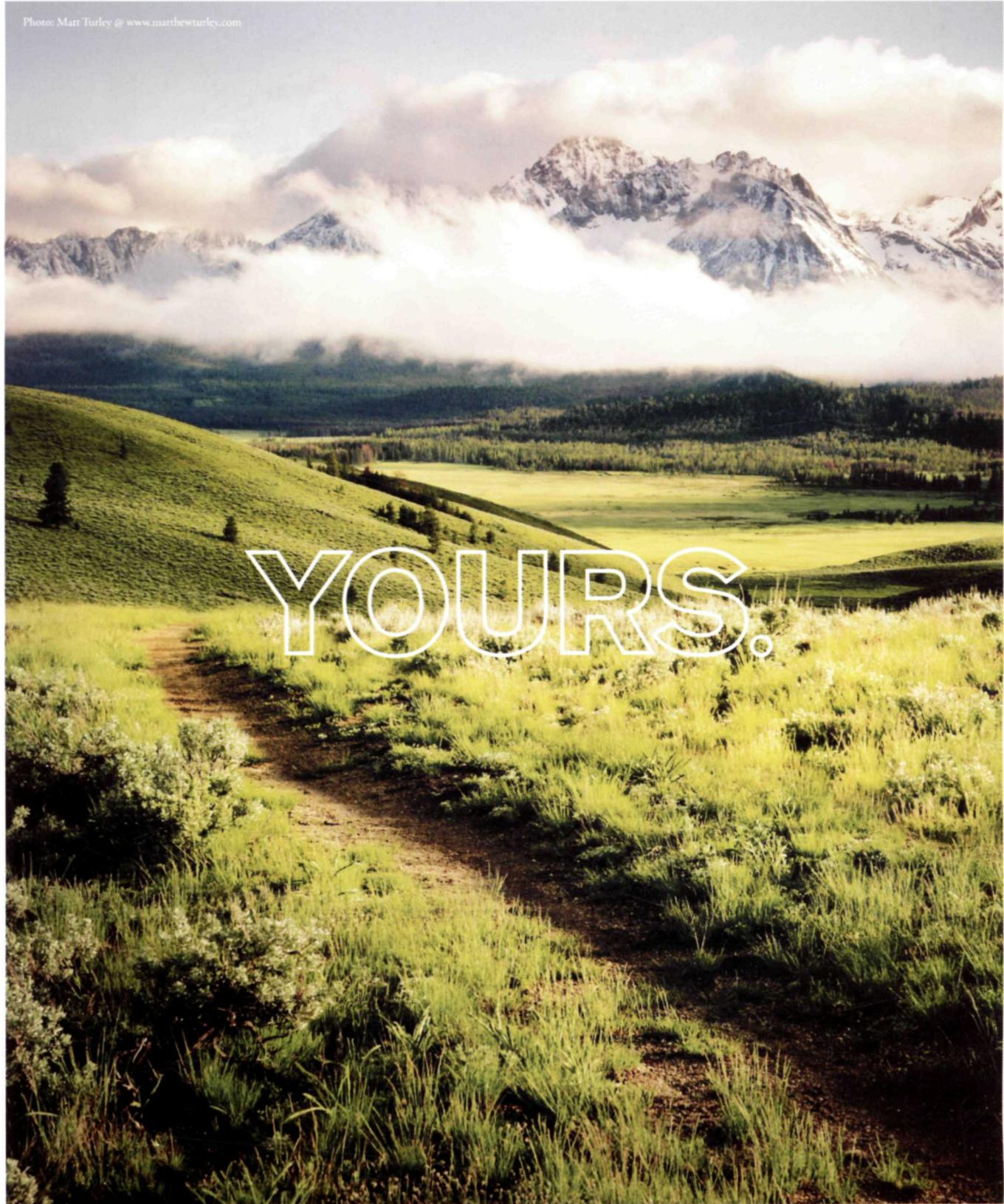


# National PARKS

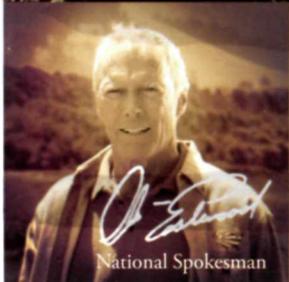
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**TOUR GUIDE DAN HERNANDEZ**  
prepares climbing gear for clients on a  
trip to Root Glacier in Wrangell-St. Elias  
National Park and Preserve, Alaska.

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During World War II, a different kind of war hero emerged when conscientious objectors chose to restore America's national parks rather than fight overseas.

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Massive glaciers, old mining towns, and abundant wildlife greet visitors to Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, the country's biggest and wildest national park.

*By Craig Medred*

**COVER PHOTO:**  
A WOMAN CLIMBS  
out of a deep moulin in  
the Root Glacier during  
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Alpine Guides.

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# On a Clear Day...

In 1977, more than 33 years ago, Jimmy Carter became our 39th president, Elvis Presley and Joan Crawford died, and *Saturday Night Fever*—an ode to disco music—opened in theaters across the country. That same year, Congress enacted air-quality protections for national parks, giving them the greatest level of protection. Despite the laws, progress toward clean air in our national parks has been slow.



In the last four decades, many coal-fired power plants have been built throughout the country, and plants built prior to the enactment of the laws have been allowed to continue operating without new technology that could eliminate some of the pollutants that cause ozone damage and cloud the air with haze, obscuring famous views of our national parks.

Of the 393 national park sites in the National Park System, one in three, including Mesa Verde and Grand Canyon in the Southwest, suffers the harmful effects of air pollution. Most of the air pollution now marring these scenic views, harming plants, and risking the health of wildlife and visitors is the result of burning fossil fuels, especially coal.

This past October, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a proposed rule that, when final, will hold the Four Corners Power Plant, the worst park polluter in the country, accountable for its contributions to air pollution. The rule would require the coal-fired plant to install and operate cost-effective, state-of-the-art pollution controls on all five of its units. These controls will reduce emissions of the haze-causing pollutant, nitrogen oxide, from 45,000 tons per year to 9,000 tons per year, resulting in the greatest visibility improvement possible under the Clean Air Act.

In the decades since 1977, NPCA fought one battle after another to breathe life into Congress' promise to clean up the air in national parks. If we had not conducted multiple campaigns and used the courts to push for stronger clean-air regulations, we would not be at this point today.

Although the action is not finalized, this ruling represents a tremendous step forward in the campaign for clean air in our national parks. It also points out the importance of persistence where park protection is concerned. It can take decades to establish a park, to protect its borders, and to ensure its healthy air.

Now that the law is finally being enforced by the Obama Administration, Four Corners is the first of many coal-fired power plants we hope to clean up in the next two years. We will need your continued help and support to make progress, because many challenges lie ahead, including an incoming Congress that has already revealed plans to weaken the EPA's ability to enforce the Clean Air Act. We look forward to your continued help to eliminate haze and restore the views and the health of our national parks.

THOMAS C. KIERNAN

# Scratching and Clawing



© CHRIS PETERSON

**BIOLOGISTS HAVE MUCH TO LEARN** about wolverines in Glacier National Park, Montana.

If they have a strategy, it's this: Go hard, and high, and steep, and never back down, not even from the biggest grizzly, and least of all from a mountain. Climb everything: trees, cliffs, avalanche chutes, summits. Eat everybody: alive, dead, long-dead, moose, mouse, fox, frog, its still-warm heart or frozen bones."

This is the philosophy writer Doug Chadwick attributes to the wolverine, a species he profiles in this issue. It's also the mascot of my alma mater, the University of Michigan. But until I read his piece, I admit I knew little about the species beyond their resemblance to really cranky groundhogs. Surprisingly, many biologists were unable to offer up much more than that, either. Wolverines' numbers are small, they move fast, and they spend most of their time scaling mountain-sides, so it's no wonder. But as Chadwick discovered in accompanying a research team in Glacier National Park, and in writing his book, *The Wolverine Way*, the little that we do know is fascinating.

Chadwick explains that even in a landscape as big as Glacier, wolverines are confined, and their habitat is shrinking along with their genetic pool. Fortunately, there's still a chance for the species to survive, and federal lands can play a huge role. Turn to page 34 to find out what can be done for these amazing creatures, and learn why it really matters.

SCOTT KIRKWOOD  
NPMAG@NPCA.ORG

# National PARKS

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National Parks Conservation Association®  
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®

### 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

*National Parks* magazine fosters an appreciation of the natural and historic treasures found in the parks, educates readers about the need to preserve those resources, and illustrates how member contributions drive our organization's park-protection efforts. The magazine uses the power of imagery and language to forge a lasting bond between NPCA and its members, while inspiring new readers to join the cause.

### 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. Please sign up to receive Park Lines, our biweekly e-mail newsletter. Go to [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org) to sign up.

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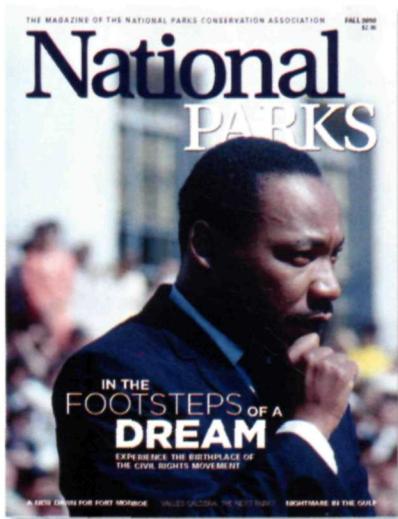
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## ALL-INCLUSIVE

I read “Expanding the Palette” [Summer] with interest. As a single African-American mom who started camping with my sons when they were eight years old, I was always disappointed to see so few people of color out enjoying nature in the state and local parks. When I met my husband in 1994, we began vacationing at some of the national parks, and when we retired about a decade later, we had the chance to visit even more. It was great to read the stories of Saoran Reouth, Shandra Roberts, and Mariajose Alcantara in your magazine, and I hope more people of color will start visiting our national parks. The parks are interesting, beautiful places, and visiting them is a great way to rejuvenate and revive ourselves after dealing with the day-to-day pressures of life. Being in nature gives me an emotional and spiritual lift that I can’t get anywhere else.

**PAT TUCKER-DOLAN**  
*Renton, WA*

What a thrilling, informative, and inspiring experience it was reading the latest addition of *National Parks*. I pride myself on being conversant with the broad swath of our nation’s history and especially Black history, yet the magazine touched on many historical incidents with which I was totally unfamiliar. The articles vividly reflect the colorful ethnic quilt work of the historical contribu-

tions that make America unique. Please continue demonstrating the inclusiveness of our great nation by revealing more such stories in the future.

**FRANK PETERMAN**  
*Atlanta, GA*

## A LESSON IN TOLERANCE

Thank you for the article on the historic Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island [“House of Worship,” Summer]. It’s interesting, in this day and age of religious intolerance, rants, and demagoguery, that we can read about George Washington’s letter to the Hebrew congregation in Newport, noting that the United States of America would give to bigotry “no sanction, to persecution no assistance,” and that any group hoping to enjoy “the exercise of their inherent natural rights” would no longer be at the whim of an individual leader or “the indulgence of one class of people.”

What an inspiration to hear of the tolerance promised by the Father of Our Country. We could hope that our religious and political leaders and angry, intolerant people will read this and remember the freedoms on which our country was founded.

**RICHARD STROWD**  
*Chapel Hill, NC*

## LIVING HISTORY

Imagine my delight when we returned from vacation and saw the article on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal lockhouses [“Waterfront Views,” Fall]—particularly Lockhouse 22, where we had stayed a few nights before! What a great idea to open these homes up to the public—what better way to have history come alive than to actually live and breathe it? I feel that the way to preserve history is to experience it—seeing it, hearing it, etc. For one night, my husband and I listened to the same sounds a lock tender and his family would have heard: the rushing water, the birds, the creak of the stairs. We saw similar sights: people walking on the tow path, the Potomac River at low tide, the house waiting

for us to arrive, and the scene out the little bedroom window. It doesn’t get much better than that! For years, I have wondered what the inside of those lockhouses looked like. Thank you so much for highlighting this wonderfully innovative program. Opening up and sharing these homes can only lead to good things!

**SUZANNE NORRIS-SILVIA**  
*Taunton, MA*

## SAVING A NATIONAL TREASURE

I read with great interest the article regarding the future of Fort Monroe, Virginia [“Freedom’s Fortress,” Fall]. I spent my high school years in a gorgeous old home on Ingalls Road and my daughter and her husband are now stationed there. I love Fort Monroe, and the thing that I love best is the fact that when I returned there after an absence of 40 years, it was almost exactly the same! I remembered every home, every street, every beautiful building.

My heart breaks to think that new developments may take over the isolated “Dog Beach,” that the lovely homes may be remodeled to accommodate big business offices, or that the quiet and very real sense of stepping back in time will be lost. I understand that it takes enormous amounts of money to maintain the post, but... Freedom’s Fortress led the way in emancipation during and immediately after the American Civil War, and Fort Monroe housed many thousands of fortunate families through the years. Thank you for the article on a place I will hold in my heart forever.

**PETRA MCDANIEL**  
*via e-mail*

A note concerning an error in your article “Freedom’s Fortress”: The writer refers to the “sacking of Baltimore,” but Baltimore City was never invaded by the British. The bombardment of Fort McHenry caused minimal damage. The British naval commander, Admiral Cockburn, dared not

bring his ships closer than two miles because of the fort's long-range guns. Unable to pass Fort McHenry, he could not support the ground effort.

General Ross, commanding the land component of the attack, landed at North Point and proceeded toward the city. The American commander, Major General Samuel Smith, had prepared strong defenses east of the city and rallied the militia. As Ross continued on, his advance guards were fired on by American pickets. Ross rode up to see the action and was mortally wounded by a rifle shot.

His second in command, Colonel Arthur Brooke, continued battling toward the city. Although the Americans were driven back, there was no repeat of the "Bladensburg Races." Arriving in view of the fortifications and able to see the forces deployed to defend the city, Colonel

Brooke wisely decided to withdraw.

**JAMES L. OWENS**  
Rockville, MD

### DULY NOTED

Many thanks to *National Parks* and Kelly Bastone for the informative article, "A Golden Opportunity" [Fall], about Valles Caldera. I am very familiar with New Mexico but had never heard of this wonderful spot. While out there two weeks ago for the balloon fiesta, I drove north to explore the park and very much enjoyed my day hiking there.

Some information in Kelly's article needs updating, however. First, signage is now ample, so finding the place is easy, simply proceeding North on Route 4 from

Jemez Springs. Second, there is now a well-appointed visitor center equipped with many outdoor toilets, and one can get maps and trail advice from the engaging staff.

**STEVE BUTTNER**  
West Hartford, CT

### CORRECTIONS:

Freedom's Fortress [Fall] notes that President James Madison was responsible for beginning the work on Fort Monroe. In fact, the president in 1819 was James Monroe. The Fort Monroe map credit on page 43 should have read © Maps of the Past Inc., [www.historicmapsrestored.com](http://www.historicmapsrestored.com).

