

# MOUNT McKINLEY

NATIONAL PARK

*Alaska*



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East side of Mount McKinley as seen from the air—Mul- drow Glacier in foreground. (Photo by Bradford Wash- burn. Copyright, National Geographic Society) . . . <i>Cover</i>	TREES AND PLANTS . . . . . 11
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## Historic Events

- 1902 A. H. Brooks and D. L. Raeburn, of the Geological Survey, United States Department of the Interior, made a survey of this mountain range and were the first white men to set foot upon the slopes of Mount McKinley.
- 1903 May. A party under leadership of Judge James Wickersham made the first attempt to climb Mount McKinley but was not successful.
- 1910 William Taylor and Pete Anderson made the first successful ascent of the north peak of Mount McKinley.
- 1913 First party under Archdeacon Hudson Stuck and Harry Karstens reached summit of the south peak of the mountain.
- 1917 Mount McKinley established as a national park by act of Congress.
- 1932 The Lindley-Liek party climbed both the north and south peaks. They were the first expedition to accomplish this feat.
- 1934 First ascent made of both peaks of Mount Foraker by C. S. Houston, Dr. T. G. Brown, and G. C. Waterston.
- 1942 Both peaks of Mount McKinley reached by seven members of the Army Test Expedition, who lived on the glaciers and the mountain while testing winter equipment and supplies.
- 1947 Mrs. Washburn, wife of group leader Bradford Washburn, was first woman to reach the top of Mount McKinley. There were also seven men on the ascent which was part of "Operations White Tower," organized for scientific observations and for motion-picture recording of a climbing group.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Oscar L. Chapman, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, Arthur E. Demaray, *Director*

# Mount McKinley

## NATIONAL PARK



SEASON JUNE 10 TO SEPTEMBER 10



MOUNT MCKINLEY NATIONAL PARK, situated in south-central Alaska, was established by act of Congress approved February 26, 1917, and on January 30, 1922, was enlarged to 2,645 square miles. On March 19, 1932, Congress approved an extension on the north and east sides, enlarging it to a gross area of 1,939,493 acres. The park is a part of the National Park System owned by the people of the United States and administered for them by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. It is one of a group of areas in the System known simply as national parks, usually of considerable extent and generally possessing outstanding scenery and wilderness character.

The principal scenic feature of the park is mighty Mount McKinley, the highest peak on the North American Continent. This majestic mountain rears its snow-covered head high into the clouds, reaching an altitude of 20,300 feet above sea level, and rises 17,000 feet above timber line. On its north and west sides McKinley rises abruptly from a plateau only 2,500 to 3,000 feet high.

For two-thirds of the way down from its summit it is enveloped in snow throughout the year. Denali, "home of the sun," was the name given to this impressive snow-clad mountain by the early Indians.

Near Mount McKinley are Mount Foraker, with an elevation of 17,000 feet; Mount Hunter, 14,960 feet; and Mount Russell, rising 11,500 feet above sea level.

### Glaciers

All of the largest northward-flowing glaciers of the Alaska Range rise on the ice-covered slopes of Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker. Of these the largest are the Herron, having its source in the névé fields of Mount Foraker; the Peters, which encircles the northwest end of Mount McKinley; and the Muldrow, whose front is about 15 miles northeast of Mount McKinley and whose source is in the unsurveyed heart of the range. The fronts of all of these glaciers for a distance of one-fourth to one-half mile are deeply buried in rock debris. Along the crest line are many



GLACIERS FLOWING FROM ALASKA RANGE. Photo by Bradford Washburn.

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smaller glaciers, including some of the hanging type.

The greatest glaciers of the Alaska Range are on its southern slope, which is exposed to the moisture-laden winds of the Pacific, and lie in the basin of the Yentna and Chulitna Rivers. These have their source high up in the loftiest parts of the range and extend south far beyond the boundaries of the park.

All of the glaciers appear to be re-

treating, but so far little direct proof has been obtained of the rate of recession.

