



Coalition To Protect America's National Parks Weekly National Park System Report

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Incidents

Yosemite National Park Two Die In Fall From Taft Point

The bodies of a man and woman were found below Taft Point on the morning of October 25th. It's believed that they fell from the point, which rises 3,000 feet from the valley floor.

Rangers have recovered the bodies, but at present their identities are unknown. It's also unknown when the incident occurred.

Taft Point is a remote location known for its spectacular views. Giant fissures in the granite rock drop directly down to the valley floor, and a granite ledge hanging over the valley is a favorite photo spot. A [photo of a couple getting engaged at the point](#) went viral in social media last week.

Source: [San Francisco Chronicle](#).

Western Pacific Areas Super Typhoon Yutu Strikes Guam, Marianas

Typhoon Yutu, which began as a tropical depression on October 21st, intensified explosively into a typhoon the following day and became a Category 5 super typhoon by October 24th. It passed over Guam, then struck the Northern Mariana Islands with 180 mile-per-hour winds that same day, making it the strongest typhoon to ever hit those islands. Two NPS sites were affected:

- *War in the Pacific National Historical Park (Guam)* – The park closed at noon on October 24th. Closures included the T. Stell Newman Visitor Center, park restrooms, gates, and all facilities. Programs were also canceled. The park reopened on October 26th, but no damage report has yet been received.
- *American Memorial Park (Saipan)* – Closures include the American Memorial Park Visitor Center, park restrooms, gates, and all facilities. All scheduled programs and reservations have been canceled. The park will reopen when it is determined all is clear and safe.

For an overview of the impact of the typhoon on the Northern Marianas, see the *Washington Post* article below.

Sources: [NPS Hurricane and Severe Weather Response webpage](#), [Washington Post](#).

Grand Canyon National Park Double Fatality Under Investigation

Rangers and special agents are investigating a double fatality that occurred in the park in September.

Jessica Bartz, 22, and Garret Bonkowski, 25, are believed to have entered the park on September 18th. Their bodies were found below Trailview 2 Overlook along West Rim Drive on the South Rim earlier this month. Their vehicle was located in a nearby parking area.

Investigators are seeking information that will help determine the circumstances surrounding their deaths. Anyone who saw them in the park or has information that could help investigators is asked to call or text 888-653-0009. Tips can also be submitted online at www.nps.gov/ISB or by email at nps_isb@nps.gov.

Source: [Grand Canyon News](#).

Denali National Park Landslide Closes Park Road

A landslide on October 18th has led to the closure of the Denali National Park Road to bikers and pedestrians near an area near mile 38 where a major slide occurred in 2013.

The slide is beyond the Teklanika River at mile 30, where private vehicles aren't allowed to travel this time of year anyway. But the closure means bikers and pedestrians are prohibited from traveling beyond mile 34 until further notice.

The park doesn't plow snow on most of the 92-mile road during the winter season. The road gets little traffic after the tour bus season ends in early September and after the road lottery days when the road is opened to private vehicles picked in a random drawing.

This slide is much smaller than the October 2013 landslide at mile 37, which covered 200 feet of the road, some of it to a depth of 35 feet.

Source: [Fairbanks News-Miner](#).

Grand Teton National Park Mother Bear Fed By Visitors Euthanized, Cubs Relocated

On Thursday, October 4th, visitors in two separate vehicles were observed feeding fruit to three black bears along the Signal Mountain Road. Two of them were subsequently cited for feeding park wildlife; the mother bear had to be euthanized and her two cubs removed from the park due to their new association of humans and food and the consequent risks to future visitors.

“Feeding wildlife in a national park is a serious offense and presents severe risks to the animal and to humans,” said Gopaul Noojibail, the park’s deputy superintendent. “Human carelessness doesn’t just endanger humans, it can result in an animal’s death.”

Feeding wildlife creates a safety risk for humans, as animals associate people with food; bears can also become aggressive in seeking additional food, especially when preparing to den for the winter. Animals that are fed by humans also have an increased likelihood of being drawn to roadways and killed by vehicles.

