



**Great Smoky Mountains National Park**  
**[www.nps.gov/grsm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm)**

## Stewardship

*The following centennial proposal is certified as eligible for Centennial Challenge funding consideration in fiscal year 2008. Funding for the Centennial Challenge requires legislation.*

### **Establish Permanent Elk Population**

Location: North Carolina

Partner(s): Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Partner Website: [www.rmef.org](http://www.rmef.org)

Total Cost: \$284,000

Proposal # 137470

**Summary:** As part of the National Park Service's policy to restore extirpated species when feasible, an experimental release of elk was begun in 2001 in Cataloochee Valley. Initially started as a five year project ending in 2005, additional study is needed to determine the sustainability of the program. Survivorship, predator interaction and habitat studies are ongoing and require additional field seasons to be conclusive. The reintroduction has nearly doubled visitation in Cataloochee from 70,000 per year in 1999 to 127,000 in 2006. To manage the increased visitation, the park initiated an "Elk Bugle Corps" of volunteers to assist during peak visitation with parking and traffic management, and visitor education about elk and responsible elk viewing. Eastern elk were abundant in the southern Appalachians prior to European settlement but their numbers declined by the late 1700s. The last remaining elk in east Tennessee and west North Carolina were killed during the mid-1800s.

**For more information contact:**

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An elk calf born in Cataloochee Valley.