Katmai Conservancy

KATMAI CONSERVANCY

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR 2017 - 2018

An overview of our activities and support of Katmai National Park and Preserve.
Katmai Conservancy (the “Conservancy”) was created in 2016 to serve as a nonprofit partner of Katmai National Park and Preserve (the “Park”). Upon entering an agreement with the National Park Service (“NPS”) in June 2016, the Conservancy began efforts to raise funds to support the Park. In July 2017, the Conservancy was successful in obtaining a sizeable grant from explore.org, a division of the Annenberg Foundation, to be used in supporting Park projects. Funds raised by the Conservancy along with the grant from explore.org permitted the Conservancy to sponsor the following projects and activities during the year of August 2017-September 2018.

**BEAR RESEARCH**

![Photo: Michael Saxton preparing biopsy samples at the Falls Platform](image)

As a part of managing this incredible Park, it is important for NPS to understand the population dynamics of the bears. One element of that which has been vastly under-studied is the genetics. The Park has undertaken bear genetic studies funded by Katmai Conservancy largely through a grant from explore.org. The intention of the bear genetic project is to evaluate the genetic connectivity across the Park, particularly between the coast and the interior of the Park. A secondary goal of the project is to evaluate the heterozygosity of bears at Brooks Camp compared to other areas of the Park. If reduced heterozygosity or increased inbreeding is found, it would be cause to initiate a larger study to look at the impacts of human landscape use on bear population genetics.

Over the past two summers Park Lead Bear Technician Michael Saxton has collected samples from brown bears throughout Katmai for genetic research. By mid-summer 2018, he had collected nearly 300 samples from a variety of sources. The changing tides project, which involved collaring bears along the coast, provided 19 blood samples from bears between Hallo Bay and Cape Douglas, 9 tissue samples were collected at Amalik Bay using biopsy darts, 19 tissue samples have been collected at Brooks Camp using biopsy darts, and over 200 hair samples have been collected throughout the park and preserve. Over the winter Michael extracted DNA from the blood and tissue samples and the extracted DNA, as well as all the hair samples, were sent to the USGS Alaska Science Center genetics lab in Anchorage, AK. All samples will be genotyped at 6 loci to assess if it is a unique sample or if that animal has already been analyzed. Unique bears will then be genotyped at 16 markers and population genetics analysis will proceed using all unique bears. Additionally, Michael will be continuing to expand the sampling in new locations and increasing the sample size at Brooks Camp to improve inferences from the project.
CONTINUING EDUCATION

Photo: Interpretation Staff Landis Ehler, Rebecca Nourot and Anela Ramos at National Association of Interpretation Conference in Spokane, WA.

Funding through Katmai Conservancy permitted NPS employees to seek continuing education, allowing interpretation staff the opportunity to attend training and professional conferences: National Association of Interpretation Conference, Spokane, WA and the Public Lands Alliance Annual Convention and Trade Show, Palm Springs, CA. Federal travel ceilings have prevented employees from attending opportunities for continuing education in previous years, and Katmai Conservancy is able to fill a portion of that need through its own funds and explore.org funds. Staff was able to attend sessions on Coaching Interpreters vs. Coaching for Interpretive Success, Inclusive Leadership: Building Culturally Competent Organizations and Effectively Leading Diverse Teams, Wood Chips, Metal Chards, and Beads: How Alaska Native Demonstrating Artists Create Authentic Connections with Park Visitors, Audience-centered Questions, Taking Your Site Virtually to Students, First Nations Community Engagement with non-personal Interpretation--A Yukon Case Study, and more. The explore.org grant supported conference fees, airfare and hotel costs.

In addition, the Park was able to host subject matter experts in King Salmon to provide training for seasonal interpretation staff. Andrew Abyo, an Alutiiq carver, provided a day long cultural presentation. Katie Ringsmuth presented on the Fisheries History at Brooks Camp.
DIGITAL MEDIA SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

Katmai Conservancy funded the purchase of equipment for media efforts at Brooks Camp, Katmai Coast and other backcountry areas. New and upgraded gear produced quality media for the bear cams, park website, social media, publications and other outreach efforts.

Photo: Wolf image taken on Katmai Coast with new camera equipment; used for social media

Photo: Bear image taken in Brooks Camp with new camera equipment and used for social media
INTERPRETIVE PROJECT AND MATERIALS

Photo: One goal of the project “Following in the footsteps” was to re-create the historic photos that made this area famous. The first photo by P. R. Hagelbarger was taken on Naknek Lake in 1919 and shows the first ever motorized boat on the waters of Katmai National Park. Almost a century later, the crew discovered this exact location while paddling these kayaks along the Iliuk Arm.

