

Denali

The air is thin and it's -10 degrees as you plod up a snowy mountain with your down suit, goggles, boots, and crampons. This is the tallest peak on the continent, the 20,310-foot Denali. You're so high you can see the curve of the earth on the horizon. Far below, the rest of this park is a vast wilderness of wind-battered peaks, boreal forests, tundra, and braided rivers. This place is BIG and so is the wildlife. Half-ton grizzly bears lumber about looking for berries and roots. Wolf packs sneak up on caribou herds as they graze. And see those white dots on the cliffs? Those are Dall sheep in their very steep homes.





DENALI

STATE:

Alaska

FOUNDED:

1917

SIZE:

6,075,080 acres



CARIBOU

It's tough to be a caribou calf. More than half of Denali's calves don't make it past the first two weeks of life because wolves, moose, coyotes, and even golden eagles eat them.



SNOWSHOE HARE

In autumn, the snowshoe hare molts its brown-and-gray coat in order to grow a white one that blends in perfectly with the snow.



QUAKING ASPEN

Aspens look like individual trees, but they're actually one big organism connected underground. Each trunk is an identical clone.



DINOSAUR TRACKS & FOSSILS

- About 70 million years ago, a very different cast of wildlife roamed Denali: dinosaurs! Paleontologists have found more than 270 fossil and dinosaur track sites here. Back in the Cretaceous period, the climate was more like the Pacific Northwest's. Imagine metasequoia trees towering over lush ferns and wetlands. Duck-billed dinosaurs as big as school buses stomped around in herds, and predators the size of microwaves soared overhead on 25-foot wingspans.



DALL SHEEP

Sheep horns grow throughout the year but slow down in late fall during mating season. By counting the rings on horns—called annuli—you can figure out the animal's age.



ARCTIC TERN

Arctic terns are believed to migrate farther than any other bird on the planet—more than 37,000 miles round trip from Antarctica to the Arctic.

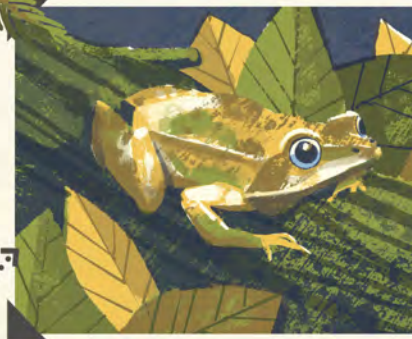
SLED DOGS

So much snow falls in Denali National Park that the roads close every winter. So how do rangers patrol the wilderness? On dogsleds! These Alaskan huskies are the only sled dogs in the country that help protect a national park. Alaska Natives have been using this mode of transportation for thousands of years. Today these dogs are still more reliable than snowmobiles. Even in temperatures of -40, all they need is some food and off they go!



MARSH LABRADOR TEA

Labrador tea seeds know to sprout when the soil gets warm and the days grow long. There's almost 24 hours of daylight here in summer!



WOOD FROG

This fingernail-sized amphibian stops its heart, turns to ice, and appears dead all winter. In spring, within hours of thawing, it's hopping around again.

NORTHERN LIGHTS



On a dark night, look up to see curtains of otherworldly green light swirl and flicker across the sky. These are the northern lights, the planet's most spectacular natural light show. Also called the aurora, the phenomenon only occurs in high latitudes when energetic particles from the sun collide with gases in our atmosphere. People travel thousands of miles for a chance to see these eerie multicolored lights.



WOLF

Have you ever heard the sound of a wolf howling? No one knows exactly what the wolves are saying. Perhaps they're trying to find each other or sound the alarm that a rival pack is nearby.

BLACK SPRUCE

This evergreen grows in harsh conditions and acidic soil just above the permafrost, another name for permanently frozen soil. Even a tiny, stunted spruce could be more than 100 years old.

