

# National parks

The Magazine of  
The National Parks  
Conservation  
Association

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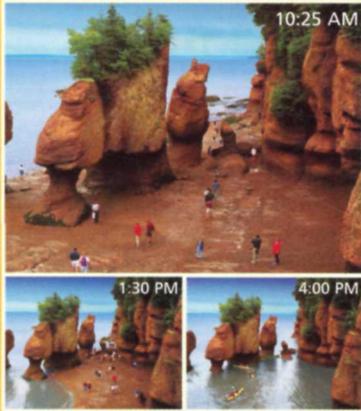
Beavers  
Alaska's Gates  
A Natural  
Challenge  
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# Walk on the Ocean Floor...

Just the Beginning of the Wonder  
Next Door in New Brunswick, Canada!

*New Brunswick, Canada has so many wonders waiting to be experienced and explored. From the preserved sanctuaries of our National and Provincial Parks to breathtaking views and spectacular natural sites, we welcome you to the wonder of New Brunswick!*



Tide times vary daily.

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## Tour Two Spectacular National Parks!

New Brunswick is home to two of Canada's National Parks. In **Fundy National Park**, the world's highest tides host a rich marine ecosystem, teeming with birds and all kinds of plant life. From lush inland forests to towering seaside cliffs, it's 206 square kilometres (80 square miles) of wonder! Hike nearly 125 kilometres (78 miles) of incredible trails past hidden waterfalls, through deep river valleys and along awesome coastal vistas. Relax in a heated saltwater pool, take in a round of golf and learn the mysteries of the Bay at the interpretation centre. And stay the night in first-class camping facilities.



One of the wonders of the Acadian coast is **Kouchibouguac National Park!** Endless stretches of sand dunes, fragile grasslands, and incredibly warm water are the hallmarks of this park. Kayak past a herd of seals sunning on a sandbar. Follow a series of boardwalks to some of the warmest salt water north of Virginia! The water is so warm that the lagoon here has been known to reach up to a high of 26°C (78.8°F)! A birdwatcher's delight of pristine forests, sprawling nesting grounds for hundreds of species of birds, in a near-perfectly preserved ecosystem.

## Provincial Parks, Natural Sites and Endless Trails...

From touring the oldest mountain range in North America to canoeing the mighty Miramichi, New Brunswick has nine provincial parks, countless natural sites, incredible inland rivers and waterways, plus a vast network of trails to take you to each and every wonder! Experience one of the last remaining sand dunes on the northeastern coast of North America at the Irving Eco-Centre, La Dune de Bouctouche. Explore the sandy coast of Miscou Island, where the oldest wooden lighthouse in the Maritimes is still in operation. And there's more! Stroll down historic city streets.



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# National parks

Vol. 77, No. 1-2  
January/February 2003

The Magazine of the National Parks  
Conservation Association

**FEATURES**

**30 The Benefits of Beavers**  
Considered functionally extinct at the beginning of the 20th century, beavers have made a dramatic comeback across the United States and Canada—good news for beavers as well as other species. The large industrious rodents create wetlands and marshy areas that provide habitat for hundreds of species.  
*By Todd Wilkinson*

**36 Wilderness Homeland**  
Eighty percent of 8.4-million-acre Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve is designated wilderness—a wilderness where animals and indigenous people have co-existed for thousands of years. Ensuring that both the park's wild character and its indigenous people's use of park resources remains compatible with wilderness preservation is a major challenge facing the Park Service.  
*By Bill Sherwonit*

**42 A Natural Challenge**  
A five-year science-gathering initiative signals a shift within the National Park Service from a focus on visitor needs to both preserving and understanding wildlife and other natural resources.  
*By David Williams*



**COVER:** A domed beaver lodge with Mt. Moran in background at Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.  
*Photo by Les Blacklock/Larry Ulrich Stock Photography.*



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Over the next two years, Republican leaders must choose to continue to protect the national parks or look out for the special interests of a few.  
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## OUTLOOK

# In the Wilds of Alaska

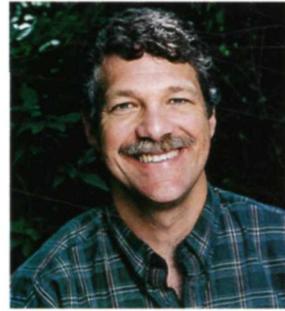
*Gates of the Arctic is the park system's premier wilderness park; the challenge is keeping it that way.*

One of the easiest ways to get around Alaska is by plane. It's also one of the best ways to experience the vastness of the countryside of our northernmost state. Sometimes from the air, you can catch glimpses of moose or caribou, and when you do, it conveys that hard-to-describe sense of wildness for which we all cherish Alaska.

During a recent trip to Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, I also saw something else from the air. Not only homes on lands outside of the parks, but a native village completely surrounded by parkland. Gates is a wild place that holds rich habitat for animals—36 northern species of mammals, including grizzly bears and wolves—and wave after wave of unnamed ridges and jagged peaks crossed by thousands of swift-running creeks. Gates is also a homeland for hundreds of people and has been for thousands of years.

The Nunamiuts have a special relationship with the landscape. Their traditional homelands include much of the park and preserve, and among the challenges facing the Park Service is ensuring the park's wild character and that the indigenous peoples' use of park resources remains compatible with wilderness preservation.

Building solid relationships with the people who live in the park and convincing those who visit and use it that some limits and regulations are necessary has been key to the success of preserving



CHAD EVANS WYATT

Gates as wilderness. The next challenge facing the Park Service is devising a backcountry plan that preserves it as the premier wilderness park.

Although Gates may seem like a place that should be allowed to exist

without limits or regulations, even this vast park can suffer from increased pressures, and an indication of this may be on the horizon. Some Republicans in Congress, notably the Alaska delegation, have in the past pushed for inappropriate development. Among the biggest proponents was Sen. Frank Murkowski. Murkowski was elected Alaska's governor this past November and is poised to choose his successor in the Republican-controlled Senate. Although the governor's plans are unclear, NPCA and other conservation groups will be watching as plans unfold.

Today, the Park Service is working on a backcountry plan to ensure that Gates of the Arctic remains the premier wilderness park in the National Park System. Not too long ago, Yellowstone National Park was part of a vast wilderness that few visited and others saw only through paintings or photographs. Today, millions visit each year. Those who manage Gates still have time to do it right. We will be there to guide them and, if need be, to fend off attempts to compromise the park's wilderness qualities.

**Thomas C. Kiernan**  
*President*



## EDITOR'S NOTE

# About Beavers

A few years ago, walking in the snowy woods behind my brother's house in New Hampshire, we



CHAD EVANS WHAT

came upon a beaver pond. Beneath the water in this still unfrozen pool were piles of birch branches, their leaves attached. Beavers were using the cold pond waters as a refrigerator, stockpiling branches for the following spring.

Beavers, as our cover story points out, are admirably industrious creatures. Their dams create marshy habitat for a variety of species and function as a filtering system.

The animals have made a dramatic comeback in the last 100 years, from near extinction to a range that extends from Alaska to Appalachia.

The article by Todd Wilkinson is not only a story about these animals, but it also addresses the effect just one species can have on an entire ecosystem. Beavers are considered keystone species, which means their health and well-being affect many other species.

Without beavers, fewer ponds and marshy areas would exist; without these, we might have fewer amphibians, wading birds, and fish. We nearly extinguished this remarkable web of life in the interest of commerce and fashion.

Beavers are no longer endangered, but it took decades for them to return to healthy numbers. It took only a few years to nearly wipe them out.

As we enter a new year, one that promises as much uncertainty on the global front as it does at home, we should be mindful that although nature may take thousands of years to create a treasure, human beings, in some instances, have not taken nearly as long to destroy it.

**Linda M. Rancourt**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

# National Parks

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## About NPCA

### WHO WE ARE

Established in 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association is America's only private, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated solely to protecting, preserving, and enhancing the U.S. National Park System.

### WHAT WE DO

NPCA protects national parks by identifying problems and generating support to resolve them.

### WHAT WE STAND FOR

The mission of NPCA is to protect and enhance America's National Park System for present and future generations.

### EDITORIAL MISSION

The magazine is the only national publication focusing solely on national parks. The magazine creates an awareness of the need to protect and properly manage park resources, encourages an appreciation for the natural and historic treasures found in the parks, and informs and inspires individuals to help preserve them.

### MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Members can help defend America's natural and cultural heritage. Activists alert Congress and the administration to park threats; comment on park

planning and adjacent land-use decisions; assist NPCA in developing partnerships; and educate the public and the media. For more information, contact our grassroots coordinator, extension 222.

### HOW TO DONATE

For more information on Partners for the Parks, contact our Membership Department, extension 213. For information about Trustees for the Parks, bequests, planned gifts, and matching gifts, call our Development Department, extension 145 or 146. You can also donate by shopping online at [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org), where 5 percent of your purchases is donated to NPCA at no extra cost to you.

### QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about your membership, call 1-800-628-7275, extension 213. *National Parks* magazine is among a member's chief benefits. Of the \$25 membership dues, \$6 covers a one-year subscription to the magazine.

### HOW TO REACH US

National Parks Conservation Association, 1300 19th St., N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036; by phone: 1-800-NAT-PARK; by e-mail: [npca@npca.org](mailto:npca@npca.org); and [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org).



# Northern Tour, Battlegrounds



## Touring the Northern Border

In "Touring the Northern Border" [September/October 2002], the statement "... the northernmost tip of the U.S. border" left me aghast. Maybe this is true for Maine, but in the contiguous states, that would be the tab that juts into Canada near International Falls.

*Bill Oakes  
via e-mail*

**Editorial Reply:** Because the focus of the article was on Maine and New Brunswick, it seemed apparent that this reference was in the context of the state and province mentioned.

## Making a Pig Sty of History

I was disgusted by "Making a Pig Sty of Ancient History" [November/December 2002]. The scientists are upset because some feral pigs have disrupted graves of Native Americans before they could! As a result, the Park Service wants to spend \$6 million to kill the pigs! I would think with a \$6 million budget there would be alternatives. I consider those pigs natural resources. Can't you find a way to live with feral animals? Your article implies that a pig is less worthy than a fox. Will the Park Service ever get it together?

*Tricia Bryne  
Falls Church, VA*

**Editorial Reply:** The mission of the National Park Service is to protect the natural and cultural resources within the national parks and to provide for the

enjoyment of those resources. Feral pigs are an introduced species and are not considered a natural resource at Channel Islands. The pigs are destroying cultural resources that the Park Service is charged with protecting. Although the choice is a tough and unpleasant one, it is a clear one if the Park Service is to remain true to its mission.

## Battlefield Blooper

It was interesting to read about a housing development threatening Chancellorsville [November/December 2002]. The article said this was the site of a battle "nearly 240 years" ago. Please remind readers that the tragic era of American slavery was legally ended after a war that began only 140 years ago. Being born in 1977, I have never met former slaves, and have only read about the civil rights movement in history books. It is important to remember our historical proximity to the Civil War in order to understand the varied cultures, lifestyles, and events of our country in present times.

*Veronica Santo  
Brooklyn, NY*

## The Clean Air Challenge

I take exception to the chants against our administration (and Republicans in general) on environmental issues. One side is all for myriad controls based on voodoo science, while other scientists are screaming about global warming. The Earth has its own cycles, although I concede that we contribute to the rapidity of those cycles.

Out-of-touch environmentalists attack industry with measures that cause thousands of jobs in the States to run off to China (which has no pollution controls). If we want clean air, we must start with ourselves. Once we make a personal sacrifice, then we can ask for contributions from industry.

*Reed Nelson  
via e-mail*

To see more letters on these and other topics, please visit our web site at [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org).

### CORRECTION

The answer to "You Are Here" in November/December is Valley Forge National Historical Park.

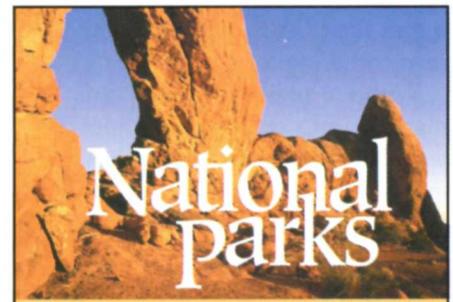
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### "YOU ARE HERE"

As a result of this march, on August 6, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson passed the Voting Rights Act, guaranteeing all Americans the right to vote.

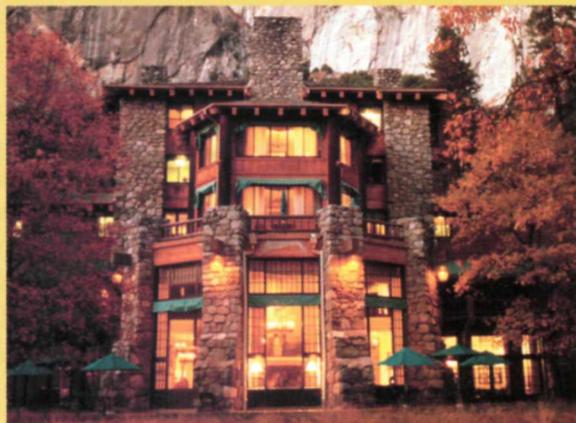
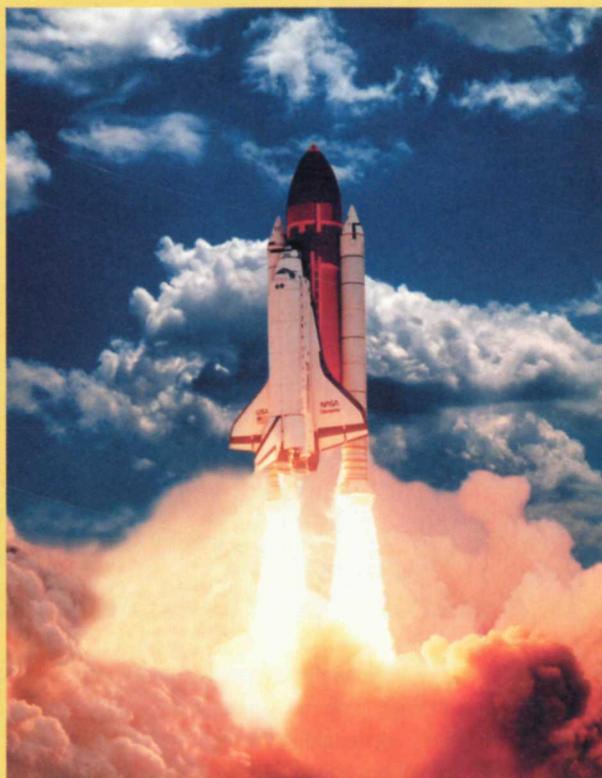
Answer: Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, Alabama.



To better serve our members, a year's worth of *National Parks* is now just a keystroke away. Look for the annual index of 2002 articles on our web site.

[www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org)

# SUMMER VACATION PLANNING GUIDE



ALL COVER PHOTOS: DELAWARE NORTH COMPANIES, INC. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE KENNEDY SPACE CENTER VISITOR CONTACT 321-449-4400; FOR THE DELTA QUEEN, CONTACT 800-543-1949; AND FOR THE AHWAHNEE HOTEL AT YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CONTACT 559-252-4848.

The Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, the Delta Queen Steamboat,  
and the Ahwahnee Hotel at Yosemite National Park.

# ALASKA

## Great Land of the North

For a state one-fifth the size of the continental United States, Alaska's nickname, The Great Land, might be an understatement. Consider just its natural attractions. Alaska is home to the two largest national forests, has 15 national parks, preserves, and monuments, and boasts more state parklands (nearly three million acres) than any other state. Seventeen of the nation's 20 highest peaks (including the tallest, Mt. McKinley) are in Alaska, which also has an estimated 100,000 glaciers, three million lakes, and more than 3,000 rivers. It's not surprising that vacationing options in Alaska are as diverse as the state is big and as spectacular as its natural beauty.

At Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, visitors on guided tours can see breaching humpback whales in one of the state's most scenic settings. Sixteen species of whales, including orcas, have been identified in Alaska's waters, where sea lions, walrus, seals, and sea otters also thrive. On land, black bear, mountain goats, elk, and moose can be found. And bird-watchers may see as many as 430 species in Alaska, which is also home to some 30,000 bald eagles.

The name Kodiak Island conjures images of Alaska's other giants, grizzly bears. Brooks Camp, within Katmai National Park and Preserve, offers world-famous views of brown bears fishing for salmon. Anglers also can fish for all five species of salmon in the distinctive green-blue waters of the Kenai River, where guided charters are available. Alaska has nearly 30 species of sport fish, including record-breaking halibut that have been hauled from the waters surrounding the Aleutian Chain.



Whitewater enthusiasts can also enjoy canoeing and rafting on many rivers in the state, and kayakers can explore the rich ecosystem of Prince William Sound and many other inlets.

Human history in North America reportedly began some 14,000 years ago when Alaska's first inhabitants crossed a land bridge from Siberia. Today, Native Americans account for nearly 16 percent of Alaska's population and add to its rich culture. The most recognizable symbol of Native Americans in Alaska (totem poles) draws visitors to Sitka National Historical Park. Ancient totem poles can be found in museums or towering among trees from Ketchikan north throughout southeast Alaska.

