loaned flag of Tibet from His Holiness, the Dalai Lama.

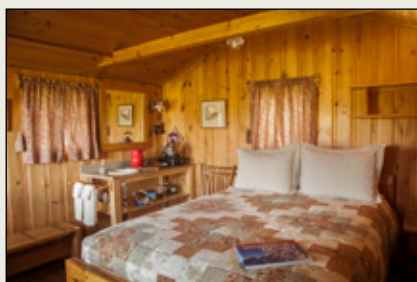
The most flags flown simultaneously have been eight, representing seven foreign countries in-house at one time, plus the United States. On sessions like this, the flagpole risks looking more like a maypole, and so a new tradition has emerged of hanging flags from the timber-frame beams inside Potlatch.

Moving country flags inside has left our flagpole underdressed, and so to fill this space we have taken to flying an Earth Day flag, a gift from Woody and Martha Wood. Atop the flagpole, it complements the country flags as a daily reminder of our global community and the importance of the integrity of earth's ecosystems. Amid the social and political turmoil of the past year, flying the Earth Day flag this summer was a small statement about the importance of community and stewardship that are central to our mission.



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

A Quilting Tradition



After the long journey to Camp Denali, the first thing seen upon entering your cabin is the quilted bed. Its colors grab your eye and establish a unique luxury in the wilderness.

The quilts of Camp Denali have evolved over the years.

In the 70s Camp Denali's beds provided very basic coverings. Working with what they could afford at the time, Wally and Jerri backed wool Army blankets with fabric. Next came wintertime quilting bees as neighbor women assembled quilts from foot-square blocks of fabric.

Gradually, all the sewing became a staff function. The sewing crew made what was needed for the coming season: aprons and pot holders for the kitchen, pillow shams or curtains for the guest cabins and rooms, but mostly quilts.



Each May, the living room at North Face Lodge fills with ironing boards, sewing machines, and cutting mats. The crew arrange and re-arrange fabric bolts to determine a palette. The quilt is designed and they start cutting and sewing the four-inch squares. The turned and tied quilt is then embroidered on the backing with the first three letters of the cabin for which it is designed, the year it was made, and the initials of those making the quilt.



Quilt-making in our community is not limited to need. When staff members get married, a message goes out to family and staff requesting squares. These creative blocks—traditional quilt patterns, appliques, embroidered pictures—are joined by a coordinator into a quilt for presentation to the newlyweds.

What began simply and from necessity has become a warm tradition: homemade quilts for chilly nights, to bring smiles to lips of guest and staff alike.

Project Roundup

The 2017 season began on May 6th when a small crew drove out to Kantishna. Hope as we might that projects would finish themselves over the winter, everything was as we had left it. After routine shutter removal, generator start-up, and water turn-up, we dove into unfinished projects from the fall. The Warehouse got its new floor, finishing touches were put on our newly built greenhouse beds, and the new lawn started to grow.

The main focus of work this summer was catching up on routine maintenance. Working around rainy afternoons we painted several cabins and the porches of many more. Out-houses that have been slowly ejected from the ground by the constant pressure of permafrost were lowered from their high-rise locations down to more reasonable heights.



We also dug—by hand and by backhoe—holes for two new guest cabin outhouse sites, answering the call for closer facilities!

Photo Credits

Cover page: Hawk Owl (Sam Wilson). This page top left: Cabin at Camp Denali (Clark Mishler). Special Sightings page: Butterfly (Sam Wilson), Pika (Sam Wilson), Sow with Cubs (Rob Waples), Moose in Nugget Pond (Jeff Schultz/SchultzPhoto), Foliage (Mark Hester), Lynx (Judy Holmes), Aurora (Ralph Lee Hopkins). Center spread: Alpenglow (Steve Murdock). Looking Back page: Fall Colors (Jess Miller). Back page: Braided River (Tom Dietrich).

Special Sightings - Notes from the Field

- 5/20 Six wolves trotting along Grant Creek.
- 6/6 Eighty-six snowshoe hares on the road between Toklat River and Camp Denali.
- 6/7 Many caribou calves in nursery herds.
- 6/10 Horned Lark nest on Camp Ridge lined with willow catkin seed fluff, holding four eggs.
- 6/11 Ten Mallard ducklings newly hatched at Mile 74 pond.
- 6/13 Moose and calf feeding in Nugget Pond at Camp Denali. Bull moose in pond the next day.
- 6/17 American Dipper nest on the drizzling wall of schist along Moose Creek with hatchlings being fed by two adults.
- 6/18 Wolverine on Gravel Mountain.
- 7/4 Osprey circling over the lodges.
- 7/23 Beavers swimming with poplar branches in MP 81 ponds for the first time in almost a decade.
- 7/29 Two short-tailed weasels scampering on the Moose Creek bridge.
- 8/4 Lynx stalking and killing a snowshoe hare alongside a Camp Denali bus.
- 8/17 Three juvenile Peregrine Falcons calling and harassing one another near Wonder Lake.
- 8/20 River otter crossing the road in front of a North Face Lodge van.
- 8/21 Sandhill Cranes heralding fall with raucous calls overhead.
- 9/1 Hawk Owl perched on the tip top of a spruce outside Potlatch (two Hawk Owls would later make regular appearances around the staff cabins).
- 9/8 Aurora borealis throughout the night and continuing in the north past sunrise while guests arrived to breakfast.
- 9/8 Black wolf digging at roadside on morning bus ride out of the park.