The bears had been frequenting several developed areas in the Signal Mountain vicinity in very close proximity to people since June. Park staff and volunteers spent hundreds of hours trying to keep park visitors and these bears at safe distances from each other near a busy park campground and lodging area. The female had three cubs born this year, but by late summer the bear was seen with only two cubs. The fate of the third cub is unknown.

The adult female was not a good candidate for an educational or zoo facility and was euthanized. The opportunity to place wild bears in an accredited facility is not always an option, but in this case the cubs were relocated to Oswald Bear Ranch in Newberry, Michigan. The facility provides educational opportunities about bears and information about how to protect their natural environment. Park staff followed National Park Service policies as well as guidance from agency veterinarian to conduct all actions in a humane manner.

Source: [Grand Teton NP](#).

National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

Below are short follow-ups on incidents previously reported in this newsletter:

- *Joshua Tree NP* – The park continues to recover from the severe storm and flooding reported in the last issue. Cottonwood Campground (Loop B) has reopened, as has the park access from I-10 via Pinto Basin Road. Cottonwood Oasis Trail and the parking lot at the trailhead will remain closed until further notice. Source: [Joshua Tree NP](#).
- *Kennesaw Mountain NBP* – Human remains found by a hiker on the night of October 22nd have been identified as those of a 25-year-old man who'd been missing since last March. An extensive air and ground search was conducted at the time, but no sign of him was found. Source: [WXIA News](#).
- *Virgin Islands NP* – A trail crew is currently clearing debris from portions of Cinnamon Bay Campground to ready the popular campsite for limited use by mid-November. Although the beach at Cinnamon Bay is open, all facilities at the campground – including tents, cottages, bathrooms, a restaurant, a store, and a water sports center – have been closed since Hurricane Irma tore through the island in September 2017. Source: [St. John Source](#).
- *Death Valley NP* – Trenton Sargent, 28, the man who last year fired a shotgun at the Devils Hole gate padlock, destroyed a surveillance camera and equipment, and harmed endangered pupfish, will be serving time behind bars. On October 25th, a federal judge sentenced Sargent to 12 months and a day in prison and three years of supervised release, Source: [Death Valley NP](#).
- *Gulf Islands NS* – Because of the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Michael, Highway 399 between Pensacola Beach and Navarre will remain closed through mid-January. It's estimated that it will take at least three months to repair damaged sections of the road. Source: [Pensacola News-Journal](#).
- *Whiskeytown NRA* – The Carr Powerhouse area of the park, devastated by the Carr Fire last summer, has reopened. Lakeshore access from the pullouts on the east side of Whiskey Creek Road have also reopened as part of the ongoing and phased effort to reopen the entire park. Source: [Redding Record-Searchlight](#).

Official Washington

Reports on official actions and activities from Capitol Hill, the White House, the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service and other related agencies.

Capitol Hill Weekly Legislative Roundup

New Public Laws

Nothing to report.

Senate

The Senate is in recess until after the mid-term elections.

House

The House is in recess until after the mid-term elections.

Source: Don Hellmann, former assistant director, legislative and congressional affairs for the National Park Service.

Park People, Friends and Allies

NPS Friends

Passing Of David Lowenthal

Historian and geographer David Lowenthal, 95, who was instrumental in the founding of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, died on September 15th.

Lowenthal helped make heritage studies a discipline in its own right and served as an adviser to UNESCO and to heritage agencies around the world, including the World Monuments Fund, English Heritage, the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Trust of Australia.

His life-long concern for environment and heritage stemmed from his doctoral dissertation on the American polymath George Perkins Marsh (1801-82). Marsh drew on his experiences in Vermont, Turkey and Italy to chronicle the devastating impact of human activity on nature, and in 1864 advocated conservation practices in his pioneering text, *Man and Nature*. Lowenthal showed how *Man and Nature*, like Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, opened a truly modern way of looking at the world.

