

# The Tower Columns

The official newspaper  
of Devils Tower National Monument

Summer 2011

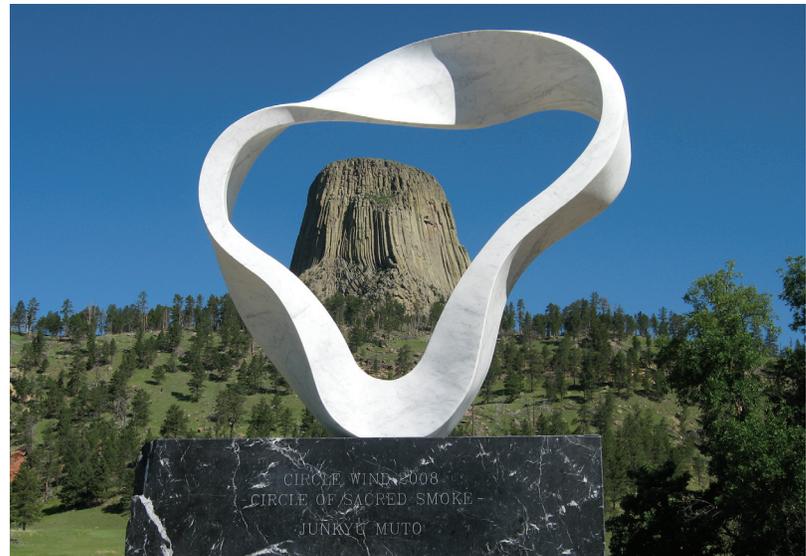


## Visit Our New Interpretive Site!

On your way into Devils Tower National Monument, you may have noticed the large granite sculpture located near the park's picnic area. This is the Tower's newest interpretive site. The site is designed to increase awareness of the sacredness of Devils Tower to the park's more than 20 affiliated American Indian tribes, and also helps place the significance of the Tower into an international context.

"Circle of Sacred Smoke," by internationally renowned Japanese sculptor Junkyu Muto, is the third installation in Muto's international peace project, Wind Circle. The first sculpture was placed at the Vatican in 2000. In 2005, the second sculpture was installed in Bodhi Gaya, India, near the Bodhi Tree, where the Buddha attained enlightenment. This third sculpture was donated to the National Park Service by Mr. Muto and the Kazenowa Corporation of Japan. It is anticipated that 4–6 more sculptures will be placed in other significant sites throughout the world.

The "Circle of Sacred Smoke" represents the first puff of smoke from the pipe used by tribal people to pray. In Lakota tradition, this sacred pipe was delivered to the Lakota people by the White Buffalo Calf Woman at the Tower several centuries ago. Upon delivering the pipe to the tribal people, she taught them the seven sacred ceremonies and the colors of the four directions (red, yellow, black, and white). You may see prayer bundles throughout the



Sculptor Junkyu Muto's "Circle of Sacred Smoke" was installed in September 2008.

park made of these four colors, as well as green and blue, which represent Mother Earth and Father Sky. Chief Arvol Looking Horse, the 17th-generation keeper of the sacred pipe for the Lakota people, was actively involved in the placement of this world peace sculpture at the Tower.

The placement of "Circle of Sacred Smoke" was a united effort by the entire Black Hills community. The Crazy Horse Memorial donated the base stones for the sculpture. Black Hills National Forest delivered the stones from Crazy Horse to the Tower, and culinary students from the Boxelder Job Corps provided refreshments for the September 2008 installation ceremony,

which was attended by several hundred local people and tribal representatives, as well as more than 60 people from Japan.

This new interpretive site addresses improvement of educational and informational programs of the historic uses of the monument as outlined in the 1995 Final Climbing Management Plan. Future plans include the addition of signs and displays to the site, as well as related interpretive programs.

Please take some time to visit our newest interpretive site, which is accessible from the picnic area parking lot via the campground road, or by trail from the prairie dog town.



