

# Denali National Park and Preserve Annual Mountaineering Summary - 2011



## THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF 2011

As I look back on the 2011 climbing season, I can't help but feel like I am writing one of those family Christmas cards that echo the year's activities, achievements, and hardships. Perhaps it's the fact that I have yet again put off writing this until moments before leaving town for the holidays. However, the more I reflect, the more it feels like the events of last year brought the Talkeetna Ranger Station staff, climbers, their families, concessionaires, and the various climbing organizations closer together. Like a family, we faced the occasional squabble, but together we worked through tragedies and celebrated our combined accomplishments.

To begin, 2011 was a very tough year. A total of nine climbers died, making it the third deadliest season in the Alaska Range. The impacts of these losses are not something that can be put into words. To those who lost friends and loved ones, please accept our sincerest condolences.

Along with the tragedies came several examples of personal heroics that, without question, saved lives. Three people in particular whose actions made the difference are Pararescueman Sgt. Bobby Schnell, AMS mountain guide Pat Ormond, and helicopter pilot Andy Hermansky. Sgt. Schnell's used a small razor blade to perform a high altitude, life-saving emergency tracheotomy in the middle of the night at the 17,200-foot camp, enabling a dying climber to cling to life; guide Pat Ormond went out in the worst of conditions to help an ailing climber back to high camp after just completing a long summit day himself; and Andy Hermansky, time and time again, skillfully piloted the NPS helicopter to the upper reaches of Denali to pluck climbers off the mountain who would have otherwise perished, including the highest helicopter rescue in North American history.

Last year was full of activity on several policy issues. After years of public engagement, a decision was reached to increase the climbing fee from \$200 to \$350 (\$250 for age 24 & under). Though it was a difficult process that at times put the NPS at odds with members of the climbing community, the increased revenue will help sustain our program at necessary levels, particularly at a time when NPS operating budgets are shrinking. We are grateful to the American Alpine Club, the Access Fund, and the American Mountain Guides Association who worked closely with us to help guide the process and build consensus around what was a once a highly contentious issue. These groups exhibited that we share a set of values, namely the protection, conservation, and enjoyment of our nation's public lands.

Guided climbing has become increasingly popular over the last decade, and in response to shifting demand, the park embarked on a process that could allow for an increase in the amount of commercial guiding on Mt. McKinley. The 2006 Denali Back-

country Management Plan (BCMP) currently limits guided activities to 25% of allowable use. When the BCMP went into effect, restrictions on commercial use in wilderness areas had strong public support, including from the climbing community. Nevertheless, over time, the NPS has worked closely and successfully with mountain guides to help keep people safe and the mountain clean, and thus many question why the park would limit guiding on Mt. McKinley. Others also believe that a 'climber is a climber', whether they are guided or independent. Finding a solution is not easy, as we value the opportunity for people to experience Denali, whether guided or independent, but at the same time we feel strongly that Denali not become a place like many of the other seven summits where wilderness values and self-reliance ostensibly cease to exist.

We continued to find ways to make our operation more fiscally and environmentally sustainable. The new solar panels at the Ranger Station generated enough energy in 2011 to power 237 homes and offset almost five tons of carbon, the equivalent of planting 127 trees. In 2012, one new change will be a heater at Basecamp that will recycle the unused fuel from climbers to heat our camp instead of propane. Not only will it lower our propane costs, it will reduce the need to fly propane tanks onto the mountain and unused fuel back to Talkeetna.

In closing, I would like to recognize one last group of people. Led by Capt. David Olson (USN) with the assistance of Alaska Mountaineering School, the team included four Combat Wounded Veterans: AOCM Will Wilson (USN), SOC Seal John Cummings (USN), LT. Justin Legg (USAR), and SSGT Vic Thibeault (USAR). These wounded soldiers exemplified the highest levels of courage and determination in honor of their fallen comrades and their families. Not only were we honored and inspired to be able to spend time with this group, we had a lot of fun along the way.

