



NATIONAL PARKS
TRAVELER

2019-2020 Annual Report

nationalparkstraveler.org

Grand Canyon National Park, Rebecca Latson



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Kurt Repanshek, founder and editor-in-chief

First of all, thank you for your support. Without it, National Parks Traveler would not exist.

Across the country, more and more news organizations are shrinking, and a disconcerting number have gone under due to changes in advertising spending. As we continue to seek additional revenue streams, your continuing support is proving invaluable.

While major news organizations across the country occasionally produce stories on the National Park System, it's usually only around large events, such as government shutdowns or the recent coronavirus pandemic. We've found that the National Park System is rich with stories, enough to justify a news organization that focuses only on national parks and protected areas. Your readership justifies our belief.

The past year has been challenging, most recently due to the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the National Park System. But that also introduced hundreds of thousands of new readers to Traveler as they came to check our daily listing of which parks were closed, and then which were open. Once on the site, more than a few recognized the value of the content we produce on a daily basis and stuck around.

Readership on the flagship website was up 18.7 percent from July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020, to 2,007,716. Our Apple News feed attracted more than 1,140,300 readers during the same period. We also added a weekly podcast series in mid-February 2019 that quickly gained interest. Through June 30, 2020, nearly 93,000 episodes were downloaded, and [feedspot.com](https://www.feedspot.com) has ranked it as the No. 1 podcast on national parks.

Looking ahead to the coming year, we will continue to expand news and feature stories as we explore the wonders of the parks. We'll continue our podcast series and continue to explore new ways to approach storytelling.



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National Parks Traveler's Leadership

Kurt Repanshek
Founder, President & CEO
Utah

Patrick Cone
Vice President
Utah

Marcelle Shoop
Secretary
Utah

Erika Zambello
Director
Florida

Rebecca Latson
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Director
Oregon

Kristen Brengel Hajibrahim
Ex Officio
Washington, D.C.



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Rich and diverse coverage of the National Park System

National Parks Traveler is a news organization. We follow accepted journalistic practices in pursuing stories. Our coverage across the National Park System ranges from search-and-rescue missions and campground openings and closings to the impact of national activities and developments that happen both inside and outside the parks. We report on scientific research and discoveries, and entertain you with travelogues so you can make the most out of your national park adventure.

We work with a cadre of freelance and volunteer writers, photographers, and broadcasters who, combined, have more than a century of professional experience.



Grand Canyon/Rebecca Latson



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Our Impact and Reach

National Parks Traveler generates more than 1,000 stories a year, with articles and podcasts spanning the National Park System from Alaska to the Caribbean that reach an audience of more than three million readers and listeners from around the world.

Coverage cannot always be carefully planned out and executed. On any given day there might be exciting research or discoveries coming from a park, a natural disaster that impacts parks and their visitors, or some other news that might affect visitors. In addition to covering those topics, we develop feature-length stories to help readers make the most out of their national park visits, or to examine an issue that merits greater depth and explanation.

As the only media organization focused solely on national parks and protected areas, we also watch for behind-the-scenes stories that affect the parks in some fashion or how visitors might experience the parks.

Among the stories that stood out during the past 12 months are the following.



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Oil And Water At Big Cypress National Preserve

This series of stories in March 2020 was developed after a field trip to Big Cypress by Editor-in-Chief Kurt Repanshek and Contributing Writer Kim O'Connell. Along with reporting on visible impacts to Big Cypress from oil exploration dating back to 2017, the trip provided coverage of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' flipflop on whether Burnett Oil Co. had damaged the park's resources.



Big Cypress National Preserve, March 2020/Kurt Repanshek

Yellowstone Forever Crippled By Overambition, Lack Of Financial Transparency



Too much ambition and too little financial transparency greatly hamstrung Yellowstone Forever in its fledgling years, and now the organization finds itself fighting for its life at a time when the coronavirus pandemic has been crippling for nonprofits that depend greatly on philanthropy. ~Kurt Repanshek

Old Faithful/Rebecca Latson



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*Caneel Bay Resort, Virgin
Islands National Park*



Virgin Islands National Park/NPS, Anne Finney

The latest articles in a years-long series documented, with material obtained through a Freedom of Information Act inquiry, how the operators of the Caneel Bay Resort in Virgin Islands National Park tried to persuade the Interior Department to break the agreement Laurance S. Rockefeller made with the department in 1983 to ensure the resort was transferred to the National Park Service in September 2023. ~ Kurt Repanshek

In a project made possible through a grant from the Water Desk at the University of Colorado, Patrick Cone traveled to Canyonlands National Park and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area to report on the impacts of an ailing Colorado River on those two parks.