Native cultural artifacts are displayed at the Alaska State Museum in Juneau. Anchorage is home to the Alaska Native Heritage Center,

and Fairbanks' University of Alaska Museum serves as the state's primary repository of natural and cultural history. In southwest Alaska, Kodiak Island features the Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository. The island's Baranov Museum, located in a warehouse built in the 1790s, reveals Alaska's historical connection to Russia, which sold the land to the United States in 1867.

About 30 years after Alaska became U.S. Territory, the gold rush began here. Between 1897 and 1898, more than 60,000 adventurers made their way north to Klondike's rich gold fields, and today fortune seekers can be found panning for gold at places like Nome. Prospectors also were drawn by rich copper deposits, such as those once found at Kennicott Mine.

The mine, which is in the middle of the nation's largest national park, Wrangell-St. Elias, was once home to 500 workers and their families. It is now home to a rustic lodge that hosts visitors who explore the surrounding natural and historic attractions.

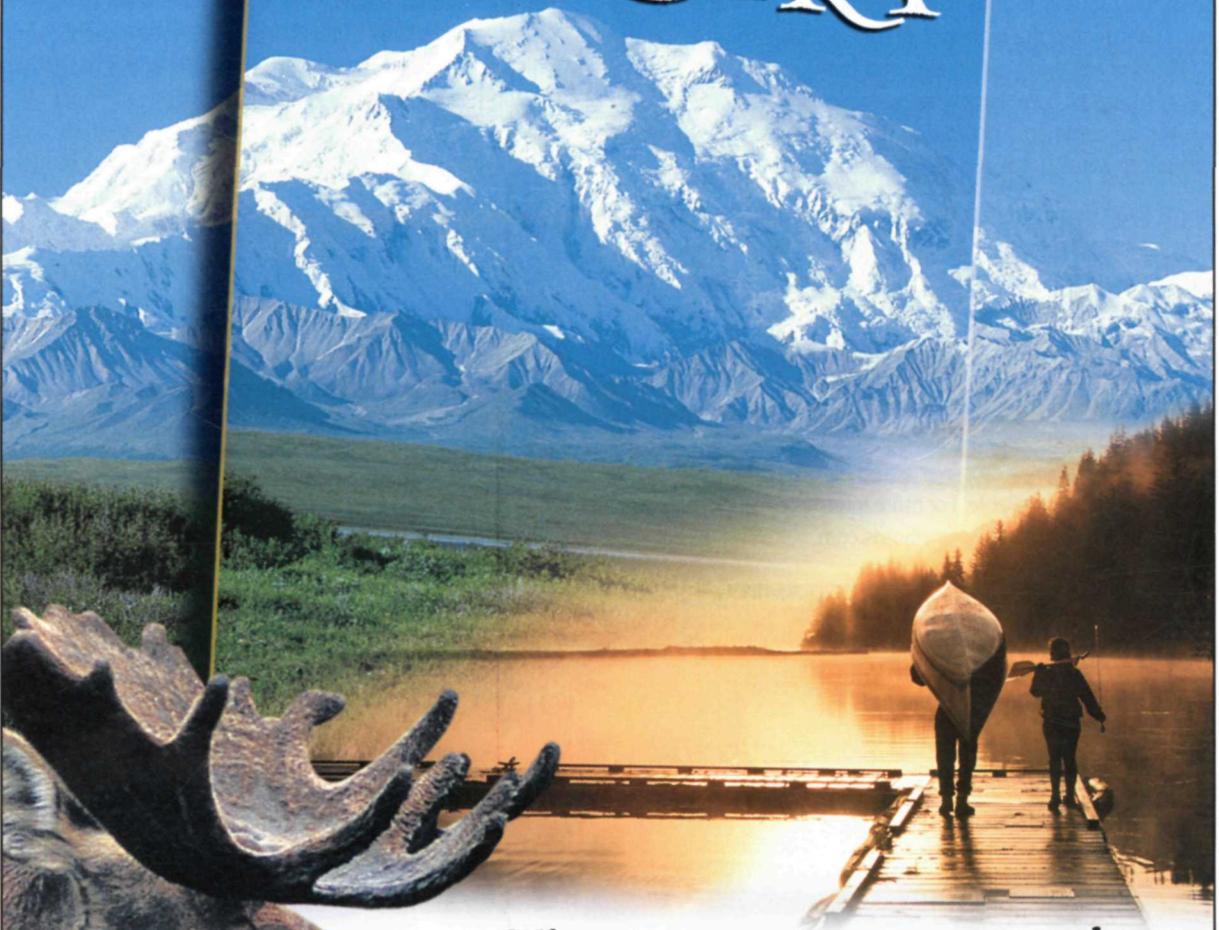
At the seaside town of Seward, visitors can depart on day cruises for Kenai Fjords National Park. The Alaska Railroad also travels the Kenai Peninsula and has connections to Fairbanks from Anchorage with stops at Talkeetna and Denali National Park.

Visitors can also travel by bike, automobile, or recreational vehicle along the Alaska Marine Highway, a designated National Scenic Byway. The marine highway uses both roads and ferry routes to traverse the state, and the ferries offer full-service amenities (including staterooms) and interpreters on a number of routes.

**To discover more of what The Great Land has to offer, call 1-888-921-8771 or visit [www.travelalaska.com/npm](http://www.travelalaska.com/npm).**

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# ALASKA



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Mt. McKinley, Denali National Park & Preserve.  
Inset: Robe Lake, Southcentral Alaska near Valdez.

# KENAI FJORDS TOURS AND PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND CRUISES & TOURS

## Experience Alaska at its Best

For many, a day cruise along Alaska's rugged coastline or through one of its stunning sounds is the highlight of a vacation to the state. Determining the highlight of such a cruise, though, can be difficult. Views of towering mountains and massive tidewater glaciers as well as glimpses of humpback whales, dozens of species of birds and other wildlife are common. Epitomizing the best in Alaska day cruising are excursions to Kenai Fjords and Prince William Sound.

Kenai Fjords Tours depart from Seward, which is about 125 miles from Anchorage and accessible via a scenic highway or the Alaska Railroad. On a typical day, guests may spot humpback whales, orcas, porpoise, sea lions and sea otters, as well as black bears, mountain goats, and moose as the touring vessels explore the rich waters of Kenai Fjords National Park. The ships skirt the Harding Icefield where giant glaciers, some thousands of feet thick, meet the ocean. Kenai Fjords Tours also offers a wilderness lodge on Fox Island where guests on three of the eight available tours enjoy a stopover and meal. Overnight accommodations at the lodge are available. For more information, including available kayaking options, visit [www.kenaifjords.com](http://www.kenaifjords.com).

In 1778, Captain Cook sailed through a fjord that reaches 12 miles inland to Valdez, Alaska, one of two cities from which Prince William Sound Cruises and Tours depart. Crystal-blue Columbia Glacier, which rises some 250 feet from the water and is more than 3,000 feet thick in places, is one of the star attractions of Prince William Sound. Encompassing 15,000 square miles, the sound showcases Alaska's natural beauty through forested mountains and thousands of bays and inlets teeming with marine life and sea birds. Guided kayaking trips are available at Valdez and at Whittier, home to gift shops offering Alaskan Native goods and the second city from which the cruises depart.

**For more information on Prince William Sound Cruises and Tours, including suggested places to stay, call 1-800-992-1297 or visit [www.princewilliamsound.com](http://www.princewilliamsound.com).**

**For more information on Kenai Fjords Tours, call 1-800-478-8068 or visit [www.kenaifjords.com](http://www.kenaifjords.com).**

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# THE OUTER BANKS

## Of North Carolina

The high sand dunes of North Carolina's Outer Banks have been drawing tourists for decades. Nearly 100 years ago, this sandy terrain attracted the interest of two of the last century's most influential inventors. Wilbur and Orville Wright made history here December 17, 1903, with the first sustained flight of a powered, heavier-than-air machine at Kill Devil Hills.

Get your reservations in early for the centennial celebration, planned for December. All four seasons in the Outer Banks are inviting, but if you prefer a summer trip, this chain of barrier islands offers plenty. Midway on the Atlantic Seaboard and surrounded by 900 miles of water, the Outer Banks has wildlife refuges, maritime forests, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, and the tallest sand dunes on the East Coast at Jockey's Ridge State Park.

This dramatic chain of barrier islands is also home to five historic lighthouses. Dubbed the "Graveyard of the Atlantic" for its treacherous currents and shoals, the Outer Banks has claimed hundreds of ships over the years, and a museum bearing that moniker chronicles the area's maritime heritage. Cape Hatteras National Seashore offers 70 miles of beach that stretches from South Nags Head to Ocracoke Inlet and has four camp-

grounds. Outdoor recreation includes fishing, sightseeing and dolphin-watching cruises, scuba-diving, hang gliding, horseback riding, hiking, saltwater kayaking, and windsurfing.

The islands also encompass two national wildlife refuges, Alligator River and Pea Island. Alligator River covers more than 150,000 acres and supports species such as alligator, black bear and red wolf, and birdwatchers can spot as many as 265 bird species at Pea Island. Nags Head Woods, where a rare maritime forest is protected by The Nature Conservancy, provides another rewarding stop for birdwatchers.

History buffs should explore Fort Raleigh National Historic Site on Roanoke Island, the site of the first English settlement in the New World. The story of the outpost and the unsolved disappearance of the settlers is told in "The Lost Colony," an outdoor symphonic drama. The Elizabethan Gardens are a living memorial to the lost colonists. They feature a sunken floral garden, antique statuary and wildflower and rose gardens.

**Learn more about what there is to see and do at the Outer Banks—call 1-877-298-4373, or visit [www.outerbanks.org](http://www.outerbanks.org).**

THE FABLED "LOST COLONY" ONCE EXISTED HERE.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY  
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# SMOKY MOUNTAINS

## *So Many Paths to Follow...*

Only minutes separate serenity from excitement at Townsend, Tennessee, which is nestled in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, renowned for their beauty and the diversity of their flora and fauna. Often dubbed "the peaceful side of the Smokies," Townsend is only two miles from the park and a short drive from the entertainment options at Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

Many choose to stay in Townsend because of its accommodations, which range from cozy cabins and chalets to modern hotels and quaint bed and breakfast inns. Golfers are drawn to the area's five public courses, including a championship course at Laurel Valley. Most visitors who come to Townsend spend some portion of their time exploring Great Smoky Mountains National Park, one of the most visited in the country.

Visitors have a variety of options for touring Great Smoky Mountains, including walking, biking, or horseback riding. Hiking trails, including 12 near Townsend, span more than 800 miles throughout the national park. Two of the most picturesque are Abrams Falls and Laurel Falls, which provide spectacular views. Bicyclists can travel along the 15-mile Louisville Lap, which leads to a historic community and past Fort Loudon Lake, or the 18-mile Clover Hill Caper, which provides



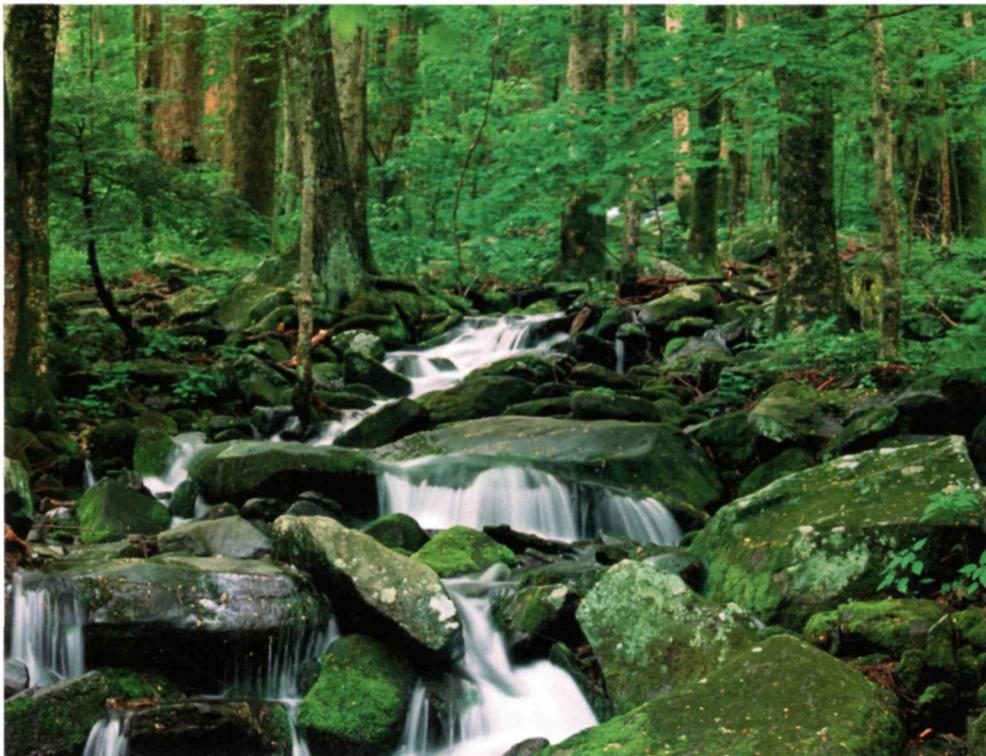
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panoramic views along ridges. Six horseback riding stables in the Townsend area are open year-round, and five within the national park are open during warmer months.

Floating or fishing along the Little River in the warm summer months is also popular. Many outfitters and campsites are available along the river, which also lures trout fishers. The national park boasts more than 700 miles of fishable trout streams.

Besides its spectacular natural beauty, Great Smoky Mountains National Park also has significant human history. About seven miles from Townsend, Cades Cove, one of the most visited sections of the park, allows visitors a chance to explore an "open-air museum" of 19th-century pioneer life. Cades Cove is home to a fully operational grist mill and other historic structures. An 11-mile road loops through Cades Cove along an old wagon road, and bicycle rentals and buggy rides are offered.

**To learn more about recreational activities and accommodations in Townsend, call the Smoky Mountain Convention and Visitors Bureau at 1-800-525-6834.**



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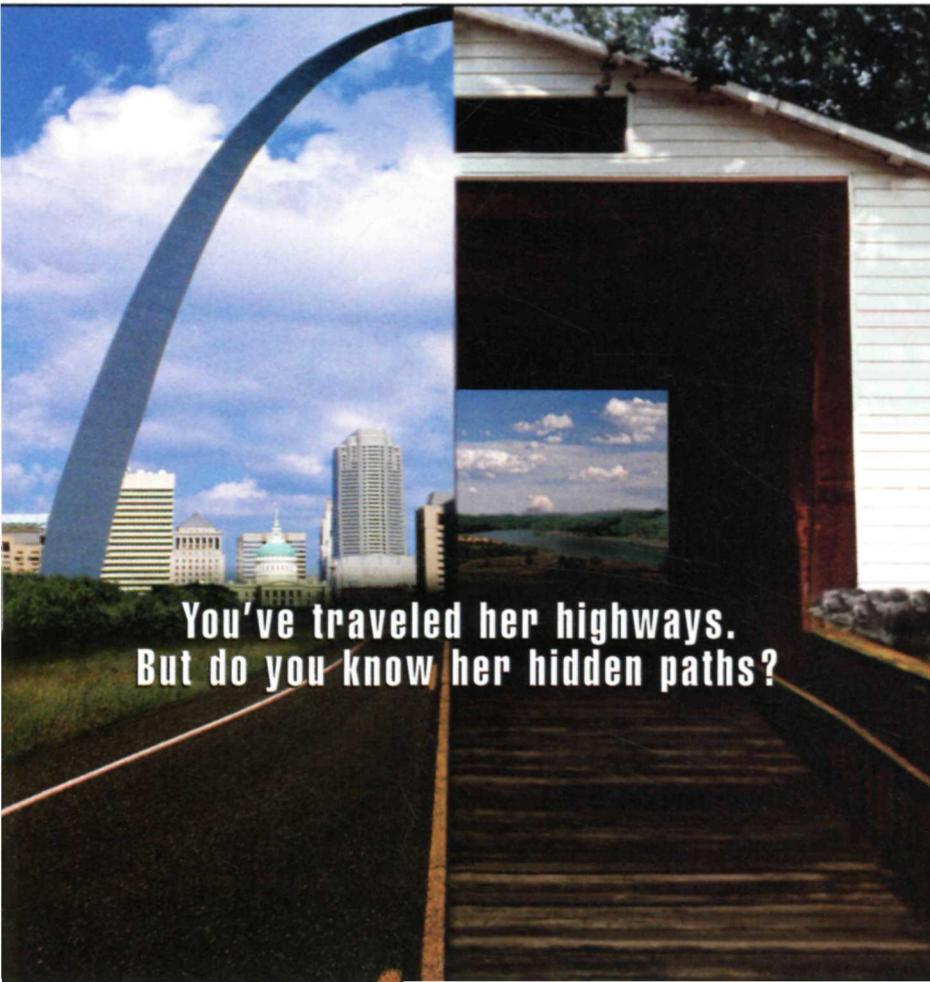
Nearby St. Charles marks the spot where Lewis and Clark departed on May 14, 1804. Here visitors to the Lewis and Clark Center can learn about the voyage through interpretive exhibits or watch, at Frontier

Park, the ongoing construction of replicas of the boats used on the expedition.