*~South District Ranger John Leonard*



*The 2012 Wounded Warrior expedition (NPS Photo / Robert Zimmer)*

# 2011 STATISTICAL REVIEW

## DENALI QUICK FACTS—2011

**Average trip length:**

18.4 days

**Average trip length with summit:**

18.4 days

**Busiest summit days**

June 6	66
May 27	45
May 30	45
June 17	39
July 7	39

**Summits by month**

May	236
June	358
July	93

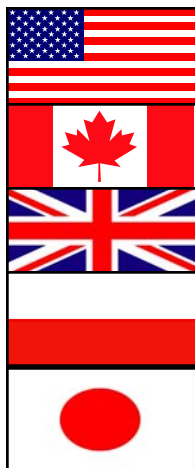
131 women attempted Denali in 2011, comprising 10.6% of all climbers

**Average age of a**

**Denali climber:**

39.8 years

### Top 5 Nations Represented on Denali in 2011



USA - 716

Canada - 67

UK - 60

Poland - 40

Japan - 31

### Statewide Distribution

AK, 112

WA, 86

CO, 84

CA, 80



Route	<u>Attempts</u> Climbers	<u>Summits</u> Climbers	<u>Summit</u> Rate
<b>MT. MCKINLEY</b>			
Cassin Ridge	19	12	63%
Messner Couloir	4	3	75
Muldrow Glacier	23	19	83
Muldrow Traverse	10	9	90
Northwest Buttress	6	0	0
West Buttress	1,135	623	55
West Buttress Traverse	6	6	100
West Rib	7	3	43
Upper West Rib	22	12	55
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,232</b>	<b>687</b>	<b>56%</b>
<b>MT. FORAKER</b>			
Infinite Spur	2	0	0%
Sultana	12	5	42
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>36%</b>



(NPS Photo / Mark Westman)

## NEW ROUTES AND NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS—2011

This season, 1,232 climbers attempted Mt. McKinley, a number consistent with the last handful of years and, in fact, the same number of climbers that attempted the mountain in 2002. Climbing activities in the Alaska Range also reflect this consistency, with quite a few parties exploring new routes and attempting to repeat established ones in a different, notable fashion. In 2011, there were significant variations climbed on each of the three prominent massifs, Mount McKinley, Foraker and Hunter. There were also new routes climbed on Mount Barrille and West Kahiltna Peak. The 'routes' described on the three largest peaks fit the general definition of 'a traveled way' or established way of travel between two points, while the 'routes' on the smaller summits more closely fit the traditional mountaineering definition of the term in which the route finishes at the summit of the intended peak.

On McKinley, Marty Schmidt and his son, Denali Schmidt, crowned a five week visit to the range by climbing the "Dad and Son" route which ascends the prominent buttress to the left of the West Rim route. Beginning from the entrance of the North East Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier, it re-joins the West Buttress route near Windy Corner. They found the climbing difficulty to be WI5, 5.10, A2 and completed the ascent in a 29 hour push from their camp in the North East Fork. The rock sections provided a change in pace from their climbing on Foraker's Sultana route as well as the snowy north and south summits of McKinley that they had visited in May. The duo had a remarkable trip for Denali's first foray into the range and Marty's umpteenth.

On the Foraker massif's Point 12,213' (located on south ridge of The Fin) Graham Zimmerman and Mark Allen climbed a route that they dubbed "To the Center" on May 26. They discovered Alaska Grade 4, AI 2 difficulties on their climb which was accomplished from a base camp established well away from the popular Alaska Range venues on the upper reaches of the Lacuna Glacier. The climb was their third attempt on the Foraker satellite peak which requires a 15 mile approach over a couple of passes from the Kahiltna Base Camp. For a more complete description, go to: [www.returnofthejollyroger.blogspot.com/](http://www.returnofthejollyroger.blogspot.com/)

The North Buttress on Mount Hunter received a new line in May by British climbers Jon Bracey and Matt Helliker. Six days were spent climbing to the left of the Bibler-Klewin (Moonflower) and right of the Wall of Shadows. The team employed a port-a-ledge on the notoriously unrelenting buttress. From their highest camp, they made a 36-hour push to the top of the buttress via the top 13 pitches of the Bibler-Klewin where they decided to turn around. Dubbed "The Cartwright Connection", Alaska Grade 6, M6, AI 6, 5.8, A2 this route is a significant variation to the original "Moonflower" route. See their blog at [www.moonflower-expedition.blogspot.com/](http://www.moonflower-expedition.blogspot.com/)

