

THE Leader

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For Alumni of the National Outdoor Leadership School
Fall 2013 • Vol. 29 No. 1



This issue's cover story by Anna Sofranko and Chris Alexander takes you on their thru hike of the Pacific Crest Trail. Their story transports you into our spectacular public lands and pulls you back to the power of extended wilderness expeditions. On Oct. 1, while I was attending the NOLS-sponsored 20th annual Wilderness Risk Management Conference in Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park, the United States government shutdown began, leading to the closing of the park and federally-administered lands nationwide. Park employees were furloughed, deemed "non-essential." I was greatly frustrated by it all, both to see these special and important lands rendered unavailable and this slam to the important jobs done by federal employees who manage our public lands across our country.

Working for public agencies is often a thankless job, but the closure seemed to amplify that lack of appreciation. Our public lands are key to our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. They, of course, also provide home for flora and fauna and protect key watersheds. Public lands make up most of NOLS' spectacular classrooms. Land management professionals are dedicated public servants. To me they clearly are not non-essential, and I thank them for their service.

Fall in the Rockies brings golden aspens, skis out of storage, and this morning, 13 inches of snow to Lander, Wyo. It is clearly a reminder that we are well into a season of transition and soon our students will be on skis or sea kayaking and sailing in the Sea of Cortez. The fall also provides a chance to look back at our recently completed fiscal year, which ended on Aug. 31. We educated a record number of students this past year, cresting 19,000—over 1,000 more than any previous year. I welcome all of these new graduates to the NOLS family. We opened and offered our first courses at the Wyss Wilderness Medicine Campus outside of Lander and also travelled new routes around the world.

We awarded record scholarship support this year, which was made possible by record support for the NOLS Annual Fund. Thank you to everyone who helped make that a reality. Our philanthropic support also provided many other opportunities, including local programming in many of our school locations and Expedition Denali—the first African American climb on North America's tallest peak.

We offered several new alumni trips in addition to adding new courses, including our first Wilderness Medicine and Rescue Semesters. We acquired land and started building a headquarters for NOLS New Zealand. We also bought adjoining property to our base in Teton Valley, which will allow us to expand operations there.

NOLS was recognized for the sixth year in a row as "one of the best employers in the country" by Outside Magazine. We also received recognition as one of the "best non-profit employers" in the country by the *NonProfit Times*. Our staff has built an amazing community, one of the keys to why people work here and to our outcomes as an organization.

I want to thank all of you for contributing to the success of NOLS. Our alumni are essential to our ability to achieve and further our mission. You help us recruit students and spread the word about NOLS. You underwrite our mission through your record support of the annual fund and carry on our educational work by spreading our curriculum in wilderness skills and leadership. You support and value our public lands and land managers. Without active alumni, NOLS would not have achieved the successes of our past year and years. Thank you!


John Gans,
NOLS Executive Director



Casey Dean
Editor

Sam Baker
Designer

Rich Brame
Alumni Relations Director

John Gans
NOLS Executive Director

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WHAT ARE THESE BOXES? They're QR codes—two-dimensional barcodes that can be read by smartphone cameras. Search "QR code" to find a free app for your phone, then use it to read images of the QR codes in *The Leader*. Scan the code above to see the latest episode of *The NOLS Cooking Show*.



WHO IS THIS?

Recognize this person? The first 10 people to contact us with the correct answer will receive a free NOLS t-shirt. Call NOLS Alumni at (800) 332-4280 or email alumni@nols.edu.

The answer to last issue's "Who Is This" is Peter Simer, former NOLS instructor and executive director from 1976 to 1984.

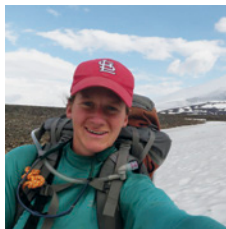
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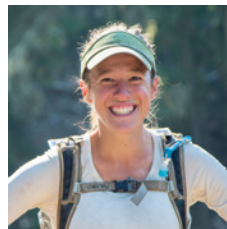
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NOLS played a major role in the first Cowboy Tough adventure race this summer, covering everything from the medical support crew to Team Wyo.
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Anna captured the adventure in words, Chris captured it in photographs. Follow their journey in *The Leader* and the book.

Contributors



BRIDGET PETERSEN
Field Notes, pg 5

Petersen grew up in Overland Park, Kan. and fell in love with the outdoors at Girl Scout camp every summer. Her experiences as camper and counselor inspired her to study parks and recreation management Northern Arizona University. She hopes to work in the outdoors as a guide or an interpretive ranger within the national and state parks.



ANNA SOFRANKO
Cover article, pg 16

Sofranko hikes with a light pack and writes about her adventures at www.wanderingthewild.com. In city life, she works as an environmental engineer, often tackling water quality problems. She recently moved to Fort Collins, Colo.



DANIEL KOEPP
Belay Off, pg 29

Koeppe is a published writer and outdoor enthusiast. He spends his field seasons in Alaska pursuing work in ecology, trails, and environmental policy. Koeppe is pursuing a master's in riverine ecology at the University of Auburn in Alabama.



MADelyn WIGLE
Profile, pg 8; feature, pg 14; book reviews, pg 21; gear review, pg 22

Wigle is an aspiring journalist and photographer hailing from southwestern Pennsylvania. Needing more wilderness than the East had to offer, she went to Alaska in 2010 to complete a NOLS backpacking course. Since then, she finished college in Virginia, traveled and explored as much as possible, and is now the alumni relations intern for NOLS.



What do you think? Join the conversation.

Send your feedback or conversation starters to theleader@nols.edu, post it to Facebook, tweet it (@NOLSedu), or give us a call at 800-710-6657 ext 2254. Find back issues online at www.nols.edu/leader

Facebook Feed

We asked, “Calling all food lovers, cooks, and bakers! We are looking for recipe ideas for the next Cooking Show. Whether it’s a unique way that you make a standard back-country meal or something we’ve never seen before, we’d love to check it out. Ideas that don’t get used this time will get recycled for the next show!”

You responded:

SYD SATTLER: Layer cheese and grape-nuts on the bottom of a fry-bake pan while pasta is cooking in the pot. mix a yummy sauce of tomato powder, water and spices. sauce up the cooked pasta, pour onto the layered cheese and cook with a top on until cheese is well melted. Slice up and enjoy your upside down lasagna. YUM!

FRED KLEISNER: Nothing beats Gado-Gado with extra garlic, from the current NOLS cookbook! It made consecutive days of rain on an impassable Rio Neff near Rio Baker in Patagonia tolerable!

We asked: If price and time commitment were of no concern, which NOLS or NOLS Wilderness Medicine Institute course would you pursue?

You said:

WENDY DOYLE All of them!

QUINTON MCKISSICK Can't decide between: year in Patagonia or mountaineering in Alaska.

MATTHEW KOCH WEMT for sure.

BILL OLEARY All of them, lol but Alaska first.

Instagram Feed



Stan Grabowski
@StanGrabowski



@NOLSedu Just found one if your magazines while getting my oil changed. Quality magazine (design and content).
pic.twitter.com/BXA6UoJLSV - 03 Sep



NOLS
@NOLSedu

@StanGrabowski Thanks, Stan! We are thrilled that you are enjoying it.
[@caseyj_dean](#) [@Slbaker3](#)

10:52 PM - 03 Sep 13

Youtube Feed



Daniel Warshauer @pineycp
WMI WEMT

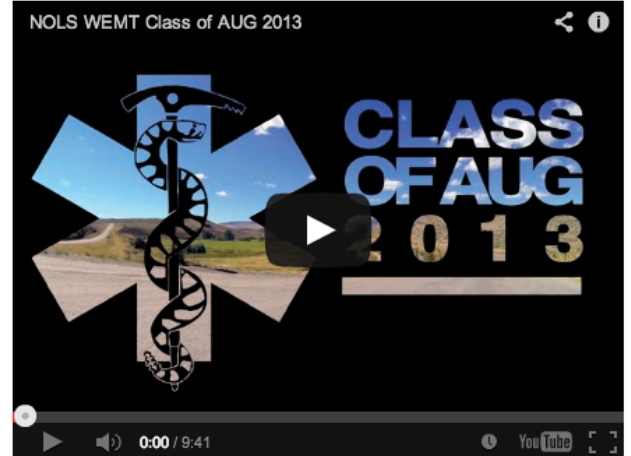
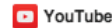
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how i spend my post college time. youtu.be/faSCfArKfOI @NOLSedu

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NOLS WEMT Class of AUG 2013

29 Students go through a month long class to learn the in's and out's of both a Wilderness First Responder and Urban EMT curriculum in a month-long course at...



LEARNING TO 'OPT IN'

IN THE OUTDOORS AND LIFE

BY BRIDGET PETERSEN, SEMESTER IN ALASKA



When a change of scenery isn't an option, students like Petersen learn to persevere and face their fears. *Bridget Petersen*

FROM THE ICY WATERS OF PRINCE WILLIAM Sound to the wild ruggedness of the Wrangell Mountains, my experience on my NOLS Semester in Alaska is one that will be echoed in my actions for the rest of my life.

For 75 wonderful days, I was able to learn and practice technical and leadership skills alike, all the while being overtaken by the beauty of fulfilling my childhood dream of traveling in the Last Frontier.

To isolate one take-away lesson from my NOLS semester is incredibly challenging, but I'd have to say it is that persistence pays off. Being out there—more remote than most people will ever find themselves—persistence was not only helpful,

but absolutely necessary for the success of our expedition.