See his obituary below for more on this remarkable man.

Source: [The Guardian](#), via member Bruce Craig.

National Mall and Memorial Parks

Karen Cucurullo Named Southeast Deputy Regional Director

Karen Cucurullo has been selected as the new deputy regional director for Southeast Region. She currently serves as the deputy superintendent for National Mall and Memorial Parks in Washington. She begins her new role in January, succeeding current Sarah Craighead, who is retiring at the end of the year.

Cucurullo has nearly 35 years of experience in the National Park Service, and has held positions in park operations and management, interpretation and education, law enforcement, maintenance, resource management and partnerships. She's worked at Manassas National Battlefield Park, President's Park, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Death Valley National Park and Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. Before joining the National Park Service, Cucurullo worked for the U.S. Forest Service and the California State Parks.

Source: [National Mall and Memorial Parks](#)

News Reports and Releases

A brief summary of recent news stories, web postings and agency press releases pertaining to the Service, the federal government, the administration, DOI, and other public land management agencies that have bearing on the NPS.

Federal Government

Stories and articles pertaining to the administration, DOI and other federal agencies and organizations, except for the National Park Service (below).

Zinke A Possible Candidate For UN Ambassador – A number of names have surfaced as possible candidates to replace outgoing U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley. One is Secretary Zinke, according to Fox News, an organization well-placed to have an inside track on who might be selected. “Zinke has talked to several people about the job,” says Fox, “and appears to want it.” Among the “several people” was the president. If chosen, will Zinke’s personal flag, which waves over DOI, be added to the row of flags in front of the UN? Will he ride a horse up First Avenue to UN headquarters? Stay tuned. Source: [Fox News](#).

“The Guy Who Does The Dirty Work” At Interior – The magazine *Mother Jones* ran a story earlier this month on David Bernhardt, second in command at Interior, with this headline: “The Guy Doing the Dirty Work’ at Trump’s Interior Department is an Ex-Oil Lobbyist Straight Out of the Swamp.” Bernhardt is described as “the perfect No. 2” to Zinke: “Zinke is the folksy charmer; Bernhardt is the strictly-business lawyer. Zinke is the relative outsider, an opportunist, and a politician; Interior watchdogs say Bernhardt is the ultimate DC swamp creature. Zinke is relatively new to Interior; Bernhardt, who spent eight years at the department earlier in his career, knows the ins and outs of its labyrinthine bureaucracy. And while Zinke has been mired in scandals and faces at least six active ethics investigations...Bernhardt has been largely invisible.” The article explains how and why he’s been effective, and notes that “some of the most radical changes under Trump have come from the many behind-the-scenes appointees...” The author believes that we may eventually see him in a larger role – Bernhardt “has been one of the most effective officials in the Trump administration, and after 14 months on the job, he appears to be within striking distance of taking over the department that oversees a fifth of the nation’s landmass.” Source/more information: [Mother Jones](#).

Property Rights Activist Becomes Deputy Solicitor At DOI – The October 25th issue of *High Country News* has an article on Karen Budd-Falen, who was recently appointed deputy Interior solicitor for wildlife and parks for DOI. Her job there will be to provide legal counsel to the NPS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Geological Survey. “Budd-Falen’s four-decade-long career, which includes a stint under James Watt, Ronald Reagan’s notorious Interior secretary, has been built on the defense of private property, part of a movement that is often opposed to federal oversight and environmental regulation,” writes the author, adding that “(her) vision of private property rights extends beyond a landowner’s property lines and onto the public lands and resources — at the expense of the land itself, the wildlife that live there, and the people who rely upon it for other uses.” Source/more information: [High Country News](#).

