

HARDWARE STORE HERALD

Volume 24

News from the Wrangell Mountains Center

Winter 2023/24

Connecting people with wildlands through art, science, and education in Alaska



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▲ University of Southern California students by McCarthy Creek

Message from Jon Erdman, Executive Director

I write to you in February from the WMC winter command headquarters, a small cabin in the far-flung frozen hinterlands of the Wrangell Mountains, where the month's temperatures have ranged from 47 below to 40 above and we lack indoor plumbing; but we have excellent Internet connections. It's a fascinating juxtaposition of the new times of digital connectivity and the timeless experience of wilderness living.

In last year's Herald, I spoke to the rebuilding and restarting process that was in full swing. I'm happy to report that in 2023 we made progress on that count and that this summer, 2024, we expect to be at full programming, including an invigorated Field Studies program by way of a new partnership with the University of Maine's School of Earth and Climate Sciences.

Other big organizational highlights from 2023 include the building of two new guest cabins, hiring Sabrina Simon as Director of Operations and Organizational Development, and a productive Strategic Planning Retreat with our Board of Directors in the fall. See page 9 for highlights and the full 3-Year Strategic Plan on the WMC website "About Us" page.

We are currently in the student recruitment phase for Field Studies. Between COVID and a pivot to a new partner, it's been a while since we ran the program on an annual basis, so we are working hard to re-establish our recruiting networks. Please help spread the word about our academically-rigorous, life-changing Field Studies program. Check out the new program website and share with students and professors you may know: wrangellmountainsfieldstudies.org

There's so much to be said about this type of transformative experience, including how this and other WMC programs expand and ignite the imagination, opening up new possibilities.

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We evolved in intimate connection with the natural world. It's deep in our DNA. So when our students and other program participants are immersed in the Wrangells, the inner world opens in new and profound ways. So many young people speak to me of how their Wrangells experiences unexpectedly provided new focus for their lives. Many Field Studies students in particular find the mental clarity to make career decisions that chart the course of their lives.

I hope your winter has provided time for an enriching connection with the natural world. Be well, and please stop by the campus if you are in McCarthy this summer. Stay Wild, Friends 🌿

Thank You 2023 Seasonal Staff and Resident Volunteers!

Joey Boots-Ebenfield spent his third season volunteering for the WMC, this year working on developing our Field Studies Program. He's back in 2024 as our Field Studies Program Coordinator.

Varia Garon as Facilities Manager, helped out on campus in so many ways, including fixing the Hardware Store stove pipe with climbing gear!

Michael Anderson, our Kitchen Manager cooked up tasty meals throughout the summer and baked delicious pastries for our events.

Merry Smith brought her incredibly bright personality to help us in our daily operations.

Karolina Pieczynksa also came a long way to explore Alaska (from Poland!) and helped us with facilities as well.

Lauren Palamara came all the way from Pittsburgh to help us in administration.

Madz Volk and **Brooke Harrington** helped a ton in our kitchen and brought their big personalities to Emcee Word Jams and the Storytelling Festival.

Fumi Yasuda came all the way from Japan to explore Alaska and assisted in facilities, even building us a small bench!

Katina Leier and **Caroline Diamond**, seasoned WMC volunteers, assisted in planning and facilitating some of our youth programs.

Bryan Campbell took the lead in building our new guest log cabins.

Dave Sarbell, our media artist, captured incredible photography of our programs and community. 🌿

▼ *Staff photo collection by Karolina Pieczynksa and Dave Sarbell*





▲ Wrangell Institute of Science and Environment's Geology Camp

Youth Programming

The WMC campus was alive with kids programming last summer, hosting 8 Wednesdays of the Mountain Arts and Science for Youth (MASYS) program along with our annual 4-day Geology Camp, partnered with and facilitated by the Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment (WISE). Our MASYS Wednesday events featured activities like Field Sketching with Kristin Link and the famous Predator vs Prey game which attracted over 20 kids.

During Geology Camp, kids joined us from the Copper River Valley and McCarthy areas for an overnight backpacking trip up to Bonanza Mine. Joey Boots-Ebenfield joined Robin Mayo and other chaperones from WISE to guide the kids on the trail.

Robin reflected on the group's ability to learn cooperation while on the trip. As there were several paces set by the kids, they had to cooperate to set a group pace. Additionally, many of the kids returned from the previous year so had experience with packing their gear. Seeing the kids' ability to pack their gear, Robin observed it was heartening because it proved that what they had taught the kids had stuck.

One of Robin's favorite parts about the trip was being able to marvel at the historic artifacts and the rock glacier they encountered. She said, "It couldn't have been a better day."