In the frontcountry, people often have the choice to “opt-out” of situations that aren't going as planned. I've walked away from plenty of opportunities and relationships when I did not see them going my way. It was a choice that was always there, an escape that let me submit to my fear of failure rather than confront it. I found that there were many times during the course I wished I could just quit and try something else. Fortunately, I had the support of my coursemates and instructors, and together we were able to endure every obstacle the Wrangells and the Sound threw at us.

From a 19-hour rappel in a snowstorm

at night to a three-day march off the labyrinth of the Copper Glacier to resolving some emotional issues that otherwise could have stewed until the end, our group survived. In fact, by the end, we were thriving in our newfound confidence and love for each other and the wilderness surrounding us.

For this Kansas girl, living through such a transformation and being able to use the lessons in my daily life is more than I had ever hoped to gain from my NOLS experience. ◉

MY EXPERIENCE ON MY NOLS COURSE IS ONE THAT WILL BE ECHOED IN MY ACTIONS FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.

WILDERNESS QUIZ

What is a World Heritage Site and how does this designation impact our wilderness classrooms?

Answer on page 25.



ALASKA CLASSROOMS FACE DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS & PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES

BY AMY RATHKE, ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR



NOLS students gather for a class in the vast Alaska classroom. *Ashley Wise*

ALASKA CAPTURES THE IMAGINATION. RUGGED COASTLINES, expansive tundra, and imposing mountain ranges make it an ideal destination for outdoor enthusiasts. Abundant natural resources entice energy development corporations. The vast, unpopulated expanses also make swaths of the Last Frontier ideal for military training grounds. NOLS has a vested interest in these spaces and keeps a close eye on the challenges and opportunities facing Alaska's backcountry classrooms.

Watana-Susitna Dam

Studies were underway this summer to determine the impact of a large hydroelectric dam planned for the Susitna River in Alaska. The project is in the midst of a six-year licensing process. The 735-foot high dam, if constructed, would create a 42-mile long reservoir, altering both backpacking and packrafting classrooms in the area for NOLS. NOLS anticipates the infrastructure associated with the dam, not to mention the reservoir itself, to significantly alter the Talkeetnas. This summer, surveyors were studying impacts on the flora and fauna, including big game, birds, and five species of salmon.

In addition to studying plants and wildlife, the Alaska Energy Authority has hired consultants to explore impacts on the recreation resources. NOLS is participating in these conversations making the case that the economic benefits a hydroelectric dam can provide

would come at the cost of one of the wildest and most accessible areas in the region.

Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex

Students who have explored the Talkeetna, Clearwater and Healy Mountains on Alaska Backpacking courses will recall the sight of military aircraft performing training maneuvers high overhead or hearing the occasional sonic boom as a jet broke the sound barrier. These NOLS classrooms overlap with the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC), which includes all land, air, and sea training areas used by the Army, Navy, and Air Force in the state. Although the sights and sounds of these planes is not uncommon on courses in these areas, the feeling of being in the backcountry is still very much intact. Recent adjustments to policy could change that.

As part of an effort to both modernize and enhance the complex, JPARC issued an environmental impact statement and record of decision outlining changes to the way they use the area, including increased presence of low-flying military aircraft. NOLS comments throughout the process highlighted the desire for an unimpeded wilderness experience, the challenge that increased air traffic could pose to resupply and evacuation pilots, and the adverse impacts on flora and fauna. Future courses will report disruptions to the backcountry experience at the request of the military.

Chugach National Forest

Prince William Sound is a staple sea kayaking classroom for NOLS Alaska. The coastline of the Sound in the areas where courses travel is predominantly within the Chugach National Forest. Because of its proximity to major population centers, the Sound is a popular destination for recreationists, from sea kayakers to ATV riders, from backcountry skiers to snowmobilers.

Following a series of meetings around the region this winter and spring, Chugach National Forest staff have developed an assessment report describing citizens' priorities for the forest. The Chugach is one of the first National Forests to revise its land management plan under the recently revamped Forest Planning Rule. NOLS looks forward to participating in the process.

Conclusion

Though projects in Alaska tend to occur on a vast scale, they are still dwarfed by the vastness of the state. Many NOLS classrooms in places like Gates of the Arctic National Park and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge will remain in their natural state. Even areas like the Talkeetnas will offer inspiration and fascination for years to come. Nonetheless, NOLS will work with stakeholders to be deliberate and balanced in their approach to development in this world-class natural landscape. ◻



REAL LIFE

FROSTBITE AND DAYDREAMS

BY TOD SCHIMELPFENIG, NOLS WILDERNESS MEDICINE INSTITUTE CURRICULUM DIRECTOR



Simple steps can make an outdoor adventure comfortable and injury free. *Adam Swisher*

I LIVE IN A BEAUTIFUL PLACE. WALKING TO work this morning, I could see the first dusting of snow on the Wind River Range. My emotional brain floated images of skate skiing through the forests on South Pass.

My logical brain broke the reverie with a reminder that I'll have to make sure there is plenty of room in the toe box of my new ski boots. Tight boots make for cold toes. I'll need to fit the boots with the thick socks I plan to wear and make sure there is room to slip in the chemical heat packs I've grown fond of when the going gets cold.

Decades ago my toes were seriously bitten by the frost. The experience must have taught me something, because I've since avoided the injury even though I take my damaged circulation outside all winter long. I make sure my upper body, my core, is warm. All it takes is a brief chill for my fingers and toes to turn white,

cold, and numb as my body senses danger and denies them warm blood. I shed my warm layers moments before I begin exercise and don them promptly when I stop. I'm also very fond of windproof garments, hating the thought that the warm air I work so hard to generate could be stripped away by the wind.

I stay hydrated and don't use nicotine or any other substance that constricts blood vessels. Damp socks increase my risk of cold injury, and changing into dry socks on a long day gives me a chance to look at my toes and make sure they indeed are pink and warm.

I envy those lucky people who never seem to have cold fingers or toes. I'm in the cohort for whom frostbite avoidance is a constant struggle. We need to be exquisitely self-aware of our fingers and toes. I have learned to never tolerate numb fingers and toes. Cold slows and confuses sensation and walks us to the

fine line between cold and frozen. You don't want to join the club of people who say, "My toes were cold, but I didn't think they were *that* cold," and regret it.

Stop and deal with your cold feet. An inconvenience for the group now will prevent the bigger burden of carrying

MY TOES WERE COLD, BUT I DIDN'T THINK THEY WERE *THAT* COLD.

you and your frozen toes later. The lure of a couple more kilometers of skiing and the illusion that you can wait to get back to the truck before warming your toes are powerful procrastination drivers. Don't wait—if your feet are not warm, do something about it.

Enough from the logical brain. I'll return to indulging the images of long hours on the trail on a frosty morning. I can't wait! ❖

WILDERNESS MEDICINE QUIZ

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS A TREATMENT PRINCIPLE FOR FROSTBITE?

- A. Rapid warming in warm water.
- B. Slow warming at room temperature.
- C. Rapid warming near an open flame or a heater.
- D. Massaging frozen tissue.

Answer on page 26.



SKILL SERIES

WMI has a growing collection of skills videos to refresh your memory on such practices as splints. Watch any of the videos to review by scanning this QR code or visiting www.nols.tv and searching "NOLS Wilderness Medicine Institute."



‘ALL THE TRAIL’S A STAGE’

WENT GRAD COMBINES THEATRE AND WILDERNESS IN HIS PLAY

BY MADELYN WIGLE, ALUMNI RELATIONS INTERN



Inspired by his time in the backcountry, Lengel moved to New York and wrote a screenplay. *Brenton Lengel*

ONE DAY, WHILE TREKKING THROUGH A field in Pennsylvania along the Appalachian Trail (AT), Brenton Lengel made a resolution: “I’m going to move to New York City and become a playwright, and nothing is going to stop me.” At the moment of this epiphany, Lengel lifted his eyes to find himself face-to-face with what he describes as the largest black bear he had ever seen. Tapping into what would become innate New Yorker

“I THINK EVERYONE CAN GET WHAT THEY NEED FROM THE WILDERNESS—IT’S JUST A MATTER OF LOOKING FOR IT.”

behavior, he about-faced, ignored the bear, and walked by as if it wasn’t even there. He describes this as an encounter where his passion for the outdoors and his passion for theatre converged.

Lengel is the playwright, lead producer, and sponsor scout for the production of his play, *North to Maine: A Journey On the Appalachian Trail*. He also built the entire set for the play in his backyard.

“Day to day I might be writing, helping an actor understand something, or I might be handling the booking or publicity of the show, I might even be sawing a hole in a table,” he said.

These roles, which he fills quite successfully, attribute to the notion that in this day and age, we are required to be “Renaissance Americans,” as Lengel puts it. Society often expects this of us—to shift from one responsibility to the next with ease. But sometimes the pressure that stems from it, while exciting, can be unrelenting. Speaking with Lengel about his 2,000-mile journey and the subsequent birth of *North to Maine*, one wouldn’t expect he had gone through such internal struggle along the way. While hiking through Virginia, Brenton had another moment significantly impact his life.

“It’s like this cloud just lifted right off me and I’m like, ‘I’m not sad anymore.’ Food tasted better, people were nicer, I felt amazing and stopped being as afraid of the outside world and adulthood as I was

before,” he reflected.

Soon after he summited at Mt. Khata-din, Brenton began writing the play—a projection of his personal experiences in that the characters in the play are a composite of people Lengel met along the way.

“Ultimately though, all the characters have to come together to reach the end of the journey and get what they need,” he explained.

In the inaugural production of *North to Maine*, one of those characters proudly sports Lengel’s own NOLS hat.