Just off of the Kahiltna Glacier, every West Buttress ascensionist looks at the west ridge of West Kahiltna Peak as they make their home at Camp One. On May 23, two Italians, Diego Giovannini and Fabio Meraldi, ascended the ridge and reported finding 75

degree ice and 5.8 rock climbing on the Grade 4 route. Their climb ascends the obvious west ridge of West Kahiltna Peak (ridge closest to the North East Fork of the Kahiltna). Such an obvious feature might have been climbed previously, but there are no recorded ascents prior to this one. It is believed that Japanese climbers Tatsuro Yamada and Yuto Inoue may have climbed this line in 2008 while traversing West and East Kahiltna Peaks before they proceeded up the Cassin Ridge. However, Yamada and Inoue perished near the summit of Denali, and as their friends could not confirm which line they ascended, the truth may never be known. For now, the Italians' feat stands as the first recorded ascent. Meraldi and Giovannini reported moderate and enjoyable climbing difficulties, but reported the final section of the ridge to be dangerously threatened by an overhanging serac. They descended the same route by down-climbing and rappelling.

In the Ruth Gorge, Mount Barrille was climbed by a new route on May 13 when Americans Ben Gilmore and Hans Johnstone made a 12-hour trip from the bergschrund up to the summit and back down the other side to the Mountain House. Their route climbs a line on the northeast face of Barrille and was reported as "destined to be a classic". Primarily an ice and mixed climbing challenge, the route ascends mixed terrain with a few key traverses and gains the Northeast Ridge for the final part to the summit. Descent was made by the northwest slopes to the Mountain House. The note that the climbers left at the ranger station named the route "Alaska Primer", grade IV, 5.9+ Mixed, WI 5R.

Of other significant accomplishments in the Range this season, Andreas Fransson from Sweden completed the first ski descent of the South Face of Denali on May 23, a fantastic statement of one person's courage to challenge himself in the mountains. As a movie is sometimes worth a thousand words, take a look at Andreas' account here: <http://vimeo.com/29250081>. On Mount Huntington, the Phantom Wall's original route nearly saw its second ascent. In late April, Jared Vilhauer and Tim Dittman made it through most of the route's difficulties, but at their high bivouac, Vilhauer became ill with the flu, and the team was forced to retreat.

In the speed category, the Cassin Ridge was climbed from the bergschrund to Kahiltna Horn in 14 hours, 40 minutes, by British climbers Will Sim and Jonathan Griffith. On Mount Hunter, Colin Haley and Nils Nielsen made an extraordinarily fast ascent of the north buttress of Hunter, climbing the Deprivation route to the top of the buttress in 9 hours. They were caught by a storm atop the buttress and were unable to complete the route to Hunter's summit. The Korean team of Sukmun Choi, Heeyong Park, and Jongil Park was the only team to reach the summit of Hunter by way of the north buttress this season, with their mid-May ascent of the Bibler-Klewin route.

~Ranger Joe Reichert

## RESCUE SUMMARY - 2011

The search and rescue missions performed by Denali rangers in 2011 are summarized below. For more detailed information on these and other mountaineering missions performed in 2011, refer to *Accidents in North American Mountaineering-2012*, published by the American Alpine Club.

**Fatal Avalanche in Root Canal:** Five members of two guided groups were hit by an icefall (serac) avalanche while camped on the Root Canal Glacier below the south face of the Moose's Tooth in the Ruth Gorge. All five were blown out of their tents, partially buried, and their gear scattered by the force of the blast. The NPS received the distress call in the early hours of April 28 and flew to the site at first morning light. Rangers determined that one of the climbers had succumbed to traumatic injuries incurred in the avalanche.

**Fall at Pig Hill, 1 Fatality:** Four members of a guided West Buttress expedition (one guide and three clients) fell shortly after leaving the summit ridge on their descent of Pig Hill at approximately 19,700 feet. One client broke a leg in that fall, while the other members of the party contracted minor injuries. After attempts to move the client with a broken leg to a potential landing zone, the guide and two other climbers made the decision to descend to high camp in the face of increasingly severe weather and wind. The guide and one of these two clients were able to descend back to high camp. The guide was treated for partial thickness frostbite to his hands and the other climber suffered superficial frostbite to his face. The other descending client did not make it back to high camp.

The NPS was notified of the emergency at 3:45 am and launched a rescue effort shortly thereafter. An Air National Guard C-130 circled the upper mountain to locate the two clients and to provide weather observations. After waiting for summit winds to subside, the NPS high altitude helicopter pilot flew direct to the climber with the broken leg at 19,500 feet on the Football Field. Pilot Andy Hermansky hovered overhead as the injured and severely hypothermic climber crawled into a rescue basket secured to the end of a long line. He was subsequently flown to base camp, then on to an Anchorage hospital for treatment for severe frostbite and the leg injury. The third client was found deceased near 18,300 feet at Denali Pass. A later autopsy determined his death was attributed to exposure to the elements, compounded by injuries (a broken rib and dislocated shoulder) sustained in the fall. His body was recovered by NPS personnel via helicopter short haul.