▲ Robin Mayo (WISE) and Joey Boots-Ebenfield (WMC)



▲ Wrangell Institute of Science and Environment's Geology Camp ▼



The Art of Summer



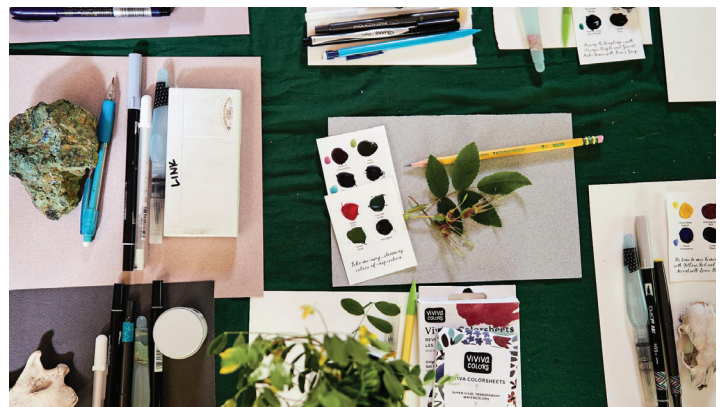
▲ Artist in Residence Brooke Pederson with paper cutout

The WMC's 2023 summer was jam-packed with arts programming from songwriting workshops and musical events, bi-weekly Word Jams, and field sketching. We were so honored to host the classical musicians of CORVUS who performed *Composing in the Wilderness* at the Recreation Hall in Kenecott. The group arrived on a tour all the way from New York City, and performed musical compositions written by youth and inspired by the Alaskan wilderness. The compositions were dissonant and experimental, and captured moments in wilderness like the delicate dance of a bird on the snow or a dramatic avalanche thundering down a mountain.

We were also lucky to have the Rasmuson Foundation's 2023 Individual Artist Award recipient, Kristin Link, offer two weekend-long workshops in field sketching. Participants came from Alaska and all over the lower 48 to attend and learn the artform immersed in our breathtaking landscapes.

We were excited to host our 2024 line-up of Artists in Residence: plein air painter, Ellina Chetverikova; paper artist, Brooke Pederson; filmmakers and fiances, Paxton Farrar & Pauline Allen; and wood-worker, Marianne Stolz. They each offered our community hands-on and exciting community engagement events including presentations, workshops and a debut film screening!

Photos from *Composing in the Wilderness* by CORVUS and
Kristin Link's Field Sketching Workshop



We held two art exhibits featuring local father-daughter artists Jill and Brad Richie, who shared their field sketching and paintings that celebrate the landscapes and architecture of the Wrangells through the generations. Even Jill's young daughter had art to contribute!

We also hosted Anna Mikuskova's photography exhibit where she showed work inspired by feelings of home, belonging, and the Czech Republic where she grew up.

Finally, we want to thank Anna Mikuskova and Kristin Link for offering several field sketching and photography community groups throughout the summer. It really brought our community together in their artistic exploration and expressions! 🍷



The Science of Summer



Brooke Kubby, UAF researcher, journaling at McCarthy Creek ▲

We kicked off the summer with Mark Vail's annual Bird Walk. Thirty eager birders and birders-to-be marveled at Mark's ability to discern individual bird species by their sounds, physical features, and preferred habitats. With Mark's help, the entourage was able to identify over 15 birds within a short walk of the Old Hardware Store.

We also heard from Mike Loso, giving his annual glacier presentation at the Recreation Hall. Each year he expands the content to include new understandings of the landscape that reveal themselves through research and keen observation. We eagerly learn something new every year he offers this presentation, as we also observe the changes in our landscape.

We were also happy to host several high school and college groups including from Alaska Pacific University, Chugach Schools, and the University of Southern California. We also hosted cutting edge researchers from the University of Idaho. Our staff had such an enriching experience, spending time with these researchers and learning about the amazing work they are doing, observing the behaviors of our varied glaciers and other landforms and attempting to uncover the mysteries they hold. ❧




▲ Local naturalist Mark Vail leading the bird walk

Word Jam & Storytelling Festival

Our bi-weekly Word Jams were a success! We heard from tourists, locals and seasonal residents, some of whom shared their poems for the first time in public! We were so honored to create an inviting space for our community to share deep parts of themselves and their artistic expression through poetry and storytelling.

Likewise, the Storytelling Festival was an absolute hit among 100 attendees and 20 competitors and guest storytellers. We heard storytellers sharing for the first time, along with seasoned storytellers coming back for many consecutive years. We heard stories of longing, belonging, comedy, injuries, grief, precious past-times of the area and more. The festival ended with the finale featuring 4 winners from the previous nights and the audience crowned our very own, Sabrina Simon, as the final festival winner.

