

Denali bios - 2010

East District



Michael Raffaelli

I'm very excited about returning to Denali National Park and Preserve for a third season. I have spent a lot of time talking with dogs this past winter so will need to practice talking with humans.

I grew up in California and, in what is starting to seem like eons ago, graduated from University of California, San Diego with a B.S in Ecology, Behavior, and Evolution, and a minor in Teacher Education. The two disciplines fit well together in the realm of Outdoor and Environmental Education, which has taken up the majority of the past 15 years for me. In between, I have filled my time working on a variety of scientific projects to keep my learning curve sharp, sleeping outside to keep adventure in my life, taking early retirement (i.e. playing while I'm younger), and most recently, trying out the lifestyle of a dogmusher.

I am passionate about natural history, and like many others, am attracted to wildflowers, birds, my wife, and big wild animals. Walks, sunsets, good food (especially vegetables), and good company are all things that I appreciate.

Denali bios - 2010



Dianna J McKeage.

I was born and grew up in Maine. I love the park service and have been bouncing around the country as a seasonal since 2003. Accompanying me on my travels, is my fine feline friend, Dew Drop. I love adventure and travel, and think Alaska will be right up my alley. I can't wait to meet you all. Safe travels

Denali bios - 2010



Jamie Milliken

Well, here we go again, it really becomes harder every year to come up with something original for this. What more could possibly be said about the most famous resident of Healy, Alaska. I guess not much, since Healy is small and I'm not really famous, but maybe someday. I like to sleep a lot, eat, drink. I spend most of my winter being pulled around by 14 wonderful sled dogs. I like to travel. I like to play games. Me and Alex like to beat people at corn hole. I like to build stuff. I like a lot of other things as well. I also don't like lots of things, too many to get into now. I also have a ton of bad habits, but luckily for me, I have a wonderful lady friend who puts up with it all. Anyway to those I haven't met yet, welcome to our little slice of paradise.

Denali bios - 2010



Stephanie Ford

Born and raised in western Washington, I transplanted to Albuquerque, New Mexico ten years ago in search of sunnier skies. I hold a B.S. in Anthropology from the University of New Mexico and a Master of Māori and Pacific Development from the University of Waikato, New Zealand. I have been involved in cultural heritage research and fieldwork in Alaska, the U.S. Southwest, Australia, and New Zealand. Research for my master's degree focused on local government legislation and planning for the protection of indigenous cultural heritage sites in New Zealand. I worked as an archaeology educator in New Mexico before working as an interpretive ranger at Katmai National Park in 2008 and 2009. Some of my favorite pastimes are hiking, bear viewing, berry picking, cross country skiing, cooking, homebrewing, and knitting. Looking forward to working with you all this summer!

Denali bios - 2010



Brandie Cheatham

I am delighted to be returning to Denali National Park and Preserve (not that I ever really left it) for another summer! Believe it or not, this will be my 5th season as an interpretive ranger in Denali. After three glorious summers spent out at Toklat, last year I decided to brave the East end operations. Under the guidance of my A-number-one boss-lady (a.k.a. Clare Curtis), I survived and will once again be immersing myself in the program-heavy, visitor chaos of the entrance area. I am very grateful that some of my amazing colleagues (Jori, Jamie, Robbie, David, Janis, and Michael) will be returning with me. I am equally looking forward to meeting all those new to this place and watching you fall in love with it.

Most recently, I am returning from Sitka National Historical Park. It is there that I fell in love with a very different Alaska than the remote, majestic beauty of the interior, where I have been living and learning for the past few years. For more background on me, you will have to come out to my little cabin in the burnt woods. I'd love to exchange stories while peeling a cabin log or two, petting dogs, bath tub gardening, sipping tea, jogging down the dirt roads, playing scrabble, picking cranberries, listening to NPR, and otherwise giving you the grand penny-tour. I mean it; you are all invited.

Until then, I eagerly await the awe-struck arrivals and joyous, hug-filled re-unions.

Denali bios - 2010



Janis Buckreus

As a teenager, Janis aspired to becoming a rock star. Little did she know that the green and gray plaid uniform of her formative years was actually foreshadowing a different (shall we say “higher”?) calling. While living in Boulder, Colorado, Janis was born in the spring of her 27th year during her first camping and mountain biking adventure in red rock country around Moab, Utah.

Subsequent adventures through Rocky Mountain National Park, Canyonlands and Yellowstone solidified her need to answer the call of the wild. On one of her excursions through the wolf country of Yellowstone, Janis met another adventurer who soon became willing to share her life of domestic cats, wild dogs, steaming geysers, robust wine, backpacking and saving the planet.

Janis still thrills to the sound of applause, but she hopes to one day see at least half the audience flick their bic lighters at the end of her evening program.

