



TETON STEWARDS

NEWSLETTER of the GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

S P R I N G / S U M M E R 2 0 1 4



Photo: NPS

Impressions that Last a Lifetime

TRAIL CREW ALUMS REFLECT *on* TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES *in* GRAND TETON

What summer program succeeds in luring teens away from the pool or a job at the ice cream shop? For those with looming college applications, it's often a leadership summit or an internship to boost the resume. But in the case of 150 teens from around the country, a new kind of enrichment program is defining a summer well spent. Youth Conservation Program, founded in 2006 and funded by the Foundation, provides 20 teens (ages 16 to 19) with work on a trail crew for 10 weeks each summer. Led by park staff, YCP combines outdoor adventure, teamwork, and physical challenge with a job that yields tangible results and a hard-earned paycheck.

A few YCP alums checked in recently to share what they've been doing since the program. As it turns out, a summer spent meeting new friends, wearing muddy sneakers, and maintaining America's public lands helped shape some impressive young adults.

Continued on next page



Photo: NPS

“The program helped influence my choice in education simply by increasing my love for the outdoors.” *Travis Soderquist*

The alums visited national parks prior to YCP, but none experienced complete immersion.

Why did they sign up?

Danielle Nicklas (2012, 2013) grew up with the Tetons and a GTNP ranger dad. “I had classmates that had participated in the program and recommended it to me. I was excited to find a summer job that allowed me to give back to the beautiful place I grew up in.”

Jake Peacock (2012) spent summers in Jackson recreating with family in Grand Teton. The opportunity to work in different areas of the park was one he couldn't pass up. “Spending two months in Wyoming far surpassed the appeal of any job I might have found at home.”

Each June, YCP teens meet the crew and leaders, complete an orientation, and suit up in work boots and utility pants. During the program's eight years, crews have worked in a variety of capacities.

Here's what stood out most:

Tim Weiss (2008) recounts the gratification of building log checks at the Lupine Meadows trailhead. “It was a fun process to build that stair system from start to finish. Every time I use that trail, I'm proud to see the fruits of my labor.”

For **Matt Minella** (2010), meeting the job's physical and mental demands proved memorable and rewarding. “We were building stairs in Death Canyon and had to bring the rocks in—it was so much hiking; the people in the back were dying while the people in the front were very experienced hikers. But we all wanted to be there, and not just because we were getting paid. We were challenging ourselves.”

Graham Soderquist (2006, 2007) echoes Minella's sentiments. “The program instilled a work ethic in me that I still have to this day. There were some tough days where my determination, focus, and teamwork skills were tested, but I became a better person from those experiences.”

“I liked waking up early and spending all day in the park,” says **Alice Ryan** (2012), citing the beautiful setting and daily routine. “We hiked trails that I would have never gone on by myself.”

At summer's end, teens return to homes and schools toting a bit more maturity, a few more muscles, and a slew of outdoor experiences.

And according to alums, the program was influential in a number of other ways:

“The program taught me that with hard work, good things will follow,” says **James Scarsella** (2013). “It also gave me a greater sense of respect for America's public lands; the experience made me consider majoring in American Studies in college.”

Danielle Nicklas studies microbiology and says YCP steered her in a direction that combines her interest in medicine with the National Park Service. Days on the trail also taught her about human impact on the environment. “There is a delicate balance between human recreation in the outdoors and the conservation of lands in their natural state.”

“Because of YCP, I was introduced to friends that I still talk to on a regular basis and visit whenever I have the chance,” says **Travis Soderquist** (2010, 2011). “The program helped influence my choice in education simply by increasing my love for the outdoors.” Travis studies biological and agricultural engineering and hopes to further technologies supporting clean energy and environmental longevity.

“The one common theme through my academic and professional life is a passion for the environment and sustainability,” says **Tim Weiss**. “This passion was largely born through my experiences at YCP and in the time I spent in Grand Teton growing up. The program exposed me to the inner workings of the national park system and showed me that I could pursue a career with a greater purpose.”