Outdoor enthusiasts can hike or bike along the longest non-motorized portion (185 miles) of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail via the Katy Trail State Park.

Those venturing across the state can also explore the river heritage of the many historic settlements - big and small - along the Missouri River Valley. On the western side of the state, lie towns that serve as testimony to the area's frontier history. From the National Frontier Trails Center in Independence to St. Joseph's Riverfront Park, visitors can learn about the legends who opened the West. The state's second largest city, Kansas City, anchors these communities and features the recently erected "Corps of Discovery" statue overlooking the Missouri and Kansas rivers.

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**T**he Grand Canyon is a riveting testament to nature's ability to sculpt awe-inspiring landscapes; it is a place that demands to be experienced — whether gazing from its rim into two billion years of geological history, descending a narrow hiking trail, or rafting on the Colorado River. One of the most popular destination spots in Northern Arizona, the majestic canyon is just the beginning of the sights and adventures to be found here.

Northern Arizona's towns are as diverse as the region's countryside. Set amid towering and colorful rock formations, Sedona has become a nationally prominent art colony and is known for its restaurants, resorts, and one-of-a-kind shopping. In Flagstaff, the Lowell Observatory visitor center features interactive exhibits and the spectroscope used in the discoveries of Pluto and the expanding universe.

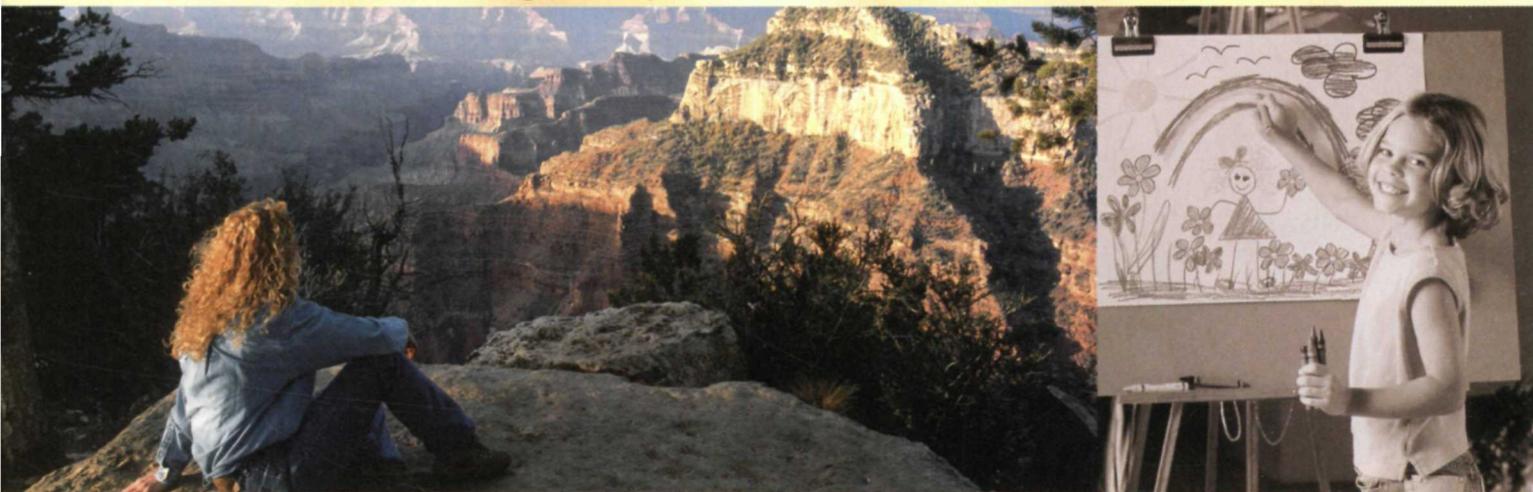
Page is a gateway to recreation on Lake Powell and the striking, sun-splashed scenery of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. In contrast to the area's natural wonders, Lake Havasu City sports an English village and double-decker bus to complement the London Bridge. The span's 10,276 granite blocks were shipped to the United States and reassembled here. In Prescott, the Sharlot Hall Museum preserves the first territorial governor's mansion.

In the Navajo Nation, isolated monoliths of red sandstone tower 1,000 feet above the floor of Monument Valley. Canyon de Chelly, Wupatki, Walnut Canyon, and other national monuments contain ruins of ancient Native American communities. The Hopi Cultural Center on Second Mesa and the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock convey the stories of still-prominent cultures. Turquoise jewelry, woven rugs, and other native arts and crafts are available from galleries, tribal guilds, and trading posts.

Visitors to Northern Arizona can also travel along more than 200 miles of historic Route 66—arguably America's most famous road. Along loops through Flagstaff, Seligman, and Kingman (home of the Route 66 Museum), stylish buildings, independent eateries, and motor courts preserve an era when travel by car was more interesting than efficient. Each May, the Route 66 Fun Run draws participants from across the country. Route 66 also runs through Williams, where many travelers pass through a historic depot for excursions on the Grand Canyon Railway.

**Find out more about Northern Arizona by calling 1-866-663-6650 or visiting [www.northern-arizona.com](http://www.northern-arizona.com).**

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# WEST VIRGINIA

## State Parks Offer Outdoor Adventures

**W**hitewater rapids, spa treatments, peace and quiet at cabin hideaways, and fish-filled streams. These are just a few of the opportunities that West Virginia State Parks has to offer.

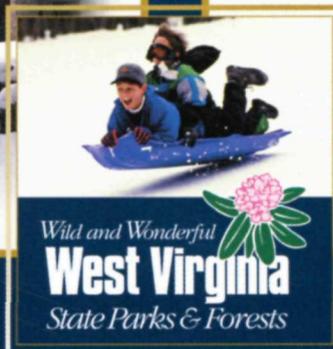
In the heart of whitewater rafting country, visitors to Hawks Nest State Park can stay at a modern lodge with views of the famed New River Gorge. Throughout the spring, this national scenic river is popular among kayakers and canoeists, while rafters face some of the most challenging whitewater in the world each October when Summersville Lake is drained into the Gauley River. Those not interested in exploring the state's streams under their own power can speed up the New River onboard a 15-passenger jet boat that departs the Hawks Nest State Park Marina.

Those in search of relaxation often come to the soothing mineral waters at Berkeley Springs State Park. Guests can choose between a variety of baths, massages, and other spa treatments and then peruse the historic streets of Berkeley Springs. Spa packages are also available at nearby Cacapon Resort State Park, where guests can also spend a day on the links.

Stonewall Jackson Lake, Twin Falls, and Pipestem Resort are other state parks that feature resort-style lodges and golf courses. Rustic cabins in peaceful wooded settings and modern ones near pristine lakes and rivers are also offered at many West Virginia state parks. Blackwater Falls State Park, set amid the Allegheny Mountains and near the Monongahela National Forest, has a lodge, cabins, campsites, horseback riding, and scenic overlooks. Trout-filled streams lure fly fishers to Canaan Valley Resort State Park, where ski lifts that run during the summer months attract hikers and mountain bikers. Outdoor enthusiasts can also explore miles of trails and natural beauty at places such as Seneca or Kanawha State Forests.

Visitors to West Virginia's state parks can delve into history at frontier forts and Civil War sites or take an excursion to the second-highest point in the state on a Shay steam-driven train at Cass Scenic Railroad State Park. Near Parkersburg, visitors can learn about the history of Blennerhassett Island in the Ohio River before going there aboard a sternwheeler.

**To discover more about West Virginia's state parks, call 1-800-CALL-WVA or visit [www.wvstateparks.com](http://www.wvstateparks.com).**



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The rugged beauty of the Atlantic shoreline and the unspoiled charm of seaport villages are the main lures of the New England Islands Cruise. The seven-night cruise departs from New London, Connecticut, and offers an onshore excursion to Mystic, home of the Mystic Aquarium, where more than 3,500 specimens of marine life are displayed. The cruise also stops at Newport, Rhode Island, where passengers can learn about a legacy of one of the most famous yacht-building families in the United States at the Herreshoff Marine Museum or find out about the history of one of the country's most famous yacht races at the America's Cup Hall of Fame. Don't miss Newport's 3.5-mile Cliff Walk, which offers spectacular views of the sea, backyard glimpses of elegant "summer cottages," and a look at the area's geologic history.

Other popular attractions along the New England Islands cruise include Martha's Vineyard; the New Bedford Whaling Museum; Nantucket, Massachusetts, and Block Island, Rhode Island. Onboard naturalists and lecturers offer informal presentations and often lead onshore excursions in port.

The Chesapeake Bay Cruise navigates the magnificent waterway of an incredibly complex ecosystem while exploring American history. The seven-night cruise departs Baltimore, Maryland's scenic inner harbor and calls at Annapolis, home to the United States Naval Academy, and St. Michaels, where visitors can tour the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum.

Passengers will also discover historic Cambridge, Crisfield, and Oxford, small coastal towns in Maryland that flourished with ship-building and oyster and crab harvesting. Passengers on either trip will be treated to oversized staterooms, spectacular views, and fine fare served in glass-enclosed lounges.

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The promise of gold brought prospectors to southwestern British Columbia in 1848, but the allure of natural hot mineral springs persuaded them to stay. Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa traces its roots to those early days as it continues to offer guests therapy and relaxation in five hot spring-fed pools, and at the new Healing Springs Spa. The resort encompasses 140 acres, features more than 300 guest rooms, recreation activities including golfing, hiking, and boating, and a variety of dining experiences. Visitors probably won't find gold, but they will find a renewed sense of calm and tranquility at this historic and luxurious mountain resort.



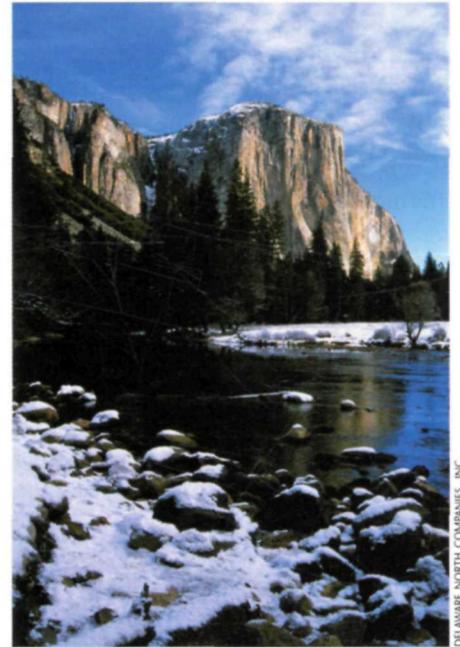
**Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa**

## The Harding Cabin at Deer Creek Resort and Conference Center

At Deer Creek Resort and Conference Center in central Ohio, a log cabin holds secrets of a presidency marked by scandal. The three-bedroom Harding Cabin once served as a retreat for President Warren G. Harding and a group of close friends (known in Washington as the "Ohio Gang"). It is part of Deer Creek's range of accommodations, which also includes an award-winning hotel and cabins that combine the beauty of nature with the comforts of home. Hiking, fishing and boating, swimming in the resort's indoor and outdoor pools and working out in its fitness center are part of the recreational experience. Deer Creek also offers a full-service restaurant and lounge and a fireplace that invites guests to relax, renew friendships, or simply curl up with a good book.

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Each year, over two million guests from around the world experience their own space odyssey by exploring America's space program at Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex. Built in 1967 as a means for families of NASA employees to view space center operations, the visitor complex is one of central Florida's most popular tourist destinations, offering live stage shows with stereoscopic 3D computer animation, encounters with astronauts, an IMAX theater, and exhibits that recreate some of the most important moments in space travel. Space shuttle launches are also open to the public, providing a tribute to one of humankind's greatest technological achievements.



**Yosemite National Park**

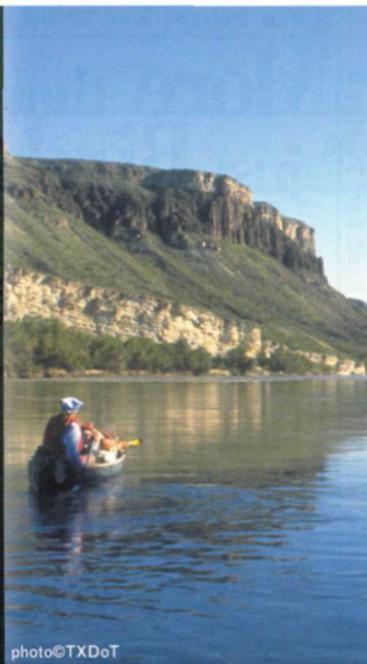
## The Ahwahnee and Wawona Hotels at Yosemite National Park

Yosemite National Park is home to two of America's most distinguished hotels, both National Historic Landmarks and members of the National Trust Historic Hotels of America. The four-diamond Ahwahnee Hotel, opened in 1927, is unparalleled in its magnificence, elegance, and charm, boasting 123 richly appointed rooms where guests are transported to the grandeur of times gone by and provided with incomparable views of Yosemite Valley's spectacular scenery: Half Dome, Yosemite Falls, and Glacier Point.

The Victorian-era Wawona Hotel was built in 1879 and is one of California's oldest mountain resorts. Located 27 miles from Yosemite Valley, it was built in the shadows of the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias and is acclaimed for its nostalgic charm, historic authenticity, and picturesque setting. Wawona's 104 newly renovated rooms allow guests to catch a glimpse of the hotel's long history through the use of vintage fabrics and furnishings and to experience life before televisions and telephones.

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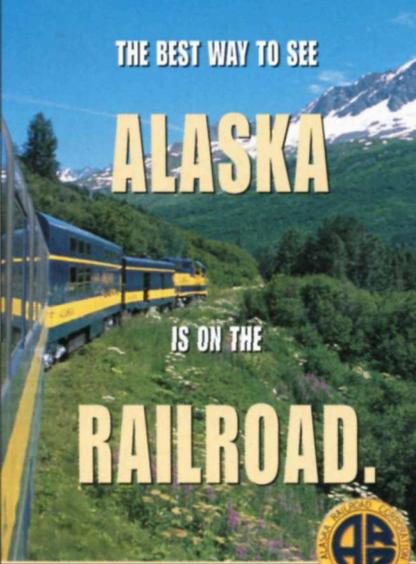
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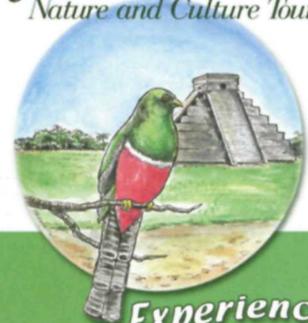
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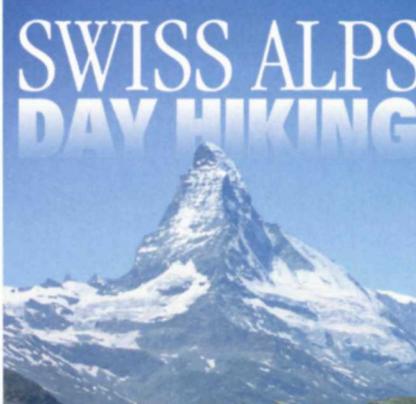
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# ParkScope

News and Notes

BY RYAN DOUGHERTY

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### Historic Beach May Become Park Unit

*Segregated African Americans cherished the Virginia Key Beach.*

HOLLYWOOD, FLA. —Lynette Austin fondly recalls childhood memories of Virginia Key Beach: nights spent dancing beneath the pavilion, picnics with her family, and life-long friendships forged, to name a few.

“The train, the carousel, the corn-dogs—it was a very festive place,” said Austin. “I’ll remember it as a place we looked forward to going to. It was a happy time. For us, it was like going to Disney World.”

It was also the only recreational area open to African Americans in Miami during the years of segregation, although some say that caused little resentment. The beach flourished, hosting family and community gatherings, religious events, and, of course, fun in the sun.

“I didn’t even give any idea to it being segregated,” said Austin. “Why would we? Look at all the good things we had there. It was a treasure.”

Today, Austin is executive director of the Virginia Key Beach Park Trust, an arm of the city of Miami working to restore the beach, which is now closed except for special events.

Before adjourning in November, the Senate passed legislation that authorized a study into whether the Virginia Key Beach Park merits inclusion in the

National Park System. NPCA supported the legislation and will work to ensure that the study gets done.

“The Virginia Key Beach Park highlights the rich history of the civil rights movement in South Florida,” said John Adornato, NPCA’s Sun Coast regional representative. “It has a history worthy of national park designation.”

The beach park is an 82-acre strip of shoreline less than a half-mile wide, just southeast of downtown Miami. Conservationists and park advocates fear that because the park is so close to Miami, it could be lost to development if it is not protected. It is now one of the few undeveloped pieces of shoreline in Miami.

“One of the big pluses of Virginia Key is the viewscape of its beaches—you don’t see any development now,” said Adornato. “Preserving that is essential.”