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National Parks Traveler released its first annual *Threatened and Endangered Parks* report in December 2019. Reported and written by Rita Beamish and Kurt Repanshek, this series examined the threats of climate change, invasive species, energy exploration, and overcrowding on parks most in danger of impairment.



Everglades National Park is endangered in part because of invasive species such as Burmese pythons overrunning the park/NPS

Continued retreat of tidewater glaciers at Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve could force park staff to choose between protecting Johns Hopkins Bay for seal pupping or to open more of it up for cruise ships/Kurt Repanshek file





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Reopening The National Park System: What's Closed, And Open?

Hundreds of thousands of readers flocked to National Parks Traveler through the second quarter of 2020 and into the third as the coronavirus pandemic swept the country and led most units of the National Park System to close...and then reopen. Traveler kept readers informed on which parks were closed and which were open with a regularly updated story. This public service feature was pinned to the top of the Traveler's homepage from March into June.

Everglades National Park Lodging At Flamingo Without The Mosquitoes



Twenty "eco-tents" are the first phase in expanded lodging at Flamingo in Everglades National Park/Kurt Repanshek

Smudge pots weren't in sight when I visited Flamingo on the southern tip of Everglades National Park, but it was early spring and the mosquitoes hadn't quite worked themselves up to scourge strength. They are legendary when in full biting force, with rumors of cows and mules being killed by vicious, insatiable swarms of the bloodsuckers. And yet, the appeal of Flamingo to anglers and those fleeing winter's snows for a few days makes it a popular destination.~ Kurt Repanshek



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*"It Looked Like Molten Lava. Except
It Was Molten Ice"*

"My first impression was that it looked like molten lava. Except it was molten ice. It had that same kind of pyroclastic flow to it," recalled Peter Christian of the day back in 2016 when he flew over a remote corner of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve and saw a slurry of ice coursing rapidly downhill through a barren drainage. ~ *Kurt Repanshek*

Big Cypress National Preserve doesn't have the same name attraction as its next-door neighbor, and that's not a bad thing. Enter its realm and you might find one of the world's most unique orchids, a forest of "dwarf" trees hundreds of years old, and a wild kingdom of raucous birds and toothy reptiles.



A Watery Feast At Big Cypress National Preserve

By Kim O'Connell



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Incoming Grand Canyon Superintendent Brings Deep Background To Challenging Job

Edward Keable doesn't bring a National Park Service pedigree with him to Grand Canyon National Park as its incoming superintendent, but he brings a wealth of legal experience in the issues the park is steeped in. ~ *Kurt Repanshek*

Gateway Town Businesses Trying To Stay Optimistic Amid Coronavirus Pandemic

As a growing number of businesses relying on visitation to the national parks face the stark reality of an obliterated April and possibly much curtailed revenue in the subsequent summer and fall months, staying calm and being flexible seem to be the best, perhaps only, options. ~ *Lynn Riddick*

The River's The Thread: Floating The Green Corridor In Utah's Desolation Canyon

Late one evening last summer, about the time that bats take to the air, I was stretched out on a patch of warm sand next to the Green River in Utah's Desolation Canyon, waiting for stars to appear. Next to me were a couple my age from Baltimore and their two young grandsons, part of a group enjoying a six-day float trip with a Utah adventure outfitter. As darkness fell, the glittering band of the Milky Way spread above us from cliff to cliff. This was one of the reasons we had come to this place, for the "star river," as the ancient Chinese poets called it, is no longer visible from our homes in the city. ~ *Fred Swanson*

Protecting The Sonoran Pronghorn From Extinction

With its diminutive frame and legendary skittishness, the Sonoran pronghorn is emblematic of the delicate efforts required to save an endangered species. Relegated to the desert of southwest Arizona and northern Mexico, the pronghorn fights for survival from predators and the ever-constant threat of drought that comes with living in the desert. ~ *Kelly Furnas*



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Traveler Special Report: Invasive Animal Species A Veritable Plague In The National Park System