**Fatal Fall on Autobahn:** Three climbers left high camp unroped for a summit bid on May 16. Weather began to deteriorate above Denali Pass and the team made the decision to turn around near Zebra Rocks at 18,500 feet. For the descent, two of the climbers roped up to each other, while the third climber chose not to. The three climbers then began their descent of the Autobahn with the two roped climbers going first, and the third, unroped climber following behind. Shortly thereafter, the team of two heard the third climber calling their names and turned around to see him sliding, unable to self arrest, down the slope

leading to the Upper Peters Glacier. An NPS patrol witnessed the fall from high camp and responded to the fallen climber's location, approximately 1,400 feet from where he fell near Denali Pass. A paramedic on the patrol pronounced the climber dead at the scene and his body was recovered from high camp two days later.

**Mount Frances Fatalities:** On May 23, two climbers were reported overdue from an attempt to climb Mount Frances when they did not return to the Kahiltna basecamp as planned. In response, NPS rangers flew a reconnaissance mission and spotted dark shapes in what appeared to be avalanche debris at the bottom of a significant gully on the west side of Mount Frances. Upon landing near the location, rangers uncovered the bodies of the two missing climbers and determined that they had either been swept off of the face by an avalanche or had fallen from a point high on their climbing route. Both were deceased and had suffered significant trauma associated with a long fall in complex terrain. Both bodies were recovered.

**Fatal Fall on Autobahn:** Late in the day on May 25, a guided group of four (three climbers and one guide) fell while descending the Autobahn just below Denali Pass at 18,200 feet. According to reports by the two surviving team members, the team had started their descent with the guide at the rear of the rope and the three climbers in front. The climber leading the way down was having difficulty locating the fixed anchors to clip their climbing rope into for protection; thus, the guide made the decision to reverse the order of the rope team and descend first with the three climbers following. Shortly after resuming the descent from Denali Pass, one of the climbers fell and the team was not able to arrest their fall, which continued to the bottom of the slope on the Upper Peters Glacier some 1,400 feet below. The guide and one client perished, while the other two clients survived with significant injuries. NPS rangers, a large contingent of volunteers, and Air National Guard Pararescuemen at high camp responded and undertook significant measures to save the life of one of the climbers, including an emergency tracheotomy. (see *Denali Pro Award story*, p.6)

**Three Cases of Altitude Illness on Summit Day:** An NPS climbing ranger and four volunteers were descending from the summit of Denali and came across a solo climber who was ataxic and appeared to be suffering from altitude illness. The patrol determined that the soloist was unable to descend under his own power and required a rescue. While they were attending to this climber and making arrangements for an air evacuation, another climber approached their location and collapsed into the snow face first. Medically trained volunteers made a rapid assessment of this patient and likewise determined that he was

## RESCUE SUMMARY, continued

suffering from altitude illness and could not descend under his own power. The NPS team was able to evacuate these climbers by attaching them to a short haul line on the NPS helicopter via a “screamer suit” and they were flown to base camp. The NPS patrol members then continued their descent, but were soon notified via radio of a third climber in distress near the 18,700-foot level on the upper mountain. They quickly descended to this location and determined that yet again, the climber was suffering from altitude illness and could not descend. The third climber was also evacuated via short haul to base camp and transferred to an air ambulance.

**Cardiac Event on the Lower Kahiltna:** On June 7, an NPS mountaineering patrol encountered a climber at approximately 7,000 feet on the lower Kahiltna Glacier who was experiencing significant chest pain and labored breathing. The patient initially declined medical treatment, but after consultation with medical personnel, consented to treatment and he was evacuated via air ambulance from his location on the glacier.