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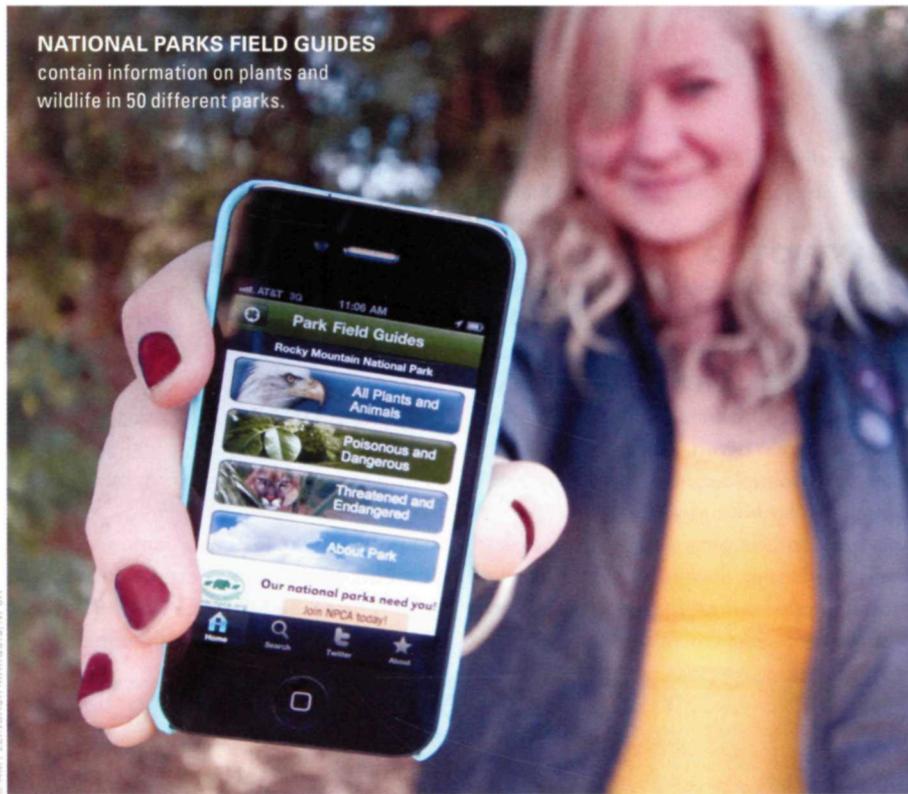
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## THE NEW-AGE NATURALIST

New applications for hand-held devices bring people closer to the parks.

Curious about a plant in Yellowstone? Birdsong in the Rocky Mountains? Endangered species in the Everglades? There's an app for that.

NPCA recently partnered with eNature.com to create a digital application that

brings national park visitors closer to nature through detailed descriptions and photos of plants and animals, range maps, recorded birdsong, park profiles, and a database of threatened and endangered species. The app, called National Parks Field

Guides, is available for the iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch—developers are also looking into producing an application for the Android platform.

"We created this app because we want to enhance people's national park experience," says Megan Cantrell, NPCA's senior coordinator for member engagement. "Close to 300 million people visit our national parks every year, and many of them are using cell phones to look up directions, make reservations, and search for information about what they're seeing in the parks. Now, thanks to this app, we can reach a new generation that we haven't really tapped into yet, and hopefully create new national park advocates."

National Parks Field Guides features 50 national park ecosystems—from Gettysburg to the Grand Canyon—along with information on almost 6,000 species that call those places home. By 2011, the app will include a section called "NPCA in the Park," which details the organization's on-the-ground conservation work. Eventually, when users click on "pronghorn" in Yellowstone National Park, they'll learn how donations have helped our regional staff open up the antelope's migration corridors.

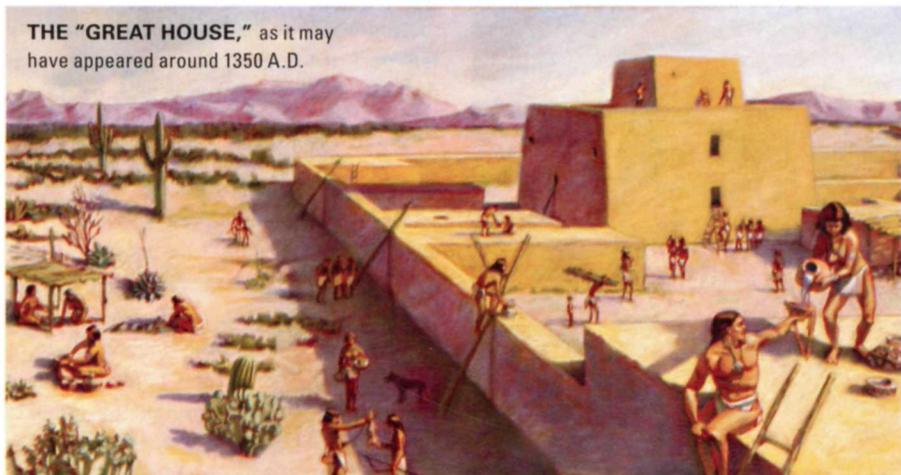
But that's not all. GeoRoamer, an iPhone/iPad app produced for Yellowstone National Park, picks up users' GPS locations and triggers an audio tour featuring up to 150 points of interest. A portion of these sales will benefit NPCA's work to protect and preserve parks for future generations. Visit [bit.ly/GeoRoamer](http://bit.ly/GeoRoamer) and <http://bit.ly/NPCApp> to download the apps.

—Amy Leinbach Marquis

# 20

**NATIONAL PARKS** that hosted naturalization ceremonies last September, when nearly 1,000 candidates took the oath of citizenship in celebration of the annual Constitution Day and Citizenship Week. Parks offered a stunning backdrop for the ceremonies, which took place under a 3,000-year-old giant sequoia tree at Kings Canyon, on the rim of the Grand Canyon, on the Civil War battlefield at Vicksburg National Military Park, and at the foot of the reflecting pool at the Lincoln Memorial, among other places. The events helped introduce new citizens to some of the nation's most significant natural and cultural resources, in the very places that shaped our nation and define what it means to be an American. "I can't think of places more appropriate to welcome a new generation of American citizens than national parks," said Park Service Director Jon Jarvis.

THE "GREAT HOUSE," as it may have appeared around 1350 A.D.



## BEYOND THE GREAT HOUSE

A new bill could add critical lands to Casa Grande Ruins National Monument

Just south of Phoenix, Arizona, Casa Grande Ruins National Monument features many of the last few remnants of the people who thrived in the Sonoran Desert for hundreds of years. But much of their way of life remains a mystery. When these people moved from the area in 1450 A.D., they didn't leave behind a single written word. More than two centuries would pass before a Spanish explorer stumbled on their ruins and took a pen to paper to describe what he saw.

Aside from the "Great House," one of the largest prehistoric structures ever built in America, a good part of Sonoran Desert archaeology rests outside park boundaries in the form of ancient farms, ceremonial mounds, and "ball courts" thought to be used as sports arenas. But that could soon change. Last April, former Representative Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ) introduced a bill in Congress to expand the national monument by 415 acres, nearly doubling its size. The acquisition of these lands would help protect these sites and allow park staff to learn more about an ancient farming community that developed wide-scale irrigation systems and extensive trade connections that lasted more than a thousand years.

"A lot of the lands we're talking about are privately owned, and if owners decided to sell them for development, the resources could be lost forever," says Superintendent Karl Cordova. "To date, there really hasn't been a single voice of opposition."

If Casa Grande Ruins acquires more land, there's more for visitors to explore, and the typical two-hour visit might eventually turn into an overnight stay that requires hotels, restaurants, and other accommodations, boosting the economy in surrounding towns. The region's American Indian tribes are backing the measure too, in hopes of preserving and accessing sacred lands that aren't available to them now as privately owned parcels.

Supporters expect the expansion proposal to proceed despite Rep. Kirkpatrick's defeat in the November election. "The measure was initiated by the prior congressman, a Republican," says Kevin Dahl, program manager for NPCA's Arizona Field Office. "With such strong bipartisan local support, the expansion should sail through Congress."

—Amy Leinbach Marquis

## ECHOES



We've known for a long time that Alaska's national parks provide tremendous economic advantage to local gateway communities—[now we know] that Katmai's impact is twice the... previous estimate.

Jim Stratton, senior director of NPCA's Alaska regional office, quoted by the National Parks Traveler blog, on a report indicating that visitors to the national park (above) contribute \$37 million to the state's economy each year.

It's like writing two checks, each for everything left in your account, and expecting not to be overdrawn — the people and parks of the Midwest cannot afford accounting like that.

Lynn McClure, director of NPCA's Midwest Regional Office, quoted in the International Falls Journal in Minnesota, regarding an iron ore refinery's attempts to circumvent the Clean Air Act. United Taconite, 60 miles from Voyageurs National Park, is required to reduce its emissions when making upgrades to its facility, but the company sought credit for the same emission reductions twice.

What message are we sending if we sacrifice lands and species we have legally committed to protect when we all know a better alternative exists?

David Lamfrom, program manager for NPCA's California Desert field office, quoted by the Associated Press, on the California Energy Commission's vote to build a massive solar energy plant outside Mojave National Preserve that would threaten endangered desert tortoises.



© CHARLIE GALLEY/GETTY IMAGES

## WATER AND SAND

Arrowhead Mountain Spring Water supports NPCA's efforts to restore Joshua Tree National Park

For more than a decade, Joshua Tree's Hidden Valley Trailhead, a high-traffic area in the California Desert, sat on a long list of maintenance projects that park staff didn't have the capacity to address. The trailhead was in desperate need of restoration, as "social trails" (pathways created when visitors step off designated areas) cut through vegetation and caused desert sands to erode into the parking lot.

On a sunny day last October, volunteers helped reverse that damage. Forty marines from nearby Twentynine Palms joined forces with 30-plus kids from the local chapters of Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 10 representatives from Arrowhead Mountain Spring Water, and more than 20 park staff to position rocks to mark trails, plant native vegetation, build fences, and disguise social trails with dead bushes and branches that cover up the damaging trails, halt erosion, and serve as a cache for seeds so that new plants can grow.

It all happened thanks to a special partnership between NPCA and Nestlé Waters North America: On behalf of its six regional water brands (Arrowhead, Deer Park, Ice Mountain, Ozarka, Poland Spring, and Zephyrhills,) Nestlé Waters—an or-

ganization with similar goals to NPCA with respect to protecting nature's special places—donated \$600,000 to support NPCA's work, and part of that money funded the restoration project at Joshua Tree.

"We believe in the need to help protect these parks, to restore them, and to fund some of the projects that help with those goals," says Laetitia Allexant, a senior marketing manager with Nestlé Waters. In fact, the company's support stretched well beyond the borders of the park: Throughout the summer, NPCA's logo was featured on more than 50 million cases of Nestlé Waters' Regional Spring Waters, and a Facebook promotion sponsored by Arrowhead Brand Mountain Spring Water encouraged people to sign on to the NPCA "cause." That program resulted in 80,000 new NPCA Facebook members and generated an additional \$40,000 donation to NPCA.

Beyond these awareness and fundraising initiatives, the partnership resulted in tangible rewards on the ground at Joshua Tree. "We did a lot of really great work that day," says Seth Shteir, a representative for NPCA's California Desert field office, "but perhaps the true definition of success was that so many of these volunteers who had never visited the park before were eager

to come back to explore and camp. They feel part of the park. And no single organization could have made this happen—everybody brought something to the table. We're grateful for the support we received from Nestlé Waters."

Organizing volunteer work like this isn't easy. Staff at Joshua Tree began working with NPCA and Nestlé Waters months before the actual event. It's challenging to meet all the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires federal agencies to factor environmental impacts into their decision making. But Karin Messaros, Joshua Tree's assistant superintendent, says it was worth every hurdle.

"Event organizers were blown away by the marines' hard physical labor and the kids' total engagement—they never stopped, they never got tired, they all stayed on task," she says. "I encourage park managers to take the time to work on partnerships like this one. It's a lot of work, but the rewards are amazing."

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## THE POINT OF NO RETURN?

Grizzly bears are disappearing from North Cascades National Park.

Washington's North Cascades National Park lies at the center of some of the most protected, well connected wildlife habitat in the Lower 48. Wolves have started making their way back into the landscape, wandering on their own accord across the Canadian border, just a stone's throw to the north. Fishers are on a promising road to recovery. Wolverines, lynx, and black bear populations are thriving.

It's a near-perfect cast of characters, except for one gaping void: grizzly bears. In 1993, a report by a coalition of land and wildlife management agencies estimated that fewer than 20 bears were using the North Cascades; the last confirmed sighting of a grizzly bear in the region was 15 years ago. One individual was photographed by a camera

trap in 2009, but on Canada's side.

"As more time goes by, you have to wonder what's happening to the few bears we have left," says Bill Gaines, a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service and member of the North Cascades Interagency Grizzly Bear Subcommittee, a group of federal agencies that developed a recovery plan for grizzly bears in the Northwest. "There's no geographical connection to more robust populations, aside from a very small number of bears in Canada—but that population is very much in trouble like ours. The more time goes by, the fewer options we'll have for bear recovery here. And they probably won't make it without human assistance."

Biologists believe the Greater North Cascades ecosystem can support anywhere from 200 to 400 grizzly bears. A

**DESPITE SEVERAL MILLION ACRES OF PROTECTED LANDS,** grizzly bears are struggling to survive in the Northwest.

general management plan created for Ross Lake National Recreation Area (the park unit adjacent to North Cascades) showed that up to 92 percent of the landscape qualifies as a "core habitat area" for grizzlies. In comparison, only 70 percent of Yellowstone can be classified as core habitat.

In 2009, Gaines was able to capture a sliver of funding to initiate a three-year survey that would use remote cameras and hair-snagging devices to estimate the number of grizzly bears living in the region today. But money for all three years hasn't been secured—project biologists will have to compete for additional funds for next year. And that's hard money to come by, when most funds are still funneled into recovery efforts in and around Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks.

"We just don't seem to pop up on the priority list," Gaines says. "The delisting of grizzlies in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem is a hot-button issue, politically and biologically, because they're trying to show good success for recovery efforts, so it's a priority. And the idea of starting something new in the northwest without additional money is really difficult."

Until biologists can get a handle on the population here, detailed recovery actions remain on hold. Augmentation—or trapping grizzly bears from healthy populations in northern Canada and transporting them to the North Cascades—is one option. But it presumes there are already enough bears in the region to mate with any new ones. If only a few individuals remain, reintroduction would be the better route, but it's expensive, and would require more research and political sway. "We already saw how controversial wolf reintroduction was in Yellowstone," says David Graves, regional program manager in NPCA's Northwest regional office. "Reintroduction is a much bigger, much more complex process than augmentation."