### Message from the Superintendent

Welcome to the nation’s first national monument! We trust that you will have a wonderful and satisfying experience while exploring all the park has to offer.

In his book, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969), American Indian author N. Scott Momaday wrote, “There are things in nature that engender an awful quiet in the heart of man; Devils Tower is one of them.” The Tower is a truly unique feature within the Black Hills area, and is enjoyed by many people in many different ways. It is the beacon that welcomes local community members home, as well as a premier crack-climbing site due to its columns and their distinct shapes. It is also a significant sacred site to American Indian tribes throughout the United States. You may see multi-colored prayer bundles along your walk; please do not disturb these offerings.

As we enter our second century of service to the American public and international visitors, we would like to hear your ideas of how we may better serve you. Please feel free to write down your ideas on the comment forms available throughout the park or on our website at [www.nps.gov/deto](http://www.nps.gov/deto).

While you are here, remember that national parks belong to the public, which shares the tremendous responsibility of park stewardship. Please be mindful of this as you spend time taking in the grandeur of the Tower and its surrounding natural and cultural resources. Leave only footprints, and take only memories.

Above all, be safe, and thank you for visiting. We look forward to seeing you again!

Dorothy FireCloud  
Superintendent

### Drive 25 and Keep Wildlife Alive!

After driving for hours to get here, often at speeds up to 75 mph, it can be difficult to slow down to the posted speed limit of 25 mph inside Devils Tower National Monument. It can be especially challenging to limit your speed when coming downhill to exit the park (*Hint: Put your vehicle in low gear when coming downhill to reduce speed without riding the brakes*). However, there are good reasons to drive slowly inside the monument. In addition to pedestrians and bicyclists, there is also abundant wildlife moving across and around the roads. Animals often make sudden movements into the road without warning, and driving at 25 mph or slower gives you a much better chance of avoiding a collision. Dozens of animals are killed by motor vehicles at Devils Tower each year. Please observe posted speed limits!

### Know Before You Go

Here are some useful reminders to help maximize the safety and enjoyment of all park visitors:

- When hiking, take plenty of water.
- All plants, wildlife, and archeological artifacts are protected.
- Wear comfortable walking shoes.
- Be respectful of this quiet place. Voices and noise travel long distances here.
- Traditional cultural landscapes are protected places. Please do not disturb prayer bundles.



Prayer bundle.

### We’re Glad You’re Here!

Please help us protect park resources and your safety by respecting the following regulations.



Pets may not be taken on trails or left unattended at any time. They may be walked in parking areas if on a leash.



Collection of rocks, plants, or any other natural material is prohibited by law.



Collection of archeological artifacts is also prohibited by law.



It is illegal and dangerous to feed any park wildlife, including prairie dogs.



Travel above the boulder field can be dangerous and requires a permit.

