



Cirque Lift Construction

When we decided to construct a new ski lift above treeline, we did it in an ecologically sound fashion. The entire construction was completed without bulldozers or mechanized ground equipment touching the fragile tundra. Crews hauled all supplies on foot, sometimes making seven trips a day up 750 vertical feet while carrying 50 pounds of equipment, always by separate paths to avoid creating trails.

Stopping construction during critical mating and nesting periods protected ptarmigan, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, elk, and other wildlife. Absolutely no sign of construction, outside of the lift poles themselves, was left on the tundra. Heavy items such as poles and concrete were delivered by helicopter. We hope that this construction will be a model for the ski industry, revealing that resorts don't have to destroy alpine environments to build lifts.

Planners opted for a simple platter pull rather than a high speed multiple passenger lift to minimize visual impact and limit user numbers. A wildlife specialist helped minimize impacts to wildlife during construction. During April and early May, when snow still covered the area, backhoes were taken across the snow to dig the 6-foot holes for the tower footings. Moving the equipment on the snow protected delicate tundra and minimized disruptions to wildlife. After digging, crews covered the holes and left the area for three months while the snow melted. This allowed ptarmigan, sheep, mountain goats, and elk to migrate, mate, and rear their young in peace. Crews then returned in August, on foot, to prepare the footings and pour concrete.