Denali bios - 2010



Robb Hannawacker

I'm a "desert-rat", originally from Utah; I've lived in the American Southwest most of my adult life. My childhood aspiration was to be an entomologist, but a laboratory has never been suitable habitat. Over the years, I've been employed as a field biologist, and an Interpreter/instructor.

I've worked at Montezuma Castle N.M., Zion N.P., Capitol Reef N.P., Joshua Tree N.P., Saguaro N.P., Imperial Sand Dunes N.R.A., and Denali N.P.P.

Denali bios - 2010

Cinnamon Dockham

Hello All! Being asked to give a brief Bio gets harder as I get older! The first question I always get is "Is that your real name?" and my answer is YES! It is on my birth certificate- what can I say, my mom was one "hip" chick!

I spent my childhood on the beaches of Michigan, just outside of a National Lakeshore where Ranger programs were a part of every summer. In fact I have family history connected to that park, and someday when we are all so bored there is nothing else to talk about, I may tell you. It is funny and a little embarrassing- which always makes the story better.

I spent time in the Military during Desert Storm; I spent time as a military spouse (harder job, really) and mother of 3 boys which are now full grown and living back in Michigan with their dad & family. I have a degree in Anthropology/ history from Washington, and a Degree in Parks and Rec. Management from FSU in Michigan. Bears are my passion- any bears- and I have spent a LOT of time studying them. I have worked in parks such as Yellowstone, Katmai & Kenai Fjords. I am truly looking forward to the experiences to come while in Denali. Currently I juggle several part time jobs here in AK. I am a substitute teacher, A "Mad Scientist" (after school programs and Birthday parties), and I am an instructor at the Campbell Creek Science Center in Anchorage for the BLM.

My last National Park job was Kenai Fjords (Seward), where I met my soul mate and have remained in Alaska ever since. We have a home in Wasilla. No, I don't know Sarah Palin.

Hobbies I enjoy are: Watercolor painting, quilting, dancing and, if all is right, karaoke! I tinker with my guitar but don't play well.

My strongest asset is my sense of humor- a little dry, kinda sarcastic, punny. Just a heads up before you meet me!

Looking forward to meeting you all!

Denali bios - 2010

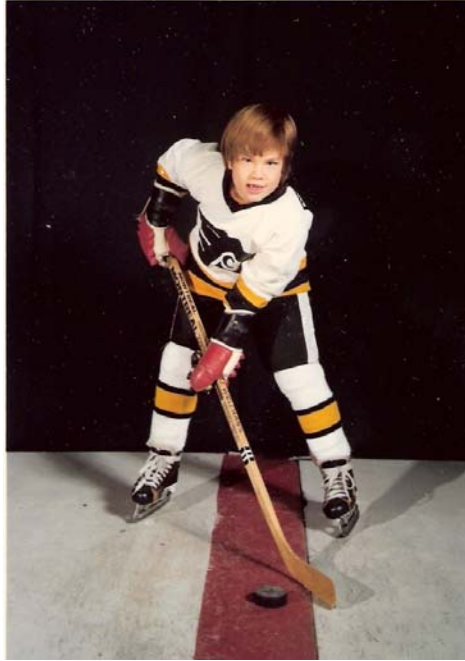


Brian Westlund:

I'm extremely excited to be working once again as an Interpretive Park Ranger in Alaska! It has been over ten years since I roved the Brooks River with brown bears at Katmai National Park, and later educated visitors about wolves in Yellowstone National Park. Exploring the wonders of Denali National Park and Preserve will be another dream experience, of which I feel very blessed.

I grew up in Northern California, and after gaining my undergraduate degree at Cal Poly State Univ. San Luis Obispo, received my Teaching Credential from Sacramento State University. I have taught as a classroom science teacher, but my real educational experience has come from working as a Field Science Educator with the Headlands Institute in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and most recently, with Olympic Park Institute in Olympic National Park.

My guiding light has always been, the natural world. I love to bird, hike, backpack, observe wildlife, write, and most especially - explore nature with a good friend by my side. Looking forward to meeting all of you in person real soon!



Rosharon Jordana Welchans

Hi everyone! My name is Jori and this is my 4th summer in Denali. I moved up here from Michigan and discovered a wonderful home in Denali. Some of my hobbies include tiptoeing through tundra, wrestling wildlife, cross-checking with Coal Queens, playing with pooches, sleeping soundly, serving up sarcasm, and annoying Alex.

Safe travels and I'll see you soon.



Alison Carlyle

Hi, My name is Alison. I am originally from Kentucky and I have been a park ranger for almost 5 years all across the United States. I most recently was at Bering Land Bridge National Preserve in Nome, Alaska. I love Nome and BELA; they made me fall in love with Alaska and I don't see myself leaving Alaska anytime soon. I just happened into being a park ranger. After I graduated college I was headed straight to law school. With what I saw as my last carefree summer, I took a volunteer position with the Park Service. Needless to say I never made it to law school. I look at that decision as the smartest decision I ever made.