On the inland front but little morainic material is left along the old tracks of the glaciers, and it appears that most of the frontal debris is removed by the streams as fast as it is laid down.

During the Pleistocene period most of the valleys and lowlands of the region were filled with glacial ice. This ice also

overrode some of the lower foothills, while in the high regions were the extensive névé fields which fed the ice streams.

### Mountain Climbing

As Mount McKinley is the highest mountain in North America and probably the tallest mountain in the world from its base, it is a challenge for moun-

tain climbers. Because of the hazards, permission to attempt an ascent must be obtained from the park superintendent. In addition to experience in the usual techniques of climbing, knowledge of great glaciers is necessary because of crevasses and snow avalanches. Prolonged storms, with subzero temperatures, are so severe that ascents have been abandoned, with success otherwise within reach.

### Mammals and Birds

As a park attraction, the animal life of Mount McKinley National Park is surpassed only by Denali itself. Up to the present time, 112 kinds of birds and 35 kinds of mammals have been definitely identified within park boundaries. About 80 out of the total number of birds recorded are known to nest within the park. Nearly all of these breeding species are found in the summer along the regular routes of tourist travel.

Because of limited space, only a few outstanding species are listed here. Some of them, such as the willow ptarmigan and the caribou, are not found in any other national park; while the eggs of the surf-bird and the wandering tattler have been found in Mount McKinley National Park and nowhere else in the entire world.

**Caribou.**—Though many thousand caribou graze within McKinley Park, their roving disposition makes their whereabouts at any given time uncertain, and this feature imparts real zest to the quest of those who would seek them out. They travel singly, in pairs, or in small bands, while a herd of hundreds may be seen on a certain day and have vanished the next. Then, too, the search may lead anywhere from the low-lying barrens to



A DALL SHEEP LOOKS CURIOUSLY AT THE PHOTOGRAPHER.

the high steep ridges of the Alaska and Secondary Ranges.

Related to these North American caribou are the domesticated reindeer of "Santa Claus" fame, which have been introduced elsewhere into Alaska and have increased enormously. They are merely an Old World race which is smaller and darker than the caribou, with much shorter legs. These two are the only members of the deer family in which both sexes have antlers. Large brow tines, or "shovels," extend well forward over the nose, adding to the grotesque appearance of the huge antlers.

Fair-sized caribou bulls stand about 4 feet at the shoulders and weigh over 350

pounds. In September when their coats are at their best, the body appears brown, with a conspicuous white neck and long white beard, the white extending back over the point of the shoulder and continuing as a band along the sides. The cows are colored much like the bulls, except that the pelage often appears paler throughout. The neck is gray rather than white, and the lateral stripe is not prominent. At birth, calves are light brown and faintly spotted.

Almost anywhere in the park the presence of caribou is indicated by the well-defined trails through the tundra. In some localities there are battered willows which the animals have used for rubbing the velvet off their antlers. Caribou also visit the licks, where their large, rounded, cowlike tracks give plain evidence of their visitations.

*Alaska Moose.*—The Alaska moose is the largest animal found in Mount McKinley National Park. It is larger than a horse, large males weighing as much as 1,700 pounds. It has the distinction of being the largest member of the deer family. In addition to this, the moose reaches its maximum size in Alaska. The males are distinguished by bearing broadly palmated antlers, which grow to tremendous size, some having a spread of over 63 inches. Both sexes carry a "bell" or "dewlap" on the throat; this peculiar appendage is merely a loose, pendant fold of skin, which hangs down several inches at the middle of the throat. The moose is an ungainly creature, with a muscular, overhanging muzzle, and high shoulders, which may have a height of 7 feet 8 inches from the ground, and slope abruptly to the hind quarters.

In color the Alaska moose ranges from dark brown to almost black, becoming lighter on the belly and under

parts. At a distance, the moose appears to be a jet black animal. The young moose when first born are reddish brown in color, without spots. Twin offspring appear to be as common as single births.

During the summer months, moose are likely to be encountered along the willow thickets and margins of spruce timber. In the winter, they are found along the lower streams in the park.