Conservationists also hope that a study of the historically significant beach park will also examine the beach’s relationship to ecological resources and contiguous areas on the 1,000-acre barrier island of Virginia Key.

The beach park was recently added to the National Register of Historic Places. The Virginia Key Beach Park Trust continues to raise money to restore the beach; it hopes to open the park next summer. Plans are under way to restore



**Virginia Key Beach was the only recreational area available to African Americans in Miami during the years of segregation.**

existing structures and popular features of the historic park, such as the merry-go-round and mini-train visitors rode.

“We are doing this not just for African Americans but for all Miami residents,” said Austin.

Dade County officials designated the beach “for the exclusive use of Negroes” in 1945, after Miami’s black leaders, frustrated with not being welcome at recreational sites, staged a wade-in at an exclusively white beach.

When Miami integrated in the 1960s, the beach’s popularity did not wane. But by the 1980s, the beach fell into disrepair after it was transferred to the city of Miami with the stipulation that it must remain open to the public.

Rep. Carrie Meek (D-Fla.) sponsored the legislation to study Virginia Key Beach Park, noting that only a handful of the 386 sites within the National Park System honor the civil rights era.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

## Bison Killings at Yellowstone Persist

*Bison that wander out of the park onto public lands are slaughtered.*

YELLOWSTONE N.P., MONT.—The annual slaughter of bison that wander outside Yellowstone National Park is under way, and critics of the practice fear that as many as 1,000 buffalo could be killed before winter ends.

Bison that stray from Yellowstone onto public lands can be killed under a state management plan designed to slow the spread of brucellosis, a disease some bison carry that officials say can be passed to livestock—an occurrence that has never been documented in the wild.

Through November, four bison had been captured and killed after wandering from the park onto adjacent public lands in Montana. These killings alarmed

many citizens and groups, including NPCA, that strongly oppose the plan.

“There is no incident of documented transmission of this disease between bison and livestock,” said Tony Jewett, NPCA’s senior director for the Northern Rockies region. “The bison are being slaughtered for no sound reason and to appease private cattle interests who choose to make private their use of our public lands.”

Opponents of the management plan also consider it a gift to the livestock industry, which views bison as competition for public land forage.

“Bison should have preferred status on public lands, with the opportunity to be free-roaming and free-ranging,” said Jewett. “Particularly in Yellowstone, there are no bright lines telling bison or elk where they need to stop before it becomes public land.”

The state of Montana has had permission from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to kill buffalo since 1995. The winter of 1996-1997 was especially eventful; unusually cold temperatures

brought many bison outside the park in search of food, and 1,083 were slaughtered. Last winter, 202 were killed.

State officials have set a population minimum of 3,000 Yellowstone bison. The Yellowstone herd is at about 4,000, so up to 1,000 could be killed this year.

NPCA and other groups, including the Buffalo Field Campaign, continue to oppose the bison management plan. NPCA has resurrected its Bison Belong campaign, through which businesses and citizens in the Yellowstone area will be engaged to oppose the slaughter.

### Take Action

For more information, visit [www.npca.org/action](http://www.npca.org/action) and click on the bison action alert. Letters can be sent to Director Fran Mainella (National Park Service, 1849 C St. NW, Washington, D.C. 22040) and Secretary Ann Veneman (Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250).

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## Legislation Would Extend Mt. Rainier

*Addition would protect park's ecosystem and hold off sprawl.*

MOUNT RAINIER N.P., WASH.—Legislation to expand Mount Rainier National Park, which observers say would protect the park's ecosystem and enhance visitor experience, could soon be signed into law.

In November, the House of Representatives voted to authorize an 800-acre increase of important river habitat adjacent to Mount Rainier in the Carbon River Valley. That area is part of Mount Rainier's river system and home to threatened and endangered species, including salmon and the marbled murrelet, a small seabird.

Heather Weiner, NPCA's Northwest regional director, said the approval of the

House bill was a key step toward protecting the Carbon River Valley from sprawl.

"Mount Rainier is becoming a suburban park, visible from millions of backyards in Washington," said Weiner. "It is important that we protect this river valley for the future of the park's wildlife."

The extension would also provide for new visitor campsites. The road leading into the current campgrounds at Ipsut Creek often floods, preventing travel.

The National Park Service first proposed the three-mile extension in the park's general management plan of 2001. Rep. Jennifer Dunn (R-Wash.) introduced the House bill. A similar bill is expected to pass in the Senate.

NPCA and other groups are working to ensure that the park extension is approved; once that happens, the groups will raise money, buy the land from its willing sellers, and transfer it to the park.

"The park [extension] is a great gift to future generations," said Liz Carr of the Carbon River Valley Conservation Project.

### NPCA Notes



#### Jim Stratton Joins NPCA

In December, Jim Stratton, former director of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation for the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, signed on as the director of NPCA's regional office in Anchorage. Stratton directs NPCA's efforts to protect the integrity of national parks in Alaska. He works with the Park Service and other groups in park planning and will help safeguard the national parks from exploitative interests. Stratton has nearly 15 years of experience in Alaska's environmental community. NPCA President Tom Kiernan said, "We are looking forward to applying [Jim's] talents to the many complex issues facing Alaska's national parks."

—Jenell Talley

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MARINE PRESERVATION

## No-Fishing Zones at Channel Islands

*The massive marine reserves are expected to revitalize fish stocks.*

CHANNEL ISLANDS N.P., CALIF.—Twenty-five percent of the biologically diverse waters surrounding Channel Islands National Park have been protected, following the decision by California's Fish and Game Commission to make 175 square miles of ocean off-limits to fishing.

The decision creates the largest marine reserve area in the continental United States. A coalition of park advocates, including NPCA, believes that the reserve area will help reverse an alarming decline in populations of several marine species once plentiful there, including red snapper, abalone, and angel sharks.

“By creating no-take zones, where no



*Much of the waters surrounding the islands (including Gull Island, above) are protected.*

sea life can be hunted, harvested, or captured, the Fish and Game Commission's vote will help to reverse declines in marine populations,” said Courtney Cuff, Pacific regional director for NPCA. “Wildlife, park visitors, and commercial fishermen can now thank the [commission].”

Scientists in recent years have concluded that no-take zones are a good way to rebuild fish stocks by allowing fish to reproduce. Recent evidence suggests that in the long-run this benefits both the fish and those who catch them. While some commercial and sports fishers oppose no-take reserves—many decried the commission vote—others see them as important for sustainable fishing.

The commission vote protected 13 areas, 11 of which are no-take reserves. One area off of Santa Cruz Island will allow recreational fishing, while another off of Anacapa Island will have limited commercial and recreational fishing.

The next step would be for the marine reserves to extend into federal waters, which begin beyond the three-mile boundaries of state waters that encircle each of the Channel Islands. That action, if approved by the Pacific Fishery Management Council, would stretch the islands' marine reserve system to 426 square miles.

The 175 miles currently protected represents the third largest reserve in the country, behind those in the Florida Keys and Hawaiian Islands. The plan for marine reserve areas at Channel Islands

was first proposed four years ago by sport fishers. The Marine Reserve Working Group, consisting of representatives from fishing and environmental groups, scholars and government officials, was created to develop approaches. Most of the nearly 10,000 public comments it received favored no-take zones.

The Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary—the ocean surrounding the islands—sits between warm and cold ocean streams, offering exceptional habitat and breeding areas for aquatic creatures, including 20 endangered or threatened species. The sanctuary covers 1,500 square miles. Before the commission's vote, only 1 percent of Channel Islands' waters were off-limits to fishing.

“Without a healthy fish population, seabirds and mammals on the coastline that depend on marine species will suffer,” said Cuff. “Protecting ocean waters that interface with national parks is inextricably linked to protecting the health of these terrestrial parks.”

**Did You Know?**

Minuteman Missile National Historic Site in South Dakota is the only park site whose primary purpose is to tell the story of the Cold War.

The park's resources include a deactivated intercontinental ballistic missile silo and a launch control facility where soldiers waited in an underground capsule for presidential instructions to launch Minuteman II missiles. The missiles were key to the U.S. military's defense systems during the Cold War.

After the Soviet Union fell and the arms reduction treaty was signed with Russia in 1991, the missile program was decreased dramatically.

The National Park Service is now planning for the site, a portion of which could open next summer.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

**YELLOWSTONE N.P., Wyoming**—The Bush administration in November released some specifics on its proposal to allow continued snowmobile use in Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks. The proposal, which would take effect in the winter of 2003-2004, would allow up to 1,100 snowmobiles daily into Yellowstone, a 35 percent increase over the current daily average. The limit is meant to keep snowmobile use under control on peak days, when snowmobile numbers have exceeded 1,500 a day. Also, 80 percent of snowmobile riders next season would be led by a guide and use reportedly quieter and less polluting four-cycle engines. Older, two-stroke machines would be phased out by 2004-2005. NPCA has long opposed snowmobiles in the parks and feels that the administration's unprecedented reversal of a well-researched and popular Park Service policy in America's first national park bodes ill for protection of America's national parks.

**GLACIER N.P., Montana**—The campaign to increase the size of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park [ParkScope, November/December 2002] gained momentum in October when Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announced an intention to expand Waterton into the Canadian Flathead Valley, immediately north of Glacier National Park. A U.S.-Canadian coalition of business groups, community leaders, and conservationists developed the proposal to double the size of Waterton, adding 100,000 acres, and align its western border with Glacier's at the Flathead River. "Americans and Canadians from all walks of life have come together to protect this special place," said Steve Thompson, NPCA's Glacier program manager and the expansion campaign's U.S. coordinator. The announcement itself does not expand the park, but it signals the prime minister's intent to negotiate toward that end. The proposed expansion lands now belong to the Province of British Columbia.

**DENALI N.P., Alaska**—The Alaska Board of Game recently increased protection for wolves on state land adjacent to Denali National Park and Preserve, where the wolves sometimes roam. The goal is to protect the full range of two of Denali's wolf packs, the Toklat and Mount Margaret packs—the most viewed wolves in the world. The board voted to create a 55-square-mile area to protect the Mount Margaret pack, which often ventures outside park boundaries, and to extend a ban on hunting and trapping in a 72-square-mile buffer established in November 2000 to protect the Toklat. Hunting and trapping on state land near Denali have killed several wolves from the two packs in recent years. NPCA called the board's decision a victory for both park wildlife and visitors who hope to see the popular wolves. NPCA has long pushed for a no-trapping, no-hunting buffer zone on state lands adjacent to the park.

**HARPERS FERRY N.H.P., West Virginia**—The National Park Service announced in October that Murphy Farm, adjacent to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, would be added to the park. The Trust for Public Land will buy the farm and sell it to the park. The 99-acre farm had been eyed for "Murphy's Landing," a 188-house subdivision that would have included a 200-foot water tower and a daily discharge of 70,000 gallons of treated sewage into a tributary of the Shenandoah River. NPCA helped lead a coalition opposed to the development. Joy Oakes, NPCA's Mid-Atlantic regional director, called the expansion a "win-win" result. Murphy Farm was key to the Confederate victory in the Battle of Harpers Ferry in 1862 and a temporary site of abolitionist John Brown's fort. Participants in a 1906 meeting that led to the creation of the NAACP made barefoot pilgrimages to the fort at Murphy Farm.

## LEGISLATION

### Flight 93 Crash Site Becomes Memorial

*Newest national park unit to honor passengers and crew.*

**SHANKSVILLE, PA.**—Recent legislation signed by President Bush created a national memorial to honor the passengers and crew of Flight 93 who lost their lives in a struggle with hijackers who had overtaken the plane last September 11.

The legislation directs the Interior Department to create a 15-member commission to plan for the Flight 93 National Memorial, to be built at the site of the crash in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, about 80 miles southeast of Pittsburgh.

The 40 passengers and crewmembers who died in the crash have been lauded as symbols of American heroism, models of selflessness and solidarity. It is believed that they prevented the plane from crashing into the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

"They took the plane into the ground to save life," said President George W. Bush in September, a day before signing the legislation to create the memorial. "These brave souls represented the true spirit and greatness of our country."

The creation of the memorial was unusual because the Park Service generally waits at least 50 years after an event before deciding whether to memorialize it as part of the National Park System.

"This memorial was declared instantaneously because of its extraordinary value to our history," said Park Service spokeswoman Edie Shean-Hammond. "This story is just phenomenal—no other park site tells a similar story...its national significance will stand up 50 years from now."

The Oklahoma City National Memorial was another recent exception; the memorial was established in 1997, two years after the federal building bombing.

The Flight 93 commission, consisting of local residents and officials, historians,



**A temporary memorial adorns the crash site.**

families of the victims, Park Service officials, and others, must present a recommended memorial design to Congress within three years. The size and scope of

the memorial, as well as how much it will cost and who will pay for it, are questions the commission will answer. The memorial becomes the National Park System's 386th unit.

Joy Oakes, NPCA's Mid-Atlantic regional director, said that protecting the land at the crash site was "timely and appropriate," adding that the designers should take their time to create a memorial truly suited to honoring Flight 93.

Thousands of people have visited the site of the crash since last September 11, leaving mementos such as handwritten letters, poems, and flags at a temporary memorial. The Park Service has worked with county officials, family members of the victims, and others to preserve the offerings.

Other legislation relating to the attacks of last September 11 has also been brought before Congress. One bill in the House would create a national memorial at or near the site of the World Trade Center in New York. Another would authorize a memorial of the attack on the Pentagon at the nearby Arlington Naval Annex in Virginia.

## NPCA Notes

### Dreyfuss Narrates PSA

Last October, Academy Award®-winning actor Richard Dreyfuss began narrating several new public service announcements launched by NPCA's Americans for National Parks campaign. The 30-second radio and television PSAs encourage people to act on behalf of the country's national parks. The radio PSA reached more than 25 million people nationwide after only five weeks. Americans for National Parks, a coalition of nonprofits, businesses, and tourism and trade associations, hopes the campaign will drive traffic to its web site, where users can learn more about the needs of the parks. For more information visit [www.americansfornationalparks.org](http://www.americansfornationalparks.org).

—Jenell Talley

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# Political Outlook

*Over the next two years, Republican leaders must choose to continue to protect the national parks or look out for the special interests of a few.*

BY CRAIG OBEY

**O**pportunity rich and high risk. That's the political outlook for our national parks during the new 108th Congress.

The Republican party now holds the Presidency and majorities in both Houses of Congress. That means they control the future of our national parks. Party members must choose between two courses—carrying the mantle of great Republican leaders such as Teddy Roosevelt, the father of some of our most cherished national parks, or carrying water for special interests who want to fatten their pocketbooks by compromising the natural and cultural heritage that our parks protect.

This year, Congress and the White House will continue to devote enormous attention to national security and the war on terror, as they must. But those pressing challenges will make protecting the precious American icons that lift our spirits, remind us of who we are, and nourish our dreams even more important. As Teddy Roosevelt said, "Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us...."

Roosevelt's words ring as true today as

CRAIG OBEY is NPCA's vice president of government affairs.

they did when he spoke them in 1910. Indeed, past presidents have given significant support to the parks during times of war. President Abraham Lincoln protected Yosemite Valley during the Civil War. Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt took actions during



World Wars I and II to protect places that have become key parts of our park system. They demonstrated strong domestic leadership by protecting enduring symbols of our treasured American landscape. We need the same from President Bush and the new Congress.

During the next two years, we will see one of two things. The president will either provide genuine leadership to meet his election-year pledge to protect the national parks or use photo opportunities with national park backdrops to distract attention from backroom deals like the one that will allow snowmobiles to continue to pollute Yellowstone. Efforts are already under way to unravel

piece-by-piece vitally important laws such as the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, which play critical roles in preserving our parks.

The good news is that parks—cherished by Americans from all walks of life—have friends on Capitol Hill in both the Democratic and Republican parties. Some old friends will be absent, such as Senators Fred Thompson (R-Tenn.), Max Cleland (D-Ga.) and Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.). But frequent park antagonists such as Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) and Rep. James Hansen (R-Utah) also will be absent.

Some strong supporters of the parks have also lost key positions. Among the more unfortunate changes resulting from the November elections is the replacement of Sen. Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.) with Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.) as chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Unlike Jeffords, who was using his chair to promote park-protecting amendments to the Clean Air Act, Inhofe is far more likely to try shifting clean air laws in favor of polluters at the expense of hikers and others who breathe air in national parks, such as Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains, that is worse than the air over Atlanta or Washington, D.C. In fact, anti-public-health forces may seek a rewrite of the Clean Air Act, as well as use more subtle methods, such as cutting

enforcement budgets and tacking anti-environmental riders onto appropriations bills. The shift in congressional control means that Congress is less likely to put a brake on the administration's efforts to weaken such protections.

Transportation in the parks is another area of enormous challenge in the coming year. Congress, led by Inhofe and Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska), will authorize the massive law that funds transportation projects across the country. Unfortunately, Sen. Paul Sarbanes' (D-Md.) loss of the Banking Committee chair, where he had jurisdiction over transit issues, jeopardizes his Transit in the Parks bill, which would provide sorely needed solutions for the most heavily visited parks. Enormous energy will be required to prevent the parks from adding to the backlog of unmet transportation, transit, and pedestrian needs.