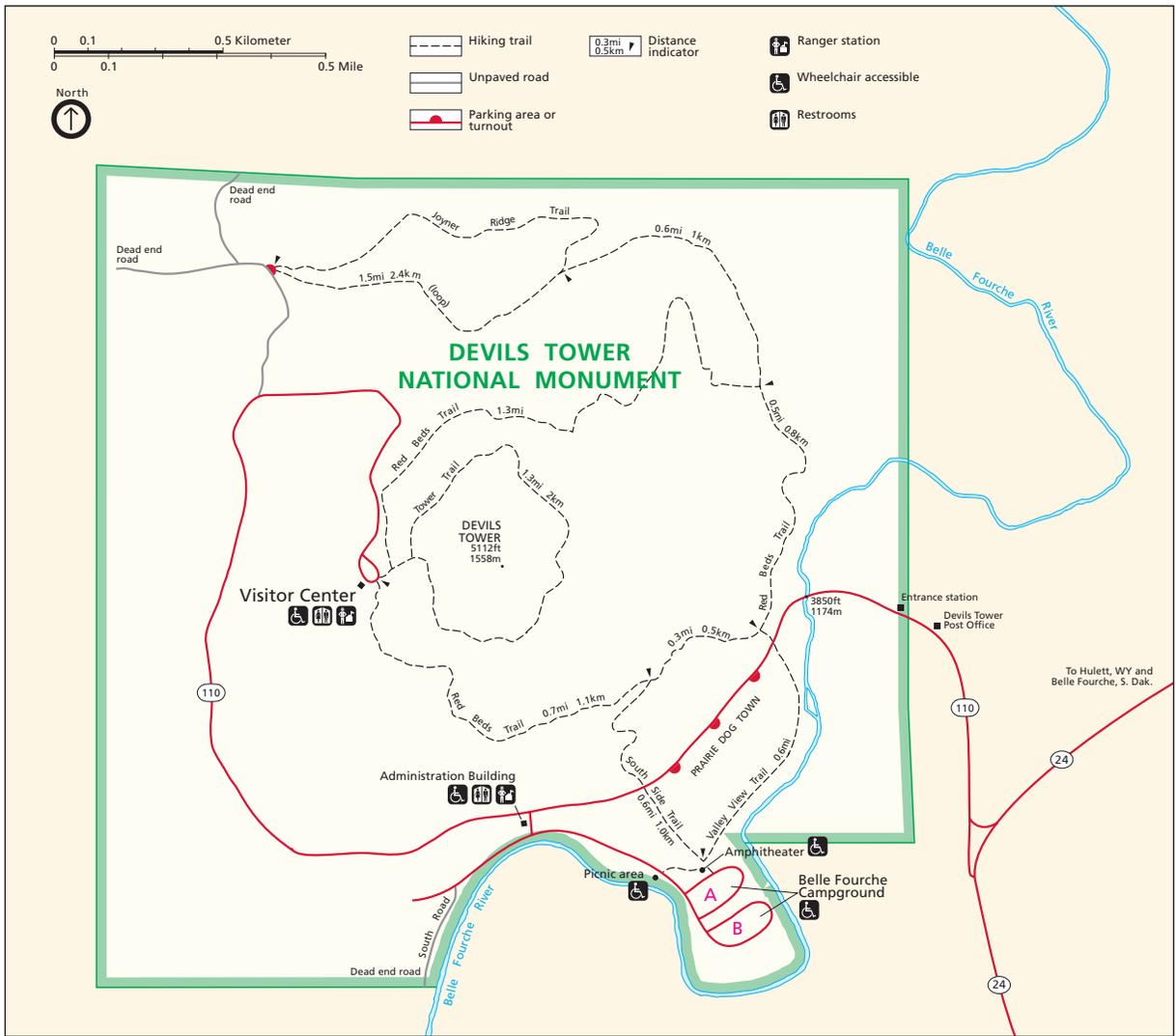


Posted speed limits are strictly enforced for the safety of visitors, employees, and park wildlife.

If you have questions about these or any other park regulations, please ask a uniformed employee!



**Speed kills! Slow down for wildlife; relax and enjoy your stay.**



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Devils Tower rises 1,267 feet above the Belle Fourche River. Also known as Bears Lodge, it is a sacred site for many American Indians. President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed Devils Tower the first national monument in 1906.

**Devils Tower National Monument**

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**Phone**  
307-467-5283

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

## Make the Most of Your Visit

**If you have an hour or two . . .** don't miss the dogs—prairie dogs, that is! Their activities are fun to watch, but remember not to feed them (see story on page 4). The visitor center at the base of the Tower contains interpretive exhibits, as well as a bookstore and souvenir shop. The visitor center was built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, and both its buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Sit on a bench and look up at the 867-foot high columnar monolith. Meander across the parking lot and walk 50 yards along the Tower Trail for another view and another bench. The Tower Trail continues 1.3 miles around the base of the Tower.