*Alaska Mountain Sheep.* — The white Alaska mountain (called Dall) sheep are among the handsomest animals of the Mount McKinley region and the most fascinating to pursue and observe. Perhaps no other locality presents such abundant opportunity for their study in large numbers at close range. Two important distinguishing characteristics of this species are the white color and slender, widely curved horns. In contrast, the bighorn sheep of the United States have a sandy-brown color, and the horns are heavier and more closely curled. A good-sized ram

of the Alaska sheep will stand about 39 inches at the shoulders and weigh approximately 200 pounds.

The single young is born during early May in sheltered nooks under protecting cliffs. Twins rarely occur. Though soon able to follow their mothers about, the lambs spend the first few weeks of their lives close to the rocks for protection against their enemies. By June they dare to venture out on the grassy slopes where they may be seen scampering about in little bands of 4 to 10 under the watchful eye of some old ewe. Playing follow-the-leader over the rocks and steep places, they gain practice in the agility and sure-footedness so necessary to their existence. A lamb can easily negotiate a vertical jump of 6 feet.

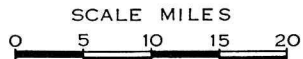
The best places to see bands of sheep during the tourist season are on the slopes of Igloo Creek and the East Fork and Toklat Rivers.

One of the problems in park administration is the maintenance of sheep in

RED FOX FORAGING IN THE SNOW.

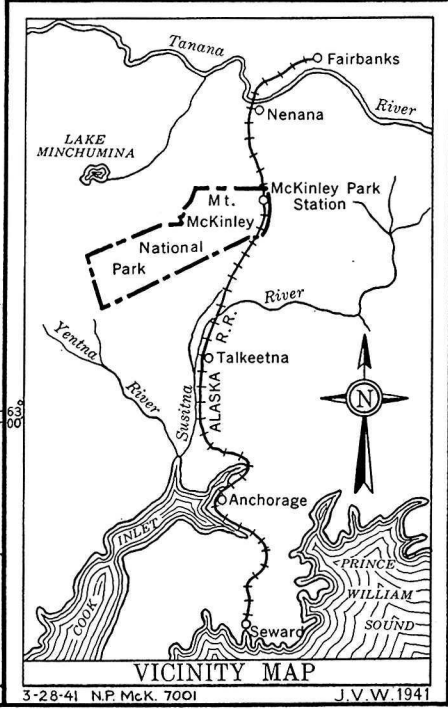
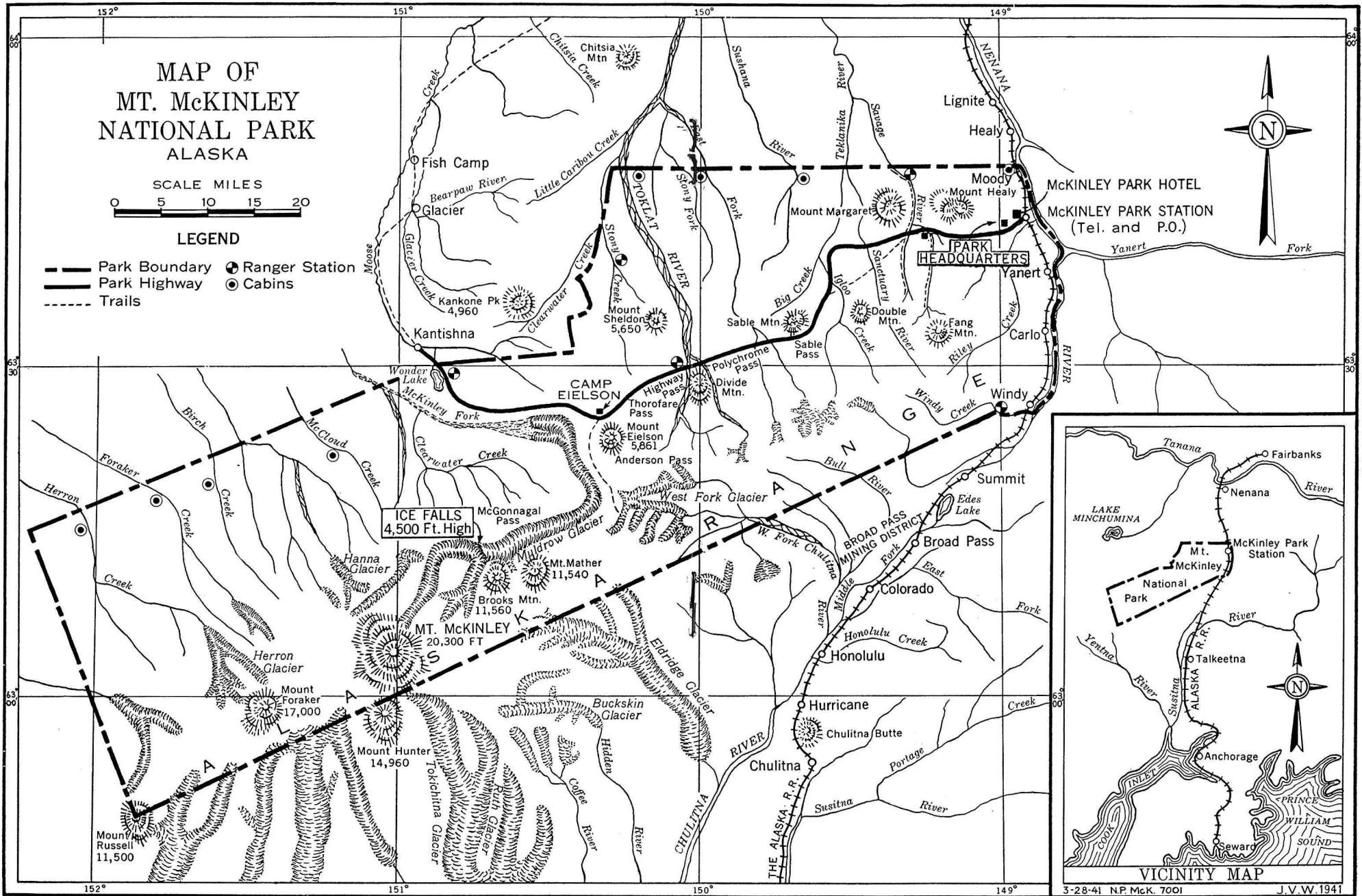