**Fatal Cardiac Arrest at High Camp:** A 51-year old male went into sudden cardiac arrest in his tent at high camp on June 10 after climbing to the summit of Denali earlier that day. The team that he had climbed to the summit with later reported that the climber had suffered from altitude illness to the point of vomiting several times, stumbling, and losing his footing while descending to high camp. Upon his arrival at high camp, his climbing companions suggested that he check in with NPS rangers at high camp but the climber stated that he felt fine and would prefer to take a nap. He entered the tent he was sharing with two other climbers, and they reported he fell asleep quickly and immediately exhibited “Cheyne-Stokes” respirations. Shortly thereafter, they did not hear any breathing sounds and they opened his sleeping bag to find him unresponsive and not breathing. The tent mates notified NPS rangers who initiated CPR which was terminated after 30 minutes without finding signs of a pulse. After conferring with the NPS medical director, the climber was pronounced dead. Poor weather delayed recovery of his body until June 16.

**Altitude Illness at 14,200 feet:** A client on a guided expedition began to display symptoms of High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE), including a persistent headache, shortness of breath, elevated pulse and respirations, a productive cough, and wet lung sounds. He received medical treatment at the 14,200 foot camp. His condition improved over time and he was eventually able to rejoin his team and descend under his own power.

**Solo Climber Search and Recovery:** On the evening of June 28, a guided group at high camp contacted NPS rangers at the 14,200-foot camp via radio to report that a solo climber had been on the upper mountain for over 24 hours and had not yet returned

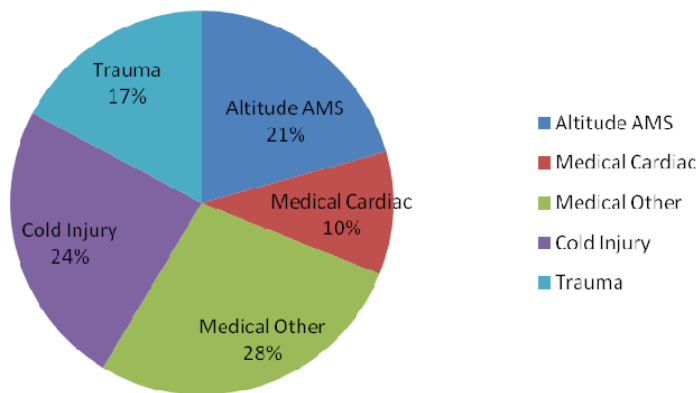
to his tent at high camp. NPS rangers notified Talkeetna personnel of the potential need for a search and rescue operation which, due to weather and time of day, could not commence until the morning. The climber was last seen ascending from high camp to Denali Pass. There were no other climbing parties on the upper mountain at this time. The NPS launched a full scale search via ground and air. During the second day of the search, NPS rangers at the 14,200-foot camp spotted what appeared to be a body at the base of a long gully below the summit plateau known as the Orient Express. The NPS helicopter with a ranger onboard flew to the site and confirmed that it did appear to be a body with clothing matching the description of that of the missing climber. Rangers and volunteers at the 14,200-foot camp climbed to the site and confirmed the identity of the missing climber, then recovered his remains. Events leading up to the climbers fall and death are not known, though it was discovered that he had left his backpack and skis at a point close to the entrance to the Orient Couloir.

**Windy Corner Altitude Illness:** During a gradual ascent as part of a guided group on the West Buttress, a climber, perhaps secondary to a respiratory infection and possible altitude illness, became too fatigued to continue his ascent to the 14,200-foot camp. At the request of his guides, NPS rangers and volunteers responded and provided medical care and transported the climber to the 14,200-foot camp. Over the course of three days of treatment, the climber’s condition improved to the point that he was able to descend under his own power with assistance from his team.

**Altitude Illness at Browne’s Tower:** In an attempt of the Muldrow Glacier route on Denali’s north side, a two member team made a rapid ascent from Wonder Lake to approximately 14,900-feet below a feature known as Browne’s Tower. One of the team members started to feel symptoms of altitude illness during his first day at camp, and his partner contacted an NPS team at an adjacent camp the following day. Upon medical assessment, the NPS team concluded that the patient’s condition warranted an immediate evacuation. The level of oxygen in his blood was measured to be approximately 35% and he was displaying signs of severely reduced mental and physical capabilities, indicating the onset of serious altitude illness. The climber was evacuated via the NPS helicopter and loaded internally from a landing spot the NPS team cut from the snow on Karsten’s Ridge.

**Chest Pain at Windy Corner:** During a gradual ascent of the West Buttress, a guided climber began experiencing chest pain while at rest. At the request of his guides, NPS rangers and volunteers responded to his location near Windy Corner at 13,500-feet and provided initial medical care and then transport to the 14,200-foot camp. His condition did not improve over two days of treatment and the climber was evacuated from the 14,200-foot camp via NPS helicopter.

