



Eagle River Nature Center News

EAGLE RIVER NATURE CENTER

No. 67 Member Newsletter

April 2017

Connecting People with Nature Since 1996

Word from the Director

Asta Spurgis

Longer days have returned to the Nature Center and so too have the trumpeter swans. As if looking at the calendar, a pair arrived on the Spring Equinox (March 20th) at the spring-fed waters near the Albert Loop Trail. They probably selected this stopover area for its clean, shallow water with plentiful food, space to takeoff and limited human disturbance. They'll stay a few weeks before continuing on their northbound journey to their nesting site.



The mounds of snow are slowly melting and it may take longer than usual for the first green shoots to emerge. This winter the long-anticipated snow arrived after a two-year shortage. We were able to groom the trails and even sections of the frozen river. Gus Gustafson, our winter trail supervisor, was immensely proud of his figure-eight river course that afforded extra miles of skiing.

In February, construction on the north and west segments of the Albert Loop Trail started. Trail damage dates back to 2012 when significant rainfall resulted in the flooding and erosion of a number of trails within Chugach State Park. Park administrators applied for and received FEMA money to help fund reconstruction. The Albert Loop was on the list. Meanwhile, the following summer, even more flooding occurred on the segment of trail paralleling the river. It became clear to us, that this flooding was bound to happen again and that we needed a solution while we waited for the FEMA project to get underway. Our own volunteers built a bypass trail. Construction work on the Albert Loop will continue into the early summer.

Limited parking space at the Nature Center continues to be an issue. We are working with Chugach State Park administrators to find a solution that would increase parking throughout the year. Growing tourism and community use have put a strain on the situation. Until we can find a viable solution, we are looking at reducing programs and group use at certain times of the day to reduce the congestion. Please consider car-pooling when possible.

Our new website went live a few weeks ago and has been designed to work with all electronic formats. The biggest change you'll notice is the ability to register online for a program or workshop in lieu of calling us. We hope that this will make it more convenient for you. Please keep in mind that many of our weekend programs do not require registration and are open to all. We hope that you'll find the website easy to navigate and more appealing with all the beautiful photographs. Many of the photographs are credited to Colin Tyler Bogucki (*photo above*), who I'm pleased to announce has joined our staff this year as assistant manager and in-house photographer.

Thank you to our major sponsors: Alaska Airlines Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. BP Alaska CIRI ConocoPhillips Alaska ExxonMobil North Country Stoves Rasmuson Foundation REI Foundation Spenard Builders Supply Visit Anchorage Walmart Foundation

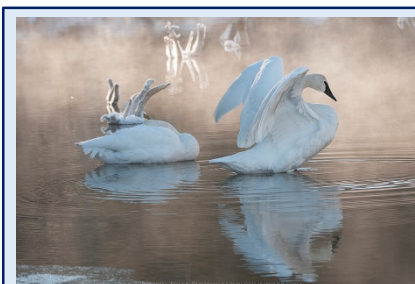
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**TOMORROW'S EARTH:
 Programs for Teens at the Nature Center**

Samantha Russell, Naturalist

This past fall, the naturalists recognized that there were no programs for our Junior Naturalists to remain engaged with the Nature Center community as they age. Teen-aged students are in an amazing place in their lives to semi-independently explore the world. They have the attention span to develop new skill sets and to participate in “real-world” science. With all this in mind, the naturalists got to work.

Since October, *Outdoor Survival Skills for Teens* has become a popular option. Students spend a full day at the Nature Center learning to navigate back-country emergency scenarios, cook on a fire they’ve built, create a survival shelter and develop team working skills. In addition to Outdoor Survival Skills, in early fall, a group of teens spent a Friday afternoon at the Nature Center to develop the tools to understand and resist climate change while enjoying a pizza snack.

Looking to expand our offerings to teens, we are planning bi-monthly programs over the course of the summer. Students will not only have the time to enjoy the Nature Center's trails, but they will also have opportunities to explore bushcraft, learn about careers in natural resources, and give back to their community through volunteer projects.

Parents can drop off their students or they are welcome to attend. For those who drop off their teen, you will need to sign a release form with emergency contact information. The naturalists are looking forward to working with your ecologically-minded teen this summer!



Sisters Kunz and Slaughter taking a break from trail work to pose with our local moose; **Sisters Julia, Olivia and Sophia Gatewood** receiving their Jr. Naturalist certificates. Bravo!

Photos by Marc Derosier





Friends of Eagle River Nature Center
 Member Newsletter April 2017
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April hours: Fri-Sun, 10am-5pm,
 May-September: Wed-Sun, 10am-5pm
 Trails are always open!
 Please, no dogs at our programs. Thank you!



Congratulations to our volunteers of the year: **Julie Saupe, Carl Lundgren, Gil Davis and Sandra Skaggs**. Each has devoted more than a decade of volunteer service. Thank you!

Save the date!
Summer Nature Walks – June through August, Wed-Sun, 1:30pm; register at the front desk 10 minutes prior
Eagle River Challenge Trail Race – August 12, 2017
Nature Center’s Annual Auction – October 7, 2017
More details coming soon!



Congratulations to **Charlie and Augie Martinez** for receiving their Junior Naturalist certification on April 2, 2017. We hope you continue to find joy in learning about the natural world.

ONLINE program registration now available at www.ernc.org
 Please let us know if you need to cancel, so that those on the waitlist can attend. Many thanks!



Artist **David Pettibone’s** work at the Nature Center will be featured as part of the Anchorage Museum’s **Polar Labs Projects**. A large cottonwood tree was the focus of his work from May 2016 through May 2017. You may still see him at work on your short hike down the Iditarod Trail. Stop by to take a look.