Denali bios - 2010



David Kallenbach

Though born in Kentucky, David considers the Rocky Mountain West his home. He was weaned on hiking, camping, and National Parks from age two on, and this has shaped his life and philosophy ever since. His love for wild places and the things that live there fuels his interest in learning their natural and cultural significance as well as comprehending the impacts they have had on him aesthetically and emotionally. Beautiful places have taken him far and wide and dictated his choice of careers. David studied biology in college, and shortly thereafter began his career in the National Parks until a relationship and a desire to get a Master's degree in education derailed that and led to his becoming a high school biology/science teacher for about 8 years. After burning out on traditional education and after a stint in the Peace Corps, he found a new lead in outdoor education, starting as an intern for Outward Bound in Montana, and working his way up to Program Director during a 13 year career there. After more than twenty years away from the National Park Service, David returned to Interpretation in Denali. He is totally devoted to his dog, Mancha, to hiking and backpacking and climbing mountains, exploring the desert, reading, NPR, music, etc. Bad knees keep him from trying to climb Denali.

Denali bios - 2010



Chris Smith
Anaheim, California

I am what I appear to be: a thinker, an artist, a caring individual. What is life other than one adventure after another? There is always more to learn and experience in this wonder we call “life.” I look forward to learning new things from you all. . .and maybe teaching you something, too. My background is in Art and Anthropology, so I guess I am a creative personality – or, at least, a “Mac Gyver of sorts”. My greatest fault, I am told, is that I am too honest, so please don’t take me too seriously. I don’t.

Well, I look forward to meeting all of you. We should have a fun, but cold, start to the season!

P.S. I am clearly a non-photogenic photographer. The camera does not like me, but I do have a good eye.



Jerri Roberts

My name is Jerri Roberts. For the past 8 years, I have lived in Denali Park, Alaska, 10 miles south of the Park entrance. While living here, I have been an interpretive bus driver in the Park, Instructor at the Denali Education Center and in the summer of 2009, was an emergency hire as an interpreter in Denali National Park. In 2009, I was also an interpreter cruising in SE Alaska and the Aleutians.

I have been an avid hiker and backpacker in the US and other parts of the world. Before coming to Denali, I worked in the aerospace and semiconductor industries and in the process became a pilot and sold light aircraft all over the world. While working for Sun, I ended up being assigned to the Pacific Rim and the hectic life this involves. Everywhere I was stationed in my work, I made it a priority to spend as much time as possible in the US National Parks or in parks wherever in the world I was assigned.

The greatest joy living in this community is meeting and working with the amazing people that come to Denali and one of the greatest joys of summer is getting to know the seasonal and permanent staff that make the park the great experience it is for our visitors and I am looking forward to meeting everyone in the coming weeks and working together this summer.

Denali bios - 2010

West District



Andy Keller

Andy grew up in the western Great Lakes region exploring the lakes, sloughs, prairies and forests looking for herptiles and other life forms. Later he canoed the region's rivers and lakes. Andy worked for the Tongass N.F. and all three federal DOI land management agencies in Alaska. He enjoyed the role of natural history and wilderness guide for several Alaska companies. Andy holds an A.A. in Geography from Parkland College, a B.S. in Biology from Evergreen State College and an M.A. from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in Northern Studies. Andy is on the Executive Committee of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club, chairs the Denali Group in Fairbanks, and serves as a special advisor to the Wildlands Committee. He serves on the Member Advisory Committee for Golden Valley Electric Association. Andy speaks and writes about conservation issues and was the 2008 recipient of the Alaska Conservation Foundation's Celia Hunter Award for his decades of volunteer work as an environmental activist in support of wild Alaska. Andy loves Alaska and enjoys all the seasons. He has camped out at -55F.

Denali bios - 2010



Adam Smith

Aloha friends from the Hawaiian Islands. My name is Adam, and in this picture are two of my greatest loves, my daughter Samantha and my German Shepherd Kai. We are from the Big Island of Hawai'i, home to Kilauea, the most active volcano on Earth. It's a great place to live or visit so I highly recommend you check it out.

Living by Kilauea presents many challenges like "Vog"-sulfur dioxide fumes, and of course surface lava flows that could take your house in a matter of minutes. As a former Park Ranger of Interpretation at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, I learned how unpredictable, yet exciting Mother Earth can be. Imagine hiking numerous miles over cooled surface lava (pahoehoe) to get to active lava flows both above ground (lava fingers) and below ground (lava tubes) with temperatures close to 2,000 degrees F. It was a mind-blowing, life-altering experience to work there. I'm sure Denali will be equally rewarding in its own special way.