Finally the appropriations committees will remain important for the national

parks. The growing deficit will limit funding opportunities, making continued attention to the needs of the parks important. During 2002 the Republican House proposed more operating funds for the parks in fiscal year 2003 than either the Senate or the president. Those funds were jeopardized by last year's breakdown of the appropriations process. In November, Congress passed a continuing resolution that means much, if not all, of the \$120 million increase the House proposed for the Park Service for fiscal year 2003 could be lost.

The funding news is not all bad. A strong bipartisan contingent in Congress supports increased funding. This group ranges from conservatives such as Sen. Conrad Burns (R-Mont.), the new Senate Interior Appropriations chairman, to civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.). But the parks will also need strong leadership from newcomers such as Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.).

Adding to the intrigue of the coming year is President Bush's as yet-unmet election-year pledge to protect the national parks. In 2000, then-Governor Bush pledged to eliminate what he anticipated at the time to be a \$4.9 billion maintenance backlog. The administration has made little progress on that pledge, \$2.7 billion of which candidate Bush said would come from this year's transportation reauthorization bill.

It's clear that national parks have an enormous amount to win or to lose in the coming year. Congress and the administration must remember that protecting America also means protecting the things we cherish here at home. To paraphrase President Nixon, the coming year must be the year when America pays its debt to the past by reclaiming the purity of its air, its waters, and our living environment. What greater way to pay that debt than to protect our national parks.



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# The Benefits of *Beavers*

By Todd Wilkinson

At dawn, Douglas Smith climbs into a small airplane and sets a course for the rugged interior of Yellowstone to track radio-collared wolves. By late afternoon, he's back on terra firma, this time perched on a six-foot dome made of mud and willow branches protruding from a freshly created wilderness pond.

Smith is not listening for howls now. He's waiting for the agitated tail slaps of *Castor canadensis* and trying to better understand the building blocks that make healthy ecosystems whole. In all of his years working as a federal wildlife biologist, including his current stint as chief wolf researcher in America's oldest national park, he has been intrigued most by the lives of "keystone species"—the pivotal creatures that profoundly affect the composition of plants and animals in the environment around them.

As much as Smith is captivated by wolves, he holds a special place in his heart for another keystone species—what he calls the "unassuming charis-



MIKE BABIOWSKI/DEBENSKY PHOTO ASSOC. FRED HIRSCHMANN



JOHN GERLACH/DEBENSKY PHOTO ASSOC.

**Beavers, which often live in domed lodges and can weigh as much as 65 pounds, feed on a variety of trees, including birch, willow, cottonwood, and aspen, their favorite.**

***Considered functionally extinct at the beginning of the 20th century, beavers have made a dramatic comeback across the United States and Canada—good news for beavers as well as other species. The large industrious rodents create wetlands and marshy areas that provide habitat for hundreds of species.***

matic rodent" that inhabits the backwaters of public attention. Smith, of course, is referring to beavers, the largest native rodent in North America.

Legendary for their prowess at building dams and engineering wetlands, beavers are making a dramatic comeback across most of the United States and Canada. Today, the recovery of the beaver, though slow to reach some areas such as Rocky Mountain National Park, rates as one of the greatest conservation success stories. In dozens of national

parks, from the glacier-coated valleys of Alaska to the mountains of Appalachia and southwest toward the Rio Grande, these shy aquatic mammals play a tremendous role in bolstering the diversity that makes parks important wildlife havens.

"The ecological role of beaver is tremendous," says Stewart Breck, a research biologist with Wildlife Services, an arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Beaver are credited with being able to alter the environment more than any

other animal in North America, except for humans," adds Bruce Baker, a senior scientist with the U.S. Geological Survey in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Beavers, which often live in domed lodges, can grow as large as 65 pounds, breed in winter, and give birth to kits in the spring. They spend much of their lives in the water and are easy to trap. Notoriously slow moving, they waddle when on land, leaving them vulnerable to predators, including bears, wolves, coyotes, and cougars.

As recently as 300 years ago, scientists say 65 million beavers lived in North America, a conservative estimate in the eyes of some, who place the historical continent-wide peak at perhaps closer to five times that number. Regardless of the unofficial census figures used, beaver experts today agree on two points: these animals were once astoundingly abundant, setting the stage for the bounty of riparian wildlife European settlers found when they reached the continent; and the animals suffered radical depletion because of commercial fur trapping.

Iconic American explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark had a hand in this exploitation. During their expedition across the country 200 years ago, Lewis and Clark established a series



*Beaver ponds and dams act as filters, capturing silt and other impurities.*

of fur trading posts, including Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site in North Dakota, as a way for the United States to assert a larger geopolitical presence in global commerce.

Both the explorers had personal financial stakes in promoting the harvest of beavers. In fact, it was Lewis' declaration in a letter to President Thomas Jefferson that the upper Missouri River held more beavers than anywhere else on Earth that hastened a rush of fur trappers to the region. Within 40 years, beavers were virtually trapped out of the Rockies.

And by the beginning of the 20th century, just 100 years after the Lewis and Clark Expedition, beavers were functionally extinct in the United States.

"We are only now beginning to comprehend the effect that beaver had," Smith says. "Unfortunately, we're also still coping with the aftermath caused by removing these animals from most of the Lower 48 in an amazingly short amount of time."

The near-elimination of beavers led to a drying of wetlands and an expansion of

meadows and forests to the detriment of marshy species. But beginning at the end of World War II, as a new age of ecological enlightenment emerged in the United States, hundreds of federal and state-sponsored beaver reintroduction efforts were carried out nationwide to enhance riparian habitat. Riparian zones—one of the richest and most diverse types of habitat—account for just 2 percent of landscapes in regions such as the American West, yet they provide 80 percent of wildlife with habitat at some point in their lives. Beavers, Smith says, are boons for species diversity.

Consider the lesson from Voyageurs National Park in Minnesota, where Smith worked for 11 years. During the 1940s, aerial photos showed that less than 4 percent of the park was riparian habitat, but during the subsequent three decades when beaver numbers were allowed to grow, the amount of riparian acres quadrupled.



How can animals that can weigh up to 65 pounds affect epic positive change on a landscape level? "Beavers bring double rewards," Smith says. "They not only break up the landscape, but they affect the homogeneity of species by producing aquatic habitat that hundreds of related species cannot live without. Where you have beaver coming back, you'll often also see recovery of other species."

Among the biggest beneficiaries of beaver presence are moose, mink, and muskrat; numerous bird species includ-

*Despite beavers' reputation for causing flooding, their marshes actually help buffer adjacent landscapes against the effects of flash floods. Their network of channels, dams, and sloughs slows the water as it moves through a drainage, holds water in the landscape longer, insulates areas from drought, and recharges underground aquifers.*



JIM BATTLES/DEMINSKY PHOTO ASSOC.



JOHN GERLACH/DEMINSKY PHOTO ASSOC.

CARY C. GIVEN

DOMINIQUE BRAUD/DEMINSKY PHOTO ASSOC.

**Beavers will choose to eat less desirable trees rather than move to a new site.**

ing songbirds, wading birds, waterfowl, and raptors; as well as amphibians, reptiles, aquatic insects, and, of course, fish that thrive in slow-moving water, Baker says. Scientists also believe that beaver ponds may be crucial in aiding the recovery of imperiled trout, and along the West Coast some say the animals historically provided key habitat that aided large runs of coho salmon.

Beaver ponds and dams function as water filters that capture silt and pollutants, leaving water heading downstream cleaner. Despite beavers' reputation for causing flooding, their marshes help buffer adjacent landscapes against the effects of flash floods. Their network of channels, dams, and sloughs slows the water as it moves through a drainage, holds water in the landscape longer, insulates areas from drought, and recharges underground aquifers. Water that normally flushes through a river corridor in a single day will pass through beaver-inhabited environments in seven to ten days.

Mark McKinstry, research scientist at the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, has spearheaded a novel project in which 285 beavers were introduced into 14 Wyoming streams on public land and private ranches. The goals were to improve wildlife habitat, restore damaged streams, enhance natural water supplies for livestock, and combat aridity. The seven-



*Beavers present challenges, toppling trees in backyards and parks. Researchers have devised materials to armor tree trunks and discovered nontoxic chemicals that repel the animals.*

year effort proved to be an overwhelming success. “Beaver deliver a huge bang for the buck. As a public investment, you’d be hard pressed to find an animal that delivers bigger returns,” he says.

The fact that ranchers are learning to regard beavers as partners shows how societal attitudes have positively shifted, McKinstry says. It also demonstrates how national parks, in serving as reservoirs for less appreciated species, are

ahead of their time. They continue to serve as important natural laboratories, delivering lessons that can be applied on a larger landscape level.

Of course, beavers can, and do, present challenges to humans. They topple trees in city parks and backyards, and their handiwork has flooded basements, roads, crops, and woodlands, causing millions of dollars in property damage each year, notes Breck. Only a few

decades ago, the standard protocol for dealing with such enterprising beavers was dynamiting their dams and lodges, then trapping the animals. Today, Breck's Wildlife Services emphasizes nonlethal methods of management. Researchers with Wildlife Services have devised special materials to armor tree trunks, and they've discovered nontoxic chemicals that repel the animals.

For Smith, it's no coincidence that his study of beavers ultimately led him into wolf management. Not only are wolves and beavers bound together as predator

and prey, but similarities abound. Both species shape the ecosystems they inhabit, exist in extended family units, and scent-mark their territories. Both have also developed unique ways of communicating. Where wolves howl to exchange information or sound an alarm of intruders, beavers slap their flat tails against water surfaces to put their kin on high alert.

In addition, both animals are classified as "cooperative breeders," a distinction that applies to only 2 percent of mammals in the animal kingdom. In

simple parlance, cooperative breeding species are led by dominant males and females that remain monogamous until one of the mates dies.

"I've studied wolves and bears and birds and beetles, but beaver are one of the more fascinating creatures I've ever observed," adds Breck. "When you're out there watching them every night, your admiration for their work ethic soars. Far from being boring, I find them to be highly charismatic."

It has taken us a long time to realize the damage caused by eliminating beavers. If past mistakes are to be remedied, long-term solutions must be found. "Public land managers and private property owners who embrace beaver as an ally may not see a whole lot of change in their lives," McKinstry says. "But if their grandkids are able to see the improvements these animals bring, then it's going to be a good thing." 🐾

## The Crunch on Beaver Food

Beavers feast on a variety of trees—birch, maple, oak, cherry, and balsam poplar—but if given a choice, they prefer aspen. Willow and cottonwood come in a distant second.

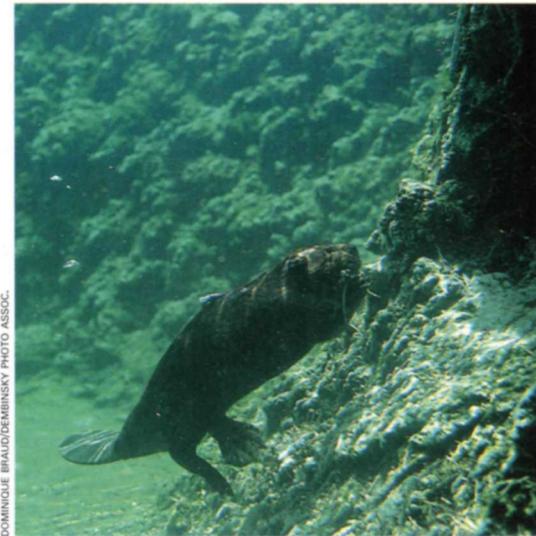
In a project in northern Minnesota, Douglas Smith studied beavers' feeding patterns in an attempt to explain why colonies occupy or abandon a particular pond. "If their chief food supply has, for whatever reason, been depleted, colonies may move on. However, some colonies become so attached to a particular location that they choose to stay and forage on less desired trees than strike out for an alternative place to live," he says. Smith also found that beavers tend to be most active cutting down trees for their bark in the spring and fall, when leaves are not available to them. A ready supply of aspen bark has been linked to healthier and higher numbers of kits born to beaver mothers.

In Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain national parks, climatic factors and grazing pressure by elk have winnowed away the aspen forest, causing beavers, in recent years, to switch over to willow for nutrition. Smith identified 77 beaver colonies across Yellowstone's 3,600 square miles in 2002, and not a single one was living on aspen. Yellowstone, in fact, probably never supported dense beaver numbers.

In Colorado, Bruce Baker, a senior scientist with the U.S. Geological Survey in Fort Collins, Colorado, is studying how beavers compete with elk and moose for willow and what effect the combination of beaver tree cutting and intense elk grazing have on the willow forest. When beavers chew through a willow trunk, it causes the tree to send out numerous suckers that result in more trees. The mud piles that beavers create along pond banks also are conducive to germination by willow seedlings.

On the other hand, intensive ungulate grazing, in which elk aggressively eat off both the buds of willow and the leaves that grow from new shoots, can depress willow regrowth, causing beavers to leave an area.

In its assessment of Rocky Mountain National Park, NPCA's State of the Parks® program stated that elk foraging was affecting willow stands, especially those found in the elk's winter range. One of the study's recommendations was to complete population studies of key vertebrate species to understand their abundance, distribution, critical habitat needs, and interactions within the park.



*Beavers fall prey to other animals when on land and spend much of their lives in water.*

**Todd Wilkinson**, a regular contributor to *National Parks*, last wrote about threats to America's native forests.

# Wilderness Homeland



PAT O'HARA

By Bill Sherwonit

In 1929, when Robert Marshall first arrived in Alaska, much of the Central Brooks Range appeared as blank spots on maps of the territory. This sweeping chain of mountains arcing east-west across the full breadth of northern Alaska inspired Marshall's wilderness-

preservation vision and led him to become a founding member of The Wilderness Society and author of the influential *Alaska Wilderness: Exploring the Central Brooks Range*, first published in 1956 as *Arctic Wilderness*. Today, Marshall's legacy lives on in a nearly continuous band of national

preserves, monuments, parks, and refuges across the area including the centerpiece—the 8.4-million-acre Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. Still, more than 70 years after Marshall's arrival, Gates of the Arctic remains terra incognita to most Americans, though it is among the largest, wildest, and most spectacular of our nation's parklands—a distinctive type of “inhabited wilderness.”

From the beginning, Gates of the Arctic was intended to be something different—a park that is expansively wild, free of visitor amenities, challenging in its scale and ruggedness to those who visit. As National Park Service (NPS) planning teams explored the Brooks Range in the 1970s, they came to see it as “America's last big chunk of raw wilderness...an ultimate range.”

In his 1992 book *Alaska's Brooks Range*, retired NPS employee John Kauffman recalled that he and other Gates planners “borrowed a karate term to call it a black-belt park. Not for neophytes, it would be at the ascetic end of a spectrum of national parks in Alaska that would range from the comforts of hotels and cruise ships to the most basic of wilderness survival.”

In legislation that established Gates of the Arctic, Congress agreed, making it clear that the park's primary purposes included “opportunities for visitors to experience solitude and...wilderness recreational activities.”

No other park in the system places such a focus on solitude and wilderness recreation, says Superintendent Dave Mills, just as no other park is to be managed, first and foremost, “to maintain the wild and undeveloped character of the area.” As if to set this unit apart from all others in the National Park System, planners proposed the name Gates of the Arctic National Wilderness Park.