# MEDICAL SUMMARY



In 2011, 36 climbers were stricken with injuries or illnesses that required medical intervention by the NPS rangers and volunteers. Cold injuries and non-cardiac medical problems (includes respiratory infections, gastrointestinal distress, yeast infections, etc) each accounted for roughly one-quarter of the medical responses.

Photos: Menno Boermans



# MISLOW-SWANSON DENALI PRO AWARD 2011

The Denali mountaineering ranger staff selected Sgt. Bobby Schnell as the recipient of the 2011 Mislow-Swanson Denali Pro Award. Bobby, an Anchorage-based Air National Guard Pararescueman from the 212<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron, was a team member on a Dutch-American military expedition. While climbers with medical and rescue expertise are frequently called on to help others while climbing Denali, few circumstances compare to the incredible efforts of Bobby and his team.

Firstly, while his team was acclimatizing at the 14,200-foot camp, Bobby assisted rangers with the patient care of multiple sick climbers. Bobby volunteered his medical skills, starting IV fluids for a climber suffering from altitude sickness and dehydration. Throughout the climb, Bobby always made himself available to help.

On the night of May 25, a climbing team sustained a 1,400-foot fall from Denali Pass. Bobby joined the initial response as a rescue team leader, using his extensive rescue training as a para-

medic to triage the four fallen climbers, finding that two had died in the fall and two were critically injured. In the demanding environment at 17,200 feet, not to mention sub zero temperatures, Bobby performed a lifesaving “cricothyrotomy”, a surgical technique to insert a breathing tube into the trachea of the critically injured climber. Bobby led the efforts to maintain the patient’s breathing, administer drugs, and keep the patient stable through the night until a helicopter evacuation could occur the next morning. Without the efforts of Bobby, James Mohr would have died from his injuries.

Bobby’s willingness to help others exemplifies the spirit of the Mislow-Swanson Denali Pro Award. The rangers are honored to recognize Bobby for his exceptional service to others and his life-saving actions.

~ Nominated by Kevin Wright

## MISLOW-SWANSON DENALI PRO AWARD, continued

While 2011 was a year of considerable tragedy in the Alaska Range, the adversity often brought out the best in the Denali climbing community. As such, there were many worthy nominees for the 2011 Mislow-Swanson Denali Pro Award. This year we highlight not only the recipient of the award, *Pararescueman Sgt. Bobby Schnell*, but we also applaud the other nominees and thank them for their incredible contributions.

Alaska Mountaineering School Guide Kevin Mahoney was nominated for the 2011 Mislow-Swanson Denali Pro Award due to his efforts during a serac fall accident on April 28. Mahoney and one client were camped next to the Root Canal airstrip along with another guide and his two clients when the serac collapsed on the West Face of the Bear's Tooth. All climbers were ejected from their tents and sleeping bags when hit by the air blast generated by the large mass of falling ice. During the air blast and subsequent debris burial, one climber was fatally injured. The remaining four were exposed to frigid temperatures with little, if any, cold weather gear. Mahoney took the leadership reins on scene and initiated the NPS rescue. In the ensuing four hours, Mahoney was left to triage patient care needs of the group until the NPS helicopter and mountaineering rangers arrived on scene at 5:30 am. He was able to keep the group focused on the necessary tasks at hand, while continually monitoring each for signs of hypothermia and any underlying injury incurred during the accident. Undoubtedly, Mahoney's experience and training kept this extremely chaotic scene from becoming hazardous to the other uninjured climbers that night.

~Nominated by David Weber

*Group nomination for the rescue party that assisted during the fatal accident at Denali Pass on May 25, including: Pararescuemen Bobby Schnell, Matt Kirby, Jay Casello, and 12 other members of their US/Dutch military expedition; independent climbers Max Talsky, Jacon Mayer, and Alex Sargent; and Mountain Trip Guides Mike Burmeister, Adam Smith, and Eric Gullickson.*

During the same incident in which Denali Pro Award Winner Bobby Schnell performed the high elevation tracheotomy, the nominees listed above, upon request from the NPS ranger at high camp, enthusiastically joined the rescue effort. Each of the nominees played an instrumental role in the rescue effort providing strength, technical rigging, medical skills, warm clothing, rescue equipment, and medical supplies. Most importantly they placed the lives of others above their own summit ambitions. The entire rescue party worked through the night until a helicopter was able to evacuate the injured climbers to Anchorage hospitals.