Want to give teens a summer to remember? Contact Kim Mills at 307-732-4192 or kim@gtnpf.org. Visit www.gtnpf.org to learn more about our full range of youth and diversity initiatives.

Message from President LESLIE MATTSON

Summer's arrival prompts a flurry of activity for the *Inspiring Journeys* campaign for Jenny Lake. While the fundraising side of the project is more than 50% complete—we've raised \$7.8 million toward our goal of \$13.4 million—the bulk of the physical trail work has only just begun. In May, a helicopter transported 260 tons of rock across the lake to be used for trail structures at North Cascade Creek. Trail crews will begin repairing and restoring our favorite lakeside routes, and soon we'll be able to see tangible progress toward the goals we set out to achieve. Yet even as we enter into this exciting phase, I find myself equally immersed in the emotional significance by which this project can be measured and in the stories and experiences that made Jenny Lake a landmark for visitors from the start.

It began with a Shoshone woman named Jenny and her husband Richard "Beaver Dick" Leigh. He was an Englishman who arrived in the Tetons in the 1860s to guide and work on government surveys, including the famous 1872 Hayden geologic expedition. Hayden was so impressed with Leigh's knowledge that he decided to name two lakes at the base of the Tetons after the Englishman and his young wife, Jenny.

Since the story of Jenny and her lake came to be, countless others have stemmed from the special place that bears her name—everyone who has been to Jenny Lake has a story to tell. Couples have married there; park rangers recount fascinating memories of patrols and rescues past. Whether in 1872 or 2014, the power of Jenny Lake as a setting always emerges as significant. The lake continues to provide a world-class backdrop for



stories and experiences worth remembering, and it has a timeless ability to inspire and invigorate those who visit its shores.

Inspiring Journeys is an opportunity for anyone who cares about the park and Jenny Lake to be involved with our effort to renovate one of the most precious and popular places in Grand Teton National Park. Have a wonderful summer.

Leslie Mattson



President

WHY WILL I LEAVE a BEQUEST?

"In the early 70s, I decided to go on the road for two months and explore our country's national parks. Hiking park trails and photographing wildlife is how I've spent my vacations ever since. Over the past decade, I've returned often to the spots I love most—Grand Teton, Yellowstone, Zion, and Bryce. I arranged a bequest through my will that will support trail work and wildlife protection in my favorite parks. I've enjoyed these vacations tremendously, and I have a deep appreciation for America's unforgettable landscapes. This is my way to give back to these places and to help others enjoy them as much as I have."

RON KIRSCHNER, HORACE ALBRIGHT SOCIETY MEMBER SINCE 2011

HORACE ALBRIGHT SOCIETY



Creating Conservation Legacies Today

Contact Kim Mills at 307-732-4192 or visit
www.gtnpf.org/horace.php to discover the benefits of charitable estate planning.

A GIFT *that* KEEPS on GIVING

No one predicted that Signal Mountain campsite #75 would become a unique spot in Grand Teton. Like its neighboring campsites, #75 sits near Jackson Lake, complete with a fire pit, a picnic table, and thanks to a generous donor, a bear-resistant food storage box.

It began in the 1960s when Richard Hirsch visited Grand Teton every summer with children, grandchildren, and eventually great-grandchildren in tow. In 2010, Richard made a gift to GTNPF in honor of his 4-year-old great-grandson, Max, and a bear box was installed at campsite #75. Richard and Max left a journal inside with a note encouraging visitors to share their park stories.

Three years later, the notebook is filled as visitors have left accounts of their experiences at the now famous campsite. Stories about hiking and canoeing fill the pages, but the reports of black bears walking through the campground bring this story full circle. Thanks to supporters, 300 boxes have been

installed for campers to conveniently store food and toiletries out of reach of curious bears, ultimately protecting visitors and bears alike.

The notebook was recently returned to Max and has been replaced with a new one. Next time you're in the park, stop by site #75 and share your park story.