We want to give a big thank you to our Storytelling business partners/sponsors, McCarthy River Tours and The Roadside Potatohead who hosted the festival at their venues during the first and last night. Also, a big thank you to our judges and emcees. We couldn't have done it without you!

We hope to hear from even more storytellers at this year's 2024 festival, August 9th-11th. Storytelling is such an important part of our small, mountain town culture and we are happy to continue celebrating that! 

▼ Photos from the Wrangell Mountains Storytelling Festival



Thank You 2023 Donors!

List of our cherished 2023 calendar year donors

\$2,500+

Stephen & Mary Birch Foundation, Alaska Community Foundation, Sally Gibert & Dick Mylius, Dick & Helen McCammon Giving Fund

\$1,000-\$2,499

Sophie Gilbert & Tim Bartholomaus, Blackburn Heritage Foundation, Ruud-Mjos Tributaries Alaska Family Fund, Barbara & John Rice, Glenda & Paul Barrett, Katherine & Gary Bartholomaus, Barbara & Gary Baugh, Garin Hecht, Karen Ruud & Peter Mjos, Benjamin Shaby, Anonymous

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\$100-\$249

Barbara Bigelow, Jon Cooperman, Charlotte Henson, Leonard Steinberg, Candice Tong, Shawn Olson-Hazboun, Jenny Carroll & Paul Dungan, Daniel Creegan, Claire Emery, Megan Gahl & Darrin Kelly, Kirk Hoessle, Tom Kizzia, Kurt Kolding, Anne Marie Moylan Fund, Chrisy & Brad Richie, Jan Rubin, Specialized Bicycle, Olaf Zerbock, Elizabeth Schafer & Howard Mozen, Philip Arrington, Edward Berg, Dolores & Bill Butler, Stephen Edwards, Lilly Goodman-Allwright & Michael Allwright, Dora Gropp, Meg Hunt, Elaine Jacobs, Kristin Link & Greg Runyan, Molly McCormick, Deb Crook & Turk Montepare, Peggy Morsch, Francis Nelson, Lila Vogt, Gayle Gordon & Rob Wesson, Marc Wilhelm

Up to \$99

Caitlin Marsteller & Nate Anderson, Cheryl Antenucci & Geoff Downes, St. Elias Alpine Guides/Copper Oar, Maya Heubner, Erika Wolter, Cheryl & Mark Lovegreen, Mary Cottom, Susan Georgette, Nancy & Ames Gilbert, Amy & David Gutierrez, Victoria Lord, Harlan Loso, Sara & Keith Mellinger, Kate Morse, Lori Stender, Greg Streveler, Katelyn Vial, Owen Vial, Riley Vial, Nathaniel Wilder, Benjamin Williams, Janelle Eklund & Paul Boos, Charles Wexler, Merry Smith, Martin Dodge, Peggy Finnegan, Blake Harrison, Michael Kenny, Lisa Moorehead, Catherine Olesen, Kroger/Fred Meyer, Keira Armstrong & Stephen

Thompson, Mary Gianotti, Tamara & Stephens Harper, Sarah Lindner, Karen & Mike Loso, Marie Lundstrom, Robin Mayo, Bonnie Robinson, Jessica & Nikolai Speed, Dennis Swanson, Patt Garrett, Marilyn & Pat Maloney, John Rosapepe, Susan Tague, Arlene Goldfarb, Jen Cole, Daire Kalmes, Carolyn Kremers, Anonymous