Zinke News Roundup – Secretary Zinke has been the subject of considerable attention over the last couple of weeks. Here’s a summary:

- *Group Sues Zinke* – “(The Western Values Project) has sued the Department of Interior for documents that may shed light on whether Ryan Zinke has acted illegally or unethically during his tenure as Interior secretary...The lawsuit is based on 14 investigations that the DOI’s Inspector General and the Justice Department’s Office of Special Counsel have initiated over more than a year.” Source: [Missoula Current](#).
- *IG Investigates Zinke* – On October 19th, DOI’s inspector general issued a report stating that Secretary Zinke “broke with agency policy by allowing family members to travel with him in government vehicles and did not inform ethics officials that two individuals accompanying him on an official trip had previously hosted a fundraiser for him,” reports *Government Executive*. “Zinke flouted Interior rules by repeatedly allowing his wife, Lolita, and other family members to travel in government vehicles with him, though the appropriate Interior channels approved the travel in advance...The secretary also asked department employees to ‘research the legal and ethical implications’ of bringing his wife on as a volunteer. The employees advised Zinke

against it, and Lolita did not become a volunteer.” Source/more information: [Government Executive](#).

- *Zinke Dismisses IG (No, Wait...)* – On October 16th, reports appeared that Secretary Zinke had dismissed DOI IG Mary Kendall and would replace her with a Trump political appointee named Suzanne Tufts. Tufts formerly held a post at HUD, where she assumed the duties of the former chief administrative officer, who had refused to approve the very expensive new furniture that Secretary Carson wanted to buy. The report was based on an email Carson sent to his staff advising that Tufts would be leaving for the DOI position. On October 19th, Interior denied that Tufts had been hired, and a HUD staffer said that the error was based on “miscommunication at the staff level.” Later that day, the IG released the report noted in the bullet above. See the following article for details. Source/more information: [The New Yorker](#).

National Park Service and System

Stories and articles pertaining to the parks, regions, technical and training centers, and WASO.

New Site Added To National Park System – On October 27th, the president designated Camp Nelson in Kentucky as a national monument. Initially established as a Union Army supply depot and hospital, Camp Nelson became a key emancipation site and refugee camp for African American soldiers and their families during the Civil War. Located in Jessamine County, Kentucky, it was one of the largest Union Army recruitment and training centers in the nation for African American soldiers, then known as U.S. Colored Troops. Thousands of enslaved African Americans risked their lives escaping to Camp Nelson with the hope of securing their freedom and controlling their own futures during and after the war. Today, the site remains one of the best-preserved landscapes and archaeological sites associated with Civil War era U.S. Colored Troops recruitment camps and the African American refugee experience. Source: [Department of the Interior](#).

Around The Parks – Brief reports on parks and regions, culled either from park press releases or from newspapers, with links to the source news articles. The reports are in alphabetical order by park name.

- *Cape Hatteras NS* – Park cleanups usually entail picking up visitor trash or occasionally illegally dumped items like tires, but Cape Hatteras recently topped the list of novel findings with the discovery and removal of a ten-foot by six-foot piece of metal that came from one of Elon Musk’s SpaceX Falcon 9 rockets. So far this year, the company has launched 12 rockets from east coast launch pads at Kennedy Space Center and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. Source/full story: [Charlotte Observer](#).
- *C&O Canal NHP* – The park will host the World Canals Conference between August 30th and September 2nd in 2021. The conference is held under the auspices of Inland Waterways International. Source: [Hagerstown Herald-Mail](#).
- *Channel Islands NP* – The park and The Nature Conservancy, which owns part of Santa Cruz Island, have been trying to restore the island by removing non-native species. One of the big problems is invasive Argentine ants, which wipe out native ants and can kill bees, lizards, and even seabird chicks. They’re employing a novel approach – using “Tobias,” a yellow lab, to find the ants: “[Tobias is] an environmental superstar, a one of a kind ‘ant-dog.’ He’s the only dog in the world trained to track down a specific invasive species of ant in the wild.” Source/full story: [Science Friday](#).
- *Grand Canyon NP* – The park is seeking public comments on the EA for the relocation or replacement of the trans-canyon water distribution pipeline. Recent breaks in the pipeline led to the imposition of water conservation rules on the South Rim. The park’s preferred alternative is to relocate the water intake from the pipeline to another location; a second alternative is to replace the pipeline in the same location as it is now; the third alternative is to take no action.

