



Rocky Mountain National Park

The official newspaper
of Rocky Mountain National Park

Spring 2009
March 29 - June 13

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Trail Ridge Road



To learn more about Trail Ridge Road - See Page 8

Springtime in the Rockies

In the spring I have counted one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of weather inside of four and twenty hours. ~Mark Twain

Springtime in the Rocky Mountains. Now, there's a contradiction of time and place! While officially beginning when the sun moves north across the equator, spring can be anything but conspicuous in late March. Blizzards arrive on any given day and we are hard pressed to find many real signs of winter's end.

This year, take time to search for spring

Yet, spring can be found. It may be as subtle as swollen buds on aspen trees. Or it may be a growing patch of thawing earth. Perhaps it's a red-winged blackbird calling defiantly from the top of last year's cattails in a frozen pond. Or it's a robin huddled under a tree, looking forlorn as it waits out a snow squall.

Spring is fleeting in the high country. While March brings both the feel and look of spring to lower elevations, it is several weeks before Rocky Mountain National Park shares this countenance. Each vertical gain of 1,000 feet holds spring's advance by as much as a week. So spring arrives two to four weeks later. It must. It is nature's time for renewal.

In June as many as a dozen species may burst their buds on a single day. No man can heed all of these anniversaries; no man can ignore all of them.
~Aldo Leopold

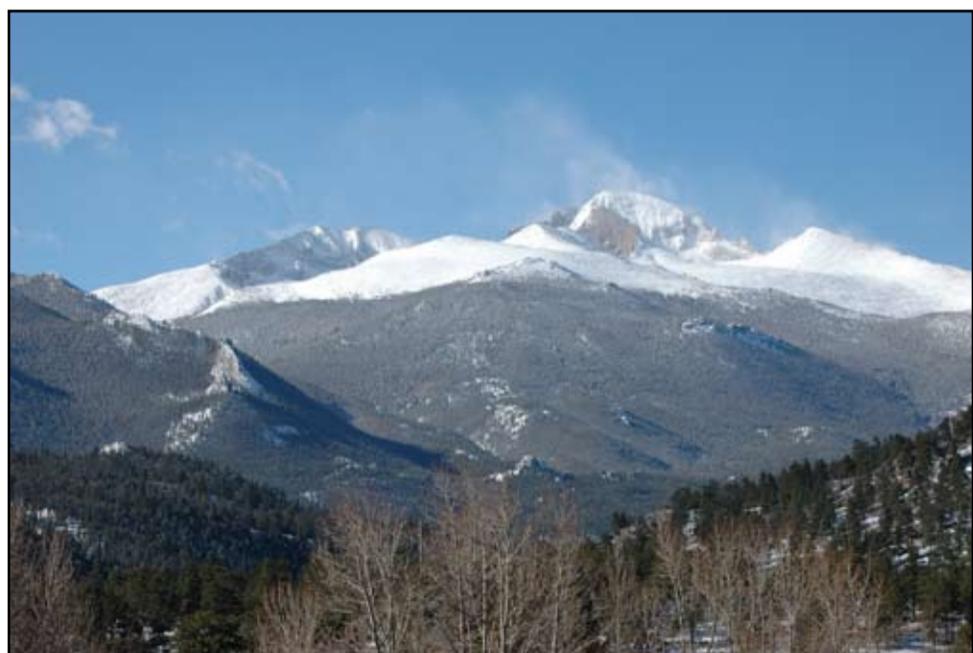
Spring begins first in meadows and woodlands. Then it passes through the spruce-fir forest, and finally reaches beyond tree limit to the alpine tundra. The landscape greens, flowers, and unfolds in a kaleidoscope of color. Spring has arrived.

To us, this season means longer days, warmer temperatures, returning birds, and blossoming plants. But it is so much more.

When the snowpack melts, the park's streams, river, and lakes once again become haven for fish, amphibians, aquatic insects, and waterbirds. Black bears, marmots, and ground squirrels leave their winter dens. Bighorn sheep, elk, and mule deer give birth to a new generation. The park's only reptile, the harmless garter snake, emerges from hibernation to bask in the warm sun.

Nighttime is animated with the flight of bats and the call of poor-wills, nighthawks, and owls. The sky displays spring's new series of rising and setting constellations.