Either way, disappearing grizzlies in the

North Cascades are likely to affect bears in the Rockies, too. "If the Northwest population is resilient and strong," says Graves, "we hope they would mix with the Selkirk Mountains population, which would in turn mix with the Rockies population, and then the entire population in the Lower 48 would be geographically and genetically resilient, because no single group would be isolated. And with the help of wildlife corridors, grizzly bears across the country would have the ability to move and adapt as climate change occurs."

"Grizzly bears symbolize our heritage, our history, where our country has come from, and the health of our ecosystems today."

Graves has been working closely with a coalition of conservation groups to push those messages and lobby for support in Congress. Public outreach, he says, is critical, too. "There is always fear of the unknown, and the augmentation of grizzly bears will frighten some people," Graves says. "But if we can teach them about the importance of grizzlies in the ecosystem, and help them understand how grizzlies really act in the landscape, we're hoping we can dampen some of that opposition and possibly grow support."

"Grizzly bears symbolize our heritage, our history, where our country has come from, and the health of our ecosystems today," says Chip Jenkins, North Cascades' superintendent. "Ensuring a sustainable grizzly population in the North Cascades is not just a win for the bears, but a win for the American people, because it demonstrates our ability to act to bring the best of our heritage into the future."

—Amy Leinbach Marquis

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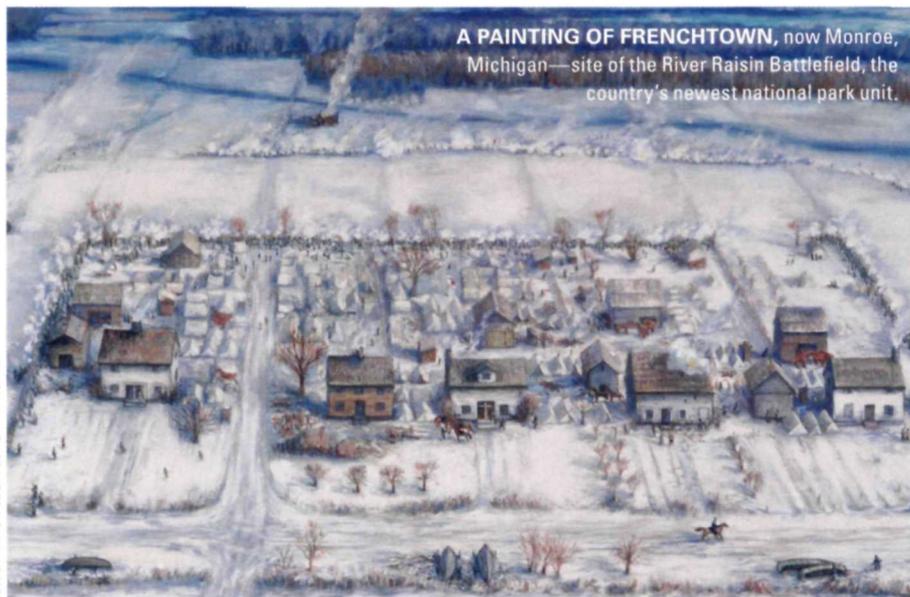


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A PAINTING OF FRENCHTOWN, now Monroe, Michigan—site of the River Raisin Battlefield, the country's newest national park unit.

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF TIM KURTZ

## RAISIN' EXPECTATIONS

The country's newest national park in southeast Michigan details a key battle in the War of 1812.

Forty miles southwest of Detroit, near the banks of Lake Erie, the city of Monroe, Michigan, is plotting a comeback. And the National Park Service might be one small piece of the puzzle. Once home to major manufacturing facilities for Ford Motor Company, Monroe Shocks, and La-Z-Boy, as well as a thriving paper industry, the city has been bleeding jobs in recent decades. But its citizens are hoping to craft a future for their city by reclaiming their history. Many residents knew that Monroe had been the site of a bloody conflict during the War of 1812, but until archaeologists discovered evidence of the battle intact beneath an abandoned paper mill, few would have thought the plot of land was worthy of the NPS arrowhead. Turns out it is. In October, River Raisin Battlefield became the 393rd unit of the National Park Service.

In 1776, when the colonies won their freedom from Britain and the Founding Fathers set about the work of forming a new nation, it wasn't clear what would

happen to the many territories to the west. French fur trappers mingled with British forces and American Indians, and skirmishes were common in the decades that followed. Then in 1807, Britain's war with France led England to blockade and seize American ships that had facilitated trade with their rival. Tensions on land and at sea eventually led the United States to declare war on Britain in June of 1812, beginning the War of 1812.

In January 1813, the British were encamped in modern-day Monroe near the River Raisin, following victories at Fort Mackinac, Fort Detroit, and Fort Dearborn. American general William Henry Harrison sent in troops to put an end to British domination, but the 1,000 regulars and militia were ultimately decimated by the coalition of the British and American Indians. The British returned to Fort Malden promising protection for the captive and wounded American soldiers. But native warriors returned to finish off the injured men, kill the prisoners of war, and burn the town to the ground. Only 33

men escaped with their lives. When news reached other settled areas, it prompted the rally cry "Remember the Raisin!" which inspired Americans much like events at the Alamo would inspire combatants during the Texas Revolution a few years later. Historians still debate whether either nation really "won" the War of 1812, but the treaty signed at the end of 1814 brought it to an end, and the British left the region to American settlers.

Like the War of 1812, the River Raisin battlefield had been largely forgotten as well. The site was home to a paper mill constructed in the early 1900s, but reclaimed in the 1990s when the facility shut down. A visitor center was established in the former home of the plant manager, and visitors started trickling in, but the local historical society had much bigger plans.

"In the beginning, some people scoffed and said it's impossible, because we were still looking at a site that said 'rustbelt community,'" says William Braunlich, president of the Monroe County Historical Society. "This was a gargantuan task that would require funding to demolish the paper mill, rehabilitate the property, hire archaeologists, and so on, but our organization made a commitment to fill every funding gap."

In 1998, the historical society acquired funding from the American Battlefield Protection Program to hire well-known battlefield archaeologist Michael Pratt to conduct forensic and historical archaeology on the site. Pratt was surprised to discover that evidence of the battle was intact, because the paper mill had been built on four feet of fill. Nothing below the surface had been touched in nearly 100 years. Soon enough, the local newspaper got on board, and people were starting to talk.

As excitement grew in the community, U.S. Rep. John Dingell (D-MI) introduced legislation to fund a study that would determine if the site was worthy of a national park. Meanwhile, the historical society commissioned a study team of leading battlefield experts to support the case for "national significance" of the

site. Monroe's residents leapt at the opportunity to tell the Frenchtown story, attending public meetings in numbers the Park Service never expected. The study validated national significance, and the park's founding legislation was drafted to require that park land be donated to the federal government, nearly eliminating any acquisition costs, helping it sail through Congress.

The creation of River Raisin National Battlefield Park is one more step forward for the region, as it continues to reclaim its historical and cultural assets: The River Raisin Heritage Trail connects Lake Erie, Sterling State Park (one of the top state parks in Michigan, welcoming more than 700,000 visitors each year), the battlefield, and Monroe's downtown. The Park Service is aiming to expand to a seven-day operation as soon as staff are hired, and volunteers are already lining up to help. New superintendent Scott Bentley is slated to arrive in a few weeks, and the park will begin to tackle its general management plan, conduct more research on the site's history, and determine what sort of interpretive programs will be offered.

"The people of Monroe are really proud of their community and they recognize this is an opportunity to showcase something important that happened in southeastern Michigan," says Sandra Washington, associate regional director for the Park Service. "When you can get more than 500 people and every television station and radio station to cover an event without putting a shovel in the ground or cutting a ribbon, it's impressive."

"We feel like a part of our national history is being reclaimed right here," says Braunlich. "When you start to engage people about what happened in 1812 and what we were fighting for, they find out about this incredible loss, and they realize for the American psyche, this is when we resolved not to lose this region to the British. Imagine if all of Michigan and the Great Lakes were part of Canada—this would be a very different continent."

—Scott Kirkwood

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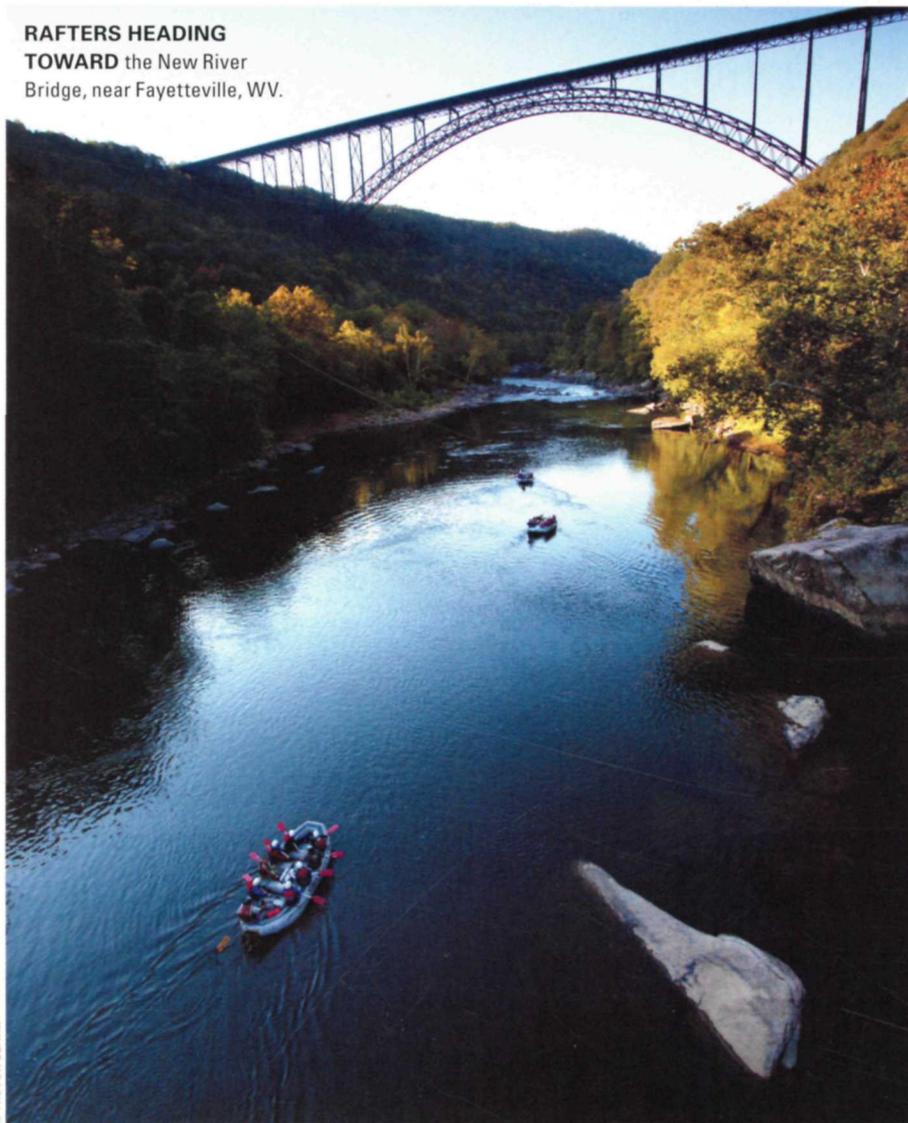
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## NEW & IMPROVED

Preserving West Virginia's best-loved view.

Gazing out at the New River Gorge is a rite of passage for West Virginians: So cherished is this site, it's depicted on the state's quarter. "There's something unique about the perspective you get sitting on top of these ancient cliffs, looking over one of the oldest rivers on the continent," explains Erin Haddix-St. John, program manager at NPCA's West Virginia field office. Still, decades of development proposals for this privately owned parcel had threatened to mar this beloved landscape, until a key land

purchase in September 2010 protected the state's most stirring vistas forever.

One of just two rivers in the world that flows south to north, the New River's corridor has been called the "Grand Canyon of the East," with forested rims towering 1,000 feet above the water below. The steel-arch bridge spanning the chasm is equally dramatic: Until 2004, the New River Gorge Bridge was the world's longest arch bridge, and it remains the country's second highest. Much of this

ecosystem—70,000 acres—was targeted for preservation in 1978, when the New River Gorge National River was created. Since then, the Park Service has been working to purchase privately owned lands within the park's boundaries from willing sellers. The temperate deciduous forests found here, after all, are some of the most diverse on Earth.

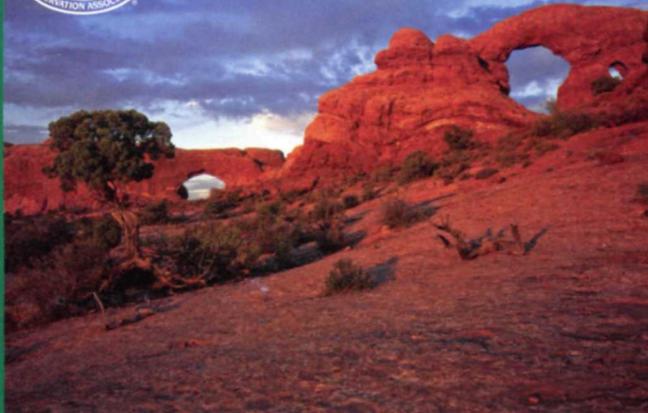
But key parcels, including a tract just downstream from the bridge, opposite Hawks Nest State Park, remained in private hands and subject to commercial development: One proposal, floated in the early '90s, would have placed 1,600 housing units—as well as shopping centers and hotels—on the scenic rim. Although the steep hillside presented less desirable building sites than the rim above, old roadbeds constructed for a former mining site made housing projects feasible even there. Logging was another threat: The property's hardwoods had been felled as recently as the 1960s. New River Superintendent Don Striker was also worried about other types of development, including unchecked expansion of the "extreme" sports already established at the gorge. BASE jumping is popular on Bridge Day, an annual celebration that allows thrill-seekers one-day-only access to the 876-foot-high structure, and Striker says that had the slope remained in private hands, other thrilling concessions (like a zipline) may have come into play, operating outside the Park Service's reach and impinging on the slope's natural state.

Since the slope forms an integral part of the view from the bridge, the Canyon Rim Visitor Center, and Hawks Nest State Park, such developments would have spoiled the natural appearance of New River Gorge and broken up the slope's ecology. "This is a big block of unfragmented land," explains Striker, and fragmentation harms the diversity that makes this forest so remarkable. "If we preserve that diversity now, it will serve us well in the future."

*(cont'd on p. 20)*



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## ARCHING FORWARD

The Park Service embraces a new vision for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis.

As you approach St. Louis, Missouri, your eye is drawn to a gleaming silver structure looming in the distance, pulling you toward the city center—the iconic stainless-steel curve anchors the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. But after checking your map, dialing up the GPS, and craning your neck as you pass a dozen exit ramps, you start to wonder if maybe you just can't get there from here.