[Click on this link](#) to comment on the proposal. The comment period closes on November 10th. Source: [Arizona Daily Sun](#).

- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – The long-awaited section of the Foothills Parkway between Walland and Wears Valley, Tennessee, has been completed and will open on Saturday, November 10th. The public will be able to experience the entire 16-mile roadway for the first time since construction began in 1966, including the 1.65-mile section known as the ‘Missing Link,’ which is now connected by a series of nine bridges. Source/more information: [Great Smoky Mountains NP](#).
- *Mesa Verde NP* – The park has acquired a remarkable gift from the estate of David Rockefeller – more than 100 works of art representing Native American cultures, by Native American artists, including pieces by tribal community members traditionally associated with Mesa Verde National Park. The works of art were primarily acquired by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller in the 1920s and 1930s, including works purchased during two trips to Mesa Verde and the western U.S. in 1924 and 1926. Later works in the collection were added by their son David Rockefeller and his wife Peggy. Source/more information: [Mesa Verde National Park](#).
- *Rosie the Riveter/ World War II Home Front NHP* – *SF Weekly* ran a story last month on Betty Reid Soskin, 97, the oldest working ranger in the NPS. Soskin, whose great-grandmother was born into slavery in 1846, worked as a clerk during the war. She was later a participant in a number of major events during the Civil Rights movement and served as a delegate to the 1972 Democratic National Convention. Her memoir, *Sign My Name To Freedom*, came out last January. Source/full story: [SF Weekly](#).
- *Wright Brothers NM* – A reopening ceremony for the park’s visitor center was held on October 20th. The VC had been closed since the winter of 2016 due to a \$5.8 million project to preserve and restore its architecturally significant features and to rehabilitate its mechanical and electrical systems. You can see photos of the visitor center opening by clicking on [this link](#). Source/more info: [Wright Brothers NM](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – The Yosemite Conservancy has purchased 356 acres of wilderness and vacant land in Yosemite West, a rural community that shares its borders with Yosemite National Park and Sierra National Forest. The Conservancy will work with the community, the National Park Service, Mariposa County and others to determine the best long-term uses for the land. Source: [Yosemite Conservancy](#).

Environmental and Land Management Agencies

Stories on federal and state agencies that are responsible for environmental oversight or the management of America’s public lands.

Monsanto Executive Nominated To Head UWFS – Aurelia Skipwith, currently DOI’s deputy assistant secretary for fish, wildlife and parks, has been nominated to serve as head of the Fish and Wildlife Service. A biologist and lawyer, Skipwith spent more than six years at Monsanto and has worked at the Agriculture Department and U.S. Agency for International Development. The Fish and Wildlife Service has been without a Senate-confirmed director since Trump took office in January 2017. Source: [ABC News](#).

EPA To Disband Air Pollution Scientific Review Panel – Here’s the latest on EPA, the organization whose mission is purportedly to protect the environment, taken from the *New York Times*: “An Environmental Protection Agency panel that advises the agency’s leadership on the latest scientific information about soot in the atmosphere is not listed as continuing its work next year, an E.P.A. official said. The 20-person Particulate Matter Review Panel, made up of experts in microscopic airborne pollutants known to cause respiratory disease, is responsible for helping the agency decide what levels of pollutants are safe to breathe. Agency officials declined to say why the E.P.A. intends to

stop convening the panel next year, particularly as the agency considers whether to revise air quality standards.” Source: [New York Times](#).

The Conservation Crisis

This section covers the myriad interconnected, conservation-related threats that are transforming the national parks.