This year, take time to search for spring. Don't despair. No matter how long winter lasts, spring will gain the upper hand. A day will come when the sun lies warm across the landscape. Birds and tiny frogs will fill the air with triumphant voices and proudly proclaim to all who will listen, "Spring is here!"



Conditions on Longs Peak can be extreme in springtime.

Park Phone Numbers and Website



Call Park Information (970) 586-1206 with your questions.
We are available to assist you from 8 to 4:30 daily.



The Official Park Website is <http://www.nps.gov/romo>



Hearing impaired persons may call the TTY at (970) 586-1319 from 8 to 5 daily.



Dial 911 or (970) 586-1203 to report emergencies.

You Need to Know



Visitor Centers

Park visitor centers are the places to find out what you need to know. All have knowledgeable staff, printed information on many topics, and great bookstores stocked with the best books for finding that perfect trail and learning what makes Rocky Mountain such an outstanding national park. Each visitor center has its own special features.

East of the Divide – Estes Park Area

Beaver Meadows Visitor Center
Open daily 8-4:30.
Starting April 26, open daily 8-5.
Features spectacular free park movie, bookstore, large park orientation map, and backcountry permits in an adjacent building.



Sheep Lakes Information Station
Starting May 16, open daily 8:30-4.
Good wildlife viewing can be found in Horseshoe Park.



Fall River Visitor Center
Open weekends 9-4 through April 25.
Starting April 26, open daily 9-5.
Features life-sized wildlife displays, a children's discovery room with objects to touch, and a bookstore.



Alpine Visitor Center
Starting May 22, open daily (weather permitting) 10:30-4:30. Features extraordinary views of alpine tundra, tundra displays, bookstore, adjacent gift shop and snack bar. Call 586-1206 for current information.



Moraine Park Visitor Center
Open for the weekend of April 25-26, 9-4:30.
Open daily starting May 2, 9-4:30. Interactive exhibits on the past and present landscape, and a bookstore.



West of the Divide – Grand Lake Area

Kawuneeche Visitor Center
Open daily 8-4:30.
Starting April 26, open 8-5.
Features free movies, exhibits on wonders of the park, a bookstore, and backcountry permits.



Keep Wildlife Wild
Never feed wildlife. A fine may be issued to violators. Animals can kick, bite, or gore you. They can become dependent on human food and lose the ability to feed naturally. Wildlife also carry diseases which can be transmitted to humans, like rabies and plague. Photograph animals from the roadside.



Please don't feed me!

Hunting is not allowed in Rocky Mountain National Park.
All firearms and weapons are prohibited unless they are being transported through the park in a vehicle. In such cases, firearms must be unloaded and rendered temporarily inoperable or packed, cased, or stored in a manner that will prevent their ready use. By definition, "unloaded" means there is no unexpended shell, cartridge, or projectile in any chamber or cylinder or in a clip or magazine. Concealed firearm permits that are valid in the state of Colorado are also valid in the park unless otherwise prohibited by posted signs at certain buildings and facilities.

Weather and Road Conditions

Spring driving conditions can change rapidly. Trail Ridge Road will open fully on May 22, if weather permits. For current park road and driving conditions, please check at park visitor centers or call (970) 586-1206. You can also check the park website, www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/road_conditions.htm



Pets Pets are **prohibited** in all areas of Rocky Mountain National Park not accessible by motor vehicles, including all trails and meadows. Leashed pets (6' leash or less) are allowed in campgrounds, picnic areas and along roadsides. In spring, leashed pets are permitted on some Rocky Mountain National Park roads when those roads are closed to motor vehicles. Check with a visitor center or call 970-586-1206 for current status.

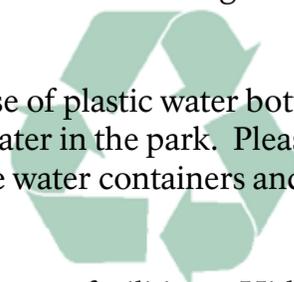
Fishing Obtain specific park regulations at visitor centers or park entrance stations. To fish in Rocky Mountain National Park, you must have a valid Colorado state fishing license.

Lost and Found Please turn found items in at any park visitor center. To inquire about lost items, call the Backcountry Office at 970-586-1242.