# MAP OF MT. MCKINLEY NATIONAL PARK ALASKA



## LEGEND

- Park Boundary
- Park Highway
- Trails
- Ranger Station
- Cabins



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numbers and at the same time to assure the presence of wolves, as these animals are a rare sight for the visitor.

**Toklat Grizzly Bear.**—To watch a Toklat grizzly bear in his native habitat in Mount McKinley National Park is to enjoy one of the rarest treats which the park affords. The most conspicuous evidence of the presence of grizzly bears is to be found in the numerous small, craterlike holes which dot the tundra. These miniature craters are the holes left where grizzly bears have dug out ground squirrels.

**Other animals.**—Commonly seen in the park are the red fox, hoary marmot, parka squirrel, and porcupine. Wolverine, lynx, wolf, coyote, beaver, marten, mink, snowshoe hare, and Alaska cony are also in the park.

**Short-Billed Gull.**—Visitors to the McKinley district frequently express surprise at the number of "sea gulls" that breed there over 300 miles inland, far removed from the salt water of the sea-coast. The common gull of the McKinley region is the short-billed, although a few of the larger herring gulls are also present. The latter species may easily be recognized by its great size. The short-billed gull is of medium size, having a length, from tip of tail to end of bill, of 17 or 18 inches. These birds are pure white below, while the mantle is pearl gray. The bill is clear yellow, without any decided spot or ring. The feet are olive green.