The sculptural marvel more commonly referred to as "The Gateway Arch" was designed by Architect Eero Saarinen and completed in October 1965. The park, designed by renowned landscape architect Dan Kiley, reflects the city's role in America's westward expansion and serves as a memorial to Thomas Jefferson and the pioneers who explored the untamed landscape that would eventually come under our flag. The 630-foot

Arch and surrounding park are situated on a 90-acre plot of land on the shores of the Mississippi River, but a spaghetti-bowl of highways surrounds the site, cutting off connections from every angle. To get there, you've got to dodge dozens of vehicles as you cross six lanes of traffic on foot, enter through a parking garage, or walk in from the park's desolate southern edge. And once you arrive, you realize the best way to experience it may have been from that highway exit ramp back in Illinois. Visitors who want to ride the tram to the top of the Arch must wait in a security line, purchase tickets, then be trapped inside an outdated museum for several hours, until their number is called. Few would compare the experience to that offered up by other urban parks like Washington's National Mall or San Francisco's Golden Gate National

Recreation Area.

"The arch itself is an extraordinary piece of public sculpture and an engineering marvel that takes the concepts of Western migration, optimism, courage, and discovery and wraps them into a phenomenal piece of art—but it's isolated," says Walter Metcalfe Jr., one of the founders of the CityArchRiver 2015 Foundation. "Its themes focus on connections, moving forward, and coming together, yet it's located on an exquisite island surrounded by an interstate, a set of railroad tracks, and a river set away from the Arch itself. The area is so foreboding and uninviting that people can't wait to get there, take a photograph, and get out of town."

"The Arch is a beautiful, but it's in a passive park that is in dire need of relevancy," says Lynn McClure, director of NPCA's Midwest regional office and another founder of CityArchRiver. "It's in a thriving city but disconnected from everything—as far as the 'potentialometer' for parks, the potential is huge. People who live and work downtown see a raw canvas and want (cont'd on p. 20)

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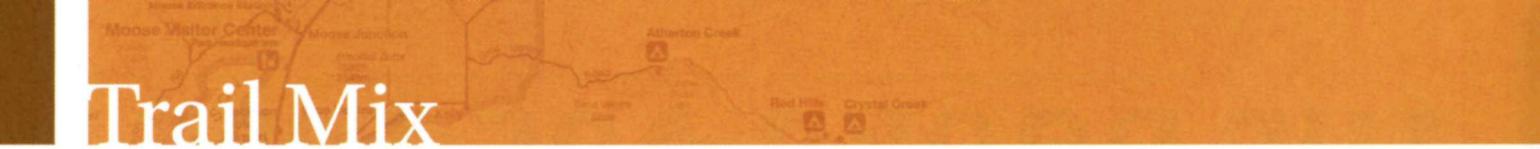
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# Trail Mix

**ARCHING FORWARD** (from p. 18) to know how to leverage this attraction for the city of St. Louis.”

Forty-five years after the memorial’s construction, that’s finally happening. In December 2009, CityArchRiver invited landscape architects from around the world to participate in a competition to envision the visitor experience for the hundreds of thousands of people who make the journey every year. The goal was not to just construct a new visitor center or erect additional structures to populate the landscape, but to reshape the entire experience in a way that invites visitors to explore the area and stay longer, and to bring more meaning to the experience for locals, who only visit the Arch with their out-of-town guests. In September, the panel of judges selected Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA) of New York City to tackle the challenge. The firm designed Brooklyn Bridge Park and took inspiration from other waterfront parks including Millennium Park in Chicago and

Allegheny Riverfront Park in Pittsburgh, and it’s now working with the Park Service, the City of St. Louis, and a host of other adjacent landowners to refine some initial design concepts and make them a reality. (Review their concepts and other entries at [www.cityarchrivercompetition.org](http://www.cityarchrivercompetition.org).) MVVA will present its final project design, budget, and implementation plan this January; the project is to be finished by October 2015, the 50th anniversary of the Arch’s completion.

The new plan would make ticketing available throughout the grounds, so visitors could roam outside the museum, if they prefer. Skylights would let light into the underground museum. A performance stage on the river would host outdoor concerts or film screenings in warmer months. Restaurants and vendors would be encouraged to open concessions on the edge of the historic landscape, just beyond the park boundary, to invite more visitors to linger. And across the Mississippi River, in Illinois, a con-

taminated area would be transformed into a sprawling riverfront park, literally expanding the memorial dedicated to expansion. Congress has empowered the Park Service to acquire the land across the river—the move will require additional funding, but planners believe it’s a goal that’s well within reach.

“The most important part of this vision is the fact that it’s led by landscape architecture, not a physical structure,” says Metcalfe. “It’s bringing the city and the river and the Illinois side together, giving people reasons to linger in the space, not just as a matter of physical comfort but as a tool to engage people in a public space.”

“The Arch could become a model for urban national parks,” says McClure. “The park simply wants to tell its story in the best way to attract the most people, and the city wants to attract more people as well, so the interests here are perfectly aligned.”

—Scott Kirkwood

**NEW AND IMPROVED** (from p. 16) Fortunately, the Park Service was able to do exactly that with the cooperation of developer Gary Driggs, who shares West Virginians’ love for the gorge. Ever since Driggs married a West Virginia native in 1959, he and his wife have returned to the New River Gorge to hike, camp, and savor the views. So instead of placing shopping centers on the rim, he pursued a low-density housing development and offered the rim for sale to the Park Service. The Nature Conservancy also participated in negotiations, acting as an independent third party to help broker the deal.

On September 14, 2010, the Park Service announced the sale’s completion: The land sold for \$1,500 per acre, and was obtained with money provided by the Land and Water Conservation Fund. “The purchase and protection of this critical parcel inside the park boundary demonstrates the importance of providing parks with adequate funding to purchase key lands when they become available, so our parks are protected for genera-

tions to come,” says Haddix-St. John.

“To look out from Hawks Nest and peer down into the curve of that tree-covered gorge is to experience one of the most iconic views in West Virginia,” Driggs adds. “Helping to preserve that has brought me enormous personal satisfaction.”

This isn’t the first acquisition made by the New River Gorge National River, but it’s one of the most visible—and it points to how the park has changed since its creation in 1978. Initially, the only federal land was to be the riverbed itself; only through easements and partnerships could the park protect the hillsides. “The public didn’t want another Shenandoah, where the government took people’s land,” says Striker. But since then, preserving the New River Gorge has gained more public support. In fact, the park’s boundary has continued to expand a little every decade, with support from private property owners and neighboring communities. “We hope this purchase has the potential to influence others, and to get people thinking about conserving

even more land,” says Rodney Bartgis of The Nature Conservancy.

This latest purchase means birders at Hawks Nest State Park can still gaze across at an undeveloped canyon wall, and whitewater rafters can continue to enjoy one of the most pristine and scenic stretches of river anywhere in the East. And a key slope, which hosts up to 20 to 30 different types of trees that shelter other plants and animals endemic to the Appalachians, is finally protected. Catawba rhododendron will continue to flourish here, as it does throughout the southeastern mountains—as will the black-bellied salamander, which is rare in West Virginia. The purchase may also extend length to a proposed 100-mile-long hiking and cycling trail that will one day span the New River Gorge National River from end to end.

Most important, the purchase preserves the appearance of an American icon. Says Bartgis, “I’m proud to protect a landscape that everyone knows and loves.”

—Kelly Bastone

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IN THE MID-1800s, a mysterious man withdrew to Hermit Island in what is now Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



# The Hermit of Hermit Island

At Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, one island echoes with legends of lost riches, forsaken love, and sweet, sweet solitude.

For as long as there have been societies, there have been those who have chosen to live apart, who turn their backs on the world to ... do what? Listen for voices in the wind? Search the clouds for signs of the divine? Think dark thoughts, enlightened thoughts, no thoughts at all?

From 1847 to 1861, Hermit Island in Apostle Islands National Lakeshore in Wisconsin was home to a mysterious man who lived alone, tending a garden, making barrels to sell to passing fishermen, keeping mostly to himself. Few hard facts remain, including his name, although the old maps speak of

this place as "Wilson's Island." But was that his first name or his last? How did he come to live here, and why? What poetry or curse did he find in the silence of this 778-acre island?

A clipping from *The Bayfield County Press* dated October 22, 1953, written by Eleanor Knight more than 90 years after the hermit's death, claims that "Wilson" was born in Canada of Scottish parents in 1792. At 18, he left his home, and his fiancée, on a sailing vessel that carried him down the Pacific Coast, where he scouted out the biggest and best stands of trees for timber companies and sought the wilderness life. "Fear was unknown to him," the article says, "And the things he did... grew into legends."

Returning in 1817, he found his parents dead and his intended bride married to another. Wilson lit out for the wildest country he could find, trying to outrun his sadness. There are tales of Wilson joining the Hudson Bay Company as a fur trapper, abandoning a wife and daughter along the Colum-

bia River, inheriting a cache of gold from his parents, and falling in love with a small group of islands he glimpsed in his travels: the Apostles.

By the 1840s, Wilson was working with the American Fur Company on Madeline Island, another of the Apostles. His wilderness life had left him “powerfully built” and “lithe, quick in all his movements.” He considered himself “the best man on Lake Superior.” That is, until he met John W. “King” Bell. A feud between the two men came to a head with a public fist fight in 1847. Wilson, the loser, loaded a small boat with his belongings and what was left of his pride, and set out to find an island of his own.

The heart of Hermit Island rises slowly. From a clearing near the island’s crest, the lake twinkles below like a blue eye just opening from sleep. Even less is known of Wilson’s solitary life on the island. Some say that he built a one-room cabin, kept chickens, read *The Whole Duty of Man* by lamplight, and left only for supplies and then only on

Sundays, hoping to encounter as few other people as possible.

There is little record of where Wilson’s cabin stood and no sign of it now, so many years later. A lack of solid details leaves the mystery open, prompting visitors to walk the island over and over, wondering, “Is this a trail he might have walked? Did he sing while he gardened? When he saw a fishing boat on the horizon, did he wonder, after so many months of silence, what the voices in the galley sounded like?” Even his death is shrouded in mystery. Stories range from being murdered at the hand of thieves ransacking the cabin for his fabled stash of gold coins, to coiling in the throes of delirium from the evils of homemade alcohol.

In life, and in death, the hermit left more questions than answers. Who was this man? Was it solitude or the fear of society that did him in? With solitude, where is the line between invigorating and insane? Will we ever find the truth, and should we even try? What is the role of human history in a national

park wilderness?

The answers, suggests Bob Mackreth, a long-time employee at Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, may say as much about the desires of park visitors today as the hermit himself. “The Hermit’s greatest significance to me is that he’s one of the better-known and most intriguing members of the rich cast of characters in the Apostle Islands drama,” says Mackreth, now retired. “His story, and the way it has grown through the years, illustrates the way people seek a human connection with this archipelago. Although Hermit Island is now labeled as wilderness, ‘untrammeled by man,’ men and women lived and worked there for a long time. And the fact that people are willing to speculate and embellish the history here shows how eager they are to find a human dimension to accompany the islands’ natural and scenic splendor.” **NP**

**Jeff Rennie** regularly paddles out to the Apostle Islands to enjoy the wilderness and contemplate the mysteries of Hermit Island.

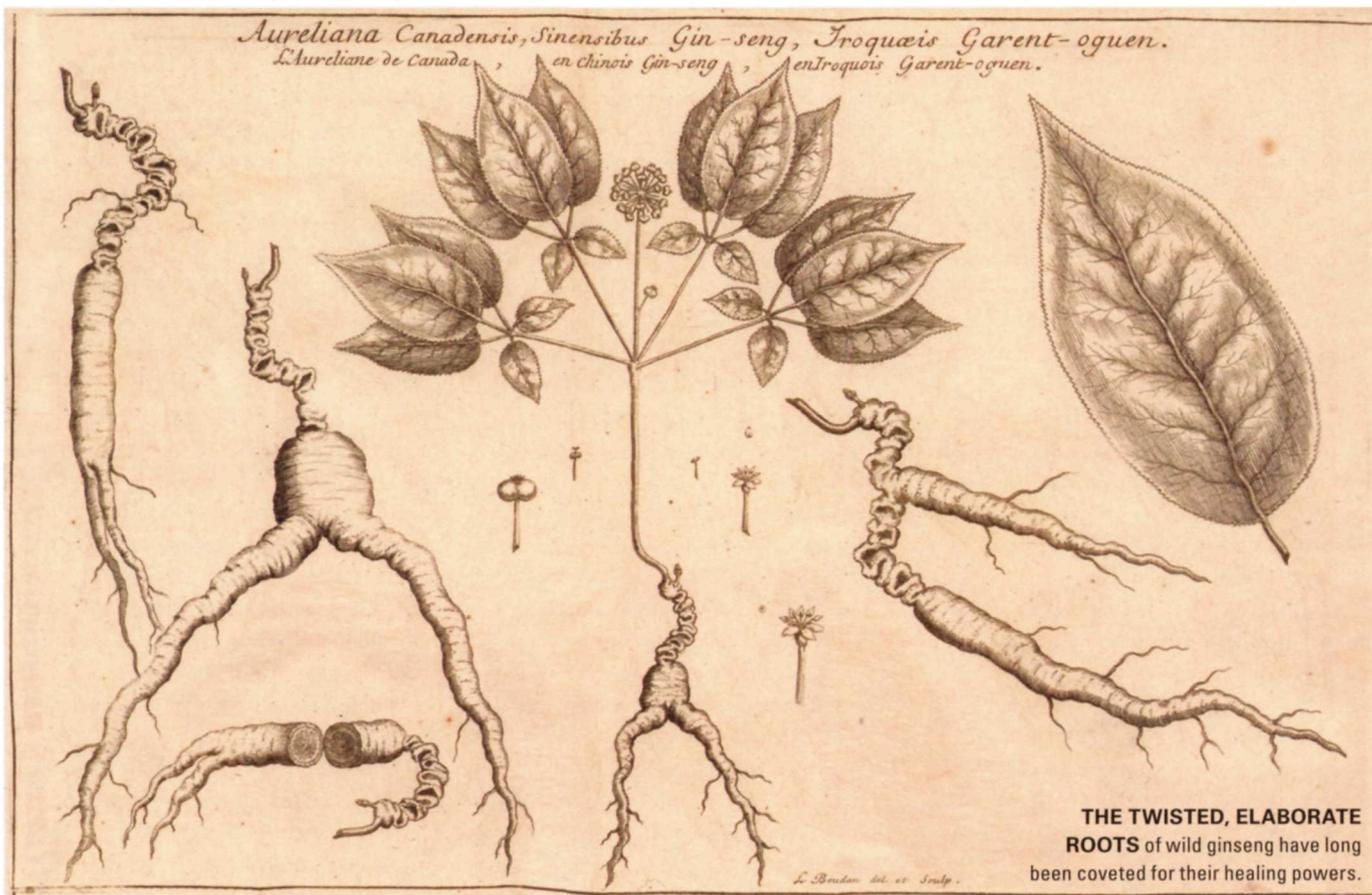


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# The Spice of Life

Wild ginseng is disappearing from Southeast parks at an alarming rate.