“[NOLS] has been so terrific,” he declared. “There is a serious wilderness medicine emergency in the play that’s based on a real emergency that I’ve run into, which is one of the reasons I think the work NOLS does is so important; even 10 miles into the woods, if you’re not able to do triage or remain calm to find where you need to go, you’re in a lot of trouble.”

There’s a serious disconnect between city life and wilderness which produces a strong need, at least for people like Lengel, to escape from time to time.

“Interestingly enough though, it goes both ways,” he explained. “The Appalachian Trail gave me the courage to move to New York and pursue a career in the arts in a very serious manner.”

The play and the author’s real journey on the AT merge together an experience that directly reflects aspects of NOLS. It is a story of carrying not only gear on one’s back, but also emotional burdens that tether one to the responsibility for a life put on hold. Mostly, though, it displays how we triumph in the face of these things and become better people for it.

“The unofficial motto of the AT is ‘hike your own hike,’” Lengel reflected. “I think everyone can get what they need from the wilderness—it’s just a matter of looking for it.”



KEEP COMING BACK FOR MORE

BY CASEY ADAMS, PR SPECIALIST AND WRITER

RIGHT NOW, IMAGES OF THE NEXT BIG ADVENTURE are drifting through Amelia Hahn's mind. Some stick, and a plan is just beginning to take form. It seems another "really long, overland trip with a packhorse" is in her future.

In 2008—shortly after graduating from high school—Amelia and her mom, Tacy, embarked on a horsepacking trip from Nevada City, Calif. to Phillipsburg, Mont. The 1,000-mile adventure "really just never seemed ridiculous to us," Amelia laughingly recalled.

The two didn't go into the 12-week adventure blindly. In fact, as part of her preparation that included working as a horsepacker, Amelia took a NOLS Wilderness Horsepacking course two years before their departure.

In addition to learning how to select the best horses for such an undertaking and getting an introduction to horsepacking, "I really learned that I want to keep doing things like that every couple of years," the University of Denver senior said.

Husbandry and horse selection were two aspects of the course that opened Amelia's eyes and helped her successfully set up her trip with Tacy. Using the knowledge she gained on her NOLS course that "they didn't have to be the toughest, most pampered, beautiful-footed horses in the world," or any particular breed, gender, or age, Amelia and her mom bought horses for the expedition the year after her course.

The team—two women, two horses, and a mule—started on the Pacific Crest Trail but were soon kicked off due to wildfires. Amelia pointed out they would have left it anyway, as the crest offered little in the way of water or feed for the livestock.

"We had been planning on the map



Part of Amelia's preparation for her adventure was a NOLS horsepacking course. *Kelsey Wicks*

for 12 months before we left. We ended up on the maps every single night tinkering," Amelia said. "We mixed a lot of local knowledge in."

They also relied on the expertise one another brought into the field.

"She was the queen of the maps, and I did the packing work," Amelia said. "Our relationship was really professional."

Dividing work—staying out of each other's way—only made traveling together easier. Amelia noted that a trek like theirs entails a lot of work. Finding water and feed, picketing, highlining and hobbling made finding fairgrounds, where they could put the horses up, buy some hay, and relax without "babysitting" a treat.

Through the professionalism and the perpetual work of the venture, the goofy also shone through, as it often does on long hauls and extended engagements with solitude. The duo created voices for their equine counterparts, which Amelia

admitted occasionally resurface to this day.

The beauty of the Western U.S. shone brightly as well. Amelia raved about the Salmon River Valley area, in particular.

"And, once we accomplished it, knowing that it was possible was pretty rewarding," said Amelia. She and her mother shared a sense of accomplishment and pride in one another, bolstering their already strong relationship.

The success and delight have fueled her subsequent adventuring. For the past five years, Amelia has been working seasonally as a packer and pursuing a college education.

And soon—shortly after graduating from college, Amelia is, in her words "overdue" for another personal expedition. Though she knows not where the trails will take her or even if she'll ride or walk alongside a packhorse, she knows she'll be going soon. ☺

NOLS DOES COWBOY TOUGH

BY KATIE EVERSON, ADMISSIONS OFFICER





NOLS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO COLLABORATE WITH Rev 3 Adventure this past July as they put on "the toughest adventure race in the United States." The Cowboy Tough Adventure Race premiered this summer, covering roughly 400 miles of Wyoming's rugged terrain.

Two of NOLS' very own employees, Adam Swisher and myself, were sponsored by the Wyoming Governor's office. We had the privilege of being Team Wyoming, representing a state we both love, in this incredible race. Swisher and I had the honor of meeting Governor Mead and his family the morning the race began. It was great to see so much state pride at the event and to see a political leader taking an interest on such a personal level.

The event brought together many different individuals, ranging from Mead to many members of the broad NOLS community. As we raced through the state, we saw the efforts of many fellow NOLS grads, instructors, and staff.

Before we even became Team Wyoming, Darran Wells, a senior NOLS instructor and the assistant professor of outdoor education and leadership at Central Wyoming College, worked as a consultant between NOLS and Rev 3 Adventure. His efforts established the foundation for the partnership.

As Swisher and I prepared for the challenge, NOLS PR and Partnerships Manager Jeanne O'Brien connected us with companies who were interested in sponsoring us in our big race. Brooks, Kind Bar, and Deuter provided us with essential gear and nutrition along the way.

When race day finally came, we loaded all of this gear and were chauffeured from Lander to the starting line in Cheyenne by NOLS instructor Zach Snavelly. He transported Swisher and I back after the race as well.

AS WE RACED THROUGH THE STATE, WE SAW THE EFFORTS OF MANY FELLOW NOLS GRADS, INSTRUCTORS, AND STAFF.

After travelling 400 miles on a few hours of sleep, Team Wyoming was in no condition to drive.

While on the course, we found ourselves facing the handiwork of NOLS instructor and NOLS Professional Training Sales Manager Casey Pikla and NOLS instructor Kelly Carlin. These two assisted in creating and setting up an orienteering course that the racers maneuvered through on the second day of the 84-hour race. NOLS provided the competitors with the tools we needed to track progress on the course. Afterwards, Pikla and Carlin had to complete the course themselves to take it down.

Throughout the race, the medical support crew played a crucial role. This team included Greg Fleming, a Wilderness EMT and NOLS Wilderness Medicine Institute (WMI) instructor; Jared Steinman, a Wilderness EMT and NOLS social media coordinator; and Travis Welch, a Wilderness EMT, NOLS instructor, and WMI program manager. This supportive group was instrumental in the success and health of every team. They checked in with competitors along the way, bandaged dirty and blistered feet, ensured we were all staying properly hydrated, and provided medical support in whatever way

the teams needed it. A few single competitors dropped out of the race, but not one team as a whole dropped out of the Cowboy Tough. This was an impressive feat for such a long race, the majority of which took place in the scalding, relentless Wyoming sun.

While Swisher and I reaped the benefits of our colleagues' hard work on the course, a team of NOLS staff was back in Casper running their own competitions. NOLS sent marketing representative Noah Silverstein, PR and partnerships intern Mike Casella, Wilderness Risk Management Conference special projects intern Max McQuarrie, and alumni relations intern Madelyn Wigle to Casper. There, they supported Rev 3 Adventure's various races in town during the four days of the main event. These NOLS representatives drew crowds through knot tying classes and backcountry-pizza-baking demonstrations.

The race was quite the adventure for Team Wyoming and NOLS as a community. It was amazing to see NOLS play so many different roles throughout the race supporting Wyoming, adventure, and community. ☺

Opposite: Katie Everson pedals down the road during the race. Top left: Adam Swisher cools off. Top right: Team Wyo poses for a quick photo-opp. *Jared Steinman*





Something in the Water:

An Outsider's Perspective on NOLS' Work Environment

BY CHARLEIGH WOLFE

WHEN I WAS APPROACHED TO WRITE AN ARTICLE FOR *THE Leader* about an outsider's perspective of why NOLS had been recognized, for the sixth straight year, as one of *Outside Magazine's* Best Places to Work, as well as two years in a row as one of the *NonProfit Times* "Best Nonprofits to Work For," I was unsure where to start.

The *NonProfit Times* weighs questionnaires on topics like leadership and planning, corporate culture, role satisfaction, and employee engagement. *Outside Magazine's* award focuses on work-life balance and "perks."

Though I've lived in Lander for several years, I'd never been in the NOLS Headquarters, let alone on a course, which does, I think, certainly qualify me as a NOLS "outsider." So, I just started asking people, some "insiders," why they liked working there. Consistently, it came down to two factors: the mission and the people.

THE MISSION

Every interviewee spoke about the unifying and motivating cultural force of the NOLS mission and values.

Marco Johnson, NOLS field staffing director, explained that force like this: "Because we believe in the mission, and that's the thing, is people who work at NOLS ... have bought into the mission of what we do ... it's easy to put a lot of effort in ... to put in really, really quality work and to continue to strive to be better."

It sounds like spin, perhaps a speech at a fundraiser. NOLS is a nonprofit, after all, even being honored by GreatNonprofits.org for being one of the best in 2012.

But it's not spin, and I'm too broke to be at a fundraiser.

Melissa Gray, Wilderness Medicine Institute director, said it this way: "NOLS' commitment to a collaboration that provides the highest quality experience for students is what keeps me here."

Wait, though. They're both directors, each with the

organization for over 20 years, so they've clearly drunk the NOLS Kool-Aid.

But Libby Gadbois has only been NOLS staff since 2009, and she gushed, "There are these ideas that are very real here—that experience trumps money, passion trumps the standard view of societal success, and a willingness to fail can lead to greater personal achievements."