2018 Special Emphasis Series



Camp Denali Contra Dance Camp

Presented by...

The Great Bear Trio

May 31 - June 4:
Camp Denali



Scott Weidensaul

Author, Field Researcher and Bird Enthusiast

Bird Migration and Conservation

June 4-7: Camp Denali
June 8-10: Camp Denali



Fred Randall

Qajaq Builder

The Qajaq: Hunting Craft in Arctic Waters

June 11-14: Camp Denali
June 15-17: North Face Lodge



Colleen Matt

Bear Biologist and Educator

Bears and People

July 2-5: Camp Denali
July 6-8: North Face Lodge

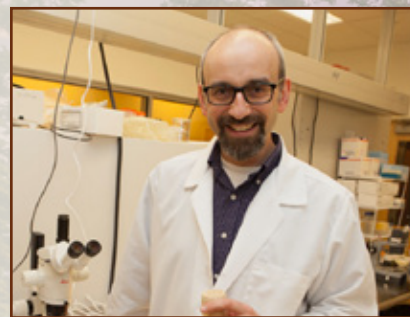


John Schoen

Wildlife Ecologist

Alaska's Wildlife and Wildlands

July 23-26: Camp Denali
July 27-29: North Face Lodge



Philippe Amstislavski

Associate Professor, University of Alaska - Anchorage

Mycology of Denali

July 30-August 2: Camp Denali
August 3-5: North Face Lodge



Ingrid Nixon

Storyteller

Denali: A Storied Landscape

August 13-16: Camp Denali
August 17-19: North Face Lodge



Kesler Woodward

Artist, Professor of Art Emeritus, University of Alaska - Fairbanks

Painting in the North

August 20-23: Camp Denali
August 24-26: North Face Lodge



Ralph Clevenger

Professional Nature Photographer

Autumn Nature Photography Workshop

August 27-30: Camp Denali
August 31-Sept 2: Camp Denali



Shaina Kilcoyne

Energy Efficiency Director, REAP

***Can Alaska be a
World Leader in Clean
Energy?***

June 29-July 1: Camp Denali



David Stevenson

Writer, Climber, Professor

***Mountaineering in
Denali***

August 6-9: Camp Denali

August 10-12: North Face Lodge



Neal Brown

*Former Director of Alaska Space
Grant Program and Poker Flat
Research Range*

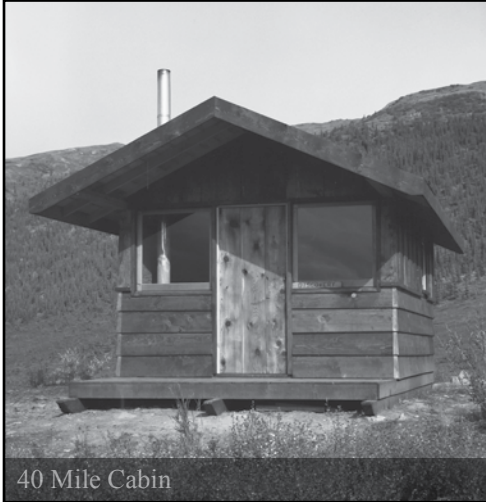
The Aurora Borealis

September 3-6: Camp Denali

September 7-9: Camp Denali

Looking Back...60 Years Ago

The following excerpts from the 1957 Tundra Telegram depict an eventful summer at Camp Denali. Our founders dispensed with all but “do-it-yourself” accommodations in order to prepare for the August 3rd opening of the Denali Highway. *From then on we were full every night. Our old Ford truck gasped its last trying to haul in enough gas in drums to meet the demand of the new-type motor tourist.* Newly road-connected, the Park’s visitation doubled from 5200 to 10,700. Changes at Camp included new “American Plan” frame cabins on the bluff; the old “housekeeping” wall tents were drug down to Lower Camp. A 3000-ft run of pipe from No Name Creek replaced yoke-hauled water from Nugget Pond.