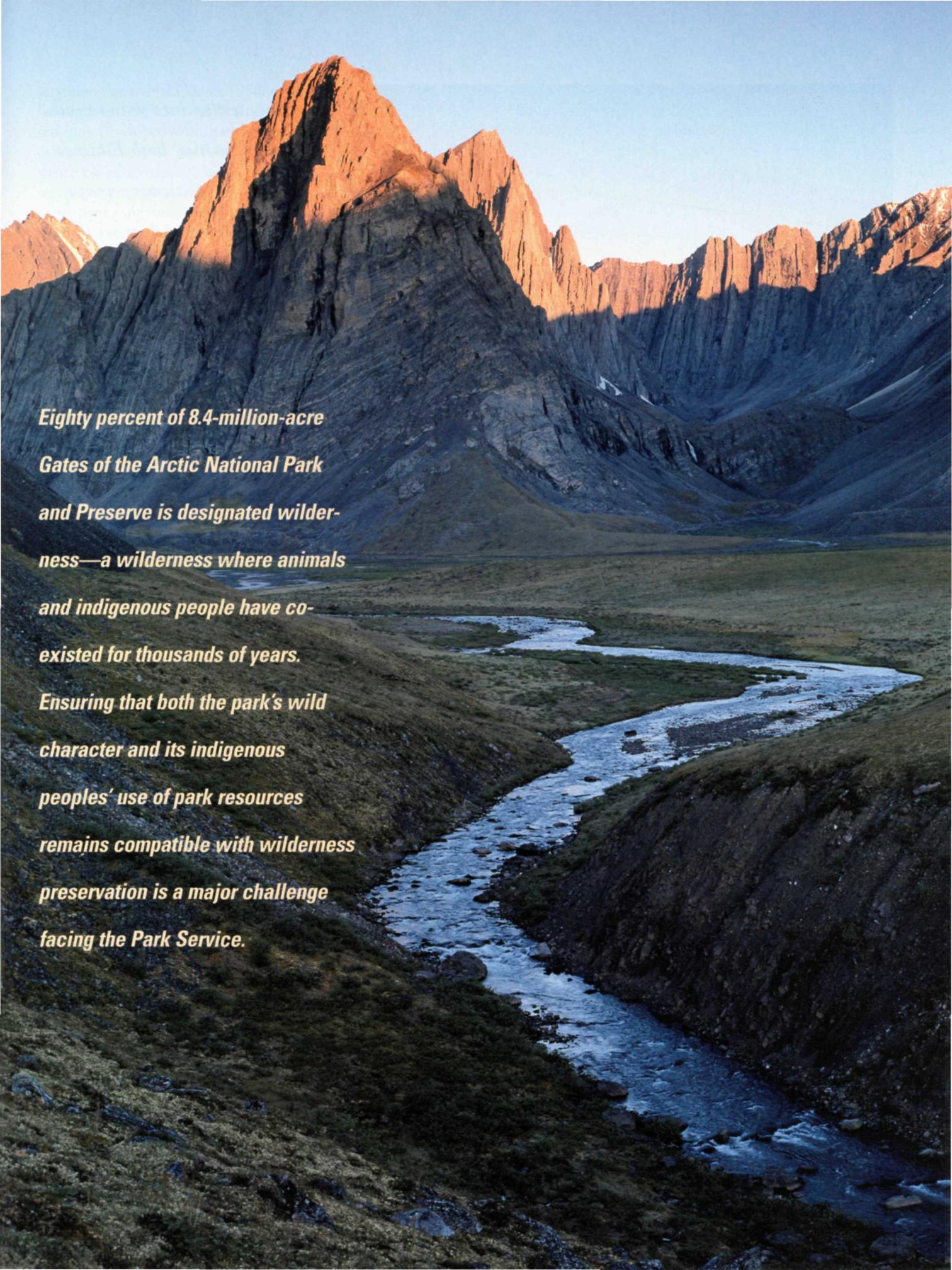
Though “wilderness” was ultimately dropped from its name, more than 80 percent of Gates is designated wilderness. Within its boundaries are six officially designated “wild rivers”; two National Natural Landmarks (Walker Lake and the Arrigetch Peaks); and a fully protected Arctic ecosystem that ranges from lowland boreal forest to high alpine tundra. Thirty-six species of northern mammals inhabit the landscape, including wolves, grizzlies, Dall sheep, and huge herds of caribou; plus,



ROB STAPLETON/DEMBINSKY PHOTO ASSOC.

An Athabascan Indian treks through Gates carrying furs.

FRED HIRSCHMANN



*Eighty percent of 8.4-million-acre  
Gates of the Arctic National Park  
and Preserve is designated wilder-  
ness—a wilderness where animals  
and indigenous people have co-  
existed for thousands of years.  
Ensuring that both the park's wild  
character and its indigenous  
peoples' use of park resources  
remains compatible with wilderness  
preservation is a major challenge  
facing the Park Service.*



FRED HIRSCHMANN

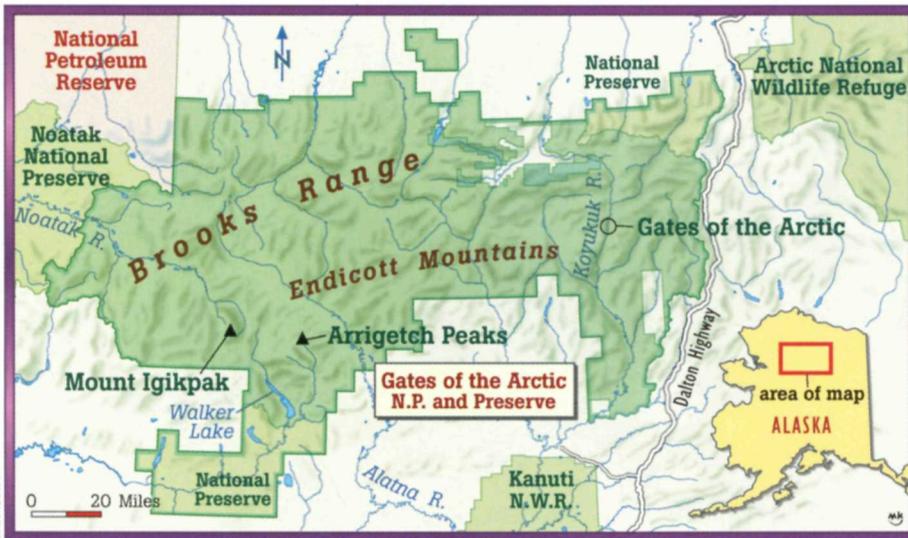
**Anaktuvuk Pass, a village of about 300, is contained within Gates of the Arctic.**

more than 130 bird species breed here, the great majority of them long-distance migrants. Wave after wave of mountain ridges and jagged peaks—most unnamed—cap the park and seem to stretch forever. The mountains are dissected by thousands of swift-running creeks and broad U-shaped river valleys that magnify the sense of wide-open spaces.

Yet this is not wilderness in the sense that our modern Western culture usually imagines it: a place where humans are merely visitors. In the words of historian

Theodore Catton, Gates of the Arctic (like several other Alaska parklands) is an “inhabited wilderness.” Or, as park ranger Steve Ulvi puts it, Gates of the Arctic is a centuries-old homeland to the region’s native residents.

Until the past century, the indigenous peoples who’ve occupied this region for thousands of years were nomads. Now settled into year-round communities, both Eskimos and Athabascans remain heavily dependent on the region’s animals and plants, as do a small number of non-native residents.



MATT KANVA

*Now settled into year-round communities, both Eskimos and Athabascans remain heavily dependent on the region’s animals and plants, as do a small number of non-native residents.*

After recognizing this dependence, Congress mandated that traditional subsistence activities by local residents be permitted in the park. Ten small communities possess “resident zone” status and have subsistence rights to hunt, trap, fish, and harvest plants within the area. But no group of people is as dependent on the park’s resources—especially caribou—as the Nunamiut Eskimos of Anaktuvuk Pass, a village of about 300 located along the Arctic Divide and the only community inside park borders.

The tribe’s oral traditions say that the Nunamiuts are firmly rooted in these mountains. They maintained a semi-nomadic lifestyle deep into the 20th century, following caribou and other game in groups of 50 to 100 people until settling at Anaktuvuk Pass in 1949. Even today, their culture remains inextricably tied to the caribou that pass through Gates each year.

“Clearly, the Nunamiut have a special relationship with this landscape,” says Ulvi. “Their traditional homelands include much of the park and preserve. So not only does Gates ensure that this wilderness remains intact, it also ensures that an indigenous culture remains intact. That combination is unique to this park.”

Recognizing that surrounding parklands could prevent unwanted development—including a proposed year-round road right through Anaktuvuk Pass—many Nunamiut supported the creation of Gates. But soon after passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Con-

servation Act (ANILCA) in 1980, establishing four NPS units including Gates, tensions developed with park managers over the Eskimos' new-found dependence on all-terrain-vehicles (ATVs) for subsistence hunting. Worried that ATVs were damaging wilderness lands, park managers restricted their use to narrow corridors; the locals, as a result, felt cut off from their traditional hunting grounds.

"We hated [the park managers]," says Nunamiut elder Rachel Riley. "They were taking over our place, the place where we would always go hunting."

As relations deteriorated, the two groups began discussing a land exchange in 1984. Negotiations were complex and sometimes contentious, but both sides realized the issue of ATV use for hunting had to be resolved. "It was the single biggest challenge we faced in those early years," says Ulvi. "We had to work that out before we could do any serious backcountry planning."

Finally, in November 1996, negotiations culminated in a massive—and in some quarters, controversial—land exchange that involved hundreds of thousands of acres. Some existing parkland surrounding Anaktuvuk Pass was delisted as wilderness, while other lands were newly designated wilderness.

The Nunamiut people conveyed nearly 40,000 acres to the government, but they also gained ATV access to 126,632 acres of non-wilderness parkland. Among the positive spinoffs: Anaktuvuk residents could continue traditional hunting patterns within the park. In return, they agreed to restrict development on their lands inside the park and allow recreational access. Park managers, meanwhile, promoted goodwill and established a working relationship with their neighbors.

"That land exchange worked out real good," says Riley, "because now we can hunt where we've always hunted. What they did was wonderful. People felt

much better about [the Park Service]."

Tensions with the Nunamiut of Anaktuvuk Pass were representative of larger problems in those early years. Jack Reakoff, a longtime resident of Wiseman, near Gates' eastern edge, says park staff then were "too heavy-handed" with longtime residents. "They were very



**Noatak River Region Camp is a popular destination.**

standoffish and mistrustful of locals," he recalls. "They came in with teams of people armed with guns, and that didn't go over very well with people who've lived here all their lives."

Over time, with changes in leadership, relationships improved dramatically. Instead of taking an adversarial approach, park managers began to seek local residents' advice and sought to form partnerships. Over the last ten years, says Reakoff, "the wounds have largely healed. People are pretty pleased with how things are now."

One key area of cooperative management has been subsistence. Reakoff, Rachel Riley, and many other residents

have worked long hours on a Subsistence Resource Commission, to address regulations and issues within Gates of the Arctic. Together with park staff, they've recently produced a Subsistence Management Plan that, according to Mills, park superintendent since 1995, is intended to be a "living, breathing document" that's regularly updated.

With the biggest challenges—the land exchange, subsistence, and trust-building—of the park's first 20 years now largely resolved, the staff can focus on backcountry planning. Part of a larger, long-term effort to better manage backcountry visitors in national parks throughout the state, Gates of the Arctic's backcountry/wilderness plan is one of the first to be undertaken in Alaska. It will amend the park's 1986 general management plan, which Ulvi describes as outdated. NPCA's Alaska office will be involved in guiding the planning process to be sure that the special qualities of the backcountry are maintained.

As might be expected, Gates' staff already has a handle on recreational-use patterns. For the most part, visitation has remained low: on average, fewer than 2,000 people visit the park from mid-June through mid-September, prime time for wilderness trips. Nevertheless, park managers have identified several visitor "hot spots," including the Noatak and North Fork of the Koyukuk rivers.

Although Gates is inland and mountainous, for recreational purposes it is first and foremost a river park. Only a quarter of Gates' recreational visitors travel exclusively overland; the rest combine river trips with day hikes. "Rivers are natural highways through these mountains," Ulvi explains. "You can cover more ground and see more wildlife, and it's easier than backpacking across the tundra."

As a consequence, much of the park's backcountry plan will likely address use in river corridors. Of particular concern are the "portals" where groups begin



Most visitors get to Gates of the Arctic by float plane, using lakes as landing spots.

their trips. Because access is primarily by plane, and landing spots (mostly lakes) are limited in number, most visitors enter Gates at the same locales. Not only can the landscape take a beating at such sites, but visitors may lose that sense of solitude they seek in remote wilderness.

To date, the only restriction has been the size of commercial groups: backpacking groups are limited to seven people and river parties, to ten (nonguided groups are asked to follow those limits voluntarily). In the new plan, park managers will consider a zoning system, with restrictions on the number of groups allowed in high-use areas and different ways to spread use out.

Superintendent Mills wants the backcountry/wilderness plan to do two things: identify a variety of management tools specific to Gates and specify threshold levels of visitor use that will trigger those tools. "Our chief concern is protecting the park's wilderness," he says, "but we also want to preserve the quality of the wilderness experience and avoid potential conflicts with subsistence uses [which to date have been minimal]. We know we have some areas that we need to manage more effectively."

Although some may resist visitor limits, Mills says most commercial operators have been supportive of a back-

country plan. Among those pushing for it is Carol Kasza, co-owner of Arctic Treks, a small, family-run business. With husband Jim Campbell, she has guided people in the Brooks Range for more than 20 years.

In the mid-1980s, Kasza participated in the development of Gates' general management plan. Back then, she recalls, "I advocated for no limits at all. But it wasn't long before I did a 180-degree turnaround, partly because of increased pressures I've seen in the [neighboring] Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

"Even a place like Gates can become overcrowded in popular spots. Some sort of regulations are needed, but they have to fit the place. I support a thoughtful plan that considers both the wilderness and the people who use it."

Ideally, such a plan would already be in place. But as Ulvi says, "We still have time to do it right—if we do it now, while we're ahead of the game. This is our challenge: to take our nation's flagship wilderness park and create a plan that preserves its wilderness character, and opportunities for wilderness recreation, in the long term—before there are any crises, or compromises to be made. That's what is so exciting; we're doing something that's never been done before." 🐻



**Bill Sherwonit** is a nature writer who lives in Anchorage, Alaska.



The aerial view, above, of the sculpted granite faces of the Arrigetch Peaks is breathtaking. A photographer tries to capture another such view, this one of morning fog lifting from the Endicott Mountains in Gates of the Arctic National Park, Alaska.

*A five-year science-gathering initiative signals a shift within the National Park Service from a focus on visitor needs to both preserving and understanding wildlife and other natural resources.*

# A NATURAL *Challenge*



*Historically, the Park Service focused on visitor needs, not preservation of the park's beautiful landscapes and natural resources.*



DARYL C. GIVEN

**Black oystercatchers are among the species being studied at Kenai Fjords.**

**By David Williams**

In April 2001, geologist Jon Achuff began a study of glaciers in Rocky Mountain National Park, hoping to answer a simple question: are the glaciers retreating? To facilitate Achuff's research, park staff provided him with workspace and equipment, made a vehicle available, arranged for campsites, and generally handled all logistics and scheduling of park facilities and personnel. Judy Visty, education coordinator for Rocky Mountain's Continental Divide Research and Learning Center, and Terry Terrell, the center's research coordinator, also made sure that everyone from interpreters to trail crews to the superintendent received a series of technical reports, written by Achuff during his study.

"The Learning Center staff helped out in every way they could," says Achuff. "It's a far cry from the past, when it seemed that it was more a matter of parks putting up with researchers than encouraging them."

In fact, previously the National Park Service (NPS) has not always been aware when a researcher was working in a park. In those cases, not only was NPS not providing assistance to the researcher, but the park often did not benefit from the fruits of the researcher's work. In addition, the park was not able to direct research or guide researchers to topics that were critical for the Park Service to do its job better.

NPS often does not know what

resources the parks contain or the extent of a critical wildlife population. For instance, Point Reyes National Seashore in California has little information on the marine mammals, and many parks do not have key information available on the life cycles of invertebrates. If park staff does not know, for instance, when butterflies or moths are maturing, they could inadvertently suggest a time for a controlled burn that could destroy a population. The Natural Resource Challenge will help to identify information gaps and provide direction for where further research is needed.

The Natural Resource Challenge, established in August 1999 with a five-year action plan, marks a distinct break from the past. The challenge will be supported by \$100 million over five years and seeks both to improve science-gathering within national parks and to disseminate information to park employees and the public. "Better information will help us make better management decisions, and sharing that knowledge with the American public will foster a broader understanding of our resource challenges," says Don Neubacher, superintendent of Point Reyes National Seashore and cochair of the NPS Natural Resources Challenge Council.

Even though the Natural Resource Challenge enjoys broad support, it is not clear whether it will meet its \$100 million goal. "Congress and the Park Service have both provided important support for the Natural Resource Challenge, but even if the administration receives its requested increase for FY 2003, the program will have reached only two-thirds of its funding goal," says Craig Obey, NPCA's vice president of government affairs. "It will take the continued commitment of Congress and the administration to help the National Park Serv-

ice realize its vision for the program."

The challenge grew out of nearly a decade of discussions about implementing stronger natural resource protection. These came to a head in 1997 with the publication of Richard Sellars' *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*, which demonstrated that historically the Park Service had emphasized visitor needs rather than preservation. This point was underscored by the fact that biological science was the only important program in Park Service history to have been initiated with private funding.

"Dick's book was the catalyst," says Doug Morris, superintendent of Shenandoah National Park and Neubacher's cochair. The book "clearly emphasized that good science could help preserve the



RICH REID, COLORS OF NATURE

**Centers blend the best of research and interpretation.**

unique and diverse natural heritage of the parks."

Proposed actions—now part of the challenge—include more plant and animal inventories, control of alien species, protection of endangered species, and monitoring of air and water quality.

## Centers of Learning

### Parks with Learning Centers that are up and running with staff.

Atlantic Learning Center - *Cape Cod National Seashore*

Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center - *Kenai Fjords National Park*

Continental Divide Research and Learning Center -  
*Rocky Mountain National Park*

Pacific Coast Learning Center - *Point Reyes National Seashore*

Appalachian Highlands Science Learning Center -  
*Great Smoky Mountains National Park*

### Parks that will be opening Learning Centers. Those with an \* have hired staff.

\*Acadia Center for the Environment - *Acadia National Park*

Center for Teaching New America -  
*Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area with Channel Islands  
National Park and Cabrillo National Monument*

\*Jamaica Bay Learning Center for Applied Research on Urban Ecology -  
*Gateway National Recreation Area within New York Harbor*

\*North Coast and Cascades Learning Center Network -  
*North Cascades National Park with Mount Rainier National Park and  
Olympic National Park*

\*Great Lakes Research and Education Center - *Indiana Dunes National  
Lakeshore with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore*

Urban Ecology Learning Alliance - *National Capital Parks*

Old-Growth Bottomland Forest Research and Learning Center -  
*Congaree Swamp National Monument*

\*Crown of the Continent Learning Center - *Glacier National Park*

Mountain National Park, Kenai Fjords National Park, and Cape Cod National Seashore. Each of these centers receives annual base funding of \$225,000, which pays for two staff positions, an education coordinator, and a research coordinator, one of whom is also director. The funds also pay for administrative support and seed money for research and educational outreach, along with facil-



Students observe a Pacific angel shark.

ity upkeep and maintenance.