A little history...I would say that I am bringing with me integrity and perseverance that I learned as a U.S NAVY serviceman during the Persian Gulf War. I would also add respect for others, and self-discipline to always strive to do my best in every situation. As for education, Hawai'i Pacific University on the island of O'ahu is my alma mater, and it's where I earned my bachelors degree in Environmental Studies. Along with interning with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, I increased my awareness and respect for the biodiversity of species that we coexist with worldwide. I am honored to work for the National Park Service and to be a vessel of knowledge for our visitors. Ideally, in carrying on the NPS policy of "resource protection through education", our guests will leave the park with a smile on their face knowing they have taken something very special with them and perhaps, this may change their life for the better. Denali is truly a magical place to visit...we lucky few have the privilege to work here for these 5 summer months. How cool is that?

I look forward to working with you all. Until then, have a safe journey.

Denali bios - 2010



JP Zamarron

I am a twenty-three year old college graduate (History major/French minor) from Plymouth State University. I call Deerfield, New Hampshire home. Although, I am not a native of New England I have spent most of my time there. My interests include a variety of outdoor recreation activities like hiking/backpacking, climbing, cycling, snowboarding, music, reading, team sports to name a few.

I am looking forward to my internship this summer to determine if I would like to pursue a career with the National Park Service. I am also looking forward to meeting new people with similar interests, particularly, being in close proximity to a major mountaineering destination. Overall, I am looking forward to an educational summer in the park and in America's "Last Frontier".

Denali bios - 2010



A Bristlecone Pine and Me.



Floating down the Rio Grande (I'm in the front).

Travis Smith

I was born in Columbia, Missouri (95,000) about two hours from St. Louis and Kansas City. I spent my youth canoeing in the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, hiking in Mark Twain National Forest, and caving across the state of Missouri. One of Missouri's nicknames is the Cave State because it has more than 7,000 caves.

I enjoy the outdoors so after high school, I enrolled in the School of Natural Resources at the University of Missouri. During my time at the school of Natural Resources, I studied wildlife management and then changed my major to Natural Resource Management and Interpretation. During school I joined the Boone County Fire District as a firefighter/EMT. I found myself living in a fire station for the next four years. I had a lot of fun and have great memories from the fire department.

After college, I briefly worked for the Katy Trail and Rock Bridge Memorial State Parks in Missouri. At Rock Bridge, I became a Wild Cave Tour Leader for Missouri State Parks. For the past eight years, I have enjoyed spending a week every spring and fall leading cavers through Devil's Icebox, Missouri largest State Park cave.

After spending 25 years in Missouri it was time to leave and I found a new adventure with the National Park Service. I started my NPS career at Wind Cave National Park, SD as a park guide intern and then found myself in Nevada where I would spend my next three summers working at Great Basin National Park. I was surrounded by millions of acres of public land (BLM, NPS, and USFS) in Nevada. At Great Basin I enjoyed searching the mountains for Bristlecone Pine (one of the oldest trees on earth). I have spent my last two winters working for Big Bend National Park, TX where I am currently leaving to find a new national park experience in Alaska. At Big Bend National Park, I am only 20 miles from Mexico and its going to be a fun 4,220 miles road trip to Denali. I cannot wait to get to Alaska to continue my remarkable journey through the park service.

Denali bios - 2010



Greg Henry

Greg Henry spends his winters as a science teacher in a public school system in Texas. After 9 months of teaching middle school maniacs, he is ready to spend the summer somewhere, as far away as possible. He started his NPS seasonal career as a volunteer at Petrified Forest National Park. An exciting summer of paleontology work for NPS led to a three more seasons at PEFO, leading hikes and giving talks as an interpretive ranger. The 5th season with NPS found Greg in Glacier N.P., Montana, again, leading hikes and giving campground programs. After only one season at GLAC, Denali called and it has been Greg's summer home for the past 19 summers. Last summer was spent at Toklat (West District), and proved to be one of the best summers yet! He is looking forward to making the 20th summer in Denali, one to remember.

Denali bios - 2010



Rob Parenti

A vacation to Yellowstone National Park in 1993 drove me to relive my wilderness experiences as a child. In Baxter State Park in northern Maine my family and I spent time camping and viewing moose, fox, and bear. I spent time capturing frogs, toads, salamanders, and butterflies around my hometown of Manchester, CT. I anxiously changed career course from accounting to the parks and began my career in the in the spring of 1994. I have worked for concession companies in Yellowstone, Death Valley, and Everglades National Park where I was a naturalist for twelve years with the concession and this season with NPS Interp. Two summers ago I worked for Alaska Geographic at Toklat and last summer I worked with NPS. It's great to be headed back to Toklat again in the green and gray!

Denali bios - 2010



Mike Nordell

Hello Everyone!