~ Nominated by Kevin Wright

Two brothers, Britten and Brooks Russell, were nominated for the 2011 Mislow-Swanson Denali Pro award for their exemplary mountain behavior and attempt to save the life of Brian Young, a cardiac victim who died at high camp on June 10. When Young initially arrived at the 17,200-foot camp without a tent, Britten and Brooks selflessly offered a sleeping space in their tent. Then, right after Young's 19-hour summit push, he woke Britten and Brooks to ask if he could climb into their tent for some rest. Moments after lying down, Young stopped breathing. Britten and Brooks attempted to wake him but he remained unresponsive. They alerted NPS rangers, and without hesitation they assisted with CPR efforts. Despite the quick response, Young could not be revived. The Russell brothers were strong and well-prepared for the many challenges mountaineers face climbing Denali, allowing them to help when help was needed.

~ Nominated by Tucker Chenoweth

Aaron Divine, Brian Kasavana, and John Stoddard, three instructors on a 2011 NOLS Muldrow Glacier climb -- in addition to demonstrating exemplary mountain stewardship including excellent cache management, trash removal, and human waste management -- were proactive and selfless in their assistance to NPS during an incident at 14,600-feet near Browne's Tower. When a Russian climber became ill with high altitude cerebral and pulmonary edema and required NPS intervention, these three instructors donated medical equipment, supplies, and rescue gear to assist the ailing climber. Preserving the unique wilderness of Denali and serving the climbers who come to climb it is the aim of the Talkeetna Ranger staff; Aaron, Brian, and John clearly understand this goal and worked to help the NPS achieve it.

~Nominated by Chris Erickson

During the early morning hours of May 12, after returning to the 17,200-foot camp after a long summit day Alaska Mountaineering School Guide Pat Ormond went above and beyond to help save the lives of members of another group who had become separated from their guide high on the mountain. While helping coordinate rescue efforts with the NPS, Ormond noticed what he believed to be a climber struggling down from Denali Pass. Knowing that the climber would have little chance to make it back to camp by himself, Ormond went out in very high winds, extreme cold temperatures, and white out conditions to safely retrieve the struggling climber. Throughout the entirety of the rescue efforts, which lasted over 24-hours, Ormond took care of the survivors of the other team and helped coordinate rescue efforts all while keeping his clients safe and happy.

~Nominated by John Leonard

## A-STAR GETS A HIGH ALTITUDE WORKOUT

Enormous thanks go out to the Temsco Helicopter team for a safe and action-packed search and rescue (SAR) season on Denali. Not counting any routine re-supply flights to the range, A-Star B3 pilot Andy Hermansky, supported by mechanic Kirt Petterson, flew 18 SAR-related missions to the upper mountain, including a record short-haul rescue of a severely injured climber at 19,500 feet. Since 2010, Denali National Park and Preserve has



Photo: Menno Boermans

had a 120-day contract with Temsco Helicopters for the invaluable A-Star B3 helicopter and its crew, including Hermansky, Petterson, and backup pilot Scott Yukimura. Below is a quick summary of this year's SAR helicopter missions:

### Short-haul (External 'Live' Loads)

- 1 @ 19,500 feet, using rescue basket
- 2 @ 19,500 feet, using screamer suits
- 1 @ 18,700 feet, using screamer suit
- 1 @ 18,200 feet, with ranger attendant
- 6 @ 13,000 feet, with ranger attendants (*Mt. Sanford, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park*)

### Long-line Operations

- 2 @ 17,200 feet
- 2 @ 7,200 feet

### Evacuations (Internal Loads)

- 6 @ 17,200 feet
- 2 @ 14,600 feet (Browne's Tower)
- 2 @ 14,200 feet
- 1 @ 6,000 feet

### Grid Search Flights

Over 6 hours between 16,000 and 20,320 feet

## THE LAUNCH OF DENALI RESCUE VOLUNTEERS

### Denali Rescue Volunteers

[www.denalirescue.com](http://www.denalirescue.com)



In the autumn of 2011, a new 501(c)(3) non-profit organization was launched to help support the mountaineering Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP) program at Denali National Park and Preserve. The organization is the brainchild of Jen Latham, a Denali mountaineering volunteer and the wife of one of Denali's mountaineering rangers, Brandon Latham. Denali Rescue Volunteers is modeled after the successful "Friends of Yosemite Search and Rescue" or Friends of YOSAR program at Yosemite National Park.