**Ptarmigan.**—In Mount McKinley National Park there are three species of ptarmigan which belong to the grouse family. The more common form, the willow ptarmigan, is generally to be found in the willow bottoms and is noteworthy because it occurs in no other national park. The willow ptarmigan has a variety of calls, and the cock has a

characteristic "crowing" which often awakens the visitor at midnight or in the early morning hours. The rock ptarmigan, a little smaller than the willow ptarmigan, is found from the more open tundra bordering the rivers to the top of the steep hills. It has a long guttural call. The third and smallest species, the white-tailed ptarmigan, in the summer lives principally on the mountain tops near the heads of the valleys. This species has a call like a scream. All three of these Arctic grouse are white in winter and brown in summer.

**Surfbird.**—The surfbird is one of the most elusive avian citizens of Mount McKinley National Park. For nearly 150 years, since the species was first given its scientific name, its nest and eggs remained unknown. The surfbird winters in South America as far south as the Strait of Magellan. It breeds among the mountain tops of central Alaska. Twice each year, in migration, it traverses the Pacific coast of North and South America.

On May 28, 1926, the first and only nest of this rare bird known to science was discovered and recorded by Joseph Dixon and George Wright (*The Condor*, vol. XXIX, pp. 3-16, January 1927).

For those who are keenly interested in bird life, to catch a glimpse of the elusive surfbird, or, better yet, to find its nest, will mark the achievement of the rarest ornithological experience that the park has to offer.

**Wandering Tattler.**—Only two nests of this shorebird have been found and both of them were discovered in Mount McKinley National Park by Olaus and Adolph Murie. Both nests were found on gravel bars. The birds are about the size of a killdeer plover, and are dark slate-colored, blending well with the



gravel bars on which they are generally found.

*Other birds.*—Golden eagle, golden plover, jaeger, raven, and several species of hawks and owls may be seen. Of the many small birds, junco, snow bunting, robin, varied thrush, redpoll, several kinds of woodpeckers, Alaska jay, white-crowned sparrow, and magpie are numerous in summer. Of these, the jays and magpies are especially conspicuous in winter. Ducks and other water birds frequent the many lakes and ponds.

### Trees and Plants

The white spruce, with its somber foliage and tawny cones, is the commonest evergreen tree in the park.

The graceful white birch is found in the lower valleys. The cottonwoods and the quaking aspen are near the streams. Willows are abundant, ranging from small trees in favorable localities through the shrublike forms, until they dwindle to matlike growths on the mountain

slopes. To escape the rigors of the climate, these latter hide their tortuous woody stems underground, thrusting only the catkins of their flowers and a few conspicuously net-veined leaves to the surface during the brief summer. The erect dark-red catkins of dwarf willow are common near Savage River.

*Shrubs.*—The thickets which clothe the valleys and the lower slopes of the mountains are composed of many varieties of shrubs, principally the dwarf birch, or "Buckbrush," a dull green in summer but flaming scarlet and orange at the touch of frost. The shrubby cinquefoil shows bright-yellow buttercuplike flowers. The blueberry yields berries that are an important source of food to Indian and white man alike. The pleasantly fragrant Labrador-tea has rusty underleaf surfaces and clusters of snow-white flowers. The bearberry grows in dense mats and shows glandular dotted leaves and crimson berries. The only prickly shrub in the park is the lovely wild rose.

THE ELUSIVE SURFBIRD.





POLYCHROME PASS.

*Herbaceous Plants.*—Scattered through the ground cover are the delicately tinted pink and blue heads of valerian and the drooping bells, ranging in color from deepest pink to palest blue, of the bluebells, also known as chiming bells or languid ladies. As the summer advances, the large-flowered blue larkspur and the monkshood thrust their showy blossoms above the thicket growth.

In the shade of the spruces, the broad white bracts of the low bunchberry or dogwood glimmer in the early part of the season, while in the fall they show bunches of bright red berries. The delicate pink bells of the twin flower cover the old mossy logs, and the crowberry, with its tiny awl-shaped needles and shiny black berries, twines over the moss and lichens. Diminutive pyrolas in white and pink space their waxy bells along their stems. Near the park entrance and at most lower altitudes the

fireweed covers all otherwise unoccupied space with its sheet of bright pink flowers. Only occasionally does one find the tall fumitory with its finely divided leaves and lyre-shaped and yellow-tipped pink blossoms.