I'm Mike, I grew up in E. Windsor, CT where I developed my love for wildlife and the outdoors. I left the east coast to go to college and have been slowly making my west ever since. I got my degree in wildlife biology at Northland College in 1997 (funny to read the sample bio). After breaking my leg in Canada tracking wolves I moved to St Louis, MO where I worked for two years at the zoo. Couldn't stand the city so moved out Montana to be a rangler at a guest ranch for the summer (what else do you do when you want to leave the city?) I then went to work at the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone, MT taking care of wolves and grizzlies (one was from Denali). After two years I was offered a job studying moose in Jackson, WY. I stayed there for about 6 years mostly as a tour guide for a private company in Teton and Yellowstone Parks. It was a great job with crazy hours and I also got a chance to guide polar bear tours in Churchill for two seasons.

I made the difficult decision to leave Jackson to try and get a masters in something completely unrelated. That will teach me. I failed miserably so decided to try the Park Service. Turns out I love it! Last summer I worked my first season in Olympic National Park. Best job I ever had! In the mean time I moved my life to my girlfriends house in Florissant, CO. I have spent the winter volunteering and working at the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. I am very excited for this summer and being up there Denali. I'm looking forward to meeting more great people to work with (and hike with)!

Denali bios - 2010



Ross Downer

I was born and raised in Alexandria, Virginia, just outside of our nation's capital. I've traveled all up and down the East Coast, particularly the seashores, islands, and swamps on the southeast. Usually it was trips with my father to try and see some exciting new species of bird, or go catch some nice fish. We didn't seem to be too successful at either.

I went to school at Old Dominion University, a sprawling school with an urban campus with about 20,000 people, and an awesome basketball team. It's a very modern school, with a big focus on science and engineering, which was what I was interested in. But above all, the school had one core value; one central point that I was looking for above all else in an institute of higher learning: it was very near the beach.

After my first year of biology courses, I worked a few jobs in the field. I was a "naturalist" at a county park for a summer, mainly dealing with children 4 to 12; I interned in the aviary of an aquarium for a summer, and worked as a lab rat – I mean lab tech – for the Chesapeake Bay Water Quality Lab my last year of school.

It was all fun and I felt like I had this great understanding of nature but it was two trips out West with my dad that really got me in to the outdoors like I am today. In August 2006 I spent 2 weeks doing this Tahoe – Yosemite – Monterrey – Pt. Reyes trip that absolutely blew me away. After growing up in the cities of the east, I honestly couldn't believe how much open space there really was in the world. I wanted to immerse myself in it. In the spring of next year we did a San Diego – Tucson trip that was, again, like nothing I'd ever seen before.

In the summer of 2007 I graduated, with a B.S. in Biology and a focus on Recreation and Tourism, and set my plans of seeing the West in motion. I took an internship with the Forest Service working in the beautiful Red Rocks of Sedona, AZ. Doing trail work, teaching people about Leave No Trace, and removing human impact. While there I got to spend time with the Park Service folks at the Grand Canyon, Canyonlands, and Arches. I wanted to give the Park Service a try, and also wanted to get up to Alaska. I knew about the Student Conservation Association, and quickly got to work filling out applications.

So in 2008 I was an SCA intern out at Toklat! The next season I worked for the SCA leading a high-school crew in Olympic National Park, and then got emergency hired at Toklat for August and September. Now it's 2010, and they say the third time's the charm...



(Can you believe I get paid to do this?)

Jamie Cleaver (AKA camp inspector Elvira)

This will be my 5th season in Denali (4rd at Wonder Lake) and I can't wait to migrate back to the Alaskan wilds! I sure do miss the good music, good beer and beautiful topography that Denali and Alaska have to offer. I have been spending the last four winters working with Environmental Education at Everglades NP, where I will miss the Latin flavor, Cuban coffee and sunsets, but certainly not the lack of topography and sticky humidity.

I am originally from the Pittsburgh area and graduated from Penn State with a BS in Recreation and Park Management. I learned about interpretive rangers while working outside of Yellowstone NP at the KOA campground in West Yellowstone, MT. I thought, now that would be a great lifestyle! I started by becoming an SCA at Natural Bridges NM for a winter season and then put on the green and gray the following two summers at Bryce Canyon NP. I moved back home and took a brief hiatus from the NPS to work at the National Aviary doing EE and fell in love with birds. So now you'll often see my eyes on the sky looking for our feathered friends.

I look forward to meeting all of our new folks, Brandie's hugs and endless days in Denali!

See you all soon!

Denali bios - 2010



Omar Chavez

I was born in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México. I grew up in the suburbs of East El Paso. My backyard was desert and we often went exploring and went bird watching near Feather Lake. Friends and I also went looking for lizards and wild hares for fun and try not to get in the way of rattlesnakes. The Chihuahuan Desert can be extremely hot in the summers and can deliver an ugly sun burn by just driving through town. I saw the desert where I used to play in turn into stores like Wal-Mart, many franchise stores and industrial companies.

After high school I went backpacking in Germany and Spain during the FIFA World Cup of 06. In downtown Detmold, Germany I saw Germany beat Sweden then saw my team lose to Argentina in the round of 16. I saw the semifinals in Lloret de Mar, Spain and saw my German friend cried because Germany had lost to the mighty Azurri Italian team.