**If you have a half-day . . .** join a park ranger for a guided walk or talk (see schedule on page 7). As you leave the parking lot and drive down the hill, look for a gravel road on the right that leads to the Joyner Ridge trailhead for another incredible view. The low-angle light an hour before sunset makes for beautiful photographic opportunities.

**If you have a full day . . .** you're lucky! You can experience all of the above plus a hike along Joyner Ridge or the Red Beds Trail, or a picnic at the picnic shelter. No food is sold inside the park, but water is available next to the ranger station at the foot of the Tower. Food can be purchased immediately outside the park entrance.

# Talk of the Tower



Juvenile black-tailed prairie dog.

## Black-tailed Prairie Dogs

The black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), a type of burrowing rodent, is one of five prairie-dog species found in North America. The other four species are the Gunnison's (*Cynomys gunnisoni*), Mexican (*Cynomys mexicanus*), Utah (*Cynomys parvidens*), and white-tailed (*Cynomys leucurus*) prairie dogs. Of those five species, the black-tailed prairie dog is the most abundant and widely distributed.

Prairie dogs are social animals that live together in "towns." The prairie dog town at Devils Tower National Monument is approximately 40 acres in size. Prairie-dog tunnels may extend downward from 3 to 10 feet, and then horizontally for another 10 to 15 feet. Prairie dogs are active only during daylight hours, when they spend hours feeding and socializing. They have complex vocalizations, and use different calls when they see different predators. For example, when a prairie dog spots a prairie falcon nearby, it will give a different call than when it sees a prowling coyote.

Though black-tailed prairie dogs are protected within the boundary of Devils Tower National Monument, their overall population is only about 2% of what Lewis and Clark described as "infinite" 200 years ago, due to habitat loss, extensive eradication programs, and introduced diseases. Prairie dogs are an important component of local ecosystems. In areas throughout their range, prairie-dog burrows and colony sites provide shelter and nesting habitat for myriad other animals, such as tiger

salamanders, mountain plovers, burrowing owls, black-footed ferrets, and hundreds of insect and arachnid species. Prairie dogs also serve as prey for numerous mammalian and avian predators, such as badgers, black-footed ferrets, bobcats, coyotes, ferruginous hawks, golden and bald eagles, and prairie falcons. Consequently, as the prairie-dog population declines, so do the populations of other species associated with them and their colonies.

Black-tailed prairie dogs have a relatively short life span, averaging only about four years in the wild. Their diet consists primarily of green vegetation. **Do NOT feed the prairie dogs.** Consumption of human food shortens their lives—not only because human food is an improper dietary source, but also because animals that become habituated to human handouts tend to spend more time near and in the road, where they can quickly become roadkill. As such, it is illegal to feed prairie dogs (or any wildlife) in a national park, both for their protection and yours: prairie dogs may bite, and they (and the fleas that live on them) often carry diseases that are potentially harmful to humans, such as bubonic plague. Enjoy them at a distance!

## Southwest Meadow Restoration

This project, which started in 2006 was completed in 2010, restoring native grasses to 50 acres of the monument's meadows. Two exotic invasive grasses, smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) and Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) have been



Prescribed fire for southwest meadow restoration project.

removed and replaced with native grasses. Restoring these meadows to native plant species increases biological diversity, creates a more natural ecosystem, and establishes native habitat that is critical to wildlife.

This long-term restoration project has been implemented in several stages. First, the number and cover of non-native grasses and plants was reduced through herbicide and mechanical treatments. Next, prescribed fire treatments further discouraged exotic plant dispersal and helped prepare the soil for planting of native grasses. Finally, native grasses, such as big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), green needlegrass (*Nassella viridula*), slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus*), western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), purple prairie clover (*Dalea lasiathera*), and white prairie clover (*Dalea candida*), were planted in spring 2009.

To reach the ideal outcome of complete restoration to native grasses, these meadows will require continual maintenance through prescribed fire treatments and integrated pest management strategies, which employ physical, mechanical, cultural, biological, and educational tactics to keep pest numbers low by means of the least-toxic, most effective management options available.

