



INSIDE YOSEMITE

By Kristi Evans

Two NMU friends followed a similar path to the National Park Service. Both landed seasonal jobs at Yosemite—first while they were in school and then continuing afterward—and both were assigned to work at Tuolumne Meadows, in the western section of Yosemite National Park. In fact,

Kim O'Hagan

'10 BS says she landed an interview in large part because

Anna Kerr '09

BS, who had worked there first, was one of the names she dropped in her cover letter.

"I owe a lot to Northern for the fact I'm working here," says O'Hagan, who spoke by mobile phone while hiking to a grove of giant sequoias. "Living there gave me a lot of passion and love for the outdoors because there was so much to take in so close to campus. And if I hadn't gone there, I wouldn't have met Anna, who provided that connection to get in at Yosemite."

As a visitor youth assistant, O'Hagan works in campgrounds, interacting with visitors to help make their experience more pleasant and safe. She offers advice on hikes and educates them on proper food storage to keep bears at bay.

O'Hagan was an art education major at Northern. She figured

summer work at Yosemite would be an ideal supplement to teaching during the academic year. O'Hagan is able to combine both areas this summer in her expanded role of interpreter. She is leading junior ranger art walks.

"My intention is to tie Yosemite and art together by showing the

"Yosemite Valley, to me, is always a sunrise, a glitter of green and golden wonder in a vast edifice of stone and space."

—Ansel Adams

important role artists and photographers played in protecting this park," she adds. "Yosemite was the first land protected by the government, when Abraham Lincoln signed a grant in 1864. A big reason for that happening was that artists came here and were extremely inspired. They sent pieces of artwork back to Washington.

People didn't believe it could be real at first, but when they realized it was, they became inspired themselves."

By contrast, Kerr was a biology major, but she also put her NMU education to use at Yosemite.

As a biological science technician, she led an aquatic restoration team. Its focus was the mountain yellow-legged frog, whose population—like many frog species—has been decimated by a chytrid fungus.

"From the 1950s through the '70s, Yosemite began introducing

non-native fish species," says Kerr.

"They were great for tourism but had a detrimental effect on frogs because the fish would eat tadpoles during the winter. We backpacked around the perimeter of water bodies, conducted visual encounter surveys and used electrofishing and gill netting to eradicate non-native fish. John Muir used



Kim O'Hagan on Lembert Dome in Tuolumne Meadows

to write that you could hardly walk around a pond or alpine lake at Yosemite without watching your step because there were so many frogs. That's not the case now; you're lucky if you see one."

After six seasons at the park, Kerr was recently hired by an environmental consulting firm in Menominee. Both women agree that a majority of Yosemite runs on seasonal workers, so it is challenging to get a full-time position there. The summers-only schedule works well for O'Hagan, who teaches a variety of things during the winters. She plans to spend many more summers in the High Sierra wilderness. "Yosemite is a special place that has grown very close to my heart." ■



Anna Kerr