Toward a Greener Park

The park is actively engaged in green practices, including using many hybrid/alternative fueled vehicles, a bicycle for mail delivery, low-wattage compact fluorescent lights bulbs, and active recycling of office materials.

Help us limit the use of plastic water bottles! There is limited potable drinking water in the park. Please remember to bring your own reusable water containers and refill them at park visitor centers.



The picnic and restroom facilities at Hidden Valley were constructed using recycled lumber and materials. All new construction and rehabilitation projects are designed using energy-efficient LEED standards. Recycle containers are available throughout the park.

High Country Survival

Swift Water

Mountain streams can be deadly dangerous, especially during high runoff in May and June. Remain back from the banks of streams and rivers. Provide proper supervision for children, who by nature, tend to be attracted to water. Rocks at streamside and in the stream are often slippery, and water beneath them may be deep. Powerful currents in park streams can quickly pull a person underwater and pin him/her below the surface.



Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a serious and sometimes fatal condition brought on by exposure to wet and cold. A person's core body temperature drops to a level that impairs normal muscle and brain activities. Symptoms include drowsiness, loss of judgment or coordination, slurred speech, and uncontrolled shivering. If these symptoms occur, warm the victim with dry clothing and warm, nonalcoholic liquids, get back to your car, and seek medical attention. Avoid these effects by carrying a windproof/waterproof outer shell and extra layers of clothing.



The park's high elevations, thin air, and wind all reduce the body's ability to stay warm.

Dehydration and Safe Water

The park's high altitude and the dry climate both work to dry out your body. Carry and drink plenty of water as you hike or travel through Rocky Mountain. Avoid drinking untreated water from streams and lakes as it may be contaminated with giardia. Giardia can cause diarrhea, cramps, bloating, and weight loss. This microscopic organism enters surface water when animals or humans defecate in or near water. To prevent giardiasis, bring water to a full rolling boil for at least 5 minutes, or use a water filtration system that eliminates the organism.

Falling Trees

are ever-present hazards when traveling or camping in the forest.



Trees can fall without warning. Be particularly watchful when it's windy, or following a snowstorm when branches are heavy with snow. Avoid parking or camping in areas where trees could fall.

Lightning

People are killed by lightning every year in Colorado. Afternoon storms are frequent and can bring an unhappy end to a hike. Watch for approaching storms and be well below treeline or back in your car before the storm hits.



High Elevation

Nearly half of the visitors to this park experience symptoms of altitude sickness. Symptoms range from headache and dizziness to nausea and unconsciousness. Rocky Mountain has the highest average elevation of any national park - even the main road climbs higher than most U.S. mountains, to 12,183 feet! High altitude can also aggravate medical conditions such as heart and lung diseases. The only cure for altitude sickness is to **go down** to a lower elevation.



Hiking Tips

Stay Together! The single most important factor in having a safe, enjoyable hike is to keep your group or family close together, and always within sight of each other.

Be prepared for all types of weather, no matter what activity you are enjoying in the national park. Unforeseen weather conditions can change a short afternoon hike into an unpleasant experience. Severe storms can impose life threatening hazards only one or two miles from your car. Carry a windproof/waterproof outer shell and extra layers of clothing, even when the weather does not appear menacing. Be equipped with detailed topographic maps and a compass, and know how to use them.



Mountain Lions and Bears

Mountain lions and black bears are powerful and potentially dangerous. Some general guidelines for traveling in backcountry areas of Rocky Mountain where wildlife may be encountered:



- 1) **Travel in Groups** and make noise as you hike. Keep your group, especially children, close together.
- 2) **Do Not Approach** a mountain lion or bear.
- 3) **Stay Calm** when you see a mountain lion or bear.
- 4) **Stop**; back away slowly. Never turn your back and run.
- 5) **Stand Tall and Look Large**. Raise your arms. Protect small children by picking them up.
- 6) If attacked by a mountain lion or bear, **Fight Back!**

Avalanches

When in snow-packed backcountry, avoid steep slopes and gullies where avalanches could occur. Open slopes of 30 to 45 degrees can be loaded with dangerous masses of snow, easily triggered by the presence of one or more backcountry travelers. Check at a park visitor center for current snow conditions, or call (970) 586-1206.