In the sandy river bed and along the roadside the large-flowered water-willow herb flames bright cerise, and the lemon-yellow arctic poppy grows in scattered clumps. A number of leguminous plants populate the sandy bars, the purple vetch being the most conspicuous. Farther up the valley a knotweed with large rose-pink spikes is abundant and contrasts sharply with the fragrant deep-blue forget-me-not, the Territorial flower.

Beds of the beautiful little shooting stars occur in damp spaces, and on the drier slopes grow great carpets of the dryas, with white flowers somewhat resembling strawberry blossoms. There is also a yellow variety. When the petals

fall they are succeeded by a tuft of silvery seed plumes and are often found covering acres of the sandy gravel bars as well as the mountain slopes. The foliage is the favorite food of the mountain sheep in the summer.

## Climate

The average snowfall in winter varies from 30 to 45 inches during the whole of the season, while in the summer the total precipitation never amounts to more than 15 inches. Temperatures range from 60° to 80° in the summer, and in the winter, although at times the thermometer reaches 45° and 50° below zero, it usually averages 5° to 10° below.

During the summer months the sun shines more than 18 hours a day. On June 21, the longest day in the year, the sun is visible at midnight from the top of mountains approximately 4,000 feet high, and photographs may be taken at that time.

Winter in this park has unique charm. It is first announced by the flaming colors of the frost-touched alder, dwarf birch,

cottonwood, willow, and quaking aspen. In contrast to these are the great masses of dark green spruce and, above timber line, the sphagnum mosses and red-hued rock outcroppings.

## Fishing

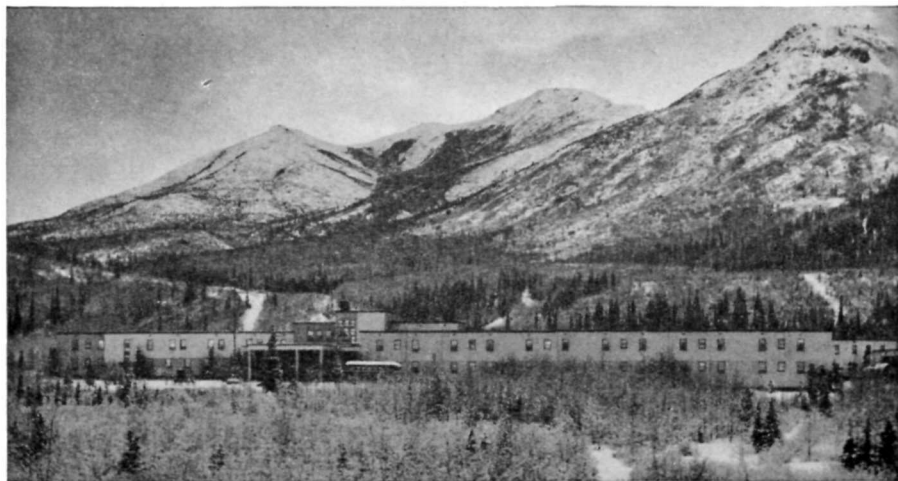
The grayling, a very hardy species, is found in park waters. They are sporty fish and weigh 1/2 to 2 pounds. Trout in some of the streams are classified locally as Dolly Varden and are "pan size." At Wonder Lake, about 35 miles north of Mount McKinley, there are Mackinaw trout which attain 24 inches or more in length.