And Jared Steinman, with the organization since 2011, demonstrated palpable enthusiasm for the philosophy of NOLS as he explained to this outsider how the departments work together for the good of the students and the environment.

I'd accuse them all of rehearsing, especially since I never actually asked about the mission or values of NOLS, but the genuine nature and absolute lack of hesitation with which they answered showed me that they were, without exception, in earnest. Even NOLS Alumni Relations Director Rich Brame confessed that often, as he walks to work, he feels compelled to run to get there faster.

Well, alright then.

THE PEOPLE

Everyone I spoke to reflected that serving students alongside amazing people is what really brings it all together.

Johnson said of his colleagues: "It's the most impressive group of people I've ever been around ... I joke that it's the biggest group of over-achievers I've ever met," he said. "They're striving to be better educators, better climbers, ... better communicators."

Steinman added that, "Nowhere else do you have a concentration of people this size that are both educated in all things outdoor recreation and education, but also eager and willing to provide mentorship and guidance to the next generation of budding outdoor enthusiasts."

Tack on some of the more "tangible" benefits NOLS employees enjoy, such as wellness days to hot springs or ski slopes, free access to outdoor gear, and opportunities to continue going out on courses even after they've taken "office jobs," and NOLS does indeed sound like a great place to work. ☺

Team meetings on skis, biking to—and at—the office, and staff barbecues are just a few perks working at NOLS offers. *Brad Christensen.*





Petzoldt's War

BY MADELYN WIGLE, ALUMNI RELATIONS INTERN

IT WAS 1943, THE ALTITUDE AT CAMP HALE IN LEADVILLE, COLO. WAS around 9,300 feet, and most of the U.S. Army recruits had only been there a week. Eighteen-year-old Private Frank Chuk turned to Paul Petzoldt, who was a few years older than the men, to say, “We’re all really curious as to what an old guy like you is doing up here.”

Reflecting on Petzoldt often conjures up staple accomplishments that have formed a legend: summiting the Grand Teton in cowboy boots at age 16, completing a double ascent of the Matterhorn, being on the first American team to attempt K2 without assisted oxygen. These are stories one can pick up effortlessly from walking around the halls of NOLS Headquarters or Googling the founder of NOLS. However, there is rich material to be mined from the unfamiliar corners of a life; the

sum of a man is not sufficiently explained in a hallway display. Rather, it’s in the stories of those who knew Petzoldt personally.

Petzoldt was 36 when he went to the 10th Mountain Division at Camp Hale as a staff sergeant.

Chuk reflects, “The purpose of [Petzoldt] being there was to give us expertise in how to evacuate people, how to move equipment at high altitudes, and then just how to survive in those altitudes, out in the weather all the time.”

According to Raye Ringholz’ book *On Belay*, Petzoldt noted how new it was for the U.S. Army to have someone who could train men to lower wounded people over cliffs or rescue them in blizzards.

When Chuk turned 18, two years after World War II began, he saw the Army was starting a new mountain division and was looking for people with experience in the outdoors: Eagle Scouts, ranchers, and anybody who skied. So he applied, and was directed to Camp Hale.

Chuk and his fellow recruits had just finished lunch a week into his stationing when Petzoldt walked into the room. Chuk recalls they

all looked at him, then at each other and said, “What’s that old guy doing here? He’ll never make it.” They would soon learn that they would have a difficult time keeping up with him.

Troops went out in groups of about 10 to develop their protocols and maneuvers. The Division often skied 25 miles a day and spent nights in snow huts. Given the small groups at Camp Hale, the men had a great deal of camaraderie both among recruits and higher-ranking officers. It’s apparent in Chuk’s words that Petzoldt’s teaching was revered, respected, and absorbed.

Petzoldt had a great teaching style, but he could be stern, especially when it came to safety. This is exemplified in the profusion of adjectives used to describe him. He was jolly, curious, humble, and fixed.

“He was big and gruff but also understanding and gentle,” said Chuk.

He instilled in the 10th Mountain Division the same principles upon which he built NOLS decades later, which serves as proof that his mission and values were sustaining.

“In his mind he was always thinking, ‘what if?’ and that’s what I learned from him,” Chuk said. “He lived so long because he knew how to handle himself and meter out his energy. He trained it into people.”

He continued: “Above all, [Petzoldt] would make it quite clear that whatever we did, we better be sincere about it. There was no place to cut corners; you have to do it right. Or you’re gonna pay the price.”

“[Petzoldt] built a reputation of safety.” Chuk applauded the staff sergeant for this: “You don’t get people out there and jeopardize them. You got to make it fun, but you got to make it safe.”

IT’S APPARENT IN CHUK’S WORDS THAT PETZOLDT’S TEACHING WAS REVERED, RESPECTED, AND ABSORBED.

A Journey in Photographs

BY ANNA SOFRANKO, AUSTRALIA BACKPACKING AND SEA KAYAKING '07





Opposite: From the deserts of California to the peaks of Washington, the views and the seasons of the Pacific Crest Trail offer a vast range of photo opportunities. Above: In the midst of a 2,660 mile journey, a photo of the rugged Mojave wilderness. *Chris Alexander photos.*

It was 1 a.m. in the middle of the Mojave

Desert. We had walked 24 miles the previous day, so I should have been sound asleep, but something urged me to look outside. I groggily unzipped the tent and peeked out. The moon had risen and was delicately illuminating a stand of spiky Joshua trees. Behind the Seussian trees floated a backdrop of countless stars. An otherworldly silence surrounded us. It was magical.

The desert is harsh and unforgiving, though, and soon practicality set in. We stopped gawking and crawled back into our sleeping bags to get a couple hours of sleep before our alarms started ringing. We had to rise at 4 a.m. to hike one of the hottest, driest sections of our trip.

We were in the midst of hiking the entire 2,660-mile Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) which begins at the U.S./Mexico border, winds through California, Oregon, and Washington, and ends at the Canadian border. Even when the journey was just a vision in our heads, Chris Alexander and I knew we couldn't keep experiences like those moonlit Joshua trees to ourselves. Throughout our hike, Chris, a professional nature photographer, captured the trail's wild beauty in photographs with the intent of publishing a coffee-table book when we finished. Meanwhile, I diligently shared stories of each day's events on our website www.wanderingthewild.com.

Documenting our trip in photographs and words required a great deal of extra work beyond the already

demanding effort of walking about 20 miles each day for over five months. However, we found that sharing the adventure with others was incredibly rewarding. Through our blog, and later our book, we were able to bring thousands of people along for the journey, introducing many to the wilderness for the first time.

The first 700 miles of our hike took us through the deserts of Southern California. Hot sun and scarce water were the elements that shaped our desert days. We hiked early and late in the day when the heat was manageable. Midday, we ate a big meal while cooling off in whatever shade we could find. We tried to break at water sources, but that wasn't always possible. Sometimes we walked 20 miles or more without encountering a drop of water.

Water was scarce, but that didn't mean life was lacking. Lizards, horned toads, snakes, and jack rabbits scurried away as we walked near. Cacti stored water within and produced intensely beautiful blooms, providing a feast for hummingbirds. Sagebrush, wildflowers, and bunch grasses grew everywhere. Initially we were nervous about covering so much distance in the desert, but we ended up loving its toughness and expansive views.

As much as we enjoyed arid Southern California, we (and our readers too!) were excited to reach the meadows, mountain streams, and jagged peaks of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. We planned to traverse the next 177 PCT miles, plus a side trip up and down Mt. Whitney, without resupply in order to thoroughly soak in the wilderness for 11 days. We left the Kennedy Meadows general store each loaded down with 22 pounds of food. Some of the most challenging, dramatic terrain on the PCT lay just ahead. We couldn't wait.

The additional food weight made us more sore than usual, but each



Above: As the seasons changed, so too did the challenges faced on the Pacific Crest Trail. *Chris Alexander*

spectacular mountain pass bolstered our resolve to hike this remote stretch in one piece. On our sixth day in the Sierras, we planned to reach the highest point on the Pacific Crest Trail: Forester Pass. Climbing higher and higher, we crossed above tree line. Surveying the sweeping terrain, we noticed ominous dark clouds gathering in the distance. With a set amount of food allotted each day, we hoped to make our daily mileage goal, which lay beyond the exposed pass.

My NOLS sea kayaking experiences in Australia helped guide us to a smarter decision. Just as my NOLS team had modified paddling plans based upon wind direction and speed, we decided to be flexible, setting up camp early in a protected spot below Forester Pass. The dramatic clouds we'd seen earlier continued to build as we ate a quick meal. Right as we finished our last bite, the storm let loose. We dove into our tent as hail pummeled the granite slabs and walls surrounding us.

The next morning was chilly but calm and lovely. Climbing to an altitude of over 13,000 feet, we reached Forester Pass where we crossed from Sequoia into Kings

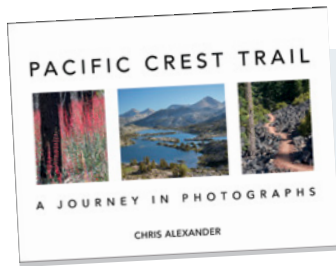
Canyon National Park without incident. Alpine lakes, granite cliffs, and a snow-covered trail greeted us north of the pass. The Sierras were even more stunning than we'd dreamed.