Ranger-Led Programs



All children must be accompanied an adult

Talks & Walks		SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Bighorn Basics - Sheep Lakes 30 minutes, starts May 16		10:30 AM						
Moraine Park Nature Walk - MPVC 1 hour, starts May 2		10 AM						
Spring Bird Walk - Cub Lake TH 1.5 hours, starts April 3		8 AM	8 AM				8 AM	8 AM
Skins and Skulls - BMVC 20 - 30 Minute Talk		3 PM						3 PM

Special Activities & Events

International Migratory Bird Day Event - 8 AM 4 hour walk		Bring binoculars and a field guide for this ranger-led birding excursion. Come for part or all of this multi-location event. Meet at the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center. Call (970) 586-1227 for information.	June 13
Coyote Valley River Walk - 10:00 AM 1 hour walk		Explore the valley ecology and history on this easy walk along the Colorado River. Meet at the Coyote Valley Trailhead.	May 30 & June 6
Skins and Things - 2:30 PM 40 minute activity		Examine the skins, skulls, antlers, teeth and bones of park mammals. Drop in anytime during the program. Meet at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.	Saturdays May 2 - June 6, & May 25
Behind The Scenes - 10:00 AM 1 hour discussion		Join a ranger to view and discuss a series of short videos documenting how specialists at Rocky Mountain National Park address challenges like elk management, pine beetles, and air quality. Meet at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.	Sundays May 3 - 31

Evening Programs		SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Beaver Meadows Evening Program 1 hour, every Saturday								7 PM
Kawuneeche Visitor Center Evening Program 1 hour, second Saturday of each month and May 23								7 PM

Ranger Program Descriptions

Talks & Walks

- Bighorn Basics** - Sheep Lakes is a popular viewing area for bighorn sheep. Meet at the Sheep Lakes Information Station in Horseshoe Park to learn about this majestic symbol of Rocky.
- Moraine Park Nature Walk** - Enjoy an easy 1/2-mile walk through the magnificent Moraine Park landscape. Meet at the Moraine Park Visitor Center.
- Spring Bird Walk** - Join a local expert for birding at one of the best times of the year. Bring binoculars and a field guide and meet at the Cub Lake Trailhead.
- Skins and Skulls** - Want to pet an elk or cuddle up to a bear? Come to Beaver Meadows Visitor Center to safely feel skins and skulls while learning about park wildlife.

Evening Programs

- Enjoy a wide variety of informative and entertaining programs. Meet in the downstairs auditorium at **Beaver Meadows Visitor Center**.
- Enjoy an evening program the second Saturday of each month in the auditorium at the **Kawuneeche Visitor Center**. For a description of topics, inquire at the front desk.

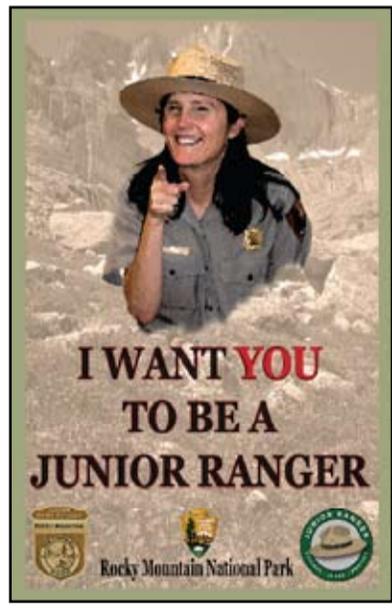
Free Park Movie

See the stunning 20 minute park movie at the Beaver Meadows and Kawuneeche Visitor Centers during normal business hours. Available en español and English. Features spectacular aerial footage of the rugged high country of Rocky Mountain National Park, as well as wildlife and other park resources.

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Junior Rangers



Free Junior Ranger books are available at park visitor centers for kids ages 6-12. A successfully completed book earns a badge!

You are an important part of this park. Stay in touch. Contact us anytime at: romo_junior_ranger@nps.gov

Los libros de guardaparque juveniles para niños de 6 a 12 años se pueden obtener sin costo en el centro de visitantes del parque. Si se completa el libro con éxito puede recibir una insignia!