Climate Change

Eastern Areas: Tornado Frequency Increases In East – Parks in the eastern USA now have another weather worry besides nor’easters and hurricanes: “Tornado frequency has increased across the eastern third of the United States and especially across the mid-South,” reported the *Washington Post* on October 27th. “While tornadoes have increased in the East, there has been a notable decrease in twister activity across a large chunk of the Southern Plains of Texas and Oklahoma as well as the high plains of Colorado.” The findings were in a report posted in the journal *Climate and Atmospheric Science*. The sharpest increase in tornado frequency was found to be across a region that includes Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee and Kentucky. As if to validate the study’s findings, there was an unheard of outbreak of tornadoes in Rhode Island and southeast Massachusetts a week later. In an epic understatement, the *Post* called the outbreak “not at all Octoberlike” for New England. Sources: [Washington Post](#), October 17th; [Washington Post](#), October 24th.

Alaskan Parks: Return Of ‘The Blob’ Portends Trouble In Alaska And Elsewhere – “Throughout early fall,” reported the *Washington Post* on October 18th, “Alaska has been oddly warm and pleasant. The cause of the freakishly nice weather has been massive high pressure anchored over and around the state. One of the strongest on record for fall, this sprawling dome of warm air has helped keep the usual transition to cold stunted.” It has also led to a significant rise in temperatures in the northeastern Pacific Ocean, which has in turn led to the return of abnormally warm water in the area known as “The Blob.” The last time “The Blob” appeared, it changed the jet stream and produced viciously cold polar vortex intrusions throughout the East. Nobody yet knows what to expect from this iteration, but the impact it’s had on Alaska is already evident. “(The) damage has been done in Alaska, where drought persists in the coastal rain forest of the southeast, and it’s been an extraordinarily peculiar start to the cold season.” Autumn is four weeks late there, and at the time of the writing Fairbanks had yet to receive any snow and Anchorage had not yet had a freeze. Source: [Washington Post](#).

Oceans and Freshwaters

Everglades NP: Rising Seas Threatening Everglades Restoration – *The Guardian* has posted a story on a new [National Academy of Sciences report](#) released on October 17th that concludes that “sea water encroaching on the Everglades will hamper decades of work by a government program to reverse manmade damage to the vast, fragile ecosystem at the tip of Florida...” The multibillion-dollar Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, authorized by Congress in 2000, was designed to redirect fresh water, reducing sea water incursion in a long-term effort to bring the tropical wetland ecosystem back to the way it looked in the early 20th century, before influxes of people to southern Florida drained much of it for development. “(Rising) global temperatures are...changing the Everglades in ways the state and federal government must consider, including changing rainfall patterns and accelerating sea-level rise. It is clear that the Greater Everglades of 2050 and beyond will be much different from what was envisioned at the time of the [plan],’ the biennial report says.” Source/more information: [The Guardian](#).

Gulf Coast Parks: Fourteen-Year-Long Spill In Gulf Becoming One Of Worst In U.S. History – “An oil spill that has been quietly leaking millions of barrels into the Gulf of Mexico has gone unplugged for so long that it now verges on becoming one of the worst offshore disasters in U.S. history,” reported the *Washington Post* on October 21st. “Between 300 and 700 barrels of oil per day have been spewing from a site 12 miles off the Louisiana coast since 2004, when an oil-production platform owned by

Taylor Energy sank in a mudslide triggered by Hurricane Ivan. Many of the wells have not been capped, and federal officials estimate that the spill could continue through this century. With no fix in sight, the Taylor offshore spill is threatening to overtake BP's Deepwater Horizon disaster as the largest ever." Never heard of it? You're not alone: "The Taylor Energy spill is largely unknown outside Louisiana because of the company's effort to keep it secret in the hopes of protecting its reputation and proprietary information about its operations...The spill was hidden for six years before environmental watchdog groups stumbled on oil slicks while monitoring the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster a few miles north of the Taylor site in 2010." Rather than worry about the spill's impacts, the administration prefers to have more wells there and elsewhere: "As oil continues to spoil the Gulf, the Trump administration is proposing the largest expansion of leases for the oil and gas industry, with the potential to open nearly the entire outer continental shelf to offshore drilling. That includes the Atlantic coast, where drilling hasn't happened in more than a half century and where hurricanes hit with double the regularity of the Gulf." Source/more information: [Washington Post](#).