Thereafter I attended El Paso Community College for one year then left to go live for seven months in Orlando, Florida for an internship in Walt Disney World. Met a lot of people from around the world and made life-long friends. Came back to El Paso finish community college and that summer went backpacking the west coast of México state of Sonora. I entered the University of Texas at El Paso to finish my degree still in progress. Through a colleague I met in Orlando, Florida and a coincidence she goes to the same University. The University Career Center informed her of an NPS event. So she sends me an e-mail recruiting students for the National Park Service Recruitment event in Acadia, Maine. I got chosen from many students in UTEP to go to the event. There I met my mentor Denise Domian from Channel Islands and she helped me out with the process of getting an internship. So here I am ready to go to Alaska.

Denali bios - 2010



Scott Einberger

Plans to protect air and water, wilderness and wildlife are in fact plans to protect man.

– Stewart Udall (1920 – 2010)

I'm looking forward to a great spring and summer up at Denali National Park and Preserve! I'm looking forward to working with all of you, serving the public, and having the opportunity to learn about and interpret one of the most environmentally-friendly units of the national park system.

I have been working for the past year and a half as a park guide at Chamizal National Memorial (the only unit of the national system that flies the Mexican flag) in El Paso, Texas; Moving from an urban environment in the desert southwest to interior Alaska will be quite a change, but a healthy, needed change at that. Before Chamizal, I worked a season at Craters of the Moon National Monument in southern Idaho, the only officially “weird” unit of the national park system. And while still at university I worked a couple of seasons at northeastern California's Lassen Volcanic National Park, my favorite place on Earth to date!

I value green living, wild places, and community atmospheres. I enjoy contemporary country music, Latin American coffee, thought-provoking books, and my two faithful companions. Safe travels everyone, and god-speed to DENA!

Denali bios - 2010



Monica Magari

I grew up in Syracuse, New York; known best for its humid summers, overcast weather, spectacular Nor'easter snowstorms, and uniquely non-intimidating sports mascot. I grew up in the city, but I've always felt connected to the outdoors and a desire to help the environment. This desire led me to study environmental conservation at the University of New Hampshire. While in college, I was introduced to the National Park Service during the summer between my junior and senior years – I worked as an intern with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) at Mount Rainier National Park. I returned the following year as an Interpretive Park Ranger at one of my favorite places on earth, the Sunrise Visitor Center. I worked in different types of jobs over the years after Mt. Rainier, including an extended career in the food and beverage industry and a teacher at a community college in Lowell, Massachusetts.

I lived in the Northeast my whole life with my family, but at Mt. Rainier I fell in love with the Pacific NW, the mountains and the fresh outdoor air. After I received my Master's Degree in Urban and Environmental Policy & Planning from Tufts University, and after more than a six years hiatus, I jumped into my Toyota Corolla full of all my personal possessions and headed cross-country. I returned to work at Mt. Rainier National Park and worked there for a year. Last summer, I went to work at Denali National Park and lived at Toklat. I fell in love with Alaska, and I love living out in the West District and can not wait to get back there this season – music in the garage, theme potlucks, group hikes and B movie nights, oh and culvert trolls...here we come.

Denali bios - 2010



Angela Horvath

Wow, I can't wait to meet everyone. Sounds like a great "summer" ahead.

Born in Tucson, my professor father and teacher mother moved my sis and I to a couple small towns in the Mid-west. Returning to Tucson for Uni, I wanted to be an anthropologist doing ethnographic work in Africa. So, after a brief stint as an English teacher in Los Mochis, Mexico, I joined the Peace Corps twice, Mauritania and Guatemala. Then there was a Master's degree at Ben Gurion U, Israel for land management in Mali. When I started a PhD afterward, I found that academic desk work just wasn't my thing (and it was nearly all desk work!), so took up rangership again. I've now been at seven parks- everything from SCA, backcountry, fees (ugh), enviro ed to interp. I'm still really keen on land management for conservation, but want to apply it in a culture that is a little closer to home.

Other stuff (just cuz I saw someone else use bullets):

- I play bluegrass and country fiddle, can handle some jazz fiddle too and am not a bad rhythm guitarist. Music is the drug of choice!
- Any of you with dogs, please let me borrow them. I have to leave my puppy dog in Arizona!
- Any of you with gardens, I'm also leaving mine in Arizona, so I'm happy to lend a hand with yours.
- List o'parks: ARCH, CAVE, GUMO, Hell's Canyon FS, GRSM, KLGO, ORPI, MEVE

Denali bios - 2010



Julie Williams

Julie got her start in the outdoors living in platform tents running a nature program at a camp in Texas. After earning a teaching degree in biology at the University of Texas, she became a park ranger for the National Park Service, working for fourteen seasons in Arizona, Oregon and Alaska doing jobs varying from educational interpretation around brown bears to formal programs on cruise ships. She enjoyed three years at Katmai National Park, and two years at Glacier Bay. She has been a wilderness educator and kayak guide in Southeast Alaska for the past twelve years, taking people out to help them experience the wilderness in an intimate camping setting. She has also guided groups observing polar bears in Churchill, Manitoba. She has spent twenty five years participating and coordinating various retreats, focusing on women, mental health, meditation, and fun. She is also a writer and artist and is now going through a mid-life career change and is working on becoming a documentary filmmaker. She lives in a yurt powered by a battery/solar system in a small bush Alaskan town part of the year, and travels part of the year to warm places where one can be in a bikini and drink MaiTais. She loves to dance.