Heart of the Rockies

Teachers, Parents, Students!
Rocky Mountain National Park's "Heart of the Rockies" education program provides an outdoor classroom to children throughout this region. Teachers who are interested in participating in this program may contact the park's Education Specialist at (970) 586-3777, or through the website at heartoftherockies.net



Camping 2009



	Fee per night ◊	Reservations?	Dump Stations	Elevation (feet)	Summer Stay Limit (nights)	Public Phones	Firewood, ice
◊ When the water is turned on for the summer.							
Aspenglen 54 campsites Open May 20	\$20	yes	no	8,220	7	yes	yes
Glacier Basin  Opening delayed-please check at visitor centers!	\$20	no	yes	8,500	7	yes	yes
Longs Peak 26 campsites Open all year-tents only	\$20	no	no	9,500	7	no	yes
Moraine Park  245 campsites Open all year 5 group campsites	\$20	yes	yes	8,160	7	yes	yes
Timber Creek 100 campsites Opening delayed-please check at visitor centers!	\$20	no	yes	8,900	7	yes	wood

Campgrounds/Reservations

This summer two park campgrounds, Moraine Park and Aspenglen, accept peak-season reservations (May 20 through the summer). Call (877) 444-6777 to make national park camping reservations up to 6 months prior to your visit. Internet reservations can be made at www.recreation.gov.

The administrative permit fee is \$20 for use from May 1 until the campground water is turned off, usually around October 31.

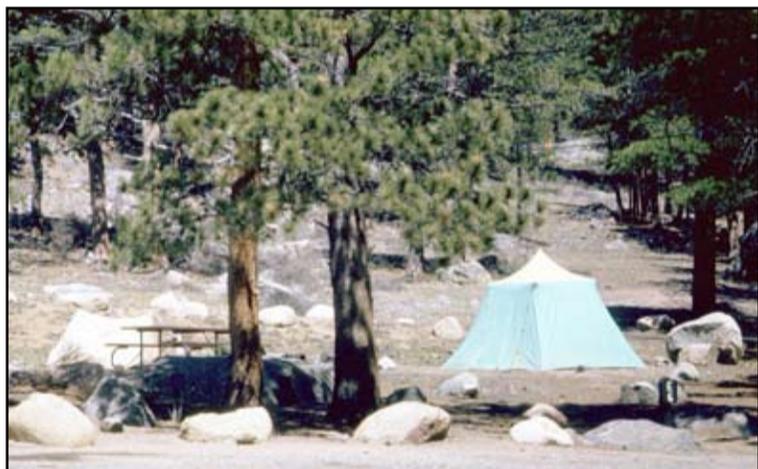
Opening of Glacier Basin and Timber Creek Campgrounds may be delayed this summer. Both campgrounds have many dead trees, and tree removal will delay opening and affect operation. For this reason Glacier Basin is not on the reservation system this summer, however Aspenglen will be on the reservation system for this summer only. Longs Peak Campground is open year-round.

Call 970-586-1206 or check at a visitor center for current status.

Black Bear Country

Never approach a bear. Keep children beside you. There is more safety in numbers; it is best to travel in a close group. If a bear approaches you, stand up tall, and make loud noises—shout, clap hands, clang pots and pans. If attacked, fight back!

In campgrounds and picnic areas, if there is a food storage locker provided, use it. Avoid storing food and coolers in your vehicle. If you must, store food in airtight containers in the trunk or out of sight. Close vehicle windows completely. Do not store food in tents or pop-up campers in campgrounds, or in vehicles at trailheads. Food, coolers, and dirty cookware left unattended, even for a short time, are subject to confiscation by park rangers; citations may be issued. Dispose of garbage in bear-resistant dumpsters and trash cans. Human-fed bears usually end up as chronic problems and need to be removed - "A fed bear is a dead bear."



Backcountry Camping Permits

Permits are required for all backcountry overnight camping. Camping is allowed only in designated sites and areas. The administrative permit fee is \$20 for use from May 1 to October 31. Permits may be obtained at the Beaver Meadows Backcountry Office or Kawuneeche Visitor Center. For further information write to: Backcountry Office, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, Colorado 80517 or phone (970) 586-1242.

Effective May 1, 2009, all backcountry camping below treeline will require carry-in, carry-out bear canisters for food storage.

Pack out all garbage. Never try to retrieve anything from a bear. Report all bear incidents to a park ranger.



Leave No Trace

With approximately 3 million visitors every year, the wild lands of Rocky Mountain National Park are heavily used.