## Exotic Plant Control Efforts

Exotic plants are species that occur outside their native ranges as a result of human influence. Today, nearly 25% of all native plant species in North America are at risk of becoming extinct, in part due to the



Planting native grass seed.

# Talk of the Tower



Mechanical treatment of non-native Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*).

presence of non-native species. These non-natives, whether introduced accidentally or intentionally as agricultural crops or landscape ornamentals, frequently outcompete native species, leading to individual species loss, endangering natural habitats, causing soil erosion, creating a monoculture, and reducing the genetic diversity necessary for stable, balanced ecosystems.

At Devils Tower National Monument, more than 60 exotic plant species have been identified. Some have replaced native plant communities, reducing the biological diversity of the monument's ecosystems, while others are spreading slowly. The monument's most aggressive, or invasive, exotic plants are leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*), houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), and cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*).

Exotic plant control efforts at Devils Tower National Monument are conducted by seasonal staff, with assistance and guidance from the National Park Service's Northern Great Plains Exotic Plant Management



Herbicide application for exotic plant control.

Team. Together, they work in accordance with an exotic plant management plan that outlines a control strategy for Devils Tower and 12 other national parks. Before developing control strategies, the team evaluates each exotic plant's natural history. Park staff are trained to use chemical, biological, manual/mechanical, and prescribed-fire methods as part of an integrated pest management approach to control the spread of exotic plants and maintain the natural ecosystem for the benefit of native wildlife and vegetation.

## Sit Back and Enjoy the View

For many people, a trip around the Tower Trail is the highlight of their visit to Devils Tower National Monument. During your walk, be sure to notice—and relax on—one of the 12 brand-new benches the park recently received thanks to the Unilever Recycling at Work Sustainable Grants Program. This program, a partnership with the National Park Foundation, provides recycled plastic lumber, made of sustainable, 100% HDPE (high-density polyethylene), for projects including trails, boardwalks, overlooks, pullouts, and other visitor amenities, such as picnic tables and benches. These benches will provide welcoming waypoints along the 1.3-mile, paved trail. Here, visitors can take time to relax, reflect, and experience the park as they embrace the outdoors and contemplate the sacred American Indian site that is Devils Tower. Benches made of 100% HDPE plastic also reduce recurring maintenance costs, such as those associated with sanding, painting, and sealing, that are required annually for wooden benches. So as you walk the trail, find a bench, sit back, and enjoy the view!

## Do Your Part!

Devils Tower National Monument has built environmental responsibility into all



The park recently received 12 benches through the Unilever Recycling at Work Sustainable Grants Program.

aspects of park operations. Recycling is a major part of how we fulfill this responsibility. The monument recycles #1 and #2 plastic, glass, aluminum, steel, cardboard, newspaper, magazines, office paper, printer cartridges, copper, batteries, and light bulbs, among other materials.

Plastic is one of the most commonly used consumer products. More than 2.3 billion pounds of plastic bottles were recycled worldwide in 2007. New products, like the benches on the Tower Trail, can be produced from these previously consumed goods. Devils Tower National Monument is pleased to provide recycling bins at all visitor-use areas. These bins are bright green in color and are located at the Visitor Center parking lot, the beginning of the Tower Trail, the picnic area, and campground.

Devils Tower National Monument is reducing fuel and energy consumption by utilizing new technologies. The park owns a flex-fuel vehicle and has recently acquired a hybrid vehicle, powered by gasoline and electricity, which uses only one-third of the gas required by conventional engines.

Throughout the monument, park staff have replaced incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lights (CFLs). Making this change will help us to use less

*continued on page 8* →

# Park Partners



## Thanks, Pardner!

Yes, YOU! By paying the entrance fee, you are partnering with the National Park Service through the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act Program at Devils Tower National Monument. Your entry fees are used to support park projects, including improved signage and building restoration.