By the time we reached northern California, our minds had begun to make an unexpected shift: our senses were awakening. Over years of city life, our brains subconsciously created filters to deal with the constant jumble of sensory information surrounding us: car horns, sirens, advertisements, chatter, and all sorts of smells. Now that silence and stillness were the norm, those mental filters gradually disappeared. The crack of a distant twig alerted us to a deer, almost hidden in the forest. We could smell day hikers' deodorant and laundry detergent from several feet away. Our eyes tracked the subtle movements of a soaring hawk adjusting to shifting air currents. These little observations thrilled us, encouraging us to continue exploring, to see what new experience waited around the next bend.

Continue we did, following the PCT's ever-changing tread steadily north. After 111 days of hiking, we celebrated our entry into Oregon. But we couldn't pause long. We needed to walk over 20 miles every day to make it to Canada before snow could prematurely end our hike. A complete hike was essential in order to finish our photography book in one continuous progression from spring, through summer, and into fall.

Our time was precious. We ate while walking. Every piece of gear had its designated space to make packing up in the morning as speedy as possible. If Chris was filtering water, I was working on a blog entry. Each night Chris set up the tent while I prepared dinner. No moment

Our time on the trail put us in touch with the rhythm of the sun and seasons, awakened our senses to the subtleties of nature, and strengthened our deep primal connection with the wild.



Pacific Crest Trail: A Journey in Photographs

Hardback, 12 by 9, 120 pages

This collection of timeless images takes the viewer on a journey through some of the most beautiful and compelling landscapes in the world. Learn more on page 21. *Available now at <http://wanderingthewild.com/book>.*

was wasted.

Despite the time pressure, we kept our hiking pace constant so we could continue to take in and photograph beautiful scenes. We relished the new landscapes we encountered in Oregon. Fields of black lava rock lay strewn at the base of towering volcanoes. Glaciers clung to steep volcanic slopes even in the middle of summer. The sun's heat gradually melted the snow, forming waterfalls and swift ice-cold creeks. In densely forested areas, towering pines protected us from August's heat while providing homes for many species of birds.

When we reached Washington, summer was turning to fall. Temperatures dropped below freezing at higher elevations. Some mornings were so bitter we hiked in all our clothing, including hats, gloves, and rain gear, for added warmth. As the days grew shorter, we often walked all the way from dawn to dusk.

Spectacular fall colors highlighted this section of trail, particularly on Day 162. The morning's walk took us through a lush valley brimming with vine maples turning to deep oranges and reds. We were in the steep northern Cascade Range and, as usual, we began to climb a long series of switchbacks. Reaching the pass at the top, we saw our first larch trees at the peak of their brilliant yellow color, glowing in the sunlight. In a few weeks these unique conifers would drop their bright yellow needles for the winter. We were elated to arrive late enough to witness this show of color, but early enough to avoid the snow.

We reached the Canadian border after over five months on the trail. During the hike, fresh air, clean water, and open space had surrounded and sustained us. Our time on the trail put us in touch with the rhythm of the sun and seasons, awakened our senses to the

subtleties of nature, and strengthened our deep primal connection with the wild. At the trail's end, we were excited to have accomplished our goal, but sad to leave the wilderness which had inspired us so profoundly.

Working full-time on the coffee-table book after the hike eased our transition back to city life. Reviewing and refining Chris's collection of 13,000 images allowed us to relive part of the hike each day. For the book we selected only images that depicted the essence of each section of trail, had a strong composition, and flowed well with the surrounding images. Next we fine-tuned the layout, researched the location and content of each photograph, and found an American printer with experience producing high-quality art books while maintaining sustainable environmental practices. We oversaw every step of the printing process, from choosing a high-quality Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified paper to ensuring the printed pages matched the proofs. After months of hard work, we were thrilled to hold the final book in our hands.

Hiking from Mexico to Canada changed us. Documenting our experience on a blog and publishing *Pacific Crest Trail: A Journey in Photographs* allowed us to share this incredible experience with thousands of people. This sharing ended up being one of the highlights and lasting impacts of our PCT thru hike. We hope our stories and photographs continue to inspire others to protect the wilderness. 🍷

Alexander published his photographs with minimal editing for a truer documentation of the journey. *Chris Alexander*





ALUMNI TRIPS

Are you interested in returning to NOLS in the backcountry but can't take weeks off work? Do you want to share your NOLS experience with your non-grad friends and family? Do you want to adventure and network with like-minded, outdoorsy adults who know the meaning of "EB"? If you bellowed, "Yes! Yes! A thousand times yes!" then join us on an alumni trip in 2014.

NOLS offers short backcountry trips for our alumni and guests. These trips have top-quality instructors, and though they aren't guided adventures, we do cater a bit more to the desires and maturity levels of our participants. Customized trips are also available. Call us to design your dream adventure.

Signing up: A \$200 per person, non-refundable deposit is required for enrollment on all alumni trips. For more information or to sign up, call NOLS Alumni at (800) 332-4280 or visit www.nols.edu/alumni.

UPCOMING NOLS ALUMNI EVENTS

NOLS is coming to your community this spring! We're hosting alumni reunions for grads, friends, families, and guests all across the nation. Reunions include snacks, tales of adventure, a gear raffle, camaraderie, and networking. Watch for events in your area in 2014:

- Jackson, Wyo.
- Tulsa, Okla.
- Portland, Maine
- Phoenix, Ariz.
- Seattle, Wash.
- Boston, Mass.
- Denver, Colo.
- Chicago, Ill.
- Bozeman, Mont.

For more information, see www.nols.edu/reunions

ALUMNI CLIMBING—RED ROCKS

Dates: February 16–22, 2014 | Cost: \$1,550

Here's a chance to boost your climbing skills with NOLS in Las Vegas' gorgeous, varnished, and steep Red Rocks climbing area. With easy, inexpensive airfare and some classic long climbs, this trip is a great chance to increase your climbing skills, practice rope system knowledge, and anchor-building techniques.

ALUMNI CANYON HIKING

Dates: March 24–29, 2014 | Cost: \$995

Explore southern Utah's rugged canyon country with a cadre of NOLS adventurers. Get a break from winter with this trip: canyons, Anasazi ruins, slickrock and sun—what's not to love? Non-grad guests are welcome.

SAILING NAVIGATION IN THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

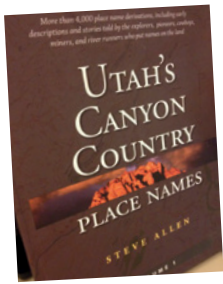
Dates: March 26–28, 2014 | Cost: \$995 (includes group villa lodging)

Base in a mountain villa above Brewer's Bay on Tortola in the beautiful British Virgin Islands for three days of classroom-based sailing navigation practice, chart reading, optional Coastal Navigation Certification, and camaraderie with a team of stalwart NOLS sailors. Most participants enroll on this seminar and the BVI Sailing Trip that immediately follows.

KEELBOAT SAILING IN THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Date: March 29–April 5, 2014 | Price: \$2,350 (includes pre- and post-trip lodging)

Explore the British Virgin Islands archipelago aboard 40-foot cruising sailboats with a small group of NOLS sailors. Learn and develop your boat handling skills and sail theory knowledge. Explore new islands and anchorages every day and immerse yourself among aquatic life and stunning coral reefs. Optional Competent Crew Certification is available.



Utah's Canyon Country Place Names

By Steve Allen, '68 Rocky Mountain Wilderness Expedition

Steve Allen has hiked more than 40,000 dusty miles for one thing: to share his knowledge of the folklore behind the names of Utah's canyon country. In this two-volume behemoth, Allen uncovers over 4,000 place name derivations, some strange, some lovely, some both.

Allen balances both local tales and detailed "history," which he describes in his disclaimer as "a set of lies agreed upon." Trivia ranges from Carrot Top Arch, named for the red-headed wife of Stan Jones in San Juan County, to No Man Mesa that got its name because, according to one of Allen's sources, "The only way you're going to get up No Man Mesa is with a helicopter." There's also history of towns like Moab, which was either named satirically after a biblical ancient kingdom in Syria with a bad reputation or for no particular reason at all. There are places named for body parts and animals, for mishaps and successes. More importantly, names were often given to describe the unmistakable beauty of this part of the U.S.

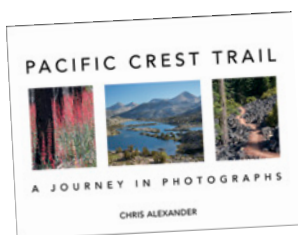
The books are a chronicle of Western spirit, traced into the locations claimed by Native Americans, cowboys, pioneers, and explorers. Allen unearths some of the desert's mysteries, all while giving readers a reason to grab their sunscreen and boots and head to the canyon country of Utah. Essential for any adventurer's coffee table, particularly canyon enthusiasts *Utah's Canyon Country Place Names* will both inform and entertain. *Reviewed by Madelyn Wigle, Alumni Relations Intern. ©2012 Steve Allen*

Way of Life

By Teton Gravity Research, founded by two NOLS graduates

Since 1996, Teton Gravity Research has been producing action films featuring athletes pushing the boundaries of their sports. Kayaking, surfing, skiing, and snowboarding have all been featured in their films, but as of late, winter sports have been the focus. Teton Gravity Research, founded and headquartered in Wilson, Wyo., has built a consistent following by staying true to its western roots. This year's film, "Way of Life," doesn't veer from that tradition. Featuring palm-sweating ski mountaineering in Grand Teton National Park, the high-flying aerials of the U.S. Olympic Freestyle Ski Team, and luxury backcountry base-camping in the heart of Alaska, the footage presented in this film is surprisingly inventive and original.