In hiking, camping, and all your park activities, do your part to preserve this national treasure by following the seven easy Leave No Trace principles:

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors



Sprague Lake Accessible Backcountry Campsite

Reservations and information are available through the Backcountry Office at (970) 586-1242. This site accommodates 12 campers with a maximum of 5 wheelchair users at the camp. The administrative permit fee is \$20 from May 1 to October 31.



This Park Paper

The park newspaper is produced by Rocky Mountain National Park in cooperation with—and funding provided by—the Rocky Mountain Nature Association. Printed on recycled paper.

Early Season Hiking Trails



With over 350 miles of trails, the park offers a vast array of choices. Many higher trails and shaded areas can hold snow well into late June. Please check at a visitor center for current conditions before hiking. Trails are listed starting with trailheads on the west side of the park, and proceeding eastward. Even for short day trips, be sure to pack gear for all types of weather (sun, rain, snow, wind). Windproof/waterproof clothing is essential gear to wear or carry.

Trail Tips: Stay Together. This is the most important tip that comes from the hard experience of park search and rescue teams! Be prepared for the rigors of high elevation - drink plenty of water, and travel at a pace where you can still talk and breathe easily. If you feel poorly, descend to a lower elevation. Pack it in, pack it out, including remains of all your food (pits, peels, etc.), and facial tissues. Let nature's sounds prevail; avoid loud voices and noises. No pets are allowed on park trails.

Trail	Location	Round Trip Distance	Elevation Gain	Cool Stuff
Featured Hikes West Side Trailheads				
Adams Falls	East Inlet, on the West Side, located on the far east end of Grand Lake.	.6 miles	80 feet	A beautiful short hike near Grand Lake. The trail continues beyond the falls to lush meadows.
Cascade Falls	North Inlet Trail off Tunnel Road in Grand Lake	6.8 miles	300 feet	A relatively level walk to a rocky cascade.
Granite Falls	Green Mountain Trailhead	10.4 miles	1046 feet	Quiet forest and flowing mountain waters await. A longer loop (13.6 miles) is possible, coming out on the Onahu Creek Trail.
Coyote Valley Trail	Coyote Valley Highway 34, north of Kawuneeche Visitor Center.	1 mile 	10 feet	Follows the bank of the Colorado River, with views of the Never Summer Mountains. Look for moose, songbirds, and wildflowers.
Shadow Mountain Lookout	East side of Shadow Mountain Lake, just south of Grand Lake	9.4 miles	1533 feet	A strenuous hike to a lookout with spectacular views.
East Shore Trail	East side of Shadow Mountain Lake, just south of Grand Lake	5.2 miles	100 feet	2.6 miles to Green Ridge Campground; a side loop trail to Ranger Meadows reconnects with main trail, adding 1.4 miles.

Pine Beetle Epidemic From Canada to Mexico Park Takes Local Actions

Bark beetles are native insects that have shaped the forests of North America for thousands of years. Bark beetles range from Canada to Mexico and can be found at elevations from sea level to 11,000 feet. Rocky Mountain National Park is just one relatively small area where trees are dying from the beetle epidemic. Because the task is enormous, the park's priorities for mitigation of the effects of beetles are focused on removing hazard trees and hazard fuels related to the protection of life and property.

The goal is to mitigate hazard tree threats in or near park facilities such as campgrounds, parking lots, housing areas and visitor centers. Temporary closures may occur until hazards are mitigated. The other goal is to continue to spray Carbaryl to protect high value trees on both east and west sides of the park. High value trees are in frontcountry locations such as campgrounds, historic landscapes, picnic areas and visitor centers. They are important for shade, visual screening, cultural significance, and outstanding visual quality. There are adverse impacts with Carbaryl spraying, and therefore, park staff are selective and limit use of this chemical. Spraying does not take place near water courses or wetlands.

There is no effective means of controlling a large beetle outbreak in such a vast area as the park's backcountry, which comprises about 95% of the park. Therefore, in the backcountry, bark beetle populations are allowed to fluctuate under natural processes with some limited mitigation work occurring around some designated backcountry campsites.

For several years, Rocky Mountain National Park has had a proactive bark beetle management program, spending over \$800,000 on mitigation work since 2006.