The mission of Denali Rescue Volunteers is to provide ancillary support to the volunteers of the mountaineering program of Denali National Park. Donations, both financial and 'in-kind', will be used for:

- > Travel and equipment stipends for current volunteers.
- > A gear/equipment cache for future volunteers.

> Stipends for current volunteers to attend medical and technical trainings.

> Creating and maintaining the Denali Rescue Volunteers website at [www.denalirescue.com](http://www.denalirescue.com).

Donations are administered through an independent board. The board of Denali Rescue Volunteers is made up of present and former volunteers, as well as advisors who have worked in and around Denali National Park as medical professionals and rescue personnel.

No donation is used to directly support the rescue operations. The costs associated with missions are covered through funding appropriated to the NPS Washington, DC office.

For more information on Denali Rescue Volunteers, go to their website at [www.denalirescue.com](http://www.denalirescue.com) or email them at [denalivolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:denalivolunteers@gmail.com).



## 2011 MOUNTAINEERING VOLUNTEERS-IN-PARKS (VIPs)

Thank you to the 50 volunteers who contributed almost 13,000 work hours to the Denali mountaineering program in 2011!



Robert Alexander  
 Tom Bailly  
 Chase Berenson  
 Menno Boermans  
 Travis Brock  
 Brendan Burns  
 Greg Campbell  
 Paul Campbell  
 Shelly Campbell  
 Mark Dalpes  
 Andrew Dietrick  
 Dr. Jennifer Dow  
 Alan Feder  
 Thomas Gall  
 Joshua Garner  
 Blake Gleason

Daniel Goddard  
 James Gustafson  
 David Hanson  
 Stuart Harris  
 Blaine Horner  
 Jane Jackson  
 Renny Jackson  
 Mik Jedlicka  
 Gregory Juhl  
 Ang Tsering Lama  
 Anthony Larson  
 Jeff Lebegue  
 Roy Leggett  
 Chandra Llewellyn  
 Luke Lohmueller  
 David Lundin

Paul Marcolini  
 Scott McIntosh  
 Sarah McConkie  
 Martha McLaughlin  
 Timothy McLaughlin  
 Mark Miller  
 Mary Palko  
 Andrew Pinkham  
 Michelle O'Neil Puryear  
 Corey Rubinfeld  
 David Saurman  
 Brian Scheele  
 Dawa Sherpa  
 Skander Spies  
 Stacy Tarango  
 Trine Vik

Andrew White  
 Jon-Philip Zamarron

*In addition to VIPs, Denali staff would like to thank our military patrol members:*

**Air National Guard  
 Pararescueman**

**Richard Alexander  
 U.S. Army - Mountain  
 Warfare Training Center**

Tom Bevins  
 Michael Heth

*NPS Photos this page by Mark Westman (upper left); Shelly Campbell (lower right); All others by Menno Boermans*



**2011 SOUTH DISTRICT STAFF**



**NPS Photo** - Lounging: R. Zimmer; Standing (l to r): M. McLaughlin, J. Loomis, M. Hendrickson, P. Robinson, T. Chenoweth, R. Robinson, C. Erickson, J. Leonard, B. Latham, M. Westman, C. Gentzel, J. Reichert, D. Weber, M. Smothers, B. Henry, C. Birdsall, B. Reynolds

*South District Ranger  
Mountaineering Rangers*

- John Leonard
- Tucker Chenoweth
- Chris Erickson
- Coley Gentzel
- Matt Hendrickson
- Brandon Latham
- John Loomis
- Joe Reichert
- Roger Robinson
- Mik Shain
- Dave Weber
- Mark Westman
- Kevin Wright
- Renny Jackson

*Rescue/Shorthaul Consultant*

- Helicopter Pilot*
- Helicopter Mechanic*
- Admin/Public Information*
- Supervisory VUA*
- Visitor Use Assistants*

- Chief of Planning*
- Education Specialist*
- Interpretive Ranger*
- Interpretive SCA\**
- Maintenance*
- Medical Directors*

- Andy Hermansky
- Kirt Petterson
- Maureen McLaughlin
- Missy Smothers
- Bill Reynolds
- Pam Robinson
- Robert Zimmer
- Miriam Valentine
- Bob Henry
- Jay Katzen
- Whitney Kempfort
- Cary Birdsall
- Jennifer Dow, M.D.
- Peter Hackett, M.D.

\*SCA = Student Conservation Association Intern