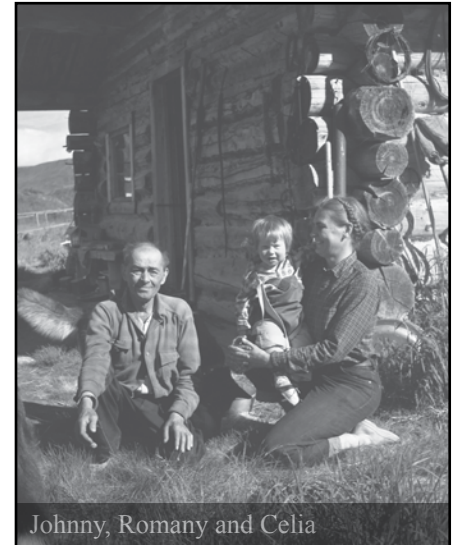


40 Mile Cabin

True to Camp’s five-summer tradition, the summer staff serendipitously took shape: *We completed all the projects we had planned plus a few others. But not with only three pairs of hands! All summer long we accumulated volunteer workers who arrived unrecruited. Some stayed a few weeks, others all summer.*

Friend and former Park Superintendent, Grant Pearson, built a cabin and moved in for the summer on his 5-acre homestead above Lake Creek. This acreage would later change hands and in 1973 become the site of the original North Face Lodge.

Kantishna old timer, Johnny Busia died on August 22: *Hundreds had signed his guest book, sipped his beer, and enjoyed his warm hospitality. He was a good friend and neighbor, and we will miss him. Johnny hadn’t been to Fairbanks for thirteen years or to the Park station for four. He would not have understood the world that will come to the Kantishna with the new road. With his death an era comes to an end, for a little bit of Alaska dies with each old timer.*



Johnny, Romany and Celia

Meanwhile, the Muldrow glacier took the limelight away from Mt. McKinley this summer. *To observe and photograph this phenomenon we made numerous overnight expeditions up the lateral moraine of the Muldrow to Anderson’s Pass. Where once you looked down onto the glacier from the ridge along Glacier Creek, you now looked a hundred feet up into the air at the bizarre seracs [that] are over-running and pushing up under the green tundra. At places high up on the ice one could observe a mesa of grass and willow that had been lifted up by the force of the moving ice.*





Camp Denali & North Face Lodge Staff

"What do you do in the winter?" is the most frequent question our guests ask our summer staff. The answer is: "Everything and everywhere."

Whether traversing Antarctica to the South Pole in a snow tractor, retrofitting a van into a mobile house, teaching English as a second language, volunteering with refugees in Greece, or chasing rare birds across Southeast Asia, our staff members really do it all.

The majority of our 43 seasonal staff begin work in late May and finish mid-September. That leaves more than half the year for other endeavors, but it also means paying bills, locating a place to live, finding solid nourishment...

Many a Camp Denali employee think they will only work a couple of summers before settling into year-round work. Some are still

working seasonally ten years later because they have found a way to make seasonal work a highly adventurous, if varyingly lucrative, lifestyle.

For our seasonal staff every summer's end brings a new beginning. We gain energy and inspiration from our community and from the place we are incredibly lucky to call home. And that is what propels us forward into whatever adventure is next.



Imagine Working in a Place Where...

- ...there are always cookies.
- ...community comes first.
- ...coffee and tea are available 'round the clock.
- ...Denali's wilderness is at your doorstep.
- ...you don't have to cook or wash dishes, unless you're being paid to do it that day.

Interested? Apply Now!

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

- **Sous Chef**
- **Breakfast Cook**
- **Dinner Cook**
- **Skilled Maintenance Crew**
- **Naturalist Guide**
- **Entry-level Housekeeper**



Denali National Park Wilderness Centers, Ltd.
Camp Denali, North Face Lodge & Parkside Guest House
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Thank you!*

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Alaska's Conservation Community Doubles Down

With the past year's change in political winds, the tide has turned on many long-standing conservation challenges in Alaska. From Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in southwest Alaska to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in the far north, movement is afoot to reverse fundamental protections to Alaska lands, wildlife and waters.

Two particular concerns with this sea-change are the lack of transparent, public process and disregard for the sound science and legal decisions that grounded prior management. For example:

- » The first-ever 2013 comprehensive plan for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska may soon be supplanted by a new round of planning that would seek to open up globally-significant wetlands previously withdrawn from oil and gas leasing for their ecological importance.
- » As this newsletter goes to print, a bill to allow oil and gas exploration and leasing in the ecological heart of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is being proposed as a source of revenue

for the national budget, using tax legislation to decide the fate of a world-class wilderness.

- » This October, the EPA withdrew its own 2014 Proposed Determination about Clean Water Act protections for the Pebble Mine area, “kicking a thorough ecological risk assessment and public process out the door because of political allegiances and agendas,” writes Trustees for Alaska.

Current political agendas should not be what jeopardizes these areas' ecological integrity. Stay informed and lend your support for Alaska's wildlife and wilderness heritage:

Audubon Alaska: for news about National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, and offshore Arctic waters

Trustees for Alaska: for the latest on the Pebble Mine and the protection of Bristol Bay watersheds

Earthjustice: for further legal angles on many of Alaska's pressing conservation issues