The issues of beetles, the changing forests of the western United States and Canada, as well as the changing landscape of Rocky Mountain National Park are reminders to us all of nature's ability to change beyond human control. At the same time, we have found it helpful to explore these forests to see all of the young new trees starting to grow.





Trail	Location	Round Trip Distance	Elevation Gain	Cool Stuff
Featured Hikes Central and East Side Trailheads				
Deer Mountain	Deer Ridge Junction	6 miles	1083 feet	Great views of beautiful peaks and deep valleys as you hike to the top of a peak.
Gem Lake	Lumpy Ridge Trailhead	3.2 miles	1000 feet	A rocky hike to a beautiful small lake, providing outstanding views along the way.
Nymph Lake	Bear Lake Trailhead	1 mile	225 feet	Beautiful views abound on an easy hike to a small lake.
Dream Lake	Bear Lake Trailhead	2.2 miles	425 feet	Excellent short hike to a very scenic backcountry lake.
Alberta Falls	Glacier Gorge Trailhead Bear Lake Trailhead	1.6 miles 1.8 miles	210 feet 160 feet (return)	Easy hike to this beautiful and powerful waterfall. Start at either Glacier Gorge or Bear Lake Trailheads.
Cub Lake	Cub Lake on Cub Lake Road near Moraine Park Campground.	4.6 miles	540 feet	Meadows, aspen groves, beaver ponds and conifer forests highlight this hike.
The Pool	Fern Lake Trailhead	3.4 miles	245 feet	An easy, shaded hike along a stream. Continues up to Fern and Odessa Lakes.
Lily Lake	Lily Lake on Highway 7 south of Estes Park	.8 miles	20 feet	Wildflowers, waterfowl, and greenback cutthroat trout may be seen on a level walk around the lake.



Fee Demonstration Enhances Visitors' Experiences

When you pay your park fees, you get so much more than just entrance into the park or a night of camping. You are helping improve your experience to Rocky Mountain National Park. In 2004, Congress extended the 1996 Fee Demonstration program with the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). That act allows National Parks to retain 80 percent of collected fees for deferred maintenance and other projects to benefit visitors. The remaining 20 percent is distributed across National Park Service areas that do not charge fees to address those same goals. Here at Rocky Mountain National Park, through FLREA and other legislation, we are able to retain over 80 percent of the fees collected. Since this legislation has been enacted, Rocky Mountain National Park has completed many projects that have enhanced our visitors' experiences, and more projects are planned. This year there are many fee projects underway; here are two you may see:

Campgrounds: Camping is a very popular activity here; in 2008, there were nearly 143,000 camper nights. A multi-year project is ongoing to completely renovate restroom facilities throughout park campgrounds. The renovated and redesigned facilities will better address visitor needs. These accessible facilities have integrated sustainable practices and designs in their construction.

Picnic Areas: Picnicking is a favorite pastime of many visitors. Currently there is a multi-year project to improve picnic areas throughout the park. These improvements will enhance visitor experiences through providing designated, improved picnic sites, with sustainable concrete picnic tables.

As you see work in Rocky Mountain National Park this year, you can feel proud knowing your fees are helping improve the park for generations to come.

RMNP On The Cutting Edge

Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) has a New Technology Committee (NTC). The group's primary goal is to utilize new technology to provide interpretive, informational and inspirational content to the public. The NTC is excited about partnering with local schools to develop educational podcasts and electronic media about the park.

Check out Rocky's new and improved website for info and downloads!

Whether it's our newest Continental Divide webcam, the latest podcast, blogging a great park story, or just checking out the best hikes to go on...

log on to nps.gov/romo and click on **PHOTOS & MULTIMEDIA**



RMNP Podcasts

Park Bookstores

At RMNA Bookstores, Your Purchase Makes A Difference

A premier selection of Rocky Mountain National Park books, maps and other interesting items can be found right here at one of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association (RMNA) bookstores located in park visitor centers. And when you make a purchase from our non-profit organization, proceeds are returned to the park, supporting important educational, interpretive and research programs.

Drop by today.