**T**radition endures in the Appalachian Mountains, where collecting ginseng root is a custom that stretches back to Daniel Boone. Along with pelts, the trapper gathered ginseng for sale to Asia, where for centuries, it has been prized for its medicinal value. Generations of mountain-dwellers have followed Boone's example. Now, wild American ginseng has become so scarce that botanists fear for the plant's very survival.

While not officially endangered, ginseng populations are dwindling due to overharvesting—a scenario that already played out in China, where people now covet the U.S.-grown roots. “They deplet-

ed their own ginseng populations, so they turned to ours,” says Janet Rock, a botanist at Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee. And she's not talking about the farmed variety, which resembles a parsnip and lacks the wild plant's potency. Asians covet the twisted, evocatively tangled roots found only in the wild, which is why nearly 90 percent of the wild ginseng harvested in the United States ends up crossing the Pacific.

There, ginseng is treasured for its supposed healing powers: Asians use the pale, gnarled roots to treat everything from depression and anxiety to erectile dysfunction

and cancer. In America, “sang” (as it's called in the South) is less cherished for its healing effects and more for its dollar value: Few gatherers on this side of the ocean use the plant for homeopathy, but it has long supplemented Appalachia's meager household incomes. “It's like moonshine,” says Don Barger, senior director for NPCA's Southeast regional office. “It's how people who are isolated in the mountains make enough money to buy flour and supplement their gardens.”

A pound of fresh ginseng (50 to 100 roots) currently goes for \$135; dried roots are worth \$460 per pound (about 200 to 300 roots). Such prices attract diggers throughout ginseng's range, from southern Canada to Georgia; in Kentucky alone—where the most roots are removed—the trade is worth \$8 million a year.

Much of that is harvested indiscriminately—and illegally. In national forests and on private property, diggers may legally collect the root with the landowner's permission.

But national parks prohibit plant removal. So at Kentucky's Mammoth Cave and in the Great Smoky Mountains, rangers battle a poaching problem that predates park boundaries; many of the poachers return to the same secret locations their grandfathers used.

Ginseng grows in moist, well-drained coves at low to moderate elevations (below 5,000 feet). Traditionally, diggers collected only in autumn, when the plant's berries aided identification; those berries were generally returned to the soil, where they'd produce the next generation of plants.

Today, poachers increasingly seek the plants throughout the summer, before they've had a chance to produce seeds. And because ginseng grows slowly, requiring at least six years to produce mature seeds and even more time to enlarge its bizarrely misshapen roots, the population is slow to rebound from aggressive gathering.

To protect it, park law-enforcement rangers patrol the backcountry to deter or apprehend diggers. Each year, two to three

poachers are caught in Smokies parkland, where many more are believed to operate. In October 2010, a landmark bust involving a longtime suspect recovered 805 roots, many of which were replanted.

But poachers caught outside park boundaries often escape prosecution by claiming their ginseng wasn't park-grown. So parks initiated a marking program developed by Jim Corbin, a plant protection specialist with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. Corbin formulated an innocuous powdered dye that, when deposited near ginseng's roots, tints them orange. The dye allows dealers to identify (and refuse) shipments of illegally-harvested roots. It also gives prosecutors key evidence that roots were actually removed from protected lands.

Unfortunately, top-tier poachers aren't deterred by such measures, and judges generally require additional evidence to convict them. So Corbin recently developed coded chips, placed on the roots just below the soil

surface, to identify the plant's precise growing location. The chips are detected using ultraviolet light or trained dogs that sniff out the encoded scent at dealers' warehouses before the roots are exported. Still, programs like this are most successful when diggers and dealers are willing to play fair. As people realize the value of preserving this dwindling plant resource, illegal activities decrease.

Long-standing habits don't change overnight, and the Park Service's plant protection resources are stretched thin. But last spring, the agency's director, Jon Jarvis, proposed a budget that could help. If Congress approves the \$238,000 line item to protect ginseng and other resources in the Smokies, the park could see an additional 1,460 backcountry patrols. "It all comes down to money," says Rock. "And education. Teaching the public about species conservation—that's where my optimism lies." NP

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Freelance writer **Kelly Bastone** lives in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.



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**CONSCIENCE**

• During World War II, thousands of conscientious objectors worked to restore and preserve our national parks and other federal lands. •  
Meet a few of them.

BY KEVIN GRANGE

**LUKE BIRKY SPENT MUCH OF WWII** as a smokejumper in Glacier National Park—one of 12,000 men who chose Civilian Public Service over military service.



**S**tanding at the airplane door in a canvas jumpsuit and leather football helmet, soaring above a remote southwestern section of Glacier National Park in 1945, Luke Birky checked the ripcord on his emergency chute, wiped the sweat from his brow, and took a deep breath.

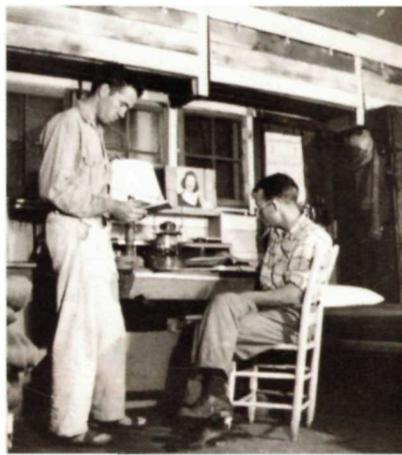
“Let’s go!” yelled the spotter, pointing to the door.

One by one, the members of Birky’s crew shuffled forward. As they leapt from the “tin goose,” an old Ford Trimotor, the static line deployed their chutes, which burst open in the smoky afternoon sky like fluffy white pieces of popcorn. Below, Mount Saint Nicholas exploded out of the earth like a massive arrowhead and snake-like smoke plumes rose from two fires, wedged between a group of pine trees.

Birky stepped up to the plane door, steadying himself with his arms at his side. A conscientious objector, Birky didn’t believe in killing another

human being, but he did believe in serving his country. As he stood at the plane door, the wind whistling through his helmet, Birky didn’t know that this would be his last jump. He didn’t know then that a downdraft—traveling 1,500 feet per minute—waited for him unseen in the sky, and that this angry torrent of air would slam him into the earth a half-mile from his intended landing site, badly injuring his right heel but miraculously sparing his life. Instead, Birky only knew that a fire threatened a national park he had loved since his first visit at age 12. He remembered family drives up the famous Going to the Sun Road, hikes to the Garden Wall, and magnificent glaciers. By jumping, he would be protecting these special memories, as well as the future visits that families would make over the ensuing years. Glacier held a special place in Birky’s heart, so when the spotter tapped his shoulder, signaling his turn, he leapt without hesitation.

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE, CIVILIAN PUBLIC SERVICE RECORDS, SWARTHMORE COLLEGE PEACE COLLECTION



**LIFE IN THE CO CAMPS** ranged from signmaking to fighting forest fires, duties that were occasionally interrupted by more casual pursuits.

★ **WHEN FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT** signed the Selective Training and Service Act in 1940, our nation's first peacetime draft, he agreed to exempt any man who, "by reason of religious training and belief, is conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form." Such a conscientious objector clause was nothing new in the United States. When George Washington was recruiting soldiers for the Continental Army during the American Revolution, he exempted "those with conscientious scruples against war." Since 1789, the choice to abstain from fighting for moral or philosophical reasons has always been an enduring First Amendment right. Yet, despite this privilege, conscientious objectors (COs) historically have been persecuted for their pacifist beliefs. During the Civil War, some COs were starved to death and hung by their thumbs. During World War I, COs could be sentenced to death or to prison sentences that stretched from 20 years to life.

As Hitler's shadow descended over Europe and FDR assembled an army, however, it was clear the conscientious objectors deserved a solution that didn't compromise their human rights. Rather than make COs prisoners, Roosevelt and the Selective Service offered them legal ways to serve their country.

More than 72,000 men applied for conscientious objector status during WWII, but only 37,000 were accepted. As opposed to the thousands of citizens who initially protested U.S. involvement in Europe in 1939—most famously Charles Lindbergh—or the young men who refused to register, the men who received IV-E status (conscientious objector) had to prove their objection to *all* wars. Once accepted, the COs had two options: They could serve as noncombatants in the Armed Forces or join the Civilian Public Service (CPS). At least 25,000 COs chose noncombatant work, going on to serve as medics or clerics in Asia or Europe. The remaining 12,000 joined the CPS, doing work of "national importance under civilian

direction" for the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, or Bureau of Reclamation or working in one of 41 mental institutions spread throughout the United States.

The first CPS camp opened on May 15, 1941, in Patapsco, Maryland; the program quickly spread to 152 locations across the country. The CPS moved into facilities that had been vacated by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and, like the workers in Roosevelt's public-relief work program, they shared the goal of developing and protecting our nation's natural resources. Although the majority of the men were from the "peace churches"—Quakers, Mennonites, and the Church of Brethren—more than 200 religious organizations were represented, along with COs unaffiliated with a particular church who opposed war on philosophical and moral grounds. Rather than earning an entry-level GI salary, the COs had to pay the government \$35 a month for their room and board, which put them in debt pretty quickly. If conscientious objectors couldn't pay, which was common after the Great Depression, their churches often stepped in to sponsor them, adding an additional \$2.50 monthly stipend for the COs and contributing more than \$7 million over the course of the war to help fund the CPS program.

Adorned in spruce green trousers, T-shirts, sack coats, and caps, the men at CPS 108 at Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee worked nine-hour days six days a week, repairing roads, fixing telephone lines, planting nurseries, clearing trails, managing fire strikes, and eradicating white pine blister rust, a destructive disease that is lethal if allowed to spread from branch to trunk. Some COs rose before their 6:15 a.m. wake-up call to attend *matins* (early morning prayer service), practiced an evening prayer service of vespers, and held a church service on Sunday.

Although some locals around Gatlinburg called the COs cowards or "yellow bellies" and occasionally beat them up, Camp Director John Ferguson had no doubts about their contribution. "There is a big satisfaction in watching the

★ *the*  
★ **NUMBERS**  
★

**152** | ★

CPS CAMPS

**12,000** | ★

MEN

**8 million** | ★

MAN-DAYS OF WORK

**\$6 million** | ★

IN UNPAID LABOR

**9** | ★

CAMPS UNDER NATIONAL  
PARK SERVICE DIRECTION

**29** | ★

CAMPS UNDER U.S.  
FOREST SERVICE  
DIRECTION (INCLUDING  
CPS 103 SMOKEJUMPER  
UNIT, WHICH FOUGHT FIRES  
ON PARK SERVICE AND  
FOREST SERVICE LANDS)

“I’m proud of the fact that I gave my country four years of service in the manner I did.”

— DICK FLAHARTY

men respond to the opportunity to help,” he wrote to the American Friends Service Committee, the Quaker organization that had partnered with the Selective Service on the CPS program. “Considering that none of the CCC units stationed in this area are left and that the present ranger and warden staff are only half as large as they should be, it can be seen that the camp is indispensable to the maintenance of the park.” In addition to the work outside, COs also assisted with the park administration by managing oil and gas records. A few men even volunteered for the “pest house,” an isolated barrack in Pinehurst, North Carolina, where they were infected with influenza and

pneumonia as “guinea pigs” for scientific research on respiratory diseases.

Hugh Bustin worked for the CPS in 1943 and remembers his time at Camp 108 fondly. “The Smokies were a beautiful place to be,” he says. “I was surrounded by good people and hard workers.” Bustin initially handled maintenance and laundry duties around camp, but with abundant wildlife, four seasons of blooming flowers, and cascading waterfalls at his doorstep, the call of the wild soon prompted him to request trail work. Before his time with the CPS, Bustin had done some hiking around Whalen, Massachusetts, but nothing prepared him

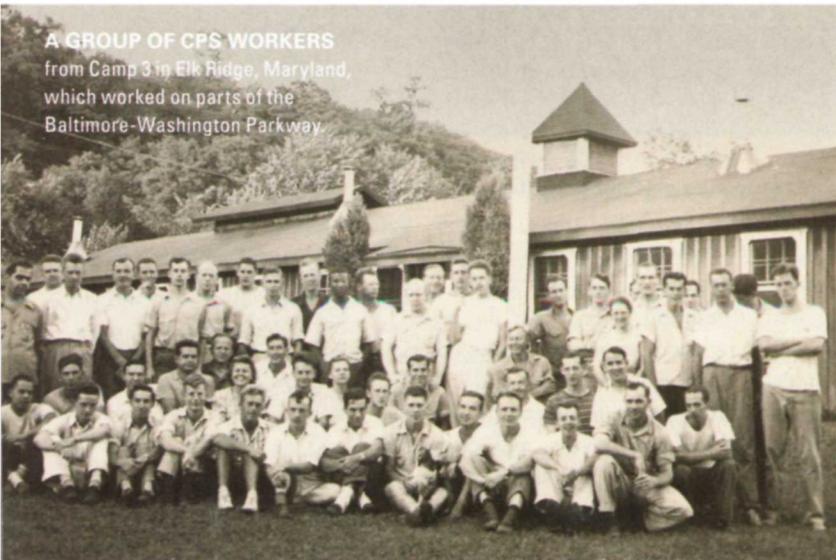
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★  
 ★ *Park Service CAMPS*  
 ★

CPS 3	Elkridge, MD	★ BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY
CPS 19	Marion, NC	★ BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY
CPS 29	Lyndhurst, VA	★ SHENANDOAH
CPS 39	Galax, VA	★ BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY
CPS 45	Luray, VA	★ SHENANDOAH
CPS 55	Belton, MT	★ GLACIER
CPS 107	Three Rivers, CA	★ SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON
CPS 108	Gatlinburg, TN	★ GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS
CPS 121	Bedford, VA	★ BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

**NOTE:** CPS 103 in Missoula, Montana, was a smokejumper unit managed by the U.S. Forest Service, serving Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks.

A GROUP OF CPS WORKERS  
 from Camp 3 in Elk Ridge, Maryland,  
 which worked on parts of the  
 Baltimore-Washington Parkway



CIVILIAN PUBLIC SERVICE PERSONAL PAPERS AND COLLECTED MATERIALS, SWARTHMORE COLLEGE PEACE COLLECTION

for the rigorous job of swinging double-bit axes and working cross-cut saws to maintain the 800 miles of trails that weave through the Smokies. “They’d drop us off at one end of the trail in the morning, and there was no going back,” Bustin recalls. “If we wanted to get home, we had miles of hard work ahead of us.” Yet despite the tough labor conditions that led to calloused hands, the position deepened Bustin’s appreciation of the outdoors. “I got to see wildlife, and it made me aware of what mountains and trees and nature gives us,” he said. “It is a great gift.”

Birky had a similar experience working—and smoke jumping—in Glacier National Park. “Before working with the CPS, I simply enjoyed the park,” he said, “but being on the inside taught me a whole new way to think about ecology and gave me an awareness of the value and purpose in preserving land and beauty.”