Photo: Diana Stratton

Fund a Bear Box of Your Own
Bear boxes cost \$1,500 and include a 3 x 5" stainless steel plaque that honors your special person. They'll receive an irresistible teddy bear and information about why bear boxes are so important, wrapped and tied with a bow.

Call 307-732-0629
for your bear box today!

Remembering Dr. Norman Sprague

1947-2014



Through their generosity, **Norm Sprague** and his family have helped the Foundation transform great ideas into programs and projects that produce extraordinary results. We are proud to have known this champion for wilderness and will always remember his kindness and his love for Grand Teton National Park.

“One spectacular day I was on horseback climbing up Shadow Mountain to Chip’s Bluff when I came upon a tall man and a dog in a rather special place resting and gazing upon the Tetons. We have moments in our lives that affect us in powerful, deeply personal ways, that stick with you and become lasting memories. We only shared a few brief words of acknowledgement, but for me, that was the kind of man I wanted to be, in a place I wanted to live, with a dog I wanted to have. Eventually we met and I could put names to that memory—Norman and Colter. You don’t have to know people long or well to be deeply affected by being around them. Today I get to live near that special place all the time and have the privilege—it is indeed a privilege—of calling the extended Sprague family my Wyoming neighbors.”

Jeff Willemain, GTNPF Resource Council Member

CREATING a NEW LEGACY at GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK



Photo: Ryan Sheets/Sheets Studios

I want to OFFER some BACKGROUND about WHY I am so HONORED to SERVE as SUPERINTENDENT of GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK and JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR. MEMORIAL PARKWAY.

I am eager to support responsible stewardship of this remarkable landscape with its fascinating wildlife. And, I look forward to working with staff and partners to protect these exceptional resources and balance interests of those who experience, enjoy, and share ownership of this national park.

We all have a story, and my introduction to northwestern Wyoming occurred when I traveled here as a teenager. Grand Teton was the first national park this country boy from Texas ever laid eyes on, and that visit left an indelible image in my mind. It also sparked my eventual career with the National Park Service. My early connection to this place increased when my son Anthony took a park ranger internship and met his future wife Amy, who was serving as a Teacher-Ranger-Teacher. My personal ties to the Tetons run deep, and my wife Melissa and I already feel at home.

National parks must become relevant to a more diverse population than they have been historically, which is why I was also grateful to attend the fourth NPS Academy this past March. Thanks in large part to generous gifts from Grand Teton National Park Foundation and our key partners, The Student Conservation Association, Teton Science Schools, and Grand Teton Association, 25 talented college students from diverse backgrounds came for an introduction to NPS careers as well as a chance to obtain internships and gain a path to potential permanent employment. I knew the wildlife and rugged Teton landscape would be transformational for me, and I wanted the same outcomes for the students. I was not disappointed!

Legacy was one of three significant NPS Academy themes. With Grand Teton's exceptional legacy of land conservation

culminating in the Wilderness Act of 1964 and its heritage of preservation through philanthropy, we have an important responsibility to continue and expand these worthy missions and create our own personal legacies in the process.

It's indeed an honor to work with the dedicated employees, partners, and community who care so deeply about this spectacular place as I begin my Grand Teton journey. It is my hope that I will have the opportunity to meet many of you in the days ahead. In the meantime, thanks for all you do in supporting Grand Teton and the Rockefeller Parkway.

DAVID VELA
Grand Teton National Park
Superintendent

NATURE'S ENGINEERS MAY BE *in* DECLINE

BIOLOGISTS NEED *your* HELP *in* LOCATING ACTIVE BEAVER COLONIES *in* GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK



Photo: Diana Stratton

The American beaver claims a noteworthy standing among animals on our continent. It is the largest member of the rodent family in North America (South American capybaras are bigger), it occupies all states except Hawaii, and its ability to modify landscapes surpasses all animals except humans. Like most rodents, beavers are herbivorous and have ever-growing, self-sharpening incisors. These modified teeth cut everything from small willows to cottonwood trees 3 feet+ in diameter in the pursuit of food and dam-building materials.