Visit the Rocky Mountain Nature Association bookstores at:
**Beaver Meadows Visitor Center • Alpine Visitor Center
 Moraine Park Visitor Center • Fall River Visitor Center
 Kawuneeche Visitor Center**





Not Much of a Fence

“Not much of a fence. Won’t keep much in with that.” The park visitor from the Midwest was studying the fenced area by the Alluvial Fan. And he was right. It won’t keep much in. Or out. And that’s the intent – for these fences, surrounding areas each about 30 acres in size, are more like sieves than fences – designed to let most animals, including us, freely move in and out. The exceptions? Mostly elk, and the occasional moose, are excluded from these habitat restoration areas along the park’s streams in Horseshoe Park and Moraine Park.

These temporarily fenced areas were established to allow the recovery of riparian (streamside) vegetation such as willows, and to restore the habitat value for riparian-dependant wildlife species. Areas inside the woven-wire “sieves” have been altered to unnatural conditions through years and years of over-browsing and trampling by our unnaturally dense elk population, making them unsuitable for riparian-dependent species such as beaver, Wilson’s warbler, Lincoln’s sparrow, and altering the streams to be less than ideal habitat for trout. As the habitat values inside the fences are restored, the design allows their easy removal, perhaps to be moved to another area needing restoration. Visitors are encouraged to look at the differences in vegetation inside and outside these areas to judge for themselves how well it’s working.



Elk enclosure fence in Moraine Park.



Plow It And They Will Come - Opening Trail Ridge Road & Fall River Road

“Is the road open yet may be the most frequently asked question during the springtime at Rocky Mountain National Park. Trail Ridge Road is the highest continuously paved road in the United States. At its highest point, it reaches an elevation of 12,183 feet above sea level, and is 48 miles in length. Designated an All American Road and Scenic Byway in 1996, Trail Ridge Road is frequently buried in deep snow. The winter snowpack is often more than 20 feet deep in places, and twice that depth in areas that are buried by avalanches. Removing snow from the roads is a difficult and dangerous maintenance task.

Immediately after Fall River Road was completed in 1920, park administrators realized that clearing snow would be a daunting task. The road climbed to Fall River Pass in a shaded valley, where avalanche chutes dumped deep accumulations of snow. The road was initially cleared with hand labor. Working conditions were severe. Cold temperatures combined with winds ranging to more than 200 mph created extreme wind chill conditions. The high altitude sun caused snow blindness and severe sunburn. New avalanches would often cover cleared sections, forcing crews to repeat their work. Experiments were made with dynamiting and the use of blow torches, kerosene flares and carbide lamps, but it soon became clear that heavy equipment would be required. In 1925, the park acquired a specially designed steam shovel. In 1931, a “Sno-Go” rotary plow was placed in operation.

Still, the tremendous snowpacks along the road were a major factor in deciding to construct the Trail Ridge Road on more open terrain.

While Trail Ridge Road was designed to pass through more open country with fewer places obstructed by heavy snow accumulation, the road climbs nearly a thousand feet higher than Fall River Road and in many years is buried under deep snowpacks. By the time the road was completed in 1932, the park was using its new rotary plow. Even so, all old snow deeper than 42 inches had to be loosened with dynamite before it could be removed with machines. While new rotary and heavier plows are now employed, opening the two park roads remains a tremendous and expensive undertaking. Crews at Rocky Mountain National Park face major challenges opening Trail Ridge Road by its target date of Memorial Day and Fall River Road by the Fourth of July.



Fall River Road -1929



Trail Ridge Road - Today

THE NEXT GENERATION FUND It’s Your Kids We’re Talking About

Getting kids outside and connected with nature is a priority of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association Field Seminars. Thanks to the Next Generation Fund, exciting new programs for children were developed in 2008, to get kids fired up to spend more time in nature and to develop a special connection with Rocky Mountain National Park.

Wilderness Explorations and Encounters (WEE!) and Art Adventures provided hands-on experiences such as outdoor navigation and artistic media to teach kids (and their parents) the natural history of RMNP. They were a hit! As one young WEE! explorer exclaimed, “I learned that animals are very important in RMNP!” Another learned “...what would make me a better fisherman.”

With funds made available through the Next Generation Fund, several new seminars will be piloted for 2009, including Estes Park Treasure Hunt, which merges GPS technology with natural history, and two seminars for kids with learning challenges—Flowers, Rocks, Animals, and More: Lake Estes and High-tech Scavenger Hunt.

Learn more about the Next Generation Fund www.nextgenerationfund.org, *creating the conservationists of tomorrow...*