Despite the pristine setting of camps scattered around the Badlands, Blue Ridge Parkway, Glacier, Shenandoah, Sequoia, and the Smokies, the CPS program had its difficulties. Just like the white pine blister rust, many conscientious objectors felt that they, too, were an invasive species in America, sent to the camps to be removed from the public eye lest they compromise the wartime spirit. “The CO, by my theory, is best handled if no one hears of him,” General Lewis Hershey, Selective Service director, told the Senate Military Affairs Committee in 1943. Difficulties even arose within the camps themselves—religious tensions, regional rivalries, and more than a few cases of late-night filching of food. In addition, some COs complained of what they viewed as inefficient administration, resented the fact they weren’t paid for their work, and questioned whether hauling boulders, surveying land, and clearing leaves qualified as work of national importance. These objections eventually prompted some COs to enlist in the Army so they could earn a decent wage and support their families; others simply quit working and chose prison over the militaristic CPS camps. But for those who stayed in the camps and were committed to the work, this transitional moment in American history became a catalyst for personal transformations.

“The CPS has been a great experience,” George Hogle wrote in *Calumet*, a newsletter published twice a month by CPS Camp 108. “It opened up new vistas of religion which were unexplored territory for me... and I realize only too well the importance of having spiritual companionship and an environment where the world cannot press in so hard on all sides.”



“Working with CPS... gave me an awareness of the value and purpose in preserving the land.”

— LUKE BIRKY

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“I believe the search for God is the search for life itself, in its fullest and most abundant form,” Reed Smith wrote on his application to spend more time in the Smokies. “It is my desire to make this my central aim and adjust all my interests and activities about this central purpose.” Reading these letters years later, it’s hard to imagine that Great Smoky Mountains National Park, with its tumbling mountains, sublime sunsets, and 1,660 flowering plants, didn’t have a little something to do with it.

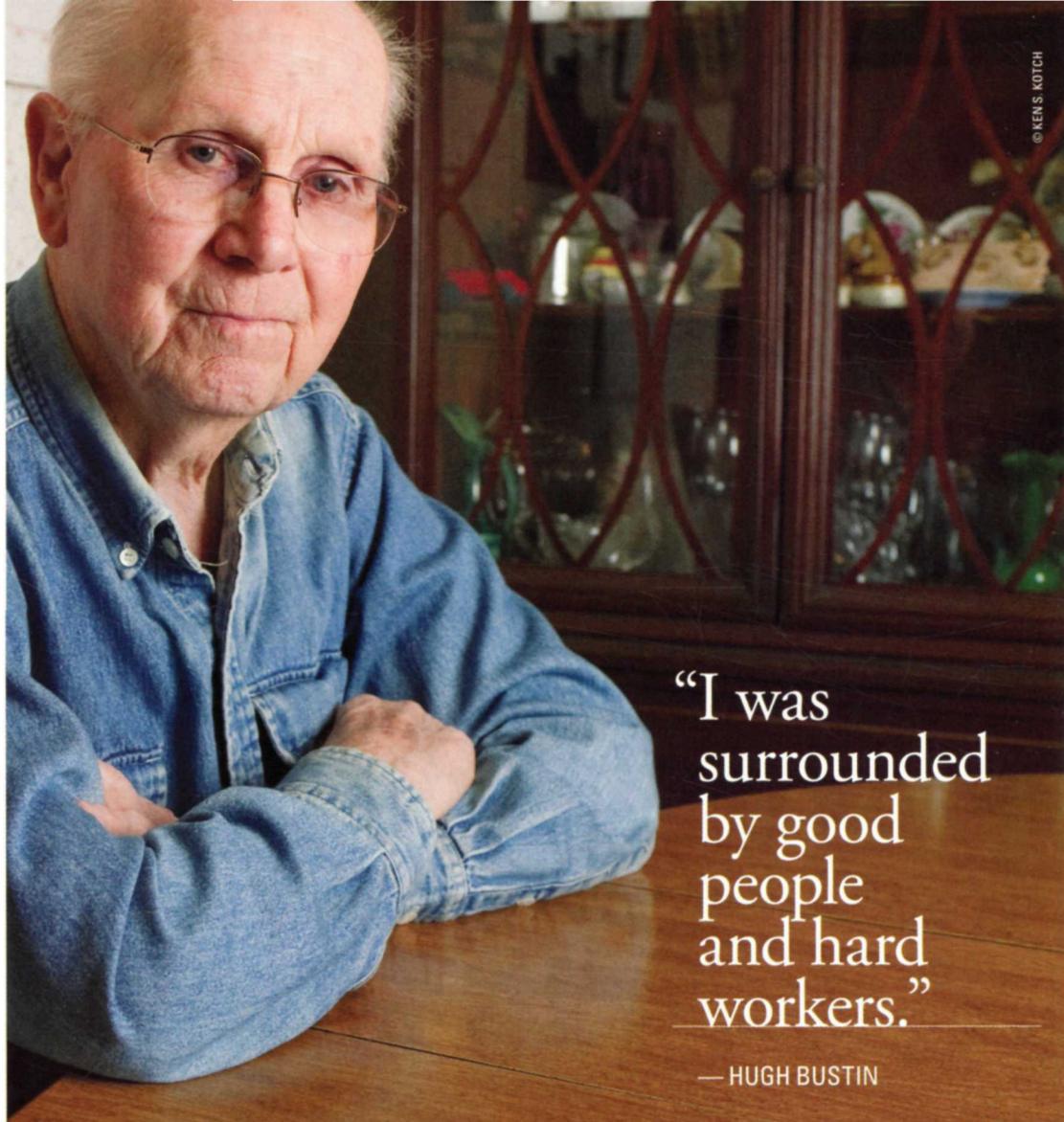
Along with spiritual progress, the camps also allowed the men to grow socially. With more than 200 religions represented, the CPS squeezed the diversity of a big city into the small, wooded confines of a camp. Muslims slept in dormitory cots beside Jews; Catholics cooked at the same kitchen stove with Jehovah’s Witnesses.

“I certainly got experiences I wouldn’t have gotten at home,” recalls Earl Schmidt, a Kansas native who worked for the CPS for four years and also volunteered for the daring work of smoke jumping. “I remember lots of interesting discussions with the guys. We didn’t always agree, but you always learned a different slant.”



AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE, ITALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE RECORDS, SWARTHMORE COLLEGE PEACE COLLECTION

COs ATOP PEREGRIN RIDGE, CPS Camp 108, Gatlinburg Tennessee.



**REFORESTATION WORK**  
being done by workers from CPS  
Camp 3, Elk Ridge, Maryland.



AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE, CIVILIAN PUBLIC SERVICE RECORDS, SWARTHMORE COLLEGE PEACE COLLECTION

“I was surrounded by good people and hard workers.”

— HUGH BUSTIN

“It was a brotherhood,” adds Bustin. “I learned more as a 19-year-old at the CPS camp than if I’d been at college. I discovered you don’t have to share the same faith to be friends.”

Even after WWII came to an end in 1945, the government demanded that some COs continue working in the camps; men were eventually released based on accumulated service, marital status, and family size. This slow process not only kept COs from their families but gave returning servicemen the first shot at post-war jobs and educational opportunities. When the CPS program finally ended in 1947, the men returned to college, farming, factory jobs, and office work.

In the years that followed, America became an increasingly mobile and prosperous nation with a renewed emphasis on family life and appreciation for the outdoors. Park visitation boomed—by 1950, more than 32 million people were visiting our national parks each year.

During their time in the camps, the smoke jumpers bonded with their fellow COs so much that they continue

to reunite and relive those memories. “I enjoyed the outdoors and the heavy work of the CPS,” says Dick Flaharty, a CO from Chicago who worked for both a soil-conservation unit and smoke jumper unit during his tenure. “And I am proud of the fact I gave my country four years of service in the manner I did.” **NP**

**ON THE WEB**

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT** COs’ work on our federal lands, see the PBS video, *The Good War And Those Who Refused to Fight It*:

[www.pbs.org/itvs/thegoodwar/story.html](http://www.pbs.org/itvs/thegoodwar/story.html)

**Kevin Grange’s** memoir about trekking in Bhutan will be published by the University of Nebraska Press in April. The author would like to thank former NPCA employee Ann Froschauer and Chuck Sheley, the editor of *Smokejumper Magazine*, for their enormous assistance with this story.

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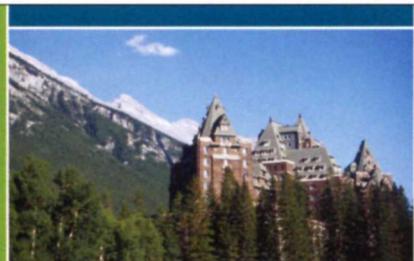
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M-1

Only 45-50 wolverines  
make their home in Glacier





BY DOUGLAS H. CHADWICK ILLUSTRATIONS BY DUNG HOANG

# THE WOLVERINE WAY

Despite a ferocious reputation, the wolverine is far more complex than the legends that surround it. And even in a place as vast and wild as Glacier National Park, its future is uncertain.

**F**ine snow streaked the air, riding sideways on a gale, in early March 2006. Biologist Rick Yates led the way, breaking trail on skis through the powder.

Great cliffs striped with avalanche tracks rose on all sides. Somewhere higher up among the clouds stretched the ice fields that gave this valley—Many Glacier—its name. We crossed two frozen lakes and finally passed into an old-growth spruce forest that took the edge off the storm. Beneath the branches, half-buried in snow, stood a large box made of logs six to eight inches thick. It looked a little like a scaled-down cabin. But it was a trap, and there was a wolverine inside.

The animal had entered during the night. We knew from its radio frequency that this was M1: M for male, Number 1 because he had been the first wolverine caught and radio-tagged during a groundbreaking study of the species under way here in Glacier National Park, Montana. Sometimes the researchers called him Piegan instead, after a 9,220-foot mountain at the head of the valley. To me, he was Big Daddy, constantly patrolling a

huge territory that straddled the Continental Divide near the heart of the park. His domain overlapped those of several females, and he had bred with at least three of them over the years while successfully keeping rivals at bay.

We paused a short distance from the trap to listen. M1 was silent. Predictably, he began to give off warning growls as we drew nearer. They rumbled deep and long with a force that made you think a much larger predator lay waiting inside, something more on the order of a Siberian tiger—or possibly a Velociraptor. I lifted the box's heavy lid an inch or two to peer in. The inside of the front wall underneath was freshly gouged and splintered, its logs growing thin under Big Daddy's assault. Raising the lid another notch, I could finally make him out as a dense shadow toward the rear of the trap. Wolverines have dark brownish eyes, but in the light from my flashlight those orbs reflected an eerie blue-green color that glowed like plutonium, surrounded by the rising steam from his breath. The next things I saw were white claws and teeth and stringers of spit all flying at me with a roar before I dropped the lid shut and sprang back.

**In 2004, writer and biologist Douglas Chadwick** joined a groundbreaking research project on wolverines in Glacier National Park, shadowing biologists as they tracked, captured, and collected data on a species that has eluded scientists for decades. The following piece includes excerpts from the resulting book, *The Wolverine Way*, published by Patagonia Books.



**Inside the trap**, the roaring and growling continued—wolverine for “Hope you won’t be needing your face for anything, Tame Boy, because I’m going to take it off next time!”—followed by the sound of more wood being ripped apart. Given a few more hours, M1 would have an escape hole torn through the mini-log cabin. From time to time, the tips of his claws poked out just above the uppermost log of the front wall while he rammed his head against the lid. He was trying to shove the thing upward, though the ice-encrusted logs that formed the top of the box must have weighed 100 pounds.

Although wolverines aren’t nearly as large as their reputation for malice and mayhem, they can reach 45 pounds in northern climes like that of Alaska. Their paws, which serve as their snowshoes, are as broad as a 120-pound wolf’s. Each paw has five toes with a stout, slightly curved claw up to two inches long.

I looked round at the trees and the snow swirls beyond and shook my head. I’d taken a vow to steer clear of wolverines when I was 17 years old, after meeting a man whose face had been disfigured during a supposed run-in with one of the creatures. Having joined the Glacier Wolverine Project in 2004, I was going into my third straight year of breaking that vow in just about every way it could possibly be broken. No regrets. These animals’ off-the-charts strength and survival skills had become a source of inspiration for me by now. Even so, I was never going to get used to dealing with the intensity of a wolverine when it’s up close and cornered. Nobody did.

**Wolverines don’t unnecessarily** complicate their lives. They won’t equivocate or trade in partial truths; I call this the wolverine pledge. If only that policy were more widely followed. More than that, wolverines are the ultimate role models for not taking crap from anybody or anything. But they aren’t always easy to emulate in Glacier. When hikers here see you coming down the trail with an H-shaped radio antenna, an awful lot of them stop you to ask what it’s for. The nervous ones quickly get around to asking whether you’ve, um, happened to

find any grizzlies close by. Glacier’s biggest carnivores are much on visitors’ minds. The trailheads have signposts warning everybody to “Be Alert—You Are Entering Grizzly Country.” At times, an additional notice, printed on a red background with a drawing of an ornery-looking bear in midstride, instructs hikers to use extra caution because “This Area Is Currently Being Actively Used By Grizzlies.” When you explain that you’re tracking wolverines, you get a variety of expressions: surprise, relief, enthusiasm, curiosity. Comprehension would be somewhere toward the bottom of the list.

“Wolverines! Cool. What are they?”

“About this high? I think we saw some eating those purple flowers in the meadows.”

“They’re sort of like little wolves, right?”

“Omigod. I heard they’re really ferocious. What should we do if one comes close? If you run, does that just make them more likely to attack?”

“Wolfy reens?”

To be fair, the name wolverine not only sounds wolfish but springs from the same Old German word: *wolver*. And the high-elevation habitats that wolverines favor are home to colonies of flower-munching megarodents: hoary marmots. These alpine versions of woodchucks, or groundhogs, can weigh as much as 20 pounds, and they have bands of contrasting colors in their fur and a fairly long, thick tail somewhat like wolverines do. The fact that one is a roundish vegetarian with chisel-like buck teeth for clipping plants and the other is an elongated, shaggy hunter with sharp incisors, stout canine fangs, and those special molar teeth called carnassials designed for shearing the flesh off victims such as marmots isn’t always obvious at a distance. I’m trying to be generous here. As for the woman who saw a wolverine with a dead ground squirrel in its mouth on the moraine below Grinnell Glacier moments before I did and described a muskrat taking some kind of chipmunk thing for a ride? All I can say is that it must be fascinating to live in her world.

**Still fairly widespread** in the far North, *Gulo gulo* was common across northern

states from Washington to Montana during the 19th century and occasionally reported from the Great Lakes to New England. Its range continued south along the Pacific Coast range and Sierras far into California and all the way down the Rockies into Colorado and New Mexico. Today, the wolverines of the Lower 48 are confined to a few remote parts of Montana, Idaho, and northern Wyoming, with perhaps a dozen more in Washington’s North Cascades. They total no more than 500 and, more likely, number just 300 or fewer. To make a point about their present status, you could cram all of them into one person’s mountainside trophy home. It would be a snarlfest, but they’d fit.

