



Eagle River Nature Center News and September 2011 Programs

No. 49 Member Newsletter ~ July 2011 ~ Connecting People with Nature

In our previous newsletter, I invited you to share your comments about what the Nature Center means to you - what you like about it, what you don't, or what you'd like to see here in the future. Here is one such story that will undoubtedly resonate for many of you. Thank you Julie Goolsby for sharing your story with our members.

~ Asta Spurgis

Nature Center Connections

by Julie Goolsby

As I accept this invitation to write about the Eagle River Nature Center, I reflect on some things that it means to me. Although I've lived here for less than three years, it has opened up the wonderful world of Alaska to me in so many ways and provided a personal and profound connection, and all within a quick drive from my home. We've had lots of experiences there—hikes in summer, fall and winter, a 6th grade field trip, geo-caching, and our son "slightly" falling into the river. We've met tourists and locals, talked to hikers just finishing up their Crow Pass adventures, and enjoyed the beautiful Alaskan scenery. As I pore through each membership letter, I always learn something new. Every family member who visits us has made a trip to the Nature Center—it's such a wonderful place to show off, and this is my story.

After relocating here from Tennessee in July 2008, our family moved into our new home in Eagle River just 5 weeks before my parents came to visit from Colorado. As great lovers of the outdoors and mountains, they were eager to see our new surroundings. My mother was also fighting terminal cancer, and she wanted to make the trip when her treatment schedule allowed for a break. They were here for less than a week, but we made it out to the Nature Center twice. The first time she was fascinated with all of the animal skins, informational hikes and programs, maps, and the coziness of the building itself. She bought



Great Horned Owl photographed by Matt Quaid on July 8, 2011 at 8am on the Rodak Nature Trail.

a few postcards and enjoyed a short walk around—taking note of the various flora and fauna. On a beautiful and sunny afternoon a few days later we returned to the Nature Center to go for a longer walk. As we entered the building, a volunteer came in slightly frazzled, as she had just seen a brown bear on a nearby trail. We wondered aloud if we were embarking on something we might regret, but then decided to go on out to see what we could find. We walked down the Rodak trail to the viewing decks, and my mom read all the informational signs as we walked along. As we basked in the late summer sunshine, she marveled at the incredible beauty of the Eagle River Valley. The mountains were glorious in the sun, and I'll never forget that afternoon. We watched a few salmon splashing around, and she read the board that explains the fascinating life cycle of salmon. She'd always enjoyed a good salmon dinner, but now had a new appreciation for the fish itself. We scanned the area for wildlife, and sure enough, spotted that brown bear out in the distance. We could see that it was probably fishing, and my parents were excited that the Nature Center gave them their first glimpse of an Alaskan bear. It gave me



Board of Directors

Carl Lundgren, *Chairman*

Bill Barron

Kevin Dee

Bob Fisher

Eric Fjelstad

Scott Girard

Eric Jenkins

Dan McDonough

Gail Raymond

Keith Sanders

Julie Saupe

Susan Spyker

Sandra Walters

Sarah Wright, *Treasurer*
Patricia Jordan, *Secretary*

Staff

Asta Spurgis, *Director*

Ute Olsson, *Chief Naturalist*

Laura Kruger, *Manager*

Doris Ivory, *Naturalist*

Seasonal

Giselle Bergeron, *Naturalist*

James Batove, *Summer Trails*

Gus Gustafson, *Winter Trails*



Non-Profit Tax
ID# 92-0156981

Continued from front page by Julie Goolsby

great joy to be able to bring my mom, in particular, to a place of such vast beauty. I was really proud to realize that this exquisite gem we call the Eagle River Nature Center was right here in the town that I now called home.

A year later, my parents visited us again. This visit was harder for my mom, as her strength had visibly declined. She was very tired and thin, and sometimes nearly out of breath. Unfortunately we didn't make it out to the center while they were here, and something told me that she wouldn't be able to make the journey to Alaska again.