Each center serves parks located within a specific inventory and monitoring (I & M) network. The center at Purchase Knob, for example, serves Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Blue Ridge Parkway, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and Obed Wild and Scenic River. Eight additional centers were created in 2002, with a goal of having all centers—one for each of the 32 I & M regions within the National Park Service—operating by 2005.

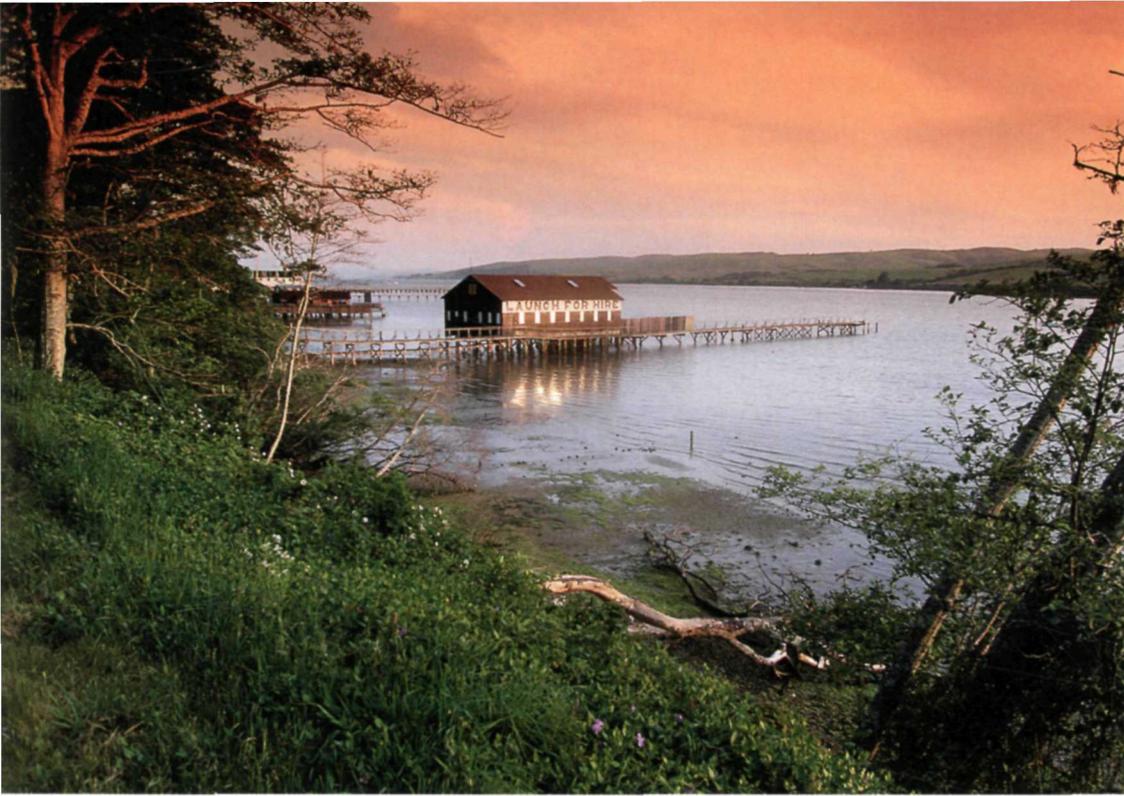
The Park Service may not reach this goal, however, because Congress allocated no money in 2003 for new centers. Instead, Interior Secretary Gale Norton requested an evaluation of the first five centers, which the Park Service recently completed. "One problem has been that there is a lack of understanding on the part of Congress about the centers. We hope the evaluation will allow us to establish a dialogue with the secretary and show her how successful they have been," says Abby Miller, associate director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science. Base funding for the 13 existing centers has not changed.

A central goal of the centers is research. "We want to be proactive instead of reactive by pointing re-

For rangers and the public, another key aspect of the challenge involves the establishment of 32 Learning Centers at parks around the country. These centers will bring together researchers, educators, park employees, and the public to facilitate the acquisition and distribution of scientific knowledge about national parks. The centers "blend together the best of research and interpretation," says

Susan Sachs, education coordinator for Great Smoky Mountains National Park's Appalachian Highlands Science Learning Center at Purchase Knob. They "enable us to put a human face on science in the parks."

Appalachian Highlands was one of five pilot Learning Centers created in 2001. The others were established at Point Reyes National Seashore, Rocky



JOHN ELK III

**One of five Learning Centers was established at Point Reyes National Seashore, California, in 2001.**

searchers to areas that will help staff make better decisions,” says Ben Becker, director of the Pacific Coast Learning Center at Point Reyes.

Becker has listed several hundred projects on the Point Reyes web site and has sent out flyers to more than 200 faculty and graduate advisors. Response has been positive, with 15 graduate students contacting the center for further information. After appraising their proposals, Becker will help them find money, focus their study, and locate volunteers, including high school students and teachers, community members, and park staff, to assist with collecting data.

Assistance does not end there. Centers provide researchers with laboratories, offices, field equipment, classrooms, and an NPS liaison. Much research goes undone in the parks because of a lack of facilities for researchers. Centers will help to alleviate this problem. Because most centers are based in historic structures within the park, they have lodging for scientists, too. “Providing a place to stay is an essential part of the program,” says Sachs. “It allows researchers to focus on their research, gives us time to talk with and learn from them, and facilitates collaboration between researchers.”

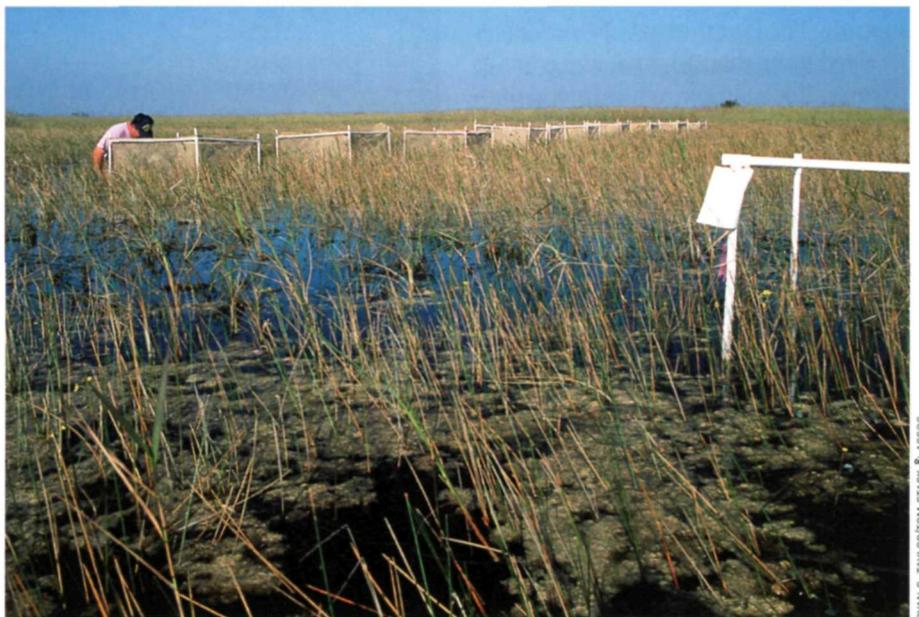
Once research is done, staff will help

find ways to get information back to the park and out to the public. “The degree to which people can understand and connect to the resources in their national parks will ultimately determine the success of research efforts,” says Christie Anastasia, education coordinator at Point Reyes. To help researchers make these connections with the public, she has prepared a list of educational outreach ideas for researchers. Rangers can

document field work with a digital camera or camcorder and then prepare a briefing paper for staff. Researchers can also choose to host an informal presentation, share professional posters and current papers, provide a bibliography, lead a tour, or collaborate with the education coordinator to produce a slide show on their project.

Another effective way Learning Centers have increased their outreach is through partnerships. Center employees have leveraged their assets by linking with universities, corporations, middle and high schools, community

groups, state and local public land management agencies, and other research institutions. The Ocean Alaska Center in Kenai, for instance, partners with the Arctic Studies Unit of the Smithsonian Institution on a study of cultural sites of the outer Kenai coast. With the assistance of the center, Aron Crowell, director of the Arctic Studies unit, was able to host visits by elders, tribal and corporate lead-



RYAN C. TAYLOR/TOM STACK & ASSOC.

**A researcher at Everglades National Park in Florida inspects experimental closures.**



RYAN C. TAYLOR/TOM STACK & ASSOC.

**A researcher samples fish at the water conservation area in Everglades.**

ers, and two teachers, who helped interpret findings, as well as have members of the Alaska Native community work on the project for up to four weeks at a time. "I have worked with NPS over the years," says Crowell, "and it is great to see this new emphasis on outreach and education."

The Park Service also gains from its relationship with NPCA because the association's State of the Parks® program provides an overall assessment of park resources. "Learning Centers and State of the Parks dovetail well. We are able to use their research, plus we can be an advocate for actions needed to better protect resources in specific parks," says Mark Peterson, director of State of the Parks. "Together we can educate the public and Congress that just because it is a beautiful national park does not mean it is adequately protected."

Other partnerships involve financial support. The Continental Divide Center received more than \$1.3 million from its partners, for example, while Intel donat-



JOHN ELK III

**Above, a fox sleeps at Point Reyes. At right, bracken ferns and aspens cover Bear Lake Road in Rocky Mountain.**



CARR CLIFTON

**Sunset over Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia, a park served by Appalachian Highlands.**

ed lab equipment and furnishings to the Atlantic Learning Center at Cape Cod, and Carolina Power and Light gave \$50,000 for construction at Appalachian Highlands. "Partnerships have been essential for our success. In addition to providing funding, they have added perspective and made our work more accessible to the public," says Neubacher.

Although all centers have similar goals, each takes a different tack to spread the word. The Continental Divide Center, for instance, has hosted two one-day, mini-conferences to educate local residents about science issues. "The sessions were extremely popular. People got answers in plain English, and researchers were excited to see people interested in what they were doing," says Terrell. The workshops resulted in more than a dozen new volunteers.

Other programs make use of the scientists' work in the field. At the Ocean Alaska Center, researchers studying black oystercatchers and harbor seals call in daily reports to a ranger, who plays the message to an audience and interprets the data for visitors. At Appalachian Highlands, Louisiana State University beetle specialist Chris Carlton spent a month in the park, where he met with school groups, talked with rangers, and led park staff into the field. Last De-



NPS

**The historic Hagmaier Ranch was adapted for use as the Pacific Coast Learning Center.**

ember, he presented a paper on a new life history of a beetle that he discovered during his stay.

"Chris' stay at the park exemplifies what we are trying to do with Learning Centers," says Karen Ballentine, education coordinator, Division of Resource Education at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

"They are one of the best things the Park Service has done. Everyone is excited and passionate. The challenge has been a real shot in the arm." 

**David Williams** is a writer

based in Seattle.

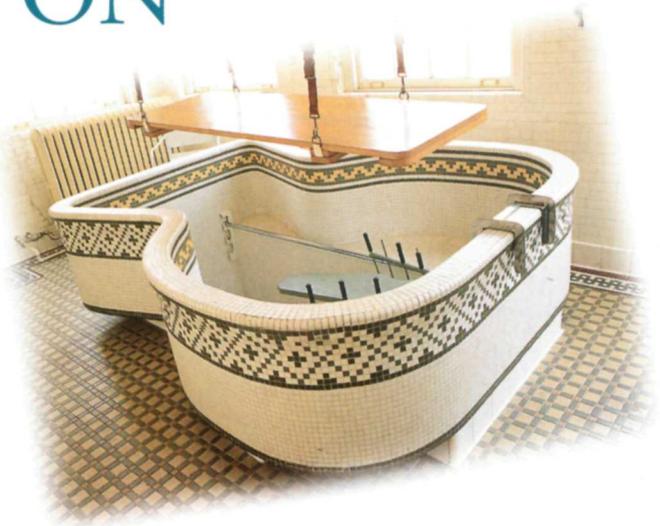


# TAKE A BATH ON VACATION?

By Jim Taylor

A narrow valley cradled between two ridges of the Ouachita Mountains in Arkansas has been the theater for a distinctive narrative of geologic history—its curtain raised in part by a continental collision that began 300 million years ago and rains that fell circa 2400 B.C. The Ouachita (WASH-uh-taw) Mountains were formed when two pre-historic continents collided, squeezing up from the ocean floor between them thick layers of sedimentary rock. The vertical and tilted sedimentary strata that resulted allow rainfall to seep sufficiently deep within the earth to become heated by surrounding rock. The water then travels to the surface via fractures in a

layer of sandstone before it can cool completely, emerging as an array of amazing thermal springs. Modern dating methods indicate the process takes a while: the water flowing from the springs fell as rain more than 4,000 years ago. Now, over the last 200 years, these springs have developed a human story as well—one that reflects the grand sweep of U.S. history and includes the creation and continued popularity of one of the nation's oldest parks, Hot Springs National Park.



***It's a pleasure at Hot Springs National Park in Arkansas, the hot spot of therapeutic soaks until the 1940s and the advent of modern medicine.***

chase, reached the narrow Ouachita valley in December 1804 and found water as hot as 150 degrees Fahrenheit issuing from the foot of a mountain that was adorned with massive mineral deposits. Though regional American Indians had long visited the springs, the geological wonder gained national renown when William Dunbar and George Hunter published reports of their expedition. In 1820, a hostelry opened in the valley and the town of Hot Springs began its rise. In 1832, four decades before making Yellowstone the world's first national park, Congress decreed a federal reservation around the springs. They were "not to be entered, pre-empted or appropriated for any purpose whatever." Although Hot Springs National Park officially became the country's 18th park in 1921, the town's boosters have long cited the reservation legislation to argue that Hot Springs actually was first.

The recorded phase of this story began when two explorers, dispatched by President Thomas Jefferson soon after the Louisiana Pur-

chase, reached the narrow Ouachita valley in December 1804 and found water as hot as 150 degrees Fahrenheit issuing from the foot of a mountain that was adorned with massive mineral deposits. Though regional American Indians had long visited the springs, the geological wonder gained national renown when William Dunbar and George Hunter published reports of their expedition. In 1820, a hostelry opened in the valley and the town of Hot Springs began its rise. In 1832, four decades before making Yellowstone the world's first national park, Congress decreed a federal reservation around the springs. They were "not to be entered, pre-empted or appropriated for any purpose whatever." Although Hot Springs National Park officially became the country's 18th park in 1921, the town's boosters have long cited the reservation legislation to argue that Hot Springs actually was first.

The reservation lacked direct federal supervision for 45 years, however, allow-



***Fordyce is a Spanish Renaissance Revival structure.***

LAURENCE PARENT (2)

ing various individuals to assume “ownership” of the springs and establish primitive bathhouses. Then, in 1876, the U.S. Supreme Court voided all private claims, and federal supervision began the next year. When a system of regulated bathhouses was soon instituted, a succession of predominantly wooden, Victorian structures followed. The creek that ran through the valley floor was covered and a roadway installed. In a city already known for its hotels, the Arlington was the largest in Arkansas when it opened in the 1870s.

The town’s character was emerging. Stephen Crane, with *The Red Badge of Courage* published but not yet widely read, visited Hot Springs in 1895. “The motive of this main street,” he wrote, “is purely cosmopolitan.”

From 1911 to 1923, eight stylishly designed bathhouses of masonry and stone were constructed along the east side of Central Avenue, the valley’s thoroughfare, replacing the wooden buildings that were more vulnerable to fire. The new structures became the components of Bathhouse Row, the park’s most celebrated architectural feature.