Part of the predicament for this hunter-scavenger is that it has proved so hard to find and follow that much of its existence remains a blank. The public scarcely knows what a wolverine actually is apart from cartoon versions and trappers’ yarns about the beast. Unfortunately, natural resource managers don’t have much more to go on when deciding how best to promote the species’ survival.

For example, female wolverines den deep in the snowpack from February into May. But what sort of places do mothers pick for a den? High slopes or low ones? Steep or gentle? Open habitats or sheltered spots? What would managers need to do to protect dens from disturbance? As with most questions about wolverine life, the answers were either vague or nonexistent.

When [wolverine biologist Jeff] Cope-land first looked into studying wolverines at the start of the 1990s, several dens in Alaska were the only ones ever reported in North America. Only a few dozen more have been located since then. Just 20 or so are known from the Lower 48 states, and more than half of those were found during the Glacier Wolverine Project. We were hunter-scavengers of new information. Somebody had to get busy scouring big swaths of corrugated terrain the wolverine way, scabbling across cliff faces, squirming under overhanging ledges, and probing fresh sign to see where it might lead.

The future of this long-mysterious, often-reviled species in the contigu-

ous states depends upon people quickly uncovering enough about its behavior and ecology to assemble the first true-to-life portrait of what this animal does and what it requires to survive.

Adding to the urgency is the current rate of climate change. What little was known about the range of wolverines made it plain that they are tied to environments with fairly heavy snowfall and cool year-round temperatures. In southern Canada and the Lower 48, that translates into a number of small, widely separated subpopulations in the alpine and subalpine zones of high mountain ranges, rather than a single continuous population. As long as they maintain some degree of contact with one another in order to avoid the negative effects of isolation such as inbreeding and occasional dips to dangerously low numbers, the scattered groups can function as what ecologists term a metapopulation.

To endure over time, though, the animals are going to need wildland corridors that guarantee individuals the freedom to roam from one chain of peaks to the next. As wolverines struggle to adapt to changing weather and shifting habitats in the warmer years to come, linkage zones running in a north-south direction may prove especially vital. Yet before ecologists can identify the best routes—the wildways that hold the most promise for keeping groups connected—many more gaps in our knowledge of the species' natural history have to be filled in.

WOLVERINE PHOTO © DALE PEDERSEN



“These animals’ off-the-charts strength and survival skills had become a source of inspiration for me by now. Even so, I was never going to get used to dealing with the intensity of a wolverine when it’s up close and cornered. Nobody did.”

**Americans have come** up with loads of tremendous ideas. Many would agree with the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Wallace Stegner that establishing a national park system was the best one this country ever had. Our national wildlife refuge system was another splendid idea, our national wilderness system yet another. The arrays of protected areas grew out of a more fun-

damental, profoundly democratic notion: public lands. Counting national forests and national rangelands, one-third of the acreage constituting these United States of America is deemed the property not of select individuals and giant corporations but of every citizen, rich or poor, in equal measure.

During a hiking trip in Glacier National Park, I would be considered a visitor. But I

am also the owner. I can’t build a house or do business in the park. I can’t haul any materials out of it. I can, however, pass as many days as I want here, hike to my heart’s content, and make Glacier my spiritual home for as long as I breathe. Though I’m nobody special, all its square miles and hundreds of thousands more from the Everglades to the Arctic National Wildlife Range and all the

“I’d taken a vow to steer clear of wolverines when I was 17 years old, after meeting a man whose face had been disfigured during a supposed run-in with one of the creatures.”

summits, canyons, wild rivers, desert sunsets, and seashore fogs within them are part of my holdings. I take the privileges and responsibilities that come with such an inheritance seriously. If I want to keep the likes of tree frogs, trout, bison, grizz, old-growth cypress woodlands, swans, prairie dogs, orchids, manatees, warblers, and wolverines alive, I’m obliged to make sure they have what they need to flourish. What do they require most today?

A fresh idea.

On both sides of the international border, many of the best-known reserves are clustered along mountain chains whose craggy heights escaped development, namely the various ranges of the Pacific region and the spine of the continent—the Rockies. Here are the bulwarks, the strongholds, for the most powerful North American mammals left outside the Arctic and Subarctic, especially the carnivores. Each of these reserves is a star in its own right as well as part of the constellation that ornaments the modern landscape. And yet not one of them—not Glacier National Park, Montana, or the Glacier National Park 220 miles north in British Columbia; not even 3,470-square-mile Yellowstone National Park or the nearest national park of that size in North America, 4,200-square-mile Jasper, 500 miles north in Alberta—is truly large enough to sustain its great beasts over time by itself.

That’s why a fresh way of thinking about conservation is so important.

Are visitors to one of our grand mountain parks going to stand there amid ranks of cloud-scraper peaks looming above valleys wider than an entire county back home and imagine that the resident wildlife need

more protection? Nope. They’re more likely to be thinking, “This is the biggest, strongest-looking setting I’ve ever been in with the biggest, strongest-looking critters I’ve ever seen. Maybe they’re in fragile shape somewhere outside the entrance gate, but surely not here, not where the view toward every horizon promises room for large numbers to thrive indefinitely. What a hopeful scene.”

And I’m the spoilsport who walks over and says, “You know, you could put the DNA that built all the magnificent creatures here into a bowl no larger than a contact lens. Imagine it resting gently on your forefinger. There’s the park’s gene pool. Hold it up against the mountain background for perspective. If some of the mixtures in this tiny container don’t flow out well beyond those towering rock walls and new mixtures flow back in, the pool is in danger of turning stagnant and starting to evaporate. Now can you begin to see why even a place that feels so overwhelmingly vast and immune to the passage of time might require a little extra help to stay strong?”

**If wolverines have** a strategy, it’s this: Go hard, and high, and steep, and never back down, not even from the biggest grizzly, and least of all from a mountain. Climb everything: trees, cliffs, avalanche chutes, summits. Eat everybody: alive, dead, long-dead, moose, mouse, fox, frog, its still-warm heart or frozen bones.

They’re wolverines. They’re indomitably wild. They want nothing to do with either our romantic tableaux of charming wild beasts that want to be our friends or our screwy fantasies where *gulos* play the role of diabolical enemies. They have no truck

with illusions. It’s part of what I think of as the wolverine pledge never to equivocate or deal in half-truths, which of course is really not their pledge but mine. I’m from the species that struggles daily to distinguish the truth from its own half-truths and lies. When you load nature up with human opinions, dreams, and nightmares, the results might make for more dramatic stories, but nature is always diminished in the end. Taken straight, the wolverine way, nature offers more real excitement, adventure, meaning, freedom, and hope than any

version we’ve ever cooked up. That is what I learned from being on these animals’ trail.

*Gulos* don’t need a few secure areas to survive. They need lots of secure areas—big ones—and healthy corridors of protected land in between to link populations and the genes they carry. They need to be part of a robust community of predators, and they need an overflow of varied prey. As the wolverine becomes better known at last, it adds a fierce emphasis to the message that every bear, wolf, lynx, and other major carnivore keeps giving:

If the living systems we choose to protect aren’t large and strong and interconnected, then we aren’t really conserving them. Not for the long term. Not with some real teeth in the scenery. We’re just talking about saving nature while we settle for something less wild. **NP**

Wildlife biologist **Doug Chadwick** has written ten books and hundreds of articles for magazines including *National Geographic*. He lives near Glacier National Park in Whitefish, Montana.



ON THE WEB

**WATCH A PROMOTIONAL** video produced by the book’s publisher, Patagonia, to see stunning Glacier

landscapes, rare footage of wolverines, and more excerpts from the book, as read by the author: <http://vimeo.com/11645804>. And watch an entire episode of PBS’s *Nature* devoted to the Glacier wolverine project and other work at <http://video.pbs.org/video/1642358743>.

BY CRAIG MEDRED, PHOTOGRAPHY BY ETHAN WELTY

EXCURSIONS

# MOUNTAIN KINGDOM

EXPLORE AMERICA'S LAST FRONTIER IN WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE

# A

bove the banks of Alaska's mighty Copper River, past the old railroad town of Chitina, the pavement of the Edgerton Highway ends next to a sign that reads "McCarthy: 60 miles." This, believe it or not, marks the entrance to North America's largest and wildest national park.

Just beyond the sign, a 1,400-foot steel bridge spans the roaring river that forms the western boundary of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. It's one of the few remaining marks of civilization left in a land reclaimed by nature. A railroad here used to shuttle workers to the old copper-mill town of Kennecott, but today, McCarthy Road buries most signs of it, and the country has returned to its original state: raw, rugged, and intimidating in its wilderness and scale.

To the east of McCarthy Road lies the greatest concentration of North American peaks over 16,000 feet, the biggest glaciers on the continent, and the largest concentration of volcanoes. They form the rugged heart of Wrangell-St. Elias in the region Alaskans call "SouthCentral," and there are only two roads in: one on the north side, the other on the south. Both lead to the park's gateway towns of Kennicott and McCarthy. The southern route—McCarthy Road—begins as a rough, winding gravel path barely two lanes wide that pushes across 60 miles of America's most remote landscapes and homesteads on the edge of an extreme Alaskan wilderness.

From the end of the road, a footbridge continues across the Kennicott River into the charming, vibrant communities of McCarthy and Kennecott which serve as jumping-off points for the vast, surrounding wilderness. Here, the mountains climb north and east into a wilderness where you really can lose yourself; in 1937, one of America's greatest adventurers almost did. The late Bradford Washburn, world-famous photographer, cartographer, and the founder of the Boston Museum of Science, barely survived an attempt to climb 17,147-foot Mount Lucania just across the border in Canada's Yukon Territory; Wrangell-St. Elias proved bigger, wilder, and more unpredictable than Mount McKinley, where Washburn pioneered what has become the main climbing route today. Author Dave Roberts would later chronicle Washburn's fight to survive in *Escape from Lucania: An Epic Story of Survival*.



SCALE A GLACIER, join locals for a salmon feast, forage for tasty mushrooms, or kick back at one of McCarthy's favorite watering holes (above). PREVIOUS SPREAD: Soak in the scenery during the drive from Chitina to McCarthy.

THE IMMENSITY OF THIS PLACE IS HARD TO IMAGINE UNTIL YOU'RE IN IT.



Amazingly, in the 63 years since, little has changed. If anything, the park is wilder now than it was then. Wrangell-St. Elias is a sprawling 20,587 square miles, big enough to hold six Yellowstone. About 70 percent of that land is designated wilderness, which connects to an additional 9,500 square miles of protected lands in Kluane National Park and Preserve of Yukon Territory, Canada, and British Columbia's Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park, next to Glacier Bay National Park. Together, these four parks—declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979—are nearly the size of New York State.

Even so, the immensity of this place is hard to imagine until you're in it, and being in it can feel exhilarating, liberating, and frightening at the same time.

What initially seems like a straightforward hike toward a 6,696-foot peak above Root Glacier turns intimidating when animal trails begin to mimic the hiking route but shoot off in various directions, destinations unknown. In this land of long winters and short, lush summers, a clearly worn trail in June can all but disappear by August—if, of course, there's any trail at all. The park has only a few designated trails. Hikers are free to blaze new routes, but bushwhacking—or "alder bashing" as some Alaskans call it—can prove challenging. Unless you're highly confident in your wilderness survival skills, it might be best to join one of the outfitters that lead guided, backcountry trips (see Travel Essentials below).

Wrangell-St. Elias is one of just four Alaskan national parks that can be reached by road, attracting approximately 65,000 people per year. Yellowstone draws 10 times that in the month of June alone. You can get caught in a traffic jam in a visit to Yellowstone; gridlock is nonexistent here. In fact, if you fly to Anchorage and make the spectacular nine-hour drive to McCarthy (see Travel Essentials), you might actually find yourself wishing for more traffic; seeing other people can be comforting in a place so wild.

So keep pushing on, because McCarthy has slowly but steadily been transforming itself into an adventure-recreation destination. You'll be in good company at the comfortable Kennicott Glacier Lodge ([www.kennicottlodge.com](http://www.kennicottlodge.com)), where views from the deck reveal the gray jumble of Root Glacier spreading out across the valley to the west. Don't miss the four-mile hike on the Root Glacier trail—this is one of the easiest and safest places in Alaska to actually put your feet on a glacier. If you're uncomfortable going by yourself, hook up with Kennicott Wilderness Guides

**HIKERS WALK TO A SMALL ROCK OUTCROPPING** below Chitstone Pass, looking out over the Skolai River Valley and Russell Glacier.

**SEEING OTHER PEOPLE CAN BE COMFORTING IN A PLACE SO WILD.**



**TRAVEL ESSENTIALS**

The first thing any traveler to Alaska needs to understand is that the place is big. The six- to 10-hour drive from Ted Stevens International Airport in Anchorage to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve makes it tempting to fly to McCarthy, and flying is indeed an option—but it would be a mistake. The Glenn Highway out of Anchorage is designated a "National Scenic Byway" for good reason. This drive has it all: roaring rivers, scenic canyons, monstrous glaciers, snow-capped volcanoes, endless tundra, and the chance of spotting caribou, moose, and grizzly bear along the way.

For decades into the early 1990s, driving McCarthy Road was its own challenge. It was not uncommon to get stuck in the mud or suffer a flat tire from an old railroad spike, but successive upgrades to the surface have minimized the dangers. In good weather, a standard passenger car won't have any trouble making it to McCarthy, though some drivers might get nervous crossing the one-lane Kuskulana Bridge. It's intimidating, but became a little less so when guard rails were installed in 1988.

All of the major car-rental companies maintain offices at the airport, but most frown on driving to McCarthy, despite the improved road. Enterprise is an exception, but if you want extra driving security, check out GoNorth Car and RV Rental ([www.gonorth-alaska.com/254.html](http://www.gonorth-alaska.com/254.html)), which specializes in trucks and sport-utility vehicles.

From the airport, head north toward the Matanuska Valley, where Depression-era Americans formed an agricultural colony in the 1930s. Turn east past the Matanuska Glacier, then follow the edge of the Chugach Mountains. Stop and stretch your legs

at the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Visitor Center, just south of Glennallen and halfway to McCarthy, to learn about the region's history, culture, and landscapes.

A lot happened in this salmon-rich country before Europeans arrived, and plenty of stories date from the years just after as waves of gold-seeking pioneers trekked north. They roughed it. You don't have to. Figure on a two-day drive to the park with a night in Copper River country, home to the fabled Copper River salmon. There are plenty of places to stay. Visit the National Park Service website for lodging options and travel tips: [www.nps.gov/wrst](http://www.nps.gov/wrst).

The roads to Chitina are paved and in good condition, but McCarthy Road to the east is more frontier-like, ending at the pedestrian bridge just short of McCarthy. The shuttle bus to town waits on the other side.

Local outfitters can help you access what waits beyond. Kennicott Wilderness Guides offers everything from wilderness education to personalized day hikes. Wrangell Mountain Air ([www.wrangellmountainair.com](http://www.wrangellmountainair.com)), a local flight company, can take you on a gentle, day-long air tour, or drop you in the wilderness to hike and camp until you've had your fill of silence in one of the most remote national parks in the country.