"Way of Life" digs down to the roots of the skiing lifestyle and tells the story of a handful of athletes who have squeezed out a living skiing down impossibly steep mountains and throwing themselves off cliffs at break-neck speeds. In a sport where the line between success and catastrophic failure is as thin as a meticulously sharpened ski edge, the athletes featured in this film explain their motivations don't stem from making money or seeking fame. Rather, it's the blissful feeling of making smooth, wide turns through waist-deep powder that has shaped their 'way of life.' *Reviewed by Jared Steinman, Social Media Coordinator. © Copyright 2013 - Teton Gravity Research*



Pacific Crest Trail: A Journey in Photographs

Chris Alexander and Anna Sofranko, Australia Backpacking and Sea Kayaking '07

Anna Sofranko and Chris Alexander traversed the Pacific Crest Trail, spanning seven national parks and 24 national forests. This book of photography and carefully researched captions is the reflection of their authentic journey on one of the country's most incredible trails (read more on page 16).

This well-crafted book chronologically catalogs the 2,660-mile trek in three parts divided by state. It is scenic evidence of an adventure and the story of two people committed to their passion for the wilderness. Alexander used minimal photo editing to ensure the most genuine representation of the trip. The purpose of the expedition was to strengthen "a deep primal connection with the wild." Between the first photo of the fence dividing Mexico and the U.S. and the last photo of the clear-cut border between the U.S. and Canada, this book carries the reader along an epic voyage. Therein lies the beauty of photography; it aids when words aren't enough to encapsulate an experience. Perfect for the coffee table or moments when inspiration is needed, *Pacific Crest Trail* offers a reminder of why we explore. *Reviewed by Madelyn Wigle, Alumni Relations Intern. © 2013 Chris Alexander. Read more about this expedition on page 16.*



Downwind and Downstream

By Carly Calhoun, Semester in Mexico '00, and Sam Despeaux, Gila Wilderness '94

In this beautifully shot series of short films, NOLS alumni Carly Calhoun and Sam Despeaux explore the impacts of coal ash on everyday Americans. Coal ash is the toxic waste left after coal is burned. As viewers learn through the films, it can leach into water supplies, polluting entire watersheds, or be carried by the wind to coat entire towns.

The longest of the series, "Things of Intrinsic Worth," reveals that for ranchers in Colstrip, Mont., the heavy-metal laden dust is threatening their way of life. Beyond the sweeping landscape and glimpse into the life of a fourth-generation rancher, there's a sinister shadow looming. Coal ash ponds seep their hazardous chemicals into the Rosebud watershed where Clint McCrae and his father Wally's cattle drink—at eight times the toxic level for cattle.

Even larger communities like Charlotte, N.C. cannot escape the risks of coal ash. "With Power Comes Responsibility" shows how public health is at risk from the carcinogenic toxic metals. Frustrated politicians and environmentalists continue to do battle, but power companies hold sway over politics.

These tales are harrowing, but there's hope. "Fighting for Air" and "American Nightmare" show local organizers fighting coal corporations for a better life. The dust has been linked to asthma, learning deficits in children, and cancer. At the end of each of these two films, it's revealed that the efforts of the local organizers, as well as environmental organizations, have led to the imminent closure of nearby plants.

These films range in length from five to 14 minutes and are free to view at www.downwindanddownstream.com. Reviewed by Larkin Flora, NOLS Development Communications Coordinator. © Carly Calhoun and Sam Despeaux 2013



VOILE SPLITBOARDS: NOLS TETON VALLEY REPORTS

BY MADELYN WIGLE, ALUMNI RELATIONS INTERN



IN THE GRAVITY-DRIVEN WORLD OF WINTER SPORTS, SNOWBOARDS ARE downhill champs, but until recently, they have proven to be real pains once the thrill is over. Enter the splitboard.

The splitboard is precisely what it sounds like: a snowboard that can separate into two skis. When skins are applied to the bottom of the separate halves, it allows a person to ascend slopes just as one would on alpine touring or telemark skis. To descend, the halves connect back together to form a snowboard.

“They’re fantastic for backcountry use,” said NOLS Teton Valley Assistant Director Dan Verbeten. When you’re touring uphill, the snowboard deck basically splits in half with clips, making it much easier to get back without using as much energy. Specifically, the Voile splitboard is ideal because it’s not too heavy or bulky. Verbeten reports they’re “extremely efficient” and designed for the powdery snow playgrounds of the backcountry.

Voile is the company that really pioneered the splitboard, which makes their products reliable, well tested and unique.

NOLS Teton Valley uses a combination of boards for their courses, the Voile Mojo RX and the Split Decision Freeride. The Mojo RX is a newer style and has a little rocker in the nose and slight taper to help it float. Advantages of this board are its lighter touring brackets, durable plastic coated climbing wires, and new binding support shim for improved uphill skiing. The Freeride has a similar shape but without the rocker.

Verbeten says the reason he gives Voile splitboards a four out of five on the versatility scale is because they can, “be a bit ‘noodley’ for the front country or resort riding.”

The torsional rigidity rating is based on how well the board flexes versus twists, and Verbeten rated it a “solid four out of five.”

On NOLS Splitboarding courses, students not only master both uphill and downhill splitboarding techniques, but they also learn to test splitboard travel techniques in a variety of winter conditions. Even in a resort setting, the Voile splitboards perform; students spend two days riding at the Grand Targhee Pass where this is tested.

“Voile boards are just great all around,” said Verbeten.

Learn more about splitboarding with NOLS at <http://www.nols.edu/splitboarding>.

NOLS Online Store

Holiday Promo

Give the gift of the outdoors by gearing up friends and family or treating yourself! Stop by the NOLS online store to receive a holiday season discount on NOLS jackets, hoodies, gloves, and neck gaiters. Simply enter **holidayleader13** at checkout and receive a **20% off** holiday gift from NOLS!

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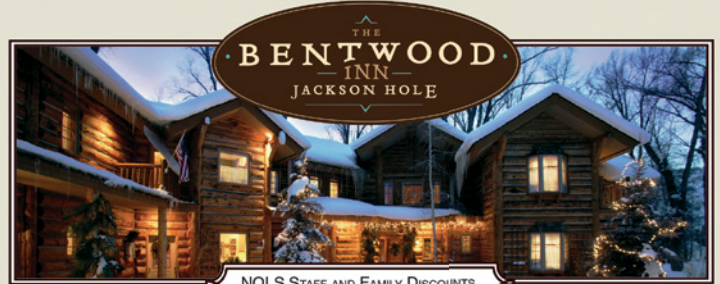
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PEANUT BUTTER TRUFFLES

BY CASEY ADAMS, PR SPECIALIST AND WRITER

NOLS Professional Training Sales Manager and instructor Casey Pikla was recently featured in an article in *Outside Magazine* online. Hungry staff and students of NOLS are familiar with (and thankful for) Pikla's culinary prowess, and the decision was unanimous when the NOLS Cooking Show crew saw this recipe: we needed to make (and repeatedly taste) this one.



Peanut butter, chocolate, your favorite "secret" ingredient. What more could a winter camper want?

Ingredients (for 10-12 pieces):

- ¾ cup sugar (brown or white depending on preference)
- ½ cup peanut butter (creamy for a smooth texture, crunchy otherwise)
- 3 tbsp butter, softened
- 6 oz chocolate or 1 cup chocolate chips, melted
- *Optional: Cinnamon, honey, oats, or any ingredients that tickle your sweet tooth*

Directions:

In a small bowl mix peanut butter, butter, sugar and optional additional ingredients. Roll out dollops of the peanut butter mixture into rounds of a size appropriate to your appetite and set aside. Watch the show at NOLS.TV to learn about Pikla's expert technique to keep your hands out of the food on this step.

Melt the chocolate carefully. Pikla notes chocolate can be a "diva," so take care not to burn her. He suggests removing the pan from the heat before the chocolate is fully melted and letting the residual heat do the rest.

Roll the cooled peanut butter balls in the melted chocolate and set aside to cool. Don't walk away from them, though, or a certain editor might swoop in with an appetite. ☺



WATCH THE VIDEO

Watch Casey's expert technique in preparing this backcountry delicacy at NOLS.TV or by scanning this QR code!

20TH ANNUAL WRMC

20 YEARS OF WILDERNESS RISK MANAGEMENT

By Max McQuarrie, WRMC special projects intern

As the Wilderness Risk Management Conference (WRMC), co-sponsored by NOLS, Outward Bound, and the Student Conservation Association, moves into its 20th year, organizers and attendees are looking back on the great strides that have been made in wilderness risk management. Since the original 1994 meeting of 194 risk managers, the conference has reached over 5,700 people representing the outdoor education, adventure, and service industry that utilizes wilderness for their activities.

The 2013 WRMC was hosted at Jackson Lake Lodge in Grand Teton National Park. With over 400 participants representing hundreds of organizations, it saw the second largest participation in the conference's history, as well as the second consecutive year that attendance exceeded 400 participants.

Among the highlights of the 20th WRMC were the opening remarks from NOLS Executive Director John Gans and the dedication of the Charles (Reb) Gregg Wilderness Risk Management Award to NOLS Director of Risk Management Drew Leemon. According to colleague Tod Schimelpfenig, Leemon "has been instrumental in creating an atmosphere of openness in incident response, a culture where it is acceptable to investigate, report, and learn from experiences throughout the NOLS community."

Workshops were commenced by a keynote address from veteran climber and 34-year National Park Services ranger Renny Jackson. His impressive credentials include a double ascent of Mt. Everest, as well as being a three-time recipient of the Department of the Interior Valor Award. He spoke about the evolution of alpine search and rescue in Grand Teton and Denali National Parks as it relates to risk management.