Flora, Fauna And Habitat

Southwestern Parks: Bird Populations Plummet in Piñon Forests – Over the course of just a decade, the Audubon Society reports, three-quarters of the birds that inhabit piñon forests have disappeared due to the drought, heat stress, and beetles that have killed millions of piñon trees in the Southwest: "Piñon-juniper woodlands, covering at least 55 million acres across the Southwest and Great Basin, are some of the world's hardiest, having evolved in an arid environment. But the Southwest is becoming even drier and hotter as climate change spikes temperatures and intensifies drought, and even stalwart piñons, whose delectable nuts appeal to both humans and wildlife, are struggling to survive this transformation. The double whammy of prolonged drought and heat stress is killing the region's signature piñon pines outright or weakening them enough for bark beetles to overwhelm their natural defenses and tunnel through their trunks, severing the flow of nutrients. In recent decades, millions of piñon—some 40 to 80 percent of all trees—have perished across a four-state area encompassing Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, leaving landscapes of dark-green juniper amid smooth, ash-gray skeletons of dead piñon. (Junipers are more drought-resistant than piñons, and are not affected by the piñon bark beetle)." A study of birds in piñon-juniper forests in Bandelier National Monument and Los Alamos National Laboratory revealed that bird numbers declined by 73 percent between 2003 and 2013 and that the number of species dropped by 45 percent. Source: [Audubon Society](#).

From The Archives

This section contains incidents taken from *Morning Report* issues published during the corresponding week (approximately) 25 years ago in 1993. All entries appear in the original verb tense.

- *Shenandoah NP* – Over the Columbus Day weekend, during which thousands of visitors came to Shenandoah to see fall foliage along Skyline Drive, the park had to deal with a four-day visit by Vice President Gore and his family, two major automobile accidents, one major rescue, and several instances of significant illness or injury to visitors. The first motor vehicle accident occurred on Saturday, when a driver lost control of his vehicle and went over a 60-foot embankment. Ropes had to be employed to lift the driver back to the road. The park's South District ambulance and two local community ambulances transported five patients to area hospitals. The driver was reportedly sleepy at the time of the accident; an investigation is underway. The second accident occurred on Monday, when another vehicle went over another 60-foot embankment. One victim was evacuated by helicopter, the other two by a local rescue squad. The cause of the accident has not been determined. Skyline Drive was closed for about 45 minutes while the victims were extricated from the vehicle. A major rescue effort took place on Saturday afternoon after a 51-year-old visitor suffered a heart attack near the top of Old Rag. A Park Police helicopter was summoned; five minutes before it arrived, however, a storm passed over the area, making a helicopter evacuation unsafe. A ground evacuation was begun and completed in the rain and darkness early the following morning, thirteen hours after the heart attack was reported. At last report, the victim was in fair condition. Ambulances were

also summoned four times to transport sick visitors, and once to transport a visitor who was injured in a fall from a horse. Reported by Larry Hakel.

