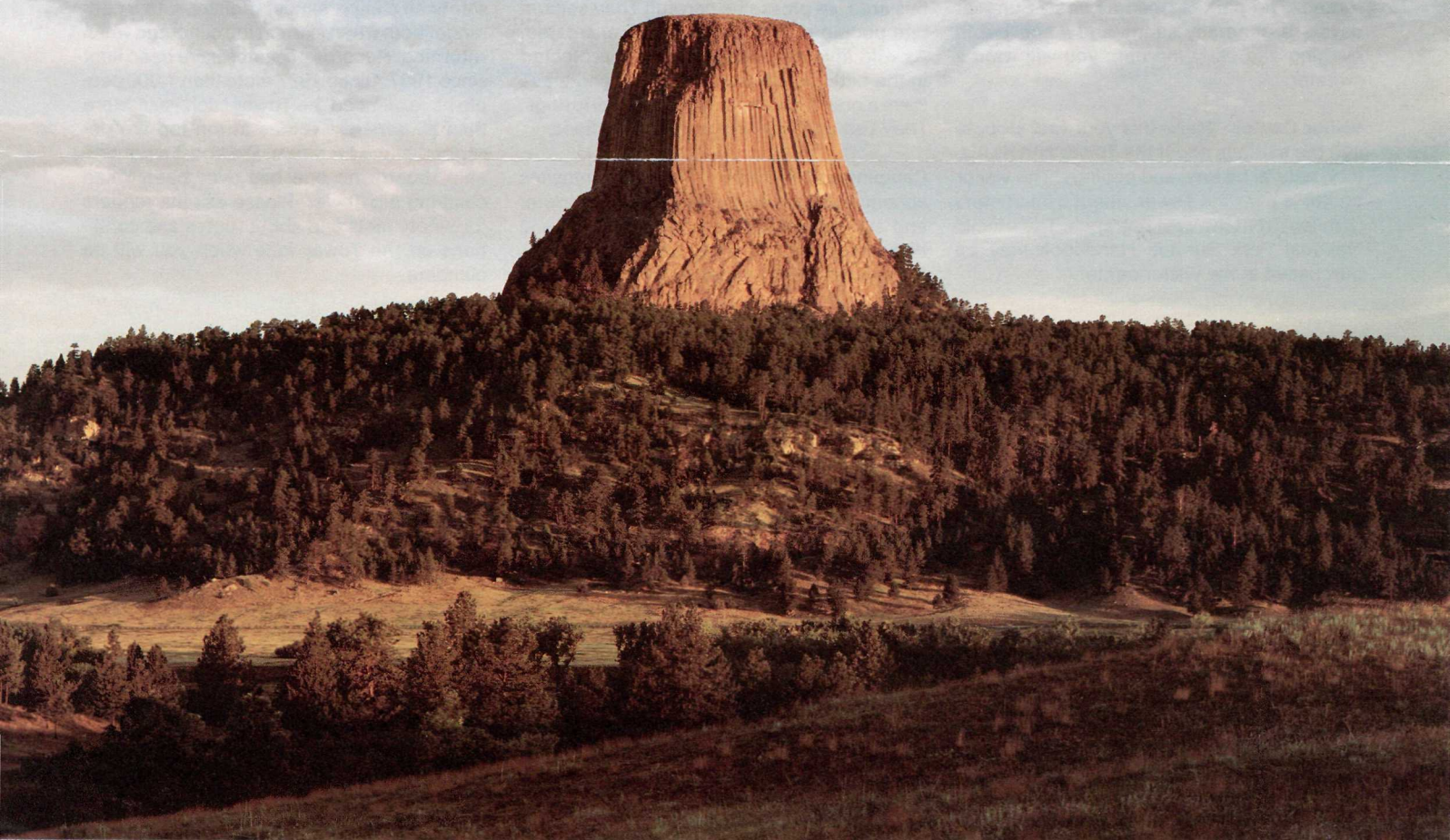


Devils Tower

National Monument
Wyoming

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Rising Up Against the Sky

"A dark mist lay over the Black Hills, and the land was like iron," N. Scott Momaday wrote. "At the top of the ridge I caught sight of Devil's Tower upthrust against the gray sky as if in the birth of time the core of the earth had broken through its crust and the motion of the world was begun. There are things in nature that engender an awful quiet in the heart of man; Devil's Tower is one of them. Two centuries ago, because they could not do otherwise, the Kiowas made a legend at the base of the rock. My grandmother said:

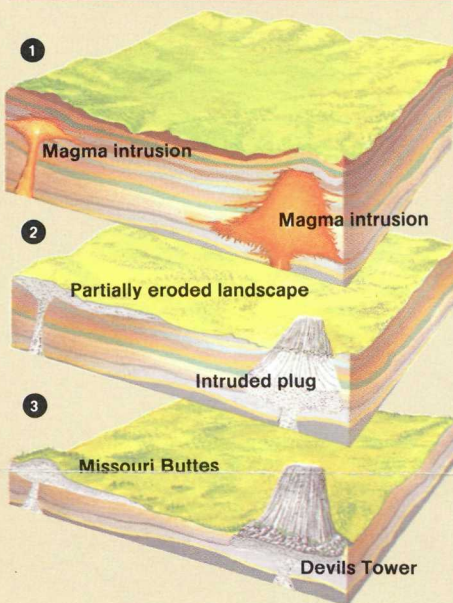
"Eight children were there at play, seven sisters and their brother. Suddenly the boy was struck dumb; he trembled and began to run upon his hands and feet. His fingers became claws, and his body was covered with fur. Directly there was a bear where the boy had been. The sisters were terrified; they ran, and the bear after them. They came to the stump of a great tree, and the tree spoke to them. It bade them climb upon it, and as they did so it began to rise into the air. The bear came to kill them, but they were just beyond its reach. It reared against the tree and scored the bark all around with its claws. The seven sisters were borne into the sky, and they became the stars of the Big Dipper."

Mateo Tepee or "Bear Lodge" was an Indian name for the Tower. Its current name was affixed in 1875 by a scientific team escorted by Col. Richard I. Dodge. The expedition was here in violation of Indian treaty rights, but Gen. George Armstrong Custer had confirmed gold reports in today's South Dakota portion of the Black Hills, and Dodge was sent to check out this area.

In the late 19th century, science had an explanation for every natural occurrence—or would shortly. Devils Tower was determined to be the core of an ancient volcano. The Indians' romance of its formation was gone, but the challenge of scaling it came alive. On July 4, 1893, amid fanfare and more than 1,000 spectators, William Rogers and Willard Ripley made the first ascent, using a wooden ladder they

had built that spring for the first 107 meters (350 feet) of the Tower. The timing, Independence Day, and the fact that they already had a flagpole waiting for raising Old Glory atop the Tower, however, suggest that the "first" ascent might have been some days

The Geological Story



1. About 60 million years ago molten magma forced its way into the sedimentary rocks. It cooled underground as igneous rock. A smaller intrusion occurred to the northwest. 2. Over millions of years the sedimentary rocks eroded, exposing the harder plug. 3. Continued erosion exposed Devils Tower. The Tower rises 264 meters (867 feet) above its base, 386 meters (1,267 feet) above the river, and 1,560 meters (5,117 feet) above sea level. Area of the top is 0.6 hectares (1.5 acres). Base diameter is 305 meters (1,000 feet).

before! The climbers' wives ran the refreshment stand and sold pieces of the flag as souvenirs. Such was life in the Old West at the turn of the century. The Tower became a natural meeting place, on the Fourth of July, for families from area ranches who might see each other but once a year. And during the

Photograph by Ed Cooper

annual picnic in 1895, Mrs. Rogers used her husband's ladder to become the first woman to reach the summit.

Records of the Tower climbs have been kept since 1937. The 1,000th climb was recorded in 1963, and since 1977 more than 1,000 people have climbed the Tower each year. More than 80 described routes have been used to reach the top.