Other partners include the Black Hills National Forest, Black Hills Youth Conservation Corps, Black Hills National Forest Tribal Youth Conservation Corps, Montana Conservation Corps, Student Conservation Association, American Conservation Experience, Hulett and Crook County Emergency Response, Bear Lodge Alternative High School, Christian Motorcycle Association, Crook County Sheriff Department, Access Fund, Wyoming Department of Transportation, Boy Scouts of America, Bearlodge Writers, and the many park climbing guides. Thanks for helping us out!

## Hey, Kids . . . Become a Ranger!

You and your family can discover Devils Tower through the Junior Ranger program. Stop at the visitor center to pick up a free Junior Ranger booklet. Return with your completed booklet, and the ranger will honor you with a badge and certificate. You can also buy an embroidered patch for \$1.00 at the bookstore. By learning about the plants, animals, geology, and history of this area, you can help protect the park's resources and make other people aware of how important these resources are.



## Devils Tower Natural History Association

For more information on Devils Tower National Monument's geology, wildlife, climbing history and opportunities, and cultural significance, look to the Devils Tower Natural History Association. The association, established to support the National Park Service with historical, educational, and interpretive programs at Devils Tower, operates the bookstore located in the visitor center at the base of the Tower. When you make a purchase at the bookstore, profits are returned to the park in the form of donations that support park programs, including the Junior Ranger Program, interpretive exhibits, the Cultural Program Series (see next page), and many other services. Membership benefits include a 15% discount in the bookstore, a discount on items purchased at other national park cooperating association bookstores, and the pleasure of knowing that your membership contributes to the support of the park!

### Devils Tower Natural History Association Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

#### Membership Rates

\_\_\_ Individual ..... \$10.00

\_\_\_ Family..... \$25.00

\_\_\_ Associate..... \$25.00



Send form, with check or money order, to:

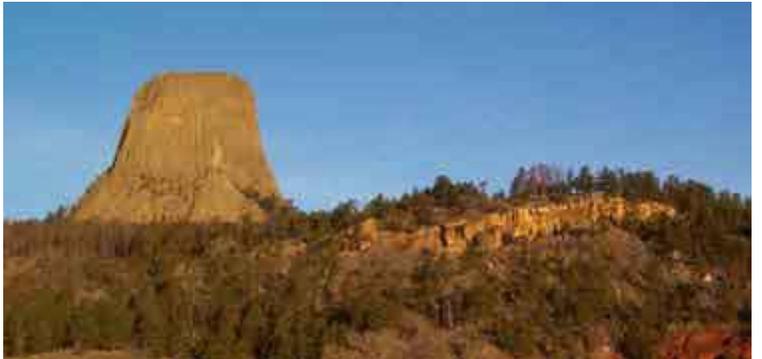
Devils Tower Natural History Association  
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Devils Tower, WY 82714



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**IMPROVING THE  
VISITOR EXPERIENCE  
AT DEVILS TOWER**





National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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All photos in this document are courtesy  
of the National Park Service.

## Talk of the Tower

(continued from page 5)

electricity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Most CFLs use up to 75% less energy and last up to 10 times longer than traditional bulbs. The monument has also started to update buildings with more energy-efficient heating systems.

Making these changes will save taxpayer dollars. While CFLs are more expensive to purchase than conventional incandescent bulbs, they save, on average, \$25–30

per bulb in energy costs over their lifetime. Hybrid cars require the purchase of less gasoline, and increasing heating efficiency will decrease heating costs.

For more information on these practices and what you can do to help reduce energy consumption and associated monetary expenditures in the national parks and at home, visit <http://www.nps.gov/climatefriendlyparks/doyourpart.html>.



## Standing Sentry

Devils Tower is home to the prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), listed as a species of concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. On a ledge near the Red Beds Trail, this watchful falcon guards the nest of its fledglings, hatched in early June 2009. In past years, prairie falcons have commonly nested on the Tower, itself.