Special Thanks to our In-Kind Donors and Volunteers

Alaska Glacial Essentials/Lauren Padawer, Agnew:Beck Consulting, Ann Robinson, Anna Mikuskova, Barbara & John Rice, Bear Tooth TheatrePub and Moose's Tooth, Ben Shaine, Blackburn Heritage Trust, Blake Leighton, Brad Richie, Brooke Harrington, Bryan Campbell, Caroline Diamond, Charlotte Henson, Cirque Alaska, Cole Pampe, Copper River Record, Copper Valley Air Service, Currant Ridge/Cynthia & Andy Shidner, Dan Talcott, Daniel Osborne, Dave Sarbell, David Lynn Grimes, Denali Seed Company, Donna Weigel & John Watson, Edible Alaska/Amy O'Neill Houck & Jeremy Pataky, Elizabeth Schafer, Fumi Yasuda, Gaelle Merchant, Glacier View Campground, Golden Spruce, Hoarding Marmot, Horseradish & Honey, Howard Mozen, Jack Holt, Jake Armstrong, Jared Stayeart, Jay McCarthy, Jeremy Pataky, Jill Richie, Joe Macchina & Meatza Wagon, Joey Boots-Ebenfield, John Adams, John Rosapepe, Jon Cooperman, Jules Hanna, Justin Farren, Jurgen Ogrodnik, Karolina Pieczynksa, Kassandra Mirosh, Katie Birsch, Katina Leier, Kelsey McDonough, Kennicott Glacier Lodge, Kennecott-McCarthy Visitor's Guide, Kennicott Wilderness Guides, Kris Wiley, Krista Beyer, Kristin Link, Lauren Palamara, Leif & Christine Mjos, Little Bear Getaway Cabins, Lyn Plomaritis, Madz Volk, Major Marine Tours, Marco Lawrence, Mark Vail, Maria Shell, Mary Odden, Max Neale, Maya Huebner, McCarthy-Kennicott Historical Museum, McCarthy River Tours & Outfitters, Meghan Seifert, Merry Smith, Michael Anderson, Michelle Latvala, Michelle McAfee, Mike Davidson, Mike Loso, Mike & Julie Truskowski, Molly Mylius, Monte Montepare, Nancy Cook, Nate Anderson, Nathaniel Wilder Photography, Nik & Gina Merlino, Owen Mozen, Patt Garrett, Paul Scannell, Peggy Morsch, Pete Senty, Peter Bartholomaus, Porphyry Press, REI of Anchorage, Robin Child, Robin Mayo, Rosie Frankowski, Sabrina Simon, Sally Gibert & Dick Mylius, Sam Gregory, Seth Campbell, Seth Rosenberger, Shannon Kerr, Shauna Potocky, Sophie Gilbert, Sophie Littee, Spenard Building Supply, St. Elias Alpine Guides/Copper Oar, Stephens Harper, Steve Edwards & Family, Sue Marsjanik, Summit Spice & Tea, Tamara Harper, The Roadside Potato, Tim Bartholomaus, Tom Kizzia, Tyler Boyes & Brita Mjos, Varia Garon, Walt Tague, Waverly Reynolds, Wendy Pollock, Wild Scoops, WISE (Wrangell Institute for Science and the Environment), Wrangell Mountain Air

Highlights from the new Wrangell Mountains Center Strategic Plan, 2024-2026

Vision: People and wild places thriving together in a changing world

Mission: Connecting people with wildlands through art, science, and education in Alaska

Core Values

- **Collaboration.** We work together with our community, our neighbors, and our partners.
- **Experiential.** We empower life-long learning through interdisciplinary, hands-on creativity and discovery.
- **Inclusive.** We offer a safe, welcoming campus that celebrates diversity.
- **Stewardship.** We cherish and understand our region’s natural history and cultural traditions.
- **Sustainable.** We responsibly invest in our people and our campus. We strive to model low impact lifestyles.

Long-Term Goals

Programming: To maintain the health of ongoing successful programs and to expand programs through increasing partnerships, cultivating new revenue opportunities, and creating greater access for more diverse participants.

Facilities & Infrastructure: Enhance campus safety, functionality, and energy efficiency; improve maintenance; protect historic integrity; and ensure facilities can meet programmatic needs of today and the future.

Financial Sustainability: Increase financial health and fiscal sustainability through income growth and continued implementation of financial best practices.

Board & Staff Support: WMC board and staff feel supported in their roles and have the tools needed to thrive, including appropriate policies, resources, and compensation.

Supporting Organizations

Alaska Community Foundation
 Alaska Humanities Forum
 Alaska State Council on the Arts
 Rasmuson Foundation
 Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve



ALASKA
 HUMANITIES
 FORUM

Stephen & Mary Birch Foundation, Inc.



ALASKA STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS



Yes, I support connecting people with wildlands through art, science and education in Alaska!

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Enclosed is my gift of:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Basic Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Swimming Hole level | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 McCarthy Creek level |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Kennicott River level | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Fireweed Mtn level | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Donoho Peak level |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Bonanza Ridge level | <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,500 Mt. Blackburn level | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
- Check box to save trees and receive future annual newsletters by email, or send an email to info@wrangells.org

Checks: Mail to the Wrangell Mountains Center, PO Box 142972, Anchorage, AK 99514-2972

Online: Go to www.wrangells.org/support-us Consider becoming a sustaining (monthly) donor.

Interested in planned giving? Contact us to learn more at info@wrangells.org



Wrangell Mountains Center
PO Box 142972
Anchorage AK, 99514-2972
www.wrangells.org

*All articles except Message from Executive Director are authored by Sabrina Simon.
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The Wrangell Mountains Center is located on the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Ahtna Athabaskan Peoples. We acknowledge and honor the land stewardship and place-based knowledge of the Peoples of this territory.