Denali bios - 2010

South District



Frannie Christensen

I grew up in Minnesota and Wisconsin, but have lived in Alaska since 2001. I immediately fell in love with the mountains and sky here. I have been working for Denali National park as a seasonal interpretive ranger since 2006, starting out in the South District and then working three seasons in East District. This summer I return to my South District roots. I have a Bachelor of Individualized Studies from the University of Minnesota with concentrations in Biology, Spanish, and Latin American Studies and am currently working on a Master's degree in teaching English as a Second Language. I love to travel, explore new places and cultures, and am fluent in Spanish. In high school, I lived abroad in Denmark and Spain, and as an adult I have lived in Mexico and Venezuela and have traveled in Central America and Colombia. I am a huge fan of linguistics, potlucks, yoga, hiking, and cross-country skiing. I look forward to working with all of you!

Denali bios - 2010

Education (East District)



Rachel Jencks

This will be my second season here at Denali. Last year I worked out west at Toklat and loved it! I grew up in the Mat-Su Valley and I am an Alaskan grown girl. I love to do anything outdoorsy and am a serious animal lover. I graduated from the Evergreen State College with a degree in Environmental Science/Biology and graduated from grad school, Alaska Pacific University with a degree in Outdoor and Environmental Education. I love working with children and sharing my love for the outdoors with them. This year I am on the east side working as the Education Ranger! In the past years I have worked for the Park Service as a seasonal ranger/education specialist at Mt. Rainier, Mt. St. Helen's, APLIC (Alaska Public Lands Information Center), Katmai, Denali, and Everglades.

Denali bios - 2010

Permanent & Term Staff



Clare Curtis - East District Supervisor

Welcome to an incredible place and thanks for joining us for summer 2010.

I was born short, nimble and fearless, but my how things change. Still short but nimble and fearless are gone. I was raised near and in the mountains of Colorado running wild taking captive all things that crawled, slithered or hopped. I spent my formative years with the US Forest Service in the summer and at Colorado State University in the winter. Mostly I played in Rocky Mountain National Park...hmmm...maybe that's the reason for my barely passing GPA. In 1982, we headed for Alaska when Breckenridge lift tickets went from \$7 to \$12...oh my 28 years ago. Best part of my year is when all of you arrive, and my husband returns from his yearly migration to Moab, Utah.

Denali bios - 2010



Jay Elhard - Media Specialist

Jay Elhard (INFJ, same as Marisa James) still comes to work each day at his dream job utterly convinced that he will finally be discovered for a fraud, and fired.

BA, English and art, from a small Lutheran school in Ohio. Worked eight years as a community newspaper journalist. MFA, nonfiction writing, Columbia University; final thesis, about the Yellowstone wolf controversy, was published as a book by the Utah State University Press. Worked six years in a publishing warehouse after grad school and still has survivor's guilt from three rounds of layoffs. Taught one semester of English 101 at a community college. First job in NPS was as a GS-04 park guide at Hopewell Culture NHP in May 2005. Went permanent at Denali in October 2008.

Born in Wisconsin, raised in Ohio, lived in New York City for three years during grad school. Never married, but certainly tried. Three older brothers; two nephews, one niece; one great nephew, one great niece. One large collie, long since appropriated as happy company for the family matriarch, who has a fenced, spruce-lined, half-acre squirrel-chasing yard in Ohio.

Denali bios - 2010



Mark Motsko - West District Supervisor

My journey in life is one of migration. Growing up in Baltimore, Maryland, I found myself always looking wild and untouched areas. The wanderlust of exploration caused a migration to the western portion of Maryland then to the south in the Smokies. The trend continued for the next 15 years taking me to such environs such as Buffalo River, Crater Lake, Yellowstone, and Theodore Roosevelt in the North Dakota badlands before finally establishing my home range in Denali. It is here that I have called home since 1995. Having adapted to the sub arctic ecosystem, I find myself able to survive in the winter months by growing 3 pin feet and X-C skis which are shed in April and replaced with hiking boots and trekking poles. My summer range is 53 miles west of park headquarters on the Toklat River, a place where new friends are made and old ones are rekindled.