After three full days of invigorating workshops, award-winning author Laurence Gonzales gave the closing keynote address. Gonzales' speech was based on his concept, "Intelligent Mistakes: Why Smart People Do Stupid Things." He shared his research in how the natural functions of the brain can lead us into systematic errors.

As organizers wrapped up this year's conference, they began looking forward to the 2014 WRMC at Stone Mountain State Park in Atlanta, Georgia.



Contact the Alumni Office via telephone (800-332-4280) or email (alumni@nols.edu) to find contact information for any of your course mates.

GRADS FROM THE '70S

John Fox, *Rocky Mountain Mountaineering '75, Yellowstone Park Expedition '76 & Wind River Rock Climbing '77*
John has been a State Department Foreign Service Officer for 25 years, including a recent posting in Baghdad. He is now a professor at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pa.

GRADS FROM THE '80S

Gary Wilmot, *Denali Expedition '83, Advanced Mountaineering '84 & Instructors Course '85*
Former NOLS instructor Gary Wilmot was recently named the executive director of the non-profit Wyoming Outdoor Council in Lander, Wyo., whose mission is protecting Wyoming's landscapes and environmental quality.

Jim Damico, *Semester in Kenya '87*
After four years of teaching English in Mongolia, Jim has been selected by the Peace Corps to be a teaching collaborator and community facilitator in Thailand. He leaves for training in January 2014 and will serve for 27 months.

Turner Moore, *Semester in the Rockies '88, and former NOLS instructor*
In April, Turner organized Florida's largest whiskey festival, serving over 150 spirits. Professional distillers and brand ambassadors traveled from around the U.S. and Scotland to participate in the event. In his hometown of Sarasota, Fla., Turner has a reputation as a whiskey maven, hosting scotch and bourbon tastings and classes regularly. Professionally, Turner joined Stifel Nicolaus as an associate vice president and financial advisor.

Gretchen Long, *Baja Sea Kayaking '91, and former NOLS Board Chair*
Wyoming's Murie Center honored former NOLS Chair Gretchen Long with their third annual Spirit of Conservation Award

Emilie Cortes, *Wilderness First Responder '11*
Emilie left her corporate job and has acquired an all-women's adventure travel company called Call of the Wild Adventures, Inc. The company focuses on domestic and international adventure travel for women. Emilie is excited to finally match her passion and her vocation.

GRADS FROM THE '90S

Deborah (Schieffer) Livingston, *Southwest Outdoor Educator '01*
Deborah lives with her husband Scott and two young children in Bolton, Conn. She is an ultramarathon trail runner and competes all over the world. She works as a yoga and fitness instructor (www.fitinspiration.com), teaching children and adults how to lead healthier lives. She serves on the board of advisors of the Appalachian Mountain Club, the board of directors of the Bolton Land Trust, and directs the Soapstone Mt. Trail Races for the Shenipsit Striders running club.

Riley Hopeman, *NOLS Instructor, and Cait Parker*, *NOLS Instructor*
Riley and Cait were married on June 29 at Galena Lodge in Idaho.

GRADS FROM THE '00S

Lee Kuck, *North Cascades Mountaineering '04, and Scott Bellware*
Lee and Scott of Montreal, Quebec were married Aug. 3. The couple lives in Austin with one black cat and several million Mexican Free Tailed bats. They get out camping whenever they can, even in the 104-degree Texas heat, and Lee credits her experience with NOLS for helping her seduce her husband with her excellent backcountry skills and ethics.

Nancy Pearson Smith, *Australia Backpacking '08, and Adam Alpsach*
Pearson and Adam were married in upstate New York on September 7.

MARRIAGES, ENGAGEMENTS & ANNIVERSARIES

Casey Dean, *Wind River Wilderness '11, and Lonnie Adams*
Casey and Lonnie were married Aug. 3 in Lander, Wyo.

Samantha Baker, *Baja Sea Kayaking '12, and Thomas Pedersen*
Sam and Thomas were married Aug. 24 at Louis Lake Lodge, near Lander, Wyo.

Evan Horn, *NOLS Instructor, and Anna Gast*, *NOLS Instructor*
NOLS instructors Evan and Anna were married Sept. 1 in Lander, Wyo.

Aaron Bannon, *Rocky Mountain Outdoor Educator '07 & Instructor Course '09,*



The designer (Samantha Baker, top) and editor (Casey Dean, bottom) of this very publication were both married near Lander, Wyo. this summer.

WILDERNESS QUIZ

A WORLD HERITAGE SITE IS: a place listed by UNESCO as having special cultural or physical significance. To date, this designation has played a key role in the preservation of 193 natural sites around the world.

A related new place of interest for NOLS Alumni is Croatia. Currently there are two natural World Heritage Sites in Croatia: Plitvice Lakes National Park and Stari Grad Plain. There are four additional natural sites on the tentative list that are up for designation nomination. These include the Lonjsko Polje Nature Park, Velebit Mountain, the Kornati National Park, and the Telascica Nature Park. As NOLS Alumni expands our sailing program to explore the Kornati and Telascica coastal regions of Croatia, this designation will play a vital role in the preservation and access to these areas.

and Joy Owen

Aaron and Joy had a baby girl Aug. 8. Fiona Elizabeth Bannon weighed 6 pounds, 15 ounces at birth and was greeted very happily by her older brother Sebastian.

Mary (MJ) Greene, *NOLS Instructor*, and **Ariel Greene**, *NOLS Instructor*

MJ and Ariel are the proud new parents of Halle Wendell Greene. Halle was born Sept. 23 at 9:40 p.m. She weighed 7 pounds, 13 ounces at birth. The new family is doing well.

Janeen Hutchins, *NOLS Alaska Director*, and **Ryan Hutchins-Cabibi**, *Wind River Wildemess '96 & Mountain Instructor Course '00*

Janeen and Ryan are the proud parents of Wyatt John Hutchins, born Sept. 29, 2013. Wyatt weighed 8 pounds, 14 ounces at birth and was 22 inches long.

IN REMEMBRANCE

Claire Adams, *Chicago Sea Kayaking Seminar '00*
Claire, wife of NOLS grad Timothy Mulvey, passed away on June 10, 2013 after a brief illness. Claire was well loved by her family and is deeply missed.

Malachi Miller, *Wind River Mountaineering '97 & Instructor Course '81*
Dr. Malachi "Mal" Miller was

born Feb. 6, 1959 in Lykens, Penn. Like so many people in Lander, he came to Wyoming to take a NOLS course and never left. His path in Lander included stints with Inberg-Miller, Safeway, Reynolds' buffalo ranch, Clay Construction, Dick's Metal & Welding, Brooks Lake Lodge, leading to a career with NOLS. He loved to climb, ski, and jump his beloved thoroughbred horse, "Ziggy." He was a Golden Gloves boxer, a pianist, and an excellent marksman. He was a world-class mountaineer and part of the first successful American expedition to Pakistan's Gasherbrum II. He guided on Aconcagua in Argentina and on Mt. Kenya. Mal passed away at his home June 22, 2013.

David Lee Cass, *Semester in the Rockies '01*

David died on June 29, 2013 after a boating accident in Minnesota. David had a strong love of the outdoors and youth outreach. David is survived by his parents, Joe and Amy Cass of Rochester, Minn.; two brothers, Mike (Katie) and niece Emily of Alexandria, Minn. and Abe (Coresa Leighty) of Minneapolis, Minn.; his maternal grandfather Richard (Gretchen) Lee of Dubuque, Iowa; and his paternal grandmother, Alice Cass Hinz. He was extremely well loved and will be missed.

Sustainability



STAYING SUSTAINABLY WARM: NOLS TETON VALLEY

When you think about the Teton Valley and its pristine snow and idyllic ski terrain, energy conservation is probably not what comes to mind. But for the past five years, NOLS Teton Valley has worked hard to combat that impression.

Based in an old church, the NOLS Teton Valley facilities suffered from the common complaints of all old buildings—drafts and poor insulation. In the winter, despite astronomical heating bills, staff used to wear their down jackets inside and sport fingerless gloves so they could type in their "heated" offices. In 2009, Assistant Director Dan Verbeten began to change all that. He spearheaded several initiatives including re-insulating much of the main building for a savings of \$800 annually in heating oil and installing low-flow water fixtures that save an estimated 3,000 gallons of water annually.

To cap it all off, in 2010 NOLS Teton Valley received grant funding for a 7.59 kilowatt solar array that produces approximately 35 percent of the electrical needs for the facility. NOLS Teton Valley has increased efficiency, decreased costs, and become a comfortable building. Best of all, employees are warmer, happier, and more eager to implement sustainability projects than ever. Warm hands are good publicity!

WANT TO DECREASE UTILITY BILLS THIS WINTER?

Check your "building envelope." Do your windows and doors seal well? Is your insulation adequate for your climate? Fixing even one of these issues can reap significant cost and energy savings.

WILDERNESS MEDICINE QUIZ

A. Rapid warming in warm water bath at 99-102 degrees Fahrenheit is ideal. Skin-to-skin warming is often the most practical in the field. Slow warming is not the best, and massage and warming with open flame or heater can cause tissue damage.



Remember the moment you first set foot in a NOLS building, wherever in the world it was? All novel and unfamiliar in the first days, it was comfortable and familiar by the time you were de-issuing and celebrating your course. Well, it's business as usual at NOLS locations around the world; stay up to date on the activities here or on the NOLS Blog at www.nols.edu/blog.