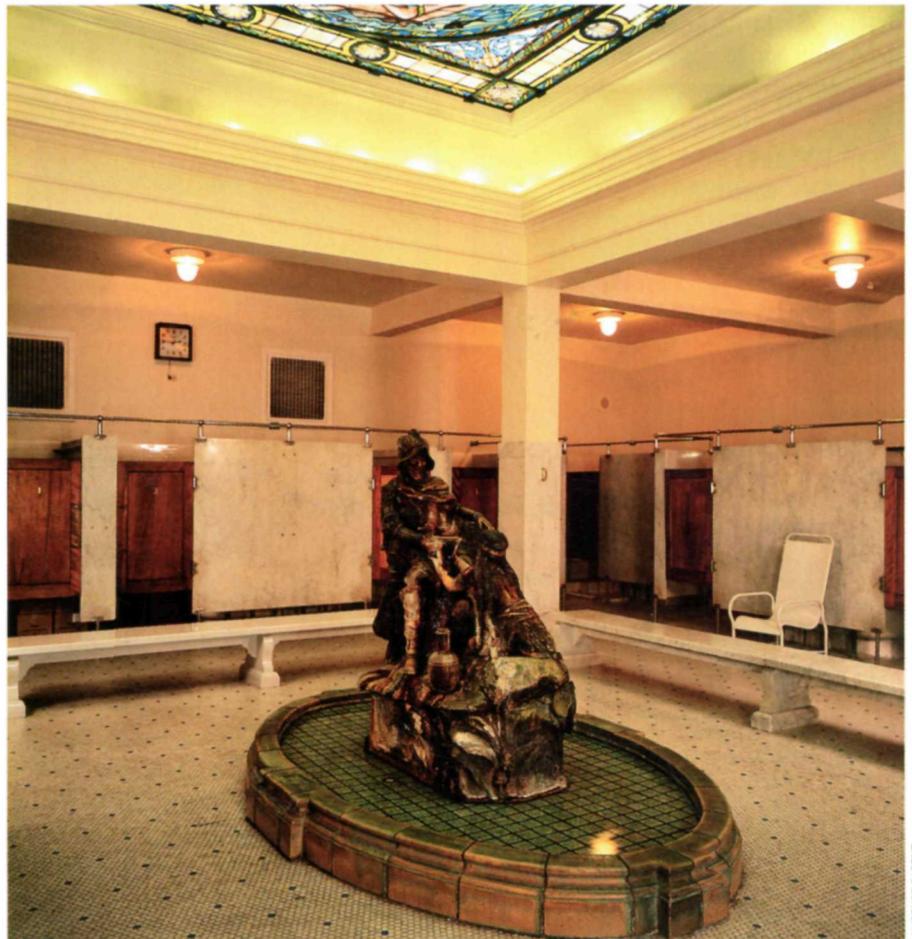
Medicinal bathing in the bathhouses attained its height of popularity in the mid-1940s, shortly before the development of modern medicines sent the industry into decline. But during its years as a leading domestic spa, Hot Springs became an American crossroads. At various times, the Chicago Cubs, Pittsburgh Pirates, Boston Red Sox, and other baseball teams came for spring training. Jack Dempsey was among noted boxers who sojourned there, and Chicago gangsters, including Al Capone, were regulars. And the town drew nationally prominent politicians long before its hometown son, Bill Clinton, was elected president.

Today, evergreen magnolias line Bathhouse Row’s broad sidewalk, where visitors pause to read brief histories of the houses. The Row’s only operating bathhouse is the Buckstaff, which opened in 1912. Six of the houses now stand vacant, maintained by the National Park Service. The Fordyce Bathhouse, a Spanish Renaissance Revival



FRED HIRSCHMANN

**Tours allow visitors to experience the opulence that characterized bathhouses.**



LAURENCE PARENT

**The men’s bath hall has a stained-glass ceiling and ceramic fountain statuary.**



structure completed in 1915, serves as the park's visitor center. A short film and exhibits detail the history of the springs, the city, and the era of medicinal bathing, and self-guided tours allow visitors to see the opulence that characterized Hot Springs' bathing industry during its heyday. The men's bath hall, for example, contains an 8,000-piece stained glass ceiling and elaborate ceramic fountain statuary.

Across the street, patrons browse in galleries of fine art and antiques, choose from a variety of restaurants, and visit the Josephine Tussaud Wax Museum. North of the Row, steaming waters from the upper spring cascade down the lower slopes of Hot Springs Mountain to a lawn where the first two Arlington Hotels stood. After a 1923 fire, the hostelry moved across Fountain Street to its present location.

Fortunately, visitors can still experi-

ence the therapeutic waters that made Hot Springs famous. Many of the existing 47 springs have been capped to keep the water clean, but their water is collected and apportioned to the Buckstaff and five other locations that currently offer thermal baths to the public. Visiting Hot Springs and not taking a thermal bath in the 4,000-year-old water is comparable to going to Redwood National Park and never looking up.

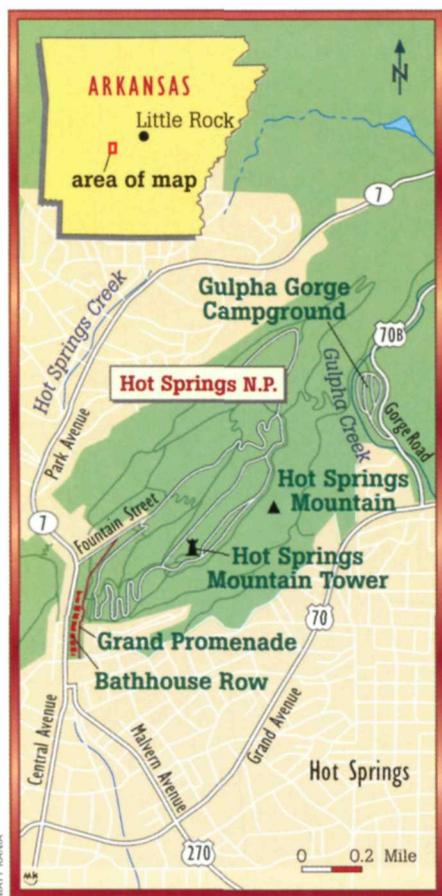
Away from Bathhouse Row, much of the park's approximately 5,500 acres is preserved in its natural state to protect the springs' recharge area. Some 30 miles of trails allow hikers to explore forested Ouachita ridges. In spring, blooming trees, such as dogwoods and redbuds, and wildflowers, including fire pinks and wild hyacinths, add color to the routes.

Autumn foliage and myriad spring greens yield picturesque vistas from scenic overlooks. Other park features



PATTI MCCONVILLE, DEBINSKY PHOTO ASSOC.

The hot springs can reach 150 degrees.



MATT KANNA



LAURENCE PARENT

Fordyce Bathhouse is one of the park's most celebrated architectural features.



*Steaming upper spring waters cascade down slopes of Hot Springs Mountain.*

LAURENCE PARENT

include an observation tower (501-623-6035); the half-mile, brick-paved Grand Promenade, a national recreation trail; a 43-site campground located along Gulpha Creek, and the Libbey Memorial Physical Medicine Center (501-321-9664).

Immediately outside the national park, visitors can also enjoy live and simulcast thoroughbred racing at Oaklawn Park; Magic Springs/Crystal Falls theme and water parks; the 210-

acre Garvan Woodland Gardens; three lakes for water sports and fishing; a thriving arts community with numerous galleries; and documentary film, jazz, classical music, and other festivals throughout the year.

For more park information, visit [www.nps.gov/hosp/](http://www.nps.gov/hosp/) or phone 501-624-3383, ext. 640. For information on hotels and thermal bathing locations, visit [www.hotsprings.org](http://www.hotsprings.org) or phone 1-800-SPA-CITY. 

## Also in Arkansas

*Five additional national park units in Arkansas await travelers*

**Buffalo National River** stretches for 135 miles across the north-central part of the state. This, the country's first national river, flows through the Ozark Mountains, where limestone bluffs towering over canoeists. Visit [www.nps.gov/buff/](http://www.nps.gov/buff/) or call 870-741-5443 for more information.

**Fort Smith National Historical Site** on Arkansas' western edge interprets the history of a late Indian Territory border town, where Hangin' Judge Isaac Parker dispensed frontier justice. Visit [www.nps.gov/fosm/](http://www.nps.gov/fosm/) or call 479-783-3961 for more information.

**Central High School National Historic Site** in Little Rock recounts the landmark 1957 federal-state confrontation over the school's desegregation and the courage of nine African-American students at the center of its fury. Visit [www.nps.gov/chsc/](http://www.nps.gov/chsc/) or call 501-374-1957 for more information.

**Pea Ridge National Military Park**, located in northwestern Arkansas, interprets an important trans-Mississippi battle of the Civil War, during which Union forces halted Confederate efforts to seize Missouri. Visit [www.nps.gov/peri/](http://www.nps.gov/peri/) or call 479-451-8122 for more information.

**Arkansas Post National Memorial** in southeastern Arkansas commemorates the first permanent European settlement on the lower Mississippi River (1686), which became the state's original territorial capital and the site of a Civil War battle. Visit [www.nps.gov/arpo/](http://www.nps.gov/arpo/) or call 870-548-2207 for more information about the park.

**Jim Taylor**, a writer who lives in

Little Rock, is a first-time contributor

to *National Parks*.



# A Quest for Freedom

*The Underground Railroad, which refers to the network that helped enslaved African Americans escape bondage, “speaks of the power of freedom and justice.”*

BY RYAN DOUGHERTY

**T**he Underground Railroad is widely considered a crucial aspect of American history, a courageous protest to slavery through which enslaved African Americans gained freedom. Perhaps not as well known is how the Underground Railroad exposed the horrors of slavery and brought together men and women of different races—without regard to race, class, religion, or gender—to fight for freedom and liberty.

“For all Americans in search of a shared past, it proves that brutal systems and laws can be overturned from within,” former National Park Service Director Robert Stanton wrote in the agency’s Underground Railroad handbook. “It speaks of the power of freedom and justice.”

The Underground Railroad refers to a complex network that helped enslaved African Americans escape bondage. Although some freedom seekers finished their journeys without help, each decade of slavery in the United States saw more efforts to assist the escapees. A loosely constructed network developed, extending to the North into Canada as well as to the western territories, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

The road to freedom was full of struggles, such as bad weather, hunger, illness, and fear of capture. The enslaved African Americans first had to elude the slave-



*Enslaved African Americans escaping bondage endured bad weather, hunger, illness, and fear.*

holder. They often traveled at night, using the North Star as a compass. Generally, they traveled between ten and 20 miles to the next site. Afraid to trust strangers, they often traveled alone and hid in remote locations.

Because of a lack of records, the number of escapees is unclear, but some say there were tens of thousands. Most enslaved African Americans chose not to flee—refusing to leave loved ones or fearing the consequences of capture.

Harriet Tubman became one of the most revered figures of the era after escaping from slavery in 1848. “There was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death,” she said. “If I could not have one, I’d have the other.” She traveled back to the South about 20 times through the next decade, leading close to 300 African Americans to freedom.

Other personal stories include those of Henry Brown from Virginia, who was

sealed in a wooden crate and shipped to Philadelphia, and Ellen and William Craft, who escaped when Ellen, who was light-skinned, posed as a sickly, white slave owner seeking medical care, and William her enslaved attendant.

After the 1850 passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, which required the return of escapees, capturing slaves became lucrative and slave catchers, merciless. Captives faced punishments ranging from branding and whipping to crippling and death. Those who aided escapes risked fines, loss of property, and jail.

The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 freed enslaved African Americans in Union-occupied territories, but it was not until the 13th amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865 that slavery officially ended.

With the recent National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act, the Park Service created a formal commemorative program. The Network to Freedom, an evaluated list of sites, programs, and facilities, includes interpretive and educational programs. The network now has 117 listings—80 sites, 14 facilities, and 23 programs—verifiably associated with the Underground Railroad. As it grows, the Network to Freedom will connect sites, programs, and facilities into a network that will one day tell the story of the Underground Railroad collectively. For more information, visit [www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr](http://www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr).

RYAN DOUGHERTY is news editor.



# A Raptor on the Rise

*Habitat loss and widespread drainage, which has permanently lowered the water table in the Everglades, continue to threaten the endangered snail kite.*

BY JENELL TALLEY

**A** snail kite isn't conventionally pretty. Its broad wings don't complement its slender body, and the birds fly less gracefully than other birds of prey. But the species is considered one of the most interesting birds in the Florida Everglades. It's also one of the most threatened.

Snail kites are medium-sized hawks. They usually weigh about 12 to 20 ounces and are about 15 inches long. Their wingspan is approximately 36 to 43 inches. Males are slate gray with specks of brown on their upper wings and orange legs. Females are brown with white streaks on their face, chest, and throat and have yellowish legs. Both sexes have red eyes, squarely tipped, dark-colored tails with a white base, and a slender, curved, hooked bill.

The birds typically mate from February to June, but it isn't uncommon for them to mate year-round. Their courtship includes aerobatics and stick-carrying displays. Males perform short ascents and descents through the air while beating their wings. Afterward, females invite them to bring food and nest-building necessities.

Nests are constructed in colonies of loose, bulky material and span close to 13 inches. They're usually found about three to ten feet above water. Females lay two to four eggs each spring. Males and females work together to keep the eggs warm for the next 27 days. Males then



*Snail kites catch their prey with one foot and carry it away in their talons.*

help females to raise the newborn.

These raptors inhabit south and central Florida and Everglades National Park. They live in freshwater lakes, marshes, and sloughs known to house apple snails, their primary food source. The hawks swoop down, pull their prey from the water with one foot, and carry the snail away with their long, sharp talons. They try to avoid getting wet but sometimes are forced to place their bellies in the water to grab hold of the 1.5-inch-wide apple snails or small turtles, which they hunt when their favorite food becomes scarce. The birds hold the captured snail with one foot and use their bills to pry it from its shell.

The birds' specialized diet renders them habitat-specific. Consequently, the species' population plunges when its habitat is altered. Marsh draining, the

infestation of water hyacinth, and pesticides, drought, and hunting by farmers who saw the birds as pests have contributed to their endangered status. "Early on they were shot," says Sonny Bass, a wildlife biologist at Everglades National Park, "but that's not the main reason they're endangered." Bass attributes the species' presence on the endangered list to a loss of habitat spurred by rapid development and urbanization and changing water-management practices.

Water conservation plays a huge role in the snail kites' preservation. The quality and quantity of water in the Everglades are vital to their well-being. Everglades National Park is trying to establish a natural water flow through marshes to maintain the birds' numbers. Legislation has authorized a long-term Everglades restoration strategy, and federal, state, and local entities are moving to restore natural water flows there despite many political obstacles and the conflicting demands of development, agriculture, and urban water supply interests. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's recovery plan includes using artificial nest structures to protect nest sites and controlling exotic plants.

Delisting the snail kite is highly unlikely, Bass says, but the birds have rebounded from astoundingly low numbers. A 1988 survey counted 500 kites, up 53 percent from the year before. Bass wouldn't suggest hoping for a full-fledged resurgence, but he says, "They could be downlisted to a threatened status. That's definitely a possibility." 

JENELL TALLEY is publications coordinator.

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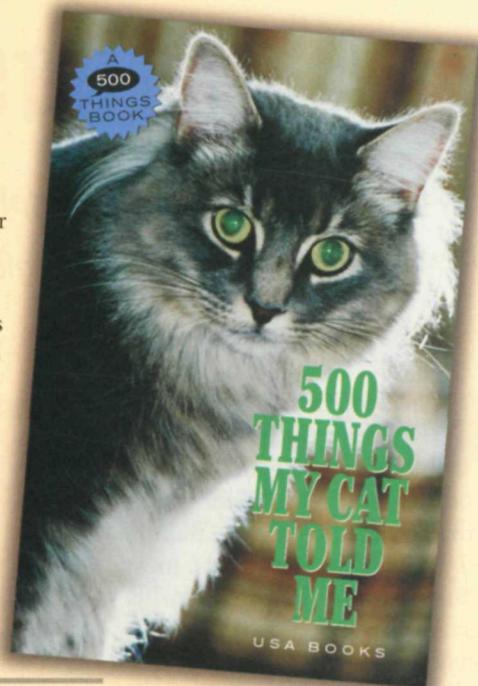
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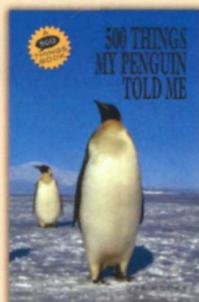
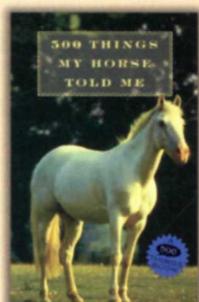
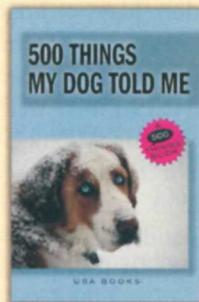
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# Marching to Their Own Beat

*This bridge, once crossed by thousands of determined African Americans, represents their struggle to obtain voting rights during the height of the civil rights movement.*



MELTON FULLEMAN

**O**n March 7, 1965, African Americans organized a nonviolent march in a Southern state to dramatize the importance of voting rights. Upon reaching this bridge, demonstrators were beaten by police. Two days later, Martin Luther King, Jr., led another march, only to have it shut down. On March 21, under the protection of the National Guard, protestors successfully marched to the state capital. The monumental event brought voting and civil rights to national attention. Have you visited this park? Do you know which one it is? [Answer on page 6.]



IT'S INSPIRED POETS TO PICK UP PENS.  
ARTISTS TO PICK UP BRUSHES.  
AND US JUST TO PICK UP.

From the beginning, we've had a passion for the special places entrusted to our care. So we developed GreenPath, an environmental management system that covers just about everything we can think of to preserve our national treasures. We've diverted, recycled and conserved. We've earned ISO 14001 registration. And we've won awards. But, most important, we've found a way to make caring for the environment, well, second nature.