Denali bios - 2010



Dan Irelan - Interpretive Specialist

After growing up a city boy in a farm state, I suddenly found myself growing up to be an environmental consultant in San Francisco. (If you've ever had difficulty explaining what it means to be an "interpretive ranger", you should try being an environmental consultant. No...actually, you shouldn't.) Somewhere within came the realization that I wanted to live outside the city, work outside the office building, and to stop growing up. So, at age 27, I restarted just about everything and became a naturalist, educator, and interpreter. I spent summers on the tundra or in the Sierra Nevada, and winters in the redwoods and tidepools, eventually moving to Denali year-round 2 years ago.

Now I get to "specialize" in interpretation – at least my title says I do – and I get to bask in the glow of many others' creative brilliance while I watch them work. I get to run with a retired sled dog, live with a backcountry ranger, and thwack out bluegrass rhythms on an upright bass. And I get to put off growing up, even as my 40th birthday looms at summer's end. I'm ready. Bring it.

Denali bios - 2010



Alex:

- Owns a lovely and free-spirited husky-mix named Scout
- Enjoys cooking, particularly baking bread and making pizza
- Dislikes starting the day without coffee
- Holds a nearly two-year unbeaten streak at corn hole, with his partner Jamie (the most famous resident of Healy, apparently ...)
- Likes to hike, cross-country ski, and just generally be outside
- Thinks that Nina Simone, Ani DiFranco and Gillian Welch represent the perfection of musical talent



Bob Henry

The mountains, forests, and adventure of western national parks were a siren's song when I was growing up in the suburbs in Indiana. At Purdue University I earned a degree in wildlife science, learned some climbing skills, and enjoyed some amazing trips to the Tetons. Finding myself unable to find employment in the natural resources arena, my dream of a Park Service career was supplanted by a science teaching career in northern California. In 1999 I began seasonal interpretative work in Grand Teton teaching at Jackson Hole High School in winter. Now almost thirty years since I earned that bachelor's degree I am thrilled to find myself realizing my adolescent dream of a career in the National Park Service.

Denali bios - 2010



Elizabeth Beavers

After many years of stuffing everything into my car to head to the next job I cast aside my fear of commitment and accepted my current position as a coach. This allows me to continue to live in a little cabin in the woods, ski from my doorstep in the winter, contemplate dog ownership, learn to be a tough hockey player for the Healy Coal Queens, gather berries in the fall, and to explore Alaska. Prior to achieving stability I worked seasonally in Denali (summer east end interp and winter volunteer the last 2 years), as well as at Sequoia Kings Canyon, Yosemite, Hopewell Culture, and the Midwest Archeological Center. I love winter sports, playing the piano, traveling, hiking with friends, listening to NPR, attempting to speak French, and wish that Healy had a tennis court.



Cass Ray:

I was a reporter and editor for four newspapers and taught math and English in a boarding school in western New York for twenty years before volunteering, leading hikes and tours, for two seasons in Shenandoah National Park in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. I came directly to Denali four and a half years ago, volunteered in the winter visitor center and led snowshoe hikes, was a seasonal at Toklat (paradise), volunteered again, then became a permanent as the clerk for interp. I've coordinated four of the park's annual Winterfests and was the park's founding motor vehicle pool slave, er, guru. Recently I've signed on as one of the region's two new conflict resolution mediators and soon will be away for three weeks of training, including a week in over-populated, smog-choked Denver in June. I remain the lion, both aging (don't ask—I'm old enough to be your grampa) and injured (Santa brought me a new rotator cuff), of the ping pong table in C-Camp. At least until Ingrid's husband, Kevin, shows up to claim his crown. Beavers is the undisputed queen of said ping pong table. I'm less of a lion on my bicycles, in my hiking boots, or, goodness knows, on skis. Hopping on shuttles and hiking in the park every weekend in the summer is, yep, heaven. Through three weeks last October I discovered Utah, and hiked through ten—ten, count 'em, ten—national parks and monuments (and never got near an over-populated, smog-choked city or even reasonably-sized town) and that too was such heaven that I can hardly wait to get back there for another three weeks this October.

(no photo)

Christie Anastasia

Christie Anastasia's office is at the Murie Science and Learning Center where she tries her best to change people's lives by connecting them to their national parks. She loves to be outdoors in all kinds of weather and always wants to live someplace where you can still hear the wind blow. She started her career at Acadia NP, moved south to Lowell NHP, west to Dinosaur NM, went overseas a bit, back to Lowell NHP, west again to Point Reyes NS, and finally way north to Denali NPP. Each of those parks and places has given her amazing experiences and memories across the spectrum of mill girls, intertidal zones, northern elephant seals, and dinosaurs. She lives in Healy AK next to Dry Creek, an amazing place to explore with more different kinds of rocks than you could imagine in just a couple of footsteps.

Denali bios - 2010

More bios are set to arrive - we'll send you an email with the link in a week or so, once we've received more from folks