

## DENALI NATIONAL PARK

*Denali National Park and Preserve, summary.* This season was not only another warm one, but also a record year for climbers. Attempts on Denali alone totaled a whopping 1,340 climbers, breaking the former record of 1,305.

The year began with the tragic loss of mountain guide, former NPS volunteer, and good friend Johnny Soderstrom in early February. On a winter attempt of Mt. Huntington, Johnny was swept away by an avalanche and buried in a crevasse. This was a huge loss for his family and friends, including the local Alaskan communities of Trapper Creek and Talkeetna. Later, in mid-May, twin brothers Jerry and Terry Humphrey of Nagley, Ohio were killed in a fall while descending Denali Pass. This accident sent a chilling, early season reminder to all climbers that the descent can be an unforgiving and dangerous part of the climb. After these heartrending accidents, the remainder of the climbing season seemed to proceed with caution. The mountain remained remarkably safe, with only a few rescues and no other fatalities in the Alaska Range.

In other news, mountaineering rangers conducting a late summer aerial patrol on August 17 documented that the firnline on the Kahiltna Glacier had reached an unprecedented level of 7,200'. Historically, the firnline has been much lower, but the last two seasons have been noticeably warmer. In both years, the first two weeks of May recorded temperatures above freezing with numerous days of rain instead of snow. Digital photos documented the rising firnline, as well as the disturbing sight of solid human waste from the outhouses, which melted on top of the glacier ice. We are currently considering how to deal with outhouse melt-out in the future. One suggestion is to require all solid human waste at base camp be carried out with Clean Mountain Cans (CMCs).

2005 Statistical Year in Review:

*Of the record-breaking 1,340 climbers who attempted Mt. McKinley, 775 (58%) reached the summit. In the previous record year of 2001, 772 (59%) of the 1,305 attempts were successful. As per usual, June was the busiest summit month, with 515 summits recorded. One climber reached the top in April, 162 in May, and 95 in July. June 15 was the busiest day (101 climbers), followed by June 5 (69), and June 17 (51).*

*The average trip length for an expedition on Mt. McKinley was 17.3 days.*

*The average age of a Denali climber was 38 years in 2005, a statistic that has inched upward from an average age of 34 in 2000.*

*The record for the oldest man to summit Mt. McKinley was broken for the second consecutive season. The current record is in the hands of Sadao Hoshiko of Oita-shi, Japan. Mr. Hoshiko summited Mt. McKinley on June 15, 2005, roughly one month after celebrating his 74th birthday!*

*Women constituted 11% of the total climbers and recorded a summit percentage rate of 45%.*

*Guided expeditions (including clients and guides) accounted for 37% of registered climbers in 2005. This percentage has increased annually since 2000, when guided expeditions accounted for 24% of all McKinley and Foraker climbers.*

*Thirty-two climbers attempted Mt. Foraker; four reached the top, all via the Talkeetna Ridge in May.*

*For more information, go to: [www.nps.gov/dena/home/mountaineering/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/dena/home/mountaineering/index.htm)*