([www.kennicottguides.com](http://www.kennicottguides.com)) or St. Elias Alpine Guides ([www.steliasguides.com](http://www.steliasguides.com)), who offer everything from wilderness training, to ice-climbing lessons, to whitewater raft trips on the Kennicott and Nizina Rivers.

When you need a break from the adrenaline, visit the park's most famous historic artifact: the Kennecott Mine National Historic Landmark. This mine is the reason anything exists at all in this corner of Alaska. In the early 1900s, the Kennecott Copper Corporation began construction of a railroad from the port of Cordova on Prince William Sound upstream along the Copper River

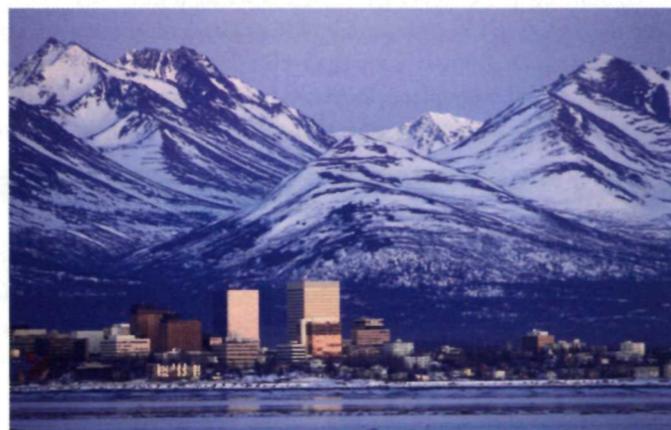
and then east along the Chitina River to a rich copper ore deposit four and a half miles up the valley from McCarthy. The railroad itself was a miracle of engineering for its day; its first section crossed the "Million Dollar Bridge" just outside of Cordova and traced the Miles Glacier, where the railbed had to be rebuilt constantly as the glacier moved slowly but steadily downhill. Upstream from the glacier along the Copper River, workers blasted a route through Wood Canyon where the railroad clung to steep, rocky walls and crossed chasms on trestles. This continued on through Chitina and then east to the mine.

## SIDE TRIP Anchorage

Anchorage, Alaska's largest city and home to the state's main international airport, bills itself as the Big Wild Life, and it's not just hype. If you go for a hike in the 'burbs here, you'd better know how to distinguish a grizzly bear from a black bear, and what to do around both. The half-million-acre Chugach State Park abuts the city's eastern edges, and Chugach Mountain grizzlies regularly venture downhill along the city's creeks in search of salmon. Hikers on paved trails on the edge of downtown have been known to stumble upon these animals—and that's not all.

The largest members of the deer family, moose are a common sight in Anchorage; your chances of seeing one here are probably better than almost anywhere in Alaska. Check Conner's Bog, not far from the airport, for browsing families of moose. If you come in fall, visit Powerline Pass in Chugach Park above the city. When breeding season starts in October, massive bull moose with antlers wider than the height of an average man gather to duel for harems of cows.

Big brown mammals aside, Anchorage offers a unique combination of urban luxury and raw wilderness. If you're craving a four-star hotel, try the Hotel Captain Cook ([www.captaincook.com](http://www.captaincook.com)), which offers rooms with three different views: downtown Anchorage, Denali's Mt. McKinley, or Mount Spurr, an active volcano. Catch a cab to first-class wildlife viewing in the nearby



TERRY CHICK/STOCK CONNECTION

mountains in the morning, then return in the afternoon for a burger and tasty microbrews at the Glacier Brew House ([www.glacierbrewhouse.com](http://www.glacierbrewhouse.com)), just a couple blocks from the hotel.

If you need to stretch your legs after dinner, stroll the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail along the shores the Knik Arm waterway, just over the bluff from the hotel. The trail ends in Kincaid Park, where world-class cross-country skiers gather to train and compete in the winter; in snow-free months the trail is usually busy with walkers, runners, cyclists, and bird watchers. The adjacent wetlands attract large numbers of migratory shorebirds and waterfowl in spring and fall.

THE PARK'S VAST, OPEN LANDSCAPES, PLENTIFUL SALMON RUNS, AND A CHARMING GATEWAY TOWN CAN MAKE WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS FEEL LIKE AMERICA'S LAST FRONTIER.



**KENNECOTT MINE OFFERS VISITORS** a glimpse of the copper industry that allowed this area to boom in the early 1900s.

The Gilahina Trestle and Kuskulana Bridge, towering more than 200 feet over raging whitewater, are the railroad's remnants, still visible from McCarthy Road.

For years, Kennecott Mine's mill buildings were off limits to the public because of the danger of walls collapsing or visitors falling into a hole, but a major stabilization and restoration effort is in progress by the Park Service, which now offers daily tours. The mill building is a massive, incongruous structure rising 14 stories above the historic mining town of Kennecott, which visitors can reach via a quick shuttle bus ride from McCarthy. On another building, enormous smokestacks rise starkly into clear skies, but it's not hard to imagine a day when they belched smoke and the whole valley thundered to the tune of a mine in its prime.

Mining started here in 1908, and by 1911 the company town of Kennecott was sending train loads of ore south to America. Kennecott's strict rules banning drinking and gambling, so miners hiked down the road to seek recreation; McCarthy quickly grew to accommodate their needs. At its peak, the city had 800 residents, a newspaper, stores, hotels, restaurants, bars, and a red-light district. Today, the year-round population tops out at about 50 residents, and the town swells with summer tourists and seasonal workers. The McCarthy Lodge & Ma Johnson's Historic Hotel ([www.mccarthylodge.com](http://www.mccarthylodge.com)) remains a happening place, landing a spot among *National Geographic Traveler's*

"129 Hotels We Love To Stay At" in 2009. And Lonely Planet's latest travel guide named Kennecott River Lodge ([www.kennecottriverlodge.com](http://www.kennecottriverlodge.com)) as "our pick" for local lodging, as it's located conveniently on the McCarthy road side of the footbridge and offers stunning glacier views.

Farther down the McCarthy Road, this tradition continues. At the Alaska Halfway House Bed and Breakfast ([www.alaskahalfwayhouse.com](http://www.alaskahalfwayhouse.com)) at mile 27, Bruce and Kayane James are new-age pioneers who ventured north in 2007 when the Michigan economy crumbled, landing in what Kayane now calls "our little piece of heaven."

"We look at things so differently now," she says. "Living out here, you have to think of things before you do them so you don't get hurt; precaution is a way of life. We go into Anchorage twice a year to buy our groceries, and I make everything I can from scratch: homemade breads, pizzas, cakes, cookies, jams, jellies. We get our news from the radio—there are limited cell phone signals out here. And wintertime is like magic. It never ceases to amaze me just how quiet it is when you step outside and take a walk."

And that might be the greatest treasure of all in a world where noise has become one of the most difficult things to escape. **NP**

**Craig Medred** has been exploring Alaska parks for 35 years. The outdoor editor of the *Anchorage Daily News* for more than two decades, he now writes regularly for [AlaskaDispatch.com](http://AlaskaDispatch.com).

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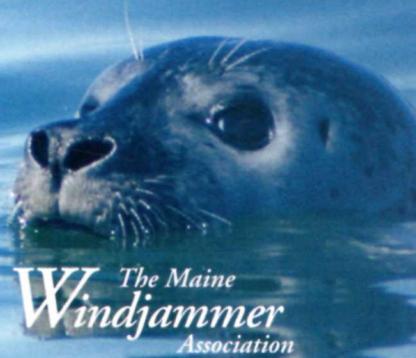
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HOMESTEAD NATIONAL MONUMENT/NPS

Lillian Wilkinson House on Claim

**WOMEN WERE ABLE TO CLAIM LAND** in their name under the Homestead Act—an ability that offered economic freedom, followed by political freedom.

# Chasing the Dream

Nebraska's Homestead National Monument celebrates the independent farmers who shaped the American landscape.

**O**n December 31, 1862, Daniel Freeman was mingling with land officers at a New Year's Eve party in Nebraska. But he wasn't just socializing; he had an agenda. A Union army scout, Freeman was scheduled to report for duty in St. Louis, Missouri, in a matter of hours—but he envisioned a much dif-

ferent future: The Homestead Act, signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln the previous May, was slated to go into effect the next day, granting 160 acres of free, federally owned land to anyone who had never raised arms against the U.S. government. In return, recipients would build a home, grow crops, and learn to

sustain themselves on the land; if they succeeded, the land was theirs to keep after five years.

It was the quintessential American Dream, and Freeman wanted a piece of it. So he convinced a clerk to open the General Land Office shortly after midnight and file his claim, making Freeman one of the first homesteaders in U.S. history.

As novel as it seemed, homesteading wasn't a new idea, but it was a controversial one. Since the Revolutionary War, the distribution of federal land had been random and chaotic, and the result was often overlapping claims and border disputes. By 1803, when the United States bought 800,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi River (the "Louisiana Purchase"), it was clear that the government needed a better plan.

Thomas Jefferson, president at the time, envisioned a nation of small, independent farmers—a "poor man's country," he called it, with potential to become "An Empire for Liberty." Most northerners supported Jeffer-

son's view, but southerners feared it would threaten their plantation model, which relied on slavery. Industrial leaders in the east worried they'd lose cheap laborers to the promise of free land.

Half a century passed before any kind of homesteading legislation was introduced in Congress. The House of Representatives tried pushing bills through in 1852, 1854, and 1859, but the Senate defeated each one. In 1860, a law passed through both chambers only to be vetoed by President Buchanan. Finally in 1862, the act gained the support it needed to become law. When Lincoln signed the bill, he set the tone for a free country, signaling a critical victory for the Union in the midst of the Civil War.

But for the new farmers tasked with taming wild landscapes, the honeymoon wore off fast. Homesteaders faced crippling droughts, severe storms, prairie fires, and grasshopper infestations. Inadequate farming equipment shattered in deep-rooted prairie grass. Winters were brutal and unforgiving.

"People talk about our country's strong work ethic and determination, and I think those qualities can be traced back to homesteading," says Mark Engler, superintendent of Homestead National Monument in Nebraska. "To be successful on a homestead, you had to have an unstoppable work ethic—because if you stopped, you failed."

More than half of America's homesteaders did just that. But they contributed in different ways, like building up and populating western cities. And where some failed, others succeeded, so by the time the Homestead Act was repealed in 1976, homesteaders had claimed more than 270 million acres of land in 30 states, from Florida to Alaska. As many as 93 million Americans today are thought to be descendants of homesteaders.

Most impressive, however, was the diversity behind the movement. The Homestead Act didn't just apply to white men—it offered the same free land to women, before women were even allowed to vote, and to im-

migrants who had yet to declare citizenship.

Even former slaves could file for land, and approximately 100,000 African Americans took the government up on its offer, including a Kentucky native named Robert Ball Anderson. While his first attempt at farming failed around 1870, he returned a few years later to claim more than 2,000 acres in western Nebraska. His success was so inspiring that it drew others to the area, and by 1910, Omaha, Nebraska, boasted the third largest African-American population in the west. "[These slaves] went from *being* property to *owning* property," says Blake Bell, a historian at Homestead.

But freedom for some Americans meant enormous losses for others. The U.S. government had long been pushing American Indians off their land—and that removal was still happening during early homesteading. Not only did tribes lose their land; they were forced to abandon their culture. Their children were stolen away, placed in Caucasian schools, and forbidden to speak their native language; when they returned several years later, they could no longer communicate with their parents.

"What happened in the west wasn't unique to U.S. history," says Bell. "The removal process had been going on for more than 200 years. Homesteading was a great opportunity for many people, but the U.S. government took that land from American Indians before giving it away."

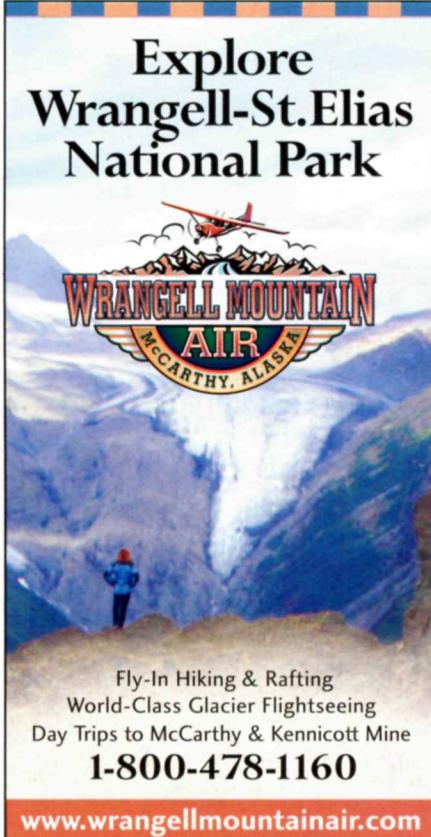
Another grave consequence stemmed from the idea that these natural lands somehow needed to be "improved." Even Lewis and Clark, whose illustrations of western landscapes sparked an early conservation movement, failed to grasp the importance of prairie ecosystems. "When Jefferson asked why they came back with only one picture of the Great Plains, they claimed there was nothing out there," Bell says. "Even though the land had been sustaining other cultures for thousands of years, Americans didn't think it was being used effectively. It just didn't fit the country's agricultural mindset during that time."

But history offers valuable lessons, and

legislators in Beatrice, Nebraska, are giving it another go with the Homestead Act of 2010, which recently became law. Although the emphasis is no longer on farming, empty city plots offer modern homesteaders a place to build a home and pursue their dreams without degrading the land. Applicants range from individuals interested in developing small-scale alternative-energy sources on their property, to retired folks seeking peace and quiet.

Staff at Homestead are also working with the University of Nebraska, the National Archives, and Footnote.com to digitize historic homesteading records. "Economically, socially, and politically, homesteading is woven into the fabric of our nation, and we have just barely begun to scratch the surface on a lot of these stories," Bell says. "We're excited about the day we're able to wrap our heads around what this really meant for our country." NP

Amy Leinbach Marquis is *National Parks'* associate editor.



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## MT. RAINIER NATIONAL PARK

Washington

I was hiking along Mazama Ridge during a late summer trip to Mt. Rainier National Park, photographing wildflowers during the “second spring,” which comes to the mountains of the Pacific Northwest in August. As I climbed higher, I became more and more interested in photographing wildflowers back-lit by the setting sun. I kept shooting as I went, with disappointing results, until I reached the top of the ridge and realized time was running out—I had one more chance before the light was gone. Suddenly I noticed a small, lone pine tree in an attractive field of wildflowers warmly lit by the sun. I composed the image so that the sun was just outside the image frame, knowing the light would hit the front element of the lens and produce a golden flare.

To me, this image tells a story about the cycle of life on the mountain, and on the planet as a whole. All of the majesty, diversity, and wonder of our living world starts with light from the sun. Without it, Earth would be a barren chunk of rock drifting in a cold, dead universe. With light comes the wonder of life in all of its shapes, colors, and splendor.



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