There has been, for a disturbing amount of time, a slow, creeping invasion of the national parks, one in the form of an ecosystem-upsetting menagerie that poses a significant threat to both native species and the very integrity of the parks. ~ *Kurt Repanshek*

Climate Change Could Be Influencing World's Greatest Terrestrial Migrations

It's a spectacle of the animal kingdom, one most of us don't see in person, but are amazed when it is shown on television. "It" is the crossing of the Noatak River far north in Alaska by thousands of caribou. ~ *Kurt Repanshek*

Lessons From A Previous Environmental Catastrophe

In June of 1894—125 years ago—Sequoia National Park superintendent James Parker journeyed northwards to inspect the Sierra Forest Reserve. This mountainous country (now called the Sierra National Forest) had been set aside sixteen months previously to protect its watersheds from overgrazing by sheep and over-cutting by timber interests. Parker entered a disaster zone. ~ *John Clayton*

Clamping Down On Climate Science At The National Park Service

You still can find some climate change information on the vast nps.gov domain, but there isn't much that's terribly recent. That's a troubling development when if you believe the National Parks Conservation Association's contention that climate change was a significant concern for 80 percent of all national park units. ~ *Kim O'Connell*



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National Parks Traveler's Weekly Podcasts

Appreciating that people consume information in many formats, National Parks Traveler launched a weekly podcast series in mid-February 2019. Since then, Kurt Repanshek, Lynn Riddick, and Erika Zambello generated 72 programs through June 28, 2020, that were produced by Jesse Repanshek.

These shows follow a newsmagazine format, with weekly content usually featuring a topic of recent prominence along with features taken from the National Park System. The 40- to 50-minute programs are distributed through libsyn.com, which sends them to iTunes, Facebook, Twitter, radio.com, Spotify, YouTube, and other podcast outlets.

Through June 30, 2020, nearly 93,000 episodes were downloaded, with listeners from at least 50 countries.

Checkerboard Mesa bighorns in Zion National Park/Kurt Repanshek





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A Sampler Of Traveler's Podcasts

The Yellowstone Volcano Observatory

A Conversation With Photographer Clyde Butcher

Sea Level Rise And National Parks, Great Sea Kayaking Park Destinations

Ranger Doug To The Rescue, Rethinking America's Best Idea

Threatened And Endangered Parks

Public Lands, Federal Regulatory Changes

Yellowstone's Wolves, National Parks Of Lake Superior, Seasonal Migrations

Longest Terrestrial Migrations, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park

Breaching Cape Lookout, Glacier's Shrinking Glaciers, Wintering At Voyageurs

*Prey And Predators In Yellowstone, Birding In Katahdin Woods And Waters
National Monument*

How Not To Get Lost, Sketching Birds, Hiking Peaked Hill Bars

Isle Royale's Wolves And Caving In The National Parks

The Dark Ranger And The Other Half Of The Park System

*Lionfish Invasion, Winter Visit To Olympic National Park, Harvest Time In The
National Park System*

Segregation In The Parks, And Winter In Everglades

Can Guns Protect You Against Bear Attacks?

Parks As Classrooms, And Katahdin Woods And Waters

Staying Safe In Bear Habitat, And Thomas Moran And The Parks

Roundtable Discussion On National Parks



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Financial Summary 2019 July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020, preliminary

Operating Income

Contributions	\$41,546
Direct public grants	\$9,998
Other income	\$13,218
Total	\$64,762

Operating Expenses

Business expenses	\$5,286
Contract Services	\$36,722
Payroll	\$19,419
Travel and meetings	\$2,591
Other expenses	\$471
Total	\$64,489



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Donors

July 2, 2019-June 30, 2020

\$2,001-5,000: Preston Chiaro, National Parks Conservation Association, Potrero

\$2,000: Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, Friends of Acadia, Grand Teton National Park Foundation, North Cascades Institute, Washington's National Park Fund





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Awards

Stewart L. Udall Award

The Western National Parks Association honored National Parks Traveler in November 2019 for keeping the public informed on National Park System issues.

The image shows two prominent, reddish-brown rock spires or buttes. The spire on the left is taller and more jagged, while the one on the right is shorter and more rounded. Both are set against a clear, bright blue sky. The foreground shows a reddish-brown, rocky surface.

*National Parks Traveler is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit media organization that
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