



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

NPS Alaska Region
240 W. 5th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501

907-644-3512 phone

Alaska National Parks News Release

Release date: June 6, 2012

Contact(s): Ralph Moore

Phone number: (907) 246-3305

Date: June 4, 2012

Centennial of 20th Century's Largest Volcanic Eruption

Wednesday, June 6, marks the 100th anniversary of the largest volcanic eruption of the 20th century -- Novarupta. Located on the Alaska Peninsula within what is now Katmai National Park, Novarupta's eruption was 30 times larger than the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, lasting 60 hours and sending ash upward for 20 miles.

Winds deposited volcanic ash over Kodiak over a foot deep and carried the ash as far away as Africa. Material from the eruption covered the immediate area around Novarupta up to 700 feet deep, yet few outside Alaska knew what had happened.

Four years later, in 1916, a National Geographic expedition led by Robert Griggs explored this area and named the remarkable landscape "The Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes." This became the impetus behind designation of Katmai National Monument in 1918. The monument was later expanded and became a national park in 1980.

Today, the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes is a remote area that may be accessed from Brooks Camp by road, and is a popular backpacking destination with challenging river crossings and frequent gale-force winds. Rivers cut sharply through the solidified ash layers and vegetation is slowly moving back into the landscape.

Volcanoes along the Alaska Peninsula are monitored by the United States Geological Survey's Alaska Volcano Observatory (AVO) with seismic equipment placed strategically to relay information that aids in prediction of future volcanic events.

A number of events commemorating the eruption of Novarupta are taking place this year. A calendar, additional information on volcanos from the AVO and an excellent timeline of the eruption history is available at <http://www.avo.alaska.edu/Katmai2012/> as well as on Twitter at Katmai1912.

Additional information on Katmai National Park is available at www.nps.gov/katm, and you can follow them on Twitter at KatmaiNPS.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.