NOLS PACIFIC NORTHWEST

- NOLS PNW ran a very successful inaugural mountaineering/sailing expedition in August. This course traversed the Homathko Icefield in central British Columbia down to tidewater where they met sailboats to voyage south to Sidney, BC. On what other course type can you sunbathe on an iceberg while observing your coursemates ice climbing?
 - The Archer School for Girls returned this fall for **six** simultaneous **one**-week expeditions into the North Cascades. As opposed to 2012's sunny and dry weather, these students experienced the **first** major mountain winter storm of the season.
 - Students on fall semesters in the Pacific Northwest learn a breadth of technical outdoor skills: mountaineering or sea kayaking, keel-boat sailing, and rock climbing. With strong early storms this fall, our students' rough-weather skills will be particularly proficient. Almost a foot of snow fell in the mountains before our mountaineering sections ended, and our first sail section of the year met gale force winds and projected swells of **five** to **nine** feet!
- to wash gear, clean the facility, and perform other branch-wide tasks. Despite several heavy rains, the region is still **two** inches below average rainfall for this time of the year.
- The fall Lightweight Backpacking course went out with an average pack weight of **26.4** pounds. The average pack weight for our standard hiking courses has been **45.5** pounds.
 - After **four** years of no caving at NOLS Southwest, staff are excited about the upcoming instructor caving training seminars. NOLS hopes to again include caving as a fall 2014 semester course option.

NOLS YUKON

- NOLS Yukon has moved! September 1 marked the **first** day in the new facility. The facilities are now just a short distance outside of Whitehorse city limits and only steps away from a natural hot spring. NOLS Yukon staff bid farewell to the pink-floored warehouse that had been the operations, storage, and nerve center since 1999.
- NOLS Yukon is now offering a new, **57**-day semester that begins backpacking, continues with whitewater canoeing, and ends in an independent travel expedition.

NOLS TETON VALLEY

- Winter had already started in the Tetons by the first week of October with over a foot of snow in the mountains.
- In February, NOLS Teton Valley looks forward to hosting its newest expedition: a 23-and-over splitboarding course where participants learn to ride at the Grand Targhee ski area, sleep **two** nights in a backcountry yurt, and then camp **six** nights using classic snow camping techniques. The opportunities for snowboarding in deep powder will be plentiful.
- NOLS Teton Valley will host a number of winter trainings for staff, educating over **50** instructors on avalanche assessment, skiing, and leadership. These trainings result in better educational outcomes for our winter students.

NOLS ALASKA

- NOLS Alaska sent **three** courses into America's largest national park, Wrangell–St. Elias: at over **8 million** acres it is larger than each of the **nine** smallest states. In 2014, NOLS will offer a semester-long expedition that rafts from the Wrangell Mountains to Prince William Sound where they switch to sea kayaks.
- The NOLS Alaska garden supplied food for hungry students, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and a local food bank.
- NOLS Alaska staff are excited about the buzz and success of our new course type, packrafting; we will offer **two** packrafting courses in 2014.

NOLS SOUTHWEST

- The **3,000** gallon branch rainwater cistern, installed last spring, has filled to the top. NOLS Southwest uses the captured rainwater



Top: The garden at NOLS Alaska thrived this summer. Middle: NOLS Southwest can't wait to start caving again. Bottom: Backpacking plus rafting equals packrafting, a great way to see as much country as possible in Alaska.

ENDOWMENT & ANNUAL FUND

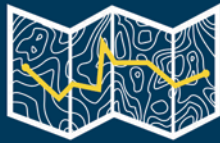
What's the difference?

Think of NOLS as a large investment, like buying a house. You have to make payments on your mortgage, but you also need to pay to keep the lights on. In the world of NOLS fundraising, the **endowment** is like the long-term investment of mortgage payments, while the **annual fund** is like the immediate need to pay the utility bills.

ENDOWMENT

Savings Account

Investment



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NOLS RUINED ME

BY DANIEL G. KOEPP, BROOKS RANGE BACKPACKING AND RIVER '11

On the runway in Kotzebue, Ala., I sit crammed in a tiny seat looking at a manmade horizon. My thoughts drift. Patterned blue cloth seats and dull, white, plastic overhead bins as far as the eye can see. To my right sits my friend; I have only known him for a month but I feel closer to him than I do many of my friends back home. He is holding his head in his hands. Leaving this place is not easy. The air is thick with the scent of what feels like hundreds of other human beings. I can smell them. Taste their sweat, breathe their exhalation, feel their oppressive nearness. New people are strange and unwelcome. Claustrophobia begins to rule my being. I grip the small armrest as I let the feeling wash over me.

Forty days prior I was on a very similar plane and had not experienced any of this. My senses were acutely dulled to the 60 or so people crammed like toothpaste into the flying tube that would transport us to the wilderness of Alaska. I did not know what to expect when

I set foot in Anchorage. My boots were clean, my clothes dry, and my body soft. I heard the soft patter of rain on my jacket as I stepped out of the terminal and breathed Alaskan air for the first time. If anything, I expected that I would go to the woods for 40 days, fly home to Louisiana, and say I had braved the wilderness. Maybe I would have a few stories to tell. I did not count on being fundamentally touched to my core.

When the nine of us landed on Lake Gideki in the Brooks Range, we did not know each other.

The land was wide, vast, and intimidating. Mountains that dwarfed any previous experience loomed menacing on the horizon, commanding respect only to be lost in the all-consuming weather. The ever-present gray sky never let you forget that you were at the mercy of the gods of

I EXPECTED THAT I WOULD GO TO THE WOODS FOR 40 DAYS, FLY HOME TO LOUISIANA, AND SAY I HAD BRAVED THE WILDERNESS. I DID NOT COUNT ON BEING FUNDAMENTALLY TOUCHED TO MY CORE.

Left: The course resupply arrives at Pingo Lake on day 10. Right: Students were greeted with this view on their first day at Lake Gideki. *Daniel Koepf*

the Arctic. Rain would turn to hail, to snow, to rain, and then to blistering sunshine in a cycle that lasted mere hours.

Above the tree line in the Arctic, the horizon opened up. On top of a mountain you can look 30 miles to your left unobstructed, look 30 miles to your right unobstructed, and realize that you are not really as important as you think you are. Soon our small group was closer than family. We relied on each other for survival. We relied on each other for comfort, warmth, and a will to continue on our journey. On top of a mountain I watched a lone caribou limp down a valley favoring his front right hoof. I stepped over many skulls and scattered carcasses in the valleys. No flesh left on the bones, but maybe a tuft of fur, or a strand of sinew. I thought about that lone caribou often. His fate was obvious.

It was more obvious one day when one of my new friends and I had to make a water run to an alpine lake. As we knelt on the lake's edge and dipped our dromedaries in frigid water, I looked up. Over a rocky berm emerged a gray wolf. Completely silent, he trotted with his head parallel to the two of us. Feigning disinterest, he pointed his body away from us. He met my gaze, his yellow eyes piercing even at a distance of 70 yards. He watched the two of us. We went back to work, then silently we marched

LESSONS I LEARNED ON THE RIVER TRANSFER SO EASILY BACK INTO "NORMAL" LIFE. DON'T FIGHT UPSTREAM, GO WITH THE FLOW, CHOOSE YOUR PATH WISELY. LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY.

back up the hill. The wolf maintained his distance for half the way back, then must have caught wind of the rest of the course and veered off and disappeared.

The land doesn't care if you are there or not. But the Brooks Range would also present another face. A mountainside of nothing but blueberries. A mother bear and her cub. A beam of sunshine piercing through grey clouds. Pure beauty made more so by bitter conditions.

On the river the wild only opened up more and our group only grew closer. Fifty miles down the Noatak River in a day was a good challenge. Our confidence in each other grew. Heavy winds battered our fabric canoes. The aluminum ribs buckled and bent as waves smashed against the slender hulls of our Ally Packs. Yet we devoured the river like it would not end. Four hundred and fifty miles passed quicker than I ever thought possible.

Parts of the Noatak are pristine beyond belief. A canoe can move quickly over crystal clear water while salmon fight upstream in the shallows. Lessons I learned on the river transfer so easily back into "normal" life. Don't fight upstream, go with the flow, choose your path wisely. Lessons learned the hard way. Soon we crossed Kotzebue Sound in our small canoes. I smelled the belching of machines and felt suddenly torn away from my world and thrown into a new and more frightening environment.

So I sit on that airplane in a state of supreme letdown. It is over. The challenge complete. No more mosquitoes, no more torrential rainstorms. No more salmon runs, rapids, or mountains to climb. I hold my head in my hand just like my friend at my side.

But in that moment, I know I will be back. How could I live a life less than what I had been through?

The following year I made it back to Alaska, working a biology job in Tanana. I had the good fortune of completing a 450-mile section of the Yukon River with a friend from the same NOLS course. At this moment I am serving a six-month Americorps Term leading youth corps work crews into the Alaskan bush. My life has become a frugal and desperate clawing of every penny and resource to get back into the wild. Nothing else matters. NOLS has ruined my normal, average, boring life forever.

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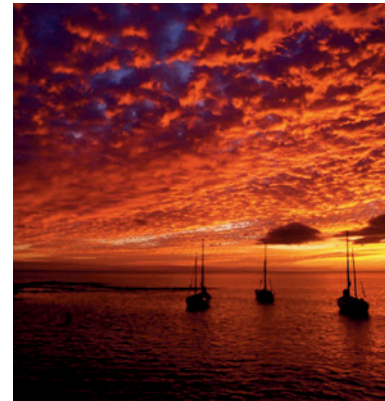
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Ian West

*2009 Rocky Mountain Outdoor Educator,
Scholarship Recipient and Donor.*



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