But what about life around the base of the Tower. Here, in the northeast corner of Wyoming, the pine forests of the Black Hills merge with the grasslands of the rolling plains. And at Devils Tower you can see every step in the process—from bare rock to pines—of establishing a forest. Because mountains and plains converge here, we also find an extensive variety of birds—more than 90 species have been counted, including two kinds of hawks, bald and golden eagles, prairie falcon, turkey vulture, and American kestrel. No one will miss the brightness of the male mountain bluebird, the industriousness of the nut-hatches, or the feistiness of the black-billed magpie. The predominant mammals are the whitetail deer and the prairie dog. You can spend hours watching busy, playful prairie dogs in the "town" on the grasslands below the Tower.

All this wildlife has been protected here since 1906 when President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed Devils Tower the first of 18 national monuments under the new Antiquities Act. This made Wyoming the home of our first national park—Yellowstone in 1872—and our first national monument. During the Depression years the Civilian Conservation Corps built road improvements, camping and picnicking facilities, and a museum. The rough-hewn log museum still serves as a summer visitor center, book sales outlet, and registration office for climbers.

Quotation from N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, The University of New Mexico Press.

Devils Tower

Access and Seasons You enter the park from Wyoming 24, 11 kilometers (7 miles) north of U.S. 14. The entrance is 53 kilometers (33 miles) northeast of Moorcroft, Wyoming, and 84 kilometers (52 miles) southwest of Belle Fourche, South Dakota. Scheduled buses serve Moorcroft; railroads Cheyenne, Wyoming. The nearest scheduled air service is at Rapid City, South Dakota, where cars may be rented. The park is open all year. Summer days are generally sunny and warm but in evening and early morning you will want a sweater.

Visitor Center Make this your first stop, to see the exhibits about the Tower and its history, natural history, and geology. The visitor center is near the Tower, about 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the east entrance. The official National Park Service Handbook may be purchased at the visitor center.

Nature Trail The self-guiding Tower Trail encircles the Tower, giving you close-up views from many vantage points. By walking this trail you can come to understand the Tower's story and the region's plantlife. Time: about 1 hour. Length: Just over 1.5 kilometers (1 mile).

For Your Safety There are rattlesnakes in this area, so please be careful! They seldom bite people unless disturbed or mistreated. As wild animals, rattlesnakes are protected in the park, so please avoid them and leave them alone. Also stay clear of the prairie dogs. They can bite, and they often carry fleas.

Camping and Facilities The park campsites accommodate both trailers and tents. Water and comfort stations are nearby. Each site has a fireplace and table. Use is first-come, first-served. The campground is open from

about May 15 through September 30. There are no laundry or showers in the park. Find these services and motels in nearby towns. Within 3 kilometers (2 miles) of the campground you will find two general stores, restaurants, and a post office.

Climbing the Tower Climbing the Tower is strenuous and exhausting. In the interest of safety all climbers must register with a park ranger both when starting the climb and when returning. Records of climbs have been kept since 1937. Since 1977 more than 1,000 people have climbed the Tower each year. More than 80 separate routes to the top are described in the literature. We boast a remarkable record: no one has ever been killed climbing the Tower. Please ask the rangers for safety hints and about routes and conditions on the Tower face when you will be climbing.



The plant succession story can be seen here. Lichens and mosses colonize bare rock. Next come grasses, then flowering plants and shrubs. Trees appear among the shrubs, and a forest is begun.



Blacktail prairie dogs, the most prevalent mammal in the park, live in a "town" near the park entrance. These communal animals are a delight to watch as they go about their daily activities of bur-

rowing, eating, grooming, and, especially among the young pups, playing. You can find out more about them in a highly illustrated section of the National Park Service Handbook.



The Belle Fourche River performed most of the landscape carving that exposed Devils Tower to view.



Whitetail deer mostly inhabit wooded areas. They may visit the campground at dawn or dusk. Other mammals you may see are cottontail rabbits, chipmunks, and porcupines. Birdlife abounds: You may see

the canyon wren along Tower Trail, and the Audubon warbler, hairy woodpecker, western flycatcher, and black-capped chickadee.

0 0.1 Kilometer 0.5
0 0.1 Mile 0.5