Interpretive Project and Materials. Funding has also been provided to the Park for interpretative materials for researching and presenting public programs. This category was expanded with the opportunity for the Park to participate in the Following Footsteps project, which retraced the paths of the original four expeditions (c. 1915-1919) of the National Geographic Society’s exploration of the environmental devastation following the 1912 Mt. Katmai-Novarupta volcanic event—an area within present-day Katmai National Park and Preserve. These expeditions, led by Robert F. Griggs, were instrumental in calling the fumarole-riddled and ash-laden landscape to the attention of President Woodrow Wilson, who in 1918 established the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes as a National Monument. At the centennial anniversary of this event, the traces of these explorers and their camps remain on the landscape but lack official recognition and documentation. In an effort to seek the real-life experiences of those early adventurers and protect their legacy, the project retraced the paths of these intrepid explorers and documented the camps they left behind for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. A further goal of the project is the production of interpretive materials by and for the Park to introduce a wider public audience to the fantastic history of this landscape and the epic scientific exploration that was spurned by Novarupta.
The interpretive materials produced by this project will include a virtual “story-map” tour of the route with 360° scenes accessible on the official Park website, new photographic media displays for the Katmai Headquarters and Visitors Center, and a short film to premier at the annual July “Fishtival” celebration in Bristol Bay and later made accessible to a wider audience on the Katmai NPS webpage. These materials will also be presented to the Bristol Bay school district. Original field notes, photos, and film will be archived into the Katmai documents storage facility in Anchorage, accessible for future researchers and use in educational materials. An Alaska Region field report of the 2018 survey and data results will also be made available on the Integrated Resources Management Applications (IRMA) database for NPS-wide and public access.

MEDIA SPECIALISTS/PARK RANGER

Photos: Use of bearcam footage for social media
Katmai Conservancy, through funding from explore.org, was instrumental in the hiring of one Digital Media Specialist (joining the one other Digital Media Specialist in the Park) and one Park Ranger for six months to be employed directly by the Park. The Digital Media Specialists and others on the Park’s media team launched a concerted and expanded effort to use bearcam media for online interpretation. This includes the use of video clips from cam footage and looping footage into gifs. This allows for a more timely and current connection to the resource for our online audiences. These posts with video from the bearcam consistently are among the Park’s most popular, visible, and engaging---reaching up to 25x more people than average posts.

In addition to regular live chats, conducted approximately twice per week, and play-by-play broadcasts, the media team participates in 2-hour text chats on the cams twice per week. This is on top of regular check-ins and monitoring of cam chats. The media team published the Bears of Brooks River Bear Identification e-book in the spring, and coordinated “Fat Bear Week” in the fall. Posts made by the media team on Facebook reached over 1,540,000, and total impressions from tweets on Twitter resulted in nearly 2,000,000 impressions. Instagram followers increased from 1,820 early in 2018 to over 7,000 by end of the summer of 2018.
CENTENNIAL SPECIAL EVENTS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

The Park celebrated its centennial in 2018, one hundred years after Congress named the Park as a national monument, following the massive volcanic activity of Novarupta in 1912. Katmai Conservancy provided funding for several centennial events, in conjunction with explore.org, commencing with a one-day conference on April 28, 2018, held at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, with the topic being the Geologic Story of Katmai. The following three speakers covered topics on the volcanic activity as well as the cultural and historical impact: Chad Hults of the National Park Service, Pavel Izbekov of the Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and Michelle Coombs of Alaska Volcano Observatory.

Approximately 150 people attended the conference, and they were entertained in between the speakers with performances by the Anchorage Sugpiaq Dance Group in native costume.
Webinars and Programs at Brooks Camp

Other centennial events include a series of webinars on a variety of topics related to the Park, including: First century of preservation and management of Katmai; salmon research and management and 4500 years of human impact on the fishery; NN Cannery history, wildlife of Katmai, a century of landscape change; and cultural crossroads in prehistory. Some of these talks were broadcasted live on explore.org for viewers, and others were recorded for viewing online. These speakers greatly enhanced the public’s knowledge of Katmai’s rich history. The webinars began on June 27 and will continued through September 2018.

The Conservancy also sponsored participation by both the Park and the Conservancy in several local community events during the centennial year.

One of the Conservancy’s highest priorities is that the Conservancy continue to be involved, in fact increase involvement, in the local community. It is the intent of the Conservancy that its purpose is not just to serve as a partner to the Park but to become an active member of the local community. To that end, the Conservancy and the Park hosted a Centennial Concert with Alaskan musicians at Brooks Camp as a fun festivity for visitors and locals alike to join in the celebration, with 35 attendees at the campground and 47 attending at the lodge. Funding was provided in addition for participation in the local Bristol Bay Expo in June and the King Salmon Fishtival celebration in July.

The final centennial event was held in Naknek at the Bristol Bay borough school on September 22, 2018. As the poster for the event states, the day was one of building cultural and community bridges as well as celebrating the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Katmai.

Local residents from several villages attended the event where a variety of activities were available, including culturally themed educational programs for all ages. Programs included making puffin beak
rattles, petroglyphs, plant identification, and fishing. In addition, native foods were sold, artists from the area and some who flew in for the event, displayed their works. There was even an Alutiiq language clinic, held by a native speaker. The centennial event was well attended, and many attendees commented that they so enjoyed the day and the interaction that they hoped the Conservancy would make the event an annual one.