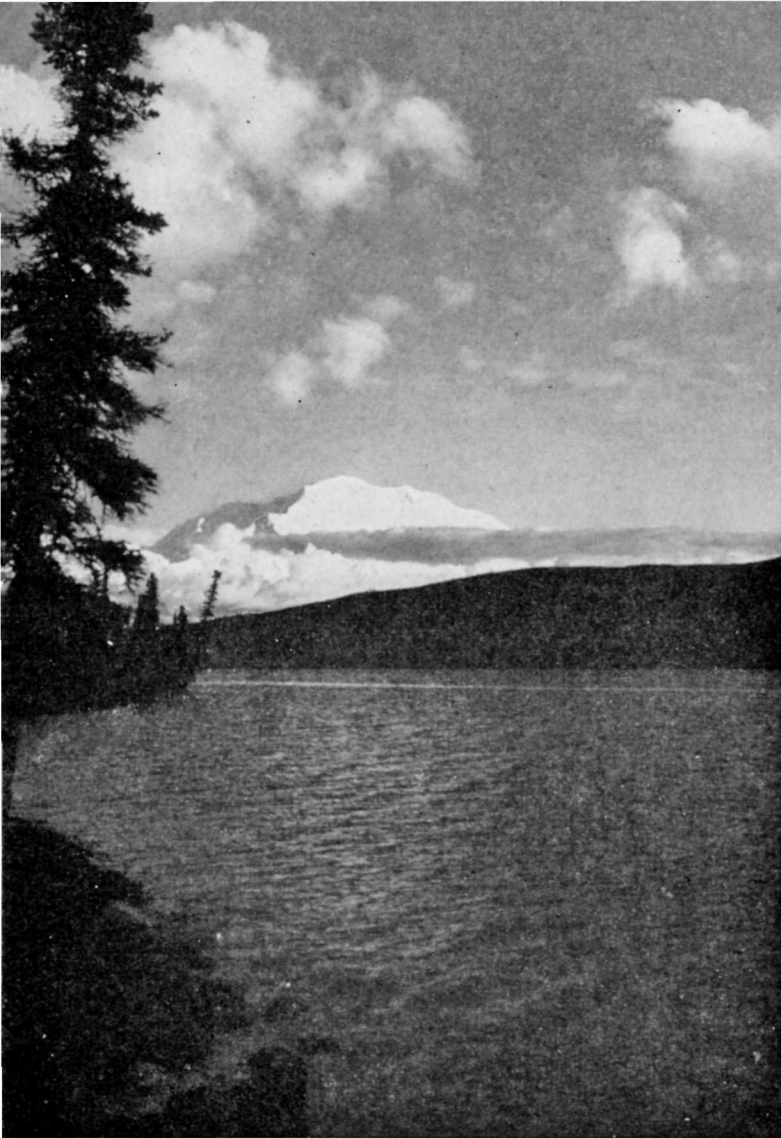
Fishing licenses are not required in the park. However, licenses should be procured before arrival at the park as some of the streams are beyond park boundaries.

## Roads and Trails

There are now 89 miles of excellent gravel highway within the park and 15

McKINLEY PARK HOTEL.





MOUNT MCKINLEY AS SEEN FROM WONDER LAKE. *Canns photo.*

miles beyond the north boundary. This road begins at McKinley Park Station on the Alaska Railroad at an elevation of 1,732 feet above sea level. It passes Sanctuary River, Igloo Creek, Sable Pass, East Fork River, Polychrome Pass, Toklat River, Highway Pass, Stony Creek, Stony Hill, Thorofare Pass, Camp Eielson at Mile 66, and Wonder Lake, passing out of the park at Moose Creek and branching out to several placer and

quartz gold mining operations. From many points along the road visitors have excellent views of Mount McKinley and other peaks, as well as several of the smaller active glaciers; and animals are always seen.

Triple Lakes Trail leads from McKinley Park Hotel to three lakes nestling in a crag-fringed valley. The 6-mile trail reveals glorious panoramas, also breathtaking glimpses of Riley Creek far be-

low. Grayling fishing is good in the lakes. Return trip may be varied by going down Riley Creek.

A fine foot trail, a mile and a half long, leads from McKinley Park Hotel to Horseshoe Lake which is close to the Nenana River. Here the activity of a beaver colony can be observed and picnicking and bathing enjoyed.