Beavers are one of the few animals that live in colonies, which typically consist of 4-8 related individuals. Breeding once a year in winter, kits are born during spring in lodges with underwater entrances, stay up to 2 years before dispersing to start their own families, and, as yearlings, babysit younger siblings. Breeding adults are believed to be monogamous. Powerful legs and webbed feet propel them, and large,

paddle-shaped tails slap the water and warn of danger, such as the presence of wolves, coyotes, bears, or humans. Since days are spent sleeping in lodges made of sticks and mud, sightings usually occur during mornings and evenings.

In most areas, including Grand Teton, beavers construct two types of lodges. In ponds created by building dams, lodges are built surrounded by water. Along the shores of lakes and rivers, lodges are built along the banks. Branches cut in summer are accessed beneath the ice during winter and used for food. Falling water levels that expose lodge entrances and food caches during winter in either scenario can spell disaster.

What we know about park beavers is limited, but indications are that numbers have declined over the last 40 years. Surveys during 1975–1977 documented 112 active pond and bank colonies. More recent efforts have located less

than half this number, but methodology varied, making absolute comparisons uncertain. Since beavers prefer willow, aspen, and cottonwood—forage also preferred by moose and some elk—a relationship between ungulate and beaver numbers could exist. A reduction in northern Yellowstone elk numbers by wolves, for example, may have allowed beaver numbers there to increase. However, some researchers believe beaver numbers here may be more influenced by water availability than by forage limitations—particularly along the Snake River where water flows are dictated more by Idaho irrigation than natural hydrological forces.

Since beavers strongly influence ecosystem function, monitoring numbers and mitigating known human influences on them is important. Beaver dams raise the water table around ponds, generating habitat for fish and other riparian-dependent flora and fauna. These habitats consistently support higher species abundance and diversity than others in arid Western landscapes. And as beaver ponds age, meadows form, creating additional habitat diversity and benefitting other wildlife. Changes in dam water releases or in hydrological cycles brought on by climate change are just two potential actors in this sensitive ecological play.

In the park this summer, if you see a beaver or come upon an active beaver colony—evidenced by a lodge and fresh vegetation cuttings nearby—pass along your observation to me at steve_cain@nps.gov. Information makes us better equipped to conserve this important park resource.

Steve Cain
Senior Wildlife Biologist
Grand Teton National Park



Photo: Ryan Sheets/Sheets Studios

WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS!

JENNY LAKE CAMPAIGN *and* CONSTRUCTION *are* WELL UNDERWAY

On the fundraising front, the Foundation is making tremendous headway with the *Inspiring Journeys* campaign as we race toward our \$13.4 million finish line. To date, donors have given \$7.8 million. We plan to complete all fundraising by August 25, 2016—the National Park Service centennial.

It's proving to be an exciting summer as construction is in full swing in the backcountry near the mouth of Cascade Canyon. Stone and crushed aggregate wintered beneath tarps in 2,000 lb. bags and were flown by helicopter to the site in early May. The materials are being used to improve trail structure, create drainage, and add rustic steps and retaining walls.

Here's what else you can expect to see:

- *Work started in 2013 on the trail that follows Jenny Lake's south shore will be completed*
- *Trail construction between the west boat dock and the north side of Cascade Creek is on the agenda; access to Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point will be available via the trail south of the creek, and reroutes will be put in place as necessary*
- *The Horse Trail route into Cascade Canyon that bypasses Inspiration Point will be reconstructed this summer and will be closed much of the season; access to popular climbing routes will be maintained*

For updates, contact Mark Berry at 307-201-1873 or mark@gtnpf.org.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Join our legacy project and share how Jenny Lake has inspired you.

We want to hear about your experiences, discoveries, and most of all, how this quiet, yet powerful place has enhanced your life. Celebrate the magic of Jenny Lake and honor an extraordinary place.

Send your story to Laura Yungmeyer at laura@gtnpf.org before July 31.

100 words max; photos welcome.



NEW WEBSITE

Visit our NEW smartphone and tablet-friendly website for stunning panoramic photos, updated program information, and more at www.gtnpf.org



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Photo: Diana Stratton