We've had several other visitors, and with each new person we always made a visit to the Nature Center a priority. My sister had researched Eagle River, found out about the ERNC, and bought our membership as a gift to us when we first moved here. When she made it to Alaska, we certainly wanted her to see what this terrific place was all about and everything that it offers to people of all ages and interests. She also admired the grand scenery of the Eagle River Valley from the viewing decks. It's truly breathtaking to see for the first time.

On July 15, 2010, exactly two years to the day after we moved into our Eagle River home, my sweet mom passed away. It had been a particularly brutal summer, because my husband lost his job in late May, and then I lost my mom. After school started back up and we had some much delayed sunny days (it was such a wet and dreary summer), my husband Will and I felt the Nature Center tugging at us. We went out there several times in the early fall and enjoyed some long and therapeutic hikes. At times our conversation was nonstop, and then at others the silence of the forest was what we needed most. The sunshine was divine as we lay flat on our backs on the deck of the Rapids Camp yurt. We wished we could stay in that spot for hours. Our heartaches and worries seemed to wash down the Eagle River as we became one with the Alaskan wilderness that we've grown so fond of. I felt a connection to my mom while out there—I knew she was with me. One afternoon we marveled at all of the spawning salmon vigorously splashing throughout the stream near the cabin. I remember thinking how much my mom would have loved watching them. On one of those healing walks, we went down to the river and I reached into the frigid water to select what I deemed to be the perfect stone. Smooth and brown, it was just what I'd wanted. This simple rock would make a one-way trip to Colorado, to be placed at my mom's grave on Mt. Lindo, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains outside of Denver. It was only fitting that a tiny part of Alaska should be with her, and I could think of no better place to find this gift than right here in Eagle River—it was the least that I could do for her.

In February of this year, my dad made his first visit here without my mom. It was bittersweet as we cross-country skied and talked about how much she would have loved the great trails we have just minutes from our home. One of the most enjoyable outings was, of course, back at the Nature Center. It was a quiet and sunny day, with lots of blue sky—perfect for a long and brisk hike along the trails. After a few minutes of walking, I commented on how much I enjoyed hearing the crunch of snow underneath my boots. It's one of my favorite sounds, and always makes me feel good inside. Right away my dad told me that my mom always said the same thing—that sound of snow crunching under her shoes as she walked was something she loved to hear. Once again, I was connected to my mom in this great place with each step I took.

The Eagle River Nature Center will always hold a special place in my heart simply because I believe a part of my mom is always there. Sometimes she's gazing at the mountains, other times she's watching the salmon splash wildly, and in the winter she's enjoying the crunch of snow beneath her boots as she hikes the trails.

Thank you to everyone who made our 15th Anniversary Celebration and Auction a great success!

ACVB
 Alaska Airlines
 Alaska ATV Adventures
 Alaska Botanical Gardens
 Alaska Distillery
 Alaska Heritage Museum
 Alaska Kayak Academy
 Alaska Laser Wash
 Alaska Railroad Corporation
 Alaska Sea Kayakers
 Alaska Sealife Center
 Alaska Wilderness Images
 Alaska Wildland Adventures
 Alaska Zoo
 Alpaska Raft, LLC
 Alyeska Resort
 Al Bowler State Farm Insurance Agency, Inc.
 Anchorage Concert Association
 Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center
 Arctic Brewing Company
 Arctic Roadrunner, Inc.
 Artworks Gallery & Glass Studio
 BP
 Bearfoot Wellness Studio
 Bird TLC
 Brecht Studio
 Brian Goodman
 Cabin Fever
 Campbell Creek Science Center
 Cathy and David Brenner
 Chugach Mountain Printer's Guild
 Chugach State Park
 CIRI Alaska Tourism
 Claire & John Leclair
 Colin Tyler Bogucki
 Conoco Phillips
 Creekside Cottage
 Days Inn Anchorage
 Denali Dream
 Denis Urban
 Dick Griffith
 Dore and Kevin Meyers
 Doris Ivory and Bill Hightower
 Dragonfly Designs
 Eagle River Puzzles
 Enstar Natural Gas Company
 Era Helicopters, LLC
 Fairmont Olympic Hotel, Seattle
 Frannie Eder
 Fred Meyer, Eagle River
 Ginamaria Smith
 Giselle Bergeron
 Glacier Valley Farm CSA
 Grannie Smith's Quilts and Crafts
 Great Harvest Bread
 Hilltop Ski Area
 Inlet Tower Inn and Suites
 Jacob Bera
 Jen Currie
 Katie Sevigny
 Kincaid Grill
 Liza Sanden
 Mahay's Riverboat Service
 Major Marine Tours (Renown Tours)
 Midnight Sun Brewing Co.
 Mike Smith
 Mile 5.2 Greenhouse
 Montreal Canadiens
 Moose's Tooth
 Monika Devine
 Northrim Bank
 PenAir