In general, the terrain of the park is such that a person will experience little difficulty in cross-country travel on foot if equipped with adequate footgear. It is an exhilarating experience to camera-hunt for birds, mammals, and vegetation away from the road and trails.

## Administration

Mount McKinley National Park is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. The officer in immediate charge is the superintendent. All complaints, suggestions, and inquiries regarding service in the park should be addressed to him at McKinley Park, Alaska.

Park headquarters are located at Mile 2 on the highway.

## Travel Routes to Alaska

Four methods for reaching Alaska may be used—ocean steamer, Yukon River stern-wheeler boats, airplane, and automobile. For leisurely summer traveling, either one of the two water methods might be preferred as the routes include scenic and historical interests peculiar to the Northland. Airplane service by major airlines is daily and modern. The Alaska Highway across Canada is well maintained, and accommodations and service stations are adequate. As automobiles may be shipped

to and from Alaska, combinations of all the travel methods may be arranged.

## Public Accommodations

The Alaska Railroad is the only surface transportation to the park. Visitors usually board the train at Seward, the ocean terminus, at Anchorage, or Fairbanks.

Shipping private automobiles to the park is considered worth while by most visitors. The Alaska Railroad provides a special low rate with a 30-day stop-over privilege. Usual shipping point is Fairbanks, the nearest town to the park. Gasoline and oil are sold by the McKinley Park Hotel.

A 3,000-foot landing field is at the eastern end of the Trans-Park Highway and is close to the hotel and the railroad station.

McKinley Park Hotel is a modern installation in every respect and is operated on the European plan.

Comfortable modern busses operate daily during the summer from the hotel to Mount Eielson, 66 miles out on the Trans-Park Highway, where a magnificent view of Mount McKinley may be had.

Information on rates and reservations may be obtained from the Manager, McKinley Park Hotel, McKinley Park, Alaska.

## Public Camp Grounds

Camp grounds are being prepared by the National Park Service and will be expanded as automobile travel increases. Authorization for camping should be obtained at park headquarters which are 2 miles out the highway from the railroad station.

# Rules and Regulations

[Briefed]

THE PARK REGULATIONS are designed for the protection of the natural beauties and scenery as well as for the comfort and convenience of visitors. Complete regulations may be examined at the office of the superintendent of the park. The following synopsis is for the general guidance of visitors, who are requested to assist in the administration of the park by observing the rules.

The destruction, defacement, or disturbance of buildings, signs, equipment, or other property, or of trees, flowers, vegetation, or other natural conditions and curiosities is prohibited.

Camping with tents is permitted. When in the vicinity of designated camp sites these sites must be used. Only dead and down timber should be used for fuel. All refuse should be burned or buried.

Permission to build fires must be obtained from the superintendent. Fires shall be lighted only when necessary, and when no longer needed shall be completely extinguished. They shall not be built in duff or a location where a conflagration may result. No lighted cigar, cigarette, or other burning material shall be dropped in any grass, twigs, leaves, or tree mold.

All hunting, killing, wounding, frightening, capturing, or attempting to

kill, wound, frighten, or capture any wild bird or animal is prohibited. Firearms are prohibited in the park, except with the permission of the superintendent.

Fishing in any manner other than with hook and line is prohibited. Fishing in particular waters may be suspended by special regulations.

Cameras may be freely used in the park for general scenic picture purposes.

Gambling in any form or the operation of gambling devices, whether for merchandise or otherwise, is prohibited.

Private notices or advertisements shall not be posted or displayed in the park, excepting such as the superintendent deems necessary for the convenience and guidance of the public.

Dogs and cats are prohibited on Government land, unless such animals are on leash, crated, or otherwise under physical restrictive control at all times; however, the superintendent may designate areas to which dogs and cats may not be admitted.

Mountain climbing shall be undertaken only with permission of the superintendent.

The penalty for violation of the rules and regulations is a fine of not more than \$500, or imprisonment not exceeding 6 months, or both, together with all costs of the proceedings.

