

On May 26th, 26 Penn State geoscience students left the Deike Building parking lot to begin the Summer Field School, the yearly rite of passage in the Geosciences degree that most students take between their junior and senior years when they have completed the core of the curriculum. Although many are originally from Pennsylvania, the field camp class of 2011 was diverse, with 8 women and 18 men and numerous students from as far away as Saudia Arabia and Malaysia. Once the students arrived in Utah for the start of the course, they began a six-week set of exercises that takes advantage of the diverse geology and spectacular exposure of the western U. S., while following a counterclockwise loop that begins in Utah but includes a stay in Red Lodge Montana, the Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, the Challis National Forest in Idaho and then back to Little Cottonwood Canyon in Utah.



The field camp dealt with record snowfalls this year, which had a serious impact on logistics. Here, the caravan traverses Beartooth Pass.



At the Book Cliffs, the students measured stratigraphic sections while using the concepts of sequence stratigraphy to interpret sedimentary strata. Despite an unrelenting rain-snow mixture, there were no complaints.



At the Stockton Bar in Utah, the students mapped Quaternary strata while walking in the footsteps of G. K. Gilbert.



The students spent 10 days at the Yellowstone Bighorn Research Association cabins along the Beartooth Front. Penn State has belonged to this organization, founded by Princeton in the 1920's, for nearly 50 years. The students learned the basics of geologic mapping at Elk Basin but also observed the local pig races, and due to the unusual weather patterns, were able to enjoy numerous bonfires in the fire pit built by Penn State Alumni in 2000.



Here they are-- the contestants in this year's mustache-growing contest.



The students take a quick break while mapping the conglomerates and volcanics of the Challis National Forest in Idaho.



The Snowbird Ski Area was open when the field camp arrived in Little Cottonwood Canyon in late June, but due to deep snow drifts, “Duff’s bench” was inaccessible. Still, all the students recognized at least two of the thrust faults that duplicate the stratigraphy in the mapping area (and the third was buried in snow). Many students stopped at the Alta Peruvian Lodge to look at the bench inscribed by Penn State Alumni to honor Duff Gold, the field camp director in the 1980’s and 1990’s.



On July 4th, the students marked the last week of field camp by organizing an International Food contest, with representative dishes from around the world.