- *Dry Tortugas NP* – On Tuesday, October 12th, the park received a call from the shrimp boat *Jolly Roger* reporting that the crew had picked up 17 Cuban refugees from a small sail boat 22 miles south of the park and asking for Coast Guard assistance. The Coast Guard advised that they couldn't make contact with the *Jolly Roger* until the following day, so a ranger went to the scene on board the commercial vessel *Antares*. All 17 refugees were transferred to the *Antares* and brought to Fort Jefferson in the Tortugas. They had been at sea about 17 hours, drifting in a small boat with no working compass. The refugees, who ranged in age from four to 54 and included six young children, were all in good shape. Park employees provided food and first aid treatment. Reported by Wayne Landrum.
- *Acadia NP* – On two experienced 20-year-old climbers went out to Great Head, one of the most difficult rock-climbing areas in the park. They lowered themselves down a cliff to the edge of the ocean, then made their way across boulders at low tide to a sea cave, where they attached their equipment to the top of the cave and walked across the ceiling. At about 5 p.m., the high tide and high surf began impeding their climb out of the cave. In order to begin the ascent, they had to make "Tarzan-type" swings out of the mouth to the vertical ropes. The first climber got out, but went well into the ocean before reaching the ropes; the second got caught up in large waves and surf. He expended a great deal of energy trying to climb, but was unable to ascend because of fatigue or hypothermia (the pair had been in the cold and water all day) and eventually let go and was swept back into the cave. The other climber made his way out in the dark and reached the Bar Harbor Police Department at about 8:30. A major rescue effort was begun that included rangers, Mount Desert Island SAR, the Coast Guard, members of the Bar Harbor fire department, students from the College of the Atlantic (where the second climber was a junior), and volunteers. Despite high winds and intense downpours, a member of the rescue team was able to climb down a rope to a point where he could look into the cave and see the climber floating face down in the surf. Rescue efforts were halted until 6 a.m. the following morning. A climber was able to pendulum swing into the cave; he got within 15 feet of the body when the surf picked up. He was completely submerged two or three times and decided to discontinue the effort. At 1 p.m., rangers climbed down to an area that was accessible by foot. A ranger then crept across the face of the rocks and attached safety ropes that other rescuers would use to cross the bottom of the sharp cliff and recover the body. The climber then made a lateral climb back to the cave. Other climbers, using the strength in their arms and legs and at times suspended in midair with their backs to the sea, moved carefully across the outcropping and retrieved the body. Reported by Norm Dodge.

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If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to Bill Halainen at the Weekly National Park System Report: BHalainen@gmail.com. Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

A Closing Observation

"The (recent) findings of the...Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change were almost universally – and justifiably – described as 'dire.' Even 1.5 degrees' worth of warming, the I.P.C.C. warned, is likely to be disastrous, with consequences that include, but are not limited to, the loss of most of the world's coral reefs, the displacement of millions of people by sea-level rise, and a decline in global crop yields.

Meanwhile, at the current rate of emissions, the world will have run through the so-called carbon budget for 1.5 degrees within the next decade or so. “It’s like a deafening, piercing smoke alarm going off in the kitchen,” Erik Solheim, the executive director of the U.N. Environment Program, told the *Washington Post*...

“(The administration) has spent the past eighteen months systematically targeting rules aimed at curbing greenhouse-gas emissions. One of these rules, which required greater fuel efficiency for cars and trucks, would have reduced CO2 emissions by an estimated six billion tons over the lifetime of the affected vehicles. In a recent filing intended to justify the rollback, the Administration predicted that, by the end of this century, global temperatures will have risen by almost four degrees Celsius (nearly seven degrees Fahrenheit). In this context, the Administration argued, why would anyone care about a mere six billion tons? Come the apocalypse, it seems, we’ll all want to be driving S.U.V.s...

“Perhaps the most important takeaway from the report is that every extra half a degree is world-altering. According to the I.P.C.C., between 1.5 degrees and two degrees of warming, the rate of crop loss doubles. So does the decline in marine fisheries, while exposure to extreme heat waves almost triples. As always, it’s the poor who are apt to suffer most...

“Meanwhile, two and a half degrees, three degrees, or even, per the Trump Administration, four degrees of warming are all realistic possibilities. Indeed, based on recent trends, the last figure seems the most likely. Globally, emissions rose last year, and they’re expected to rise still further this year. This disaster is going to be as bad—as very, very bad—as we make it.”

Journalist and environmental commentator [Elizabeth Kolbert](#), *The New Yorker*, October 22, 2018

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The *Weekly National Park System Report* is a publication of The Coalition To Protect America’s National Parks. It is prepared by Coalition member Bill Halainen, former editor of the *NPS Morning Report*, and produced and disseminated by Coalition member Steve Pittleman.

The Coalition is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that “studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service.”

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