Perkins Coie LLP
 Peter Bronz Pottery
 Pfish-Pacific Fishing
 Photograph Alaska/Carl Battreall
 Picture This
 Princess Tours/McKinley
 Princess Lodge
 Ravenwood Elementary School Staff
 Red Robin Gourmet Burgers
 REI
 Residential Mortgage
 Ric Davidge
 Rick Weber
 Roy Corral
 Seattle Art Museum
 Senator Mark Begich
 Senator Lisa Murkowski
 Sleepydog Coffee Co.
 Snow City Cafe
 South Side Bistro
 Specialty Imports
 Sue Zajac Originals
 Sunny Cove Sea Kayaking
 TDX, St. Paul Island Tours
 Tom Harrison
 Tony Perelli
 Title Wave Books
 Trailside Discovery
 Ute Olsson
 Whistling Swan Productions



Thank you to all our volunteers!

Sandra Walters, *Event Chairperson*
 Giselle Bergeron
 Glen Bobo
 Tony Carnahan
 Milt Cooper
 Stacy Flagg
 Mary Lou Glennon
 Brian Goodman
 Terry Habig
 Katie Hahn
 Tom Howell
 Jillian Jablonski
 Carl Lundgren
 Wolfgang Olsson, *cellist*
 Frank Quinn
 Ginamaria Smith
 Kyle Smith
 Gail Sommerville
 Elaine Thomas
 Sean Wagner
 Craig Walters
 Stephanie Whaley
 Sarah Wright, *barista*
 Steve Wright, *bartender*





EAGLE RIVER NATURE CENTER
 Newsletter and September 2011 Programs
 32750 Eagle River Road
 Eagle River, AK 99577
 907-694-2108 Fax: 90-694-2119
 www.ernc.org
 ID #92-0156981

Non-profit
 Organization
 U.S. Postage Paid
 Anchorage, AK
 Permit No. 69



**Saturday, September 17, 10am-noon
 Eagle River Spinners and Weavers**

If you'd like to try using a spinning wheel, contact Sandy Quimby to make arrangements at 696-2680. Or just come and watch club members practice their art.



Thank you to Scout **Simon Kiehl** and his troop for raising funds, designing, and building a wood storage shed (June 2011). Job well done!



Thank you to the Eagle River Rotary for their garden work and financial support. Thank you to Mile 5.2 Greenhouse and the youth of Community Covenant Church for their generous contributions.

Daily Nature Walks continue through August 31st, from 2-3pm.



Summer volunteers: Dick Griffith, Laura Kruger (Manager), Brian Goodman, Patricia Jordan, Mark St. Amour, Sean Wagner, Milt Cooper. Seated: Marge Brehm, Louise Preyer, Mary Lou Glennon, Coby Simpson.

Photos by Asta Spurgis

IS MY MEMBERSHIP CURRENT?

Just look at the address label above for your expiration date. You can renew online, by phone or by mail.

Our generous sponsors include:



* CIRI * Spenard Builders Supply * First National Bank of Alaska



and the BP Foundation, Inc. * Northrim Bank * Alaska Airlines * The Dorsey & Whitney Foundation

Rasmuson Foundation * REI Foundation * Totem Ocean Trailer Express, Inc. (TOTE) *



Cruz Construction * Perkins Coie LLP * ERA Helicopters * Chugiak Eagle River Foundation

Peak Oilfield Service Co. * Lifetime Adventures * Thomas, Head & Greisen, CPA * Eagle River Rotary

