THE SEARCH IS ON FOR A NEW DIRECTOR

Figuratively large shoes to fill, the search is on for a new director for the CEU Prehistoric Museum. Dr. Reese Barrick, a visionary, and passionate leader of the museum, has left a hole in the administration of our operations that will be difficult to plug.

We are going to attempt to do our best as a nationwide search ensues.

Located in the thick of things, the CEU Prehistoric Museum has much to offer to a person looking at residing in the middle of this prehistoric haven. In a geological, archaeological and paleontological sense, this is the place to be. Uncomparably rich in these resources, this area has much to offer.

Our museum is equally as impressive. It is an accredited museum, one of only five in the state of Utah and the only one located off the Wasatch front.

Additionally, we are a state and federal repository, with patrons and researchers literally traveling globally to see what we have here. We are hoping for the best in this endeavor.

MUSEUM STAFF THINNING STILL

In keeping with the migratory trend that seems to be sweeping the museum staff, Jeff Bartlett and Alison Sundahl Bartlett are following in the footsteps of Dr. Reese Barrick, the former director, and relocating.

They are going back to Minneapolis to be near family and hopefully start a family of their own.

Although we wish them well on their journey, we can feel a terrible sense of self-pity for our losses.

Alison did a wonderful job of obtaining grants and finding pots of money for advertising and oversaw the museum’s finances and memberships.

Jeff was the all around go to guy for everything from purchasing light bulbs to writing policy and his collection duties.

Jeff’s colorful, funny and expansive vocabulary along with his lightening quick wit and Alison’s sweet nature and organizational skills will make them greatly missed by all!

Near or far, they have endeared themselves to us and will always be a part of the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum family!
By early September the days were getting short and cool. Our thoughts began to move toward closing up the quarries for the season and move indoors to the preparation lab. Most of the quarry time this summer was focused at the Suarez Sisters Site, southeast of the town Green River and it was there, during the first week of September, that we finished collecting what had been exposed, covered the site and pulled down enough overburden to provide protection from winter and security from vandals.

Suarez has been a very productive site. We have moved past 1550 bones collected, most of these being the Falcarious utahensis and the balanced being a new species of a very large armored dinosaur, yet to be named. We spent limited time this summer at EO2, but enough to confirm that there is still plenty of good fossil bone to excavate there. Likewise, a couple of visits to our new site WS22 did suggest that this site has some good quality fossil material and warrants pursuing a permit.

By mid September there were still some sunny, bright days to be had. We made use of these by making day trips out to cast some tracks and do some site surveys in the hope of finding new quarry locations. These tracks are cool, deep circular imprints in sandstone, about the size of contemporary horses, but appear to be two toed. No idea what type of critter laid down this path. Drop by the bone lab sometime and take a look. Make a guess at what you think left these tracks.

One of these outings took us back out to a petrified log that John Bird and Marvin Evens came across earlier this spring while doing site surveys. John found this log of some interest and had it in mind to jacket this beauty. Well, this log turned out to be considerably larger than first thought. Fortunately we had with us this Utah Friends of Paleontology chapter’s adventurous president (B2) and, with her able and spirited assistance, we made short work of this fossil.

By days end we had a wondrous creation, an 800 lb. white plaster “Mummy”, safe, secure and thoroughly “unmovable”. Being wise warriors, we retreated to fight another day. Stay alert here, a piece of this log may well become an exhibit in the museum. John’s instincts may be well founded here. This is becoming a “fossil of interest”.

Currently we are into our winter chores of bone preparation, cataloging, year end reports and, as weather permits, day outings to look for new bone sites. As always, you are invited to take part in any of these activities. If you know of locales were you think dino bone is weathered out, come by and talk with us, share your knowledge and we can set a date to go check it out. We are very dependent on our friends of the museum helping us find new sites and working with us to keep our little museum an active part of the paleontology community.

And speaking of this, just last week a new UFOP member, Richard Poulson, contacted us and said he wanted to take us out to a site were he found dino bone. A couple of days later we headed out to a spot in the San Rafael Swell and sure enough there was fossil bone scattered all up and down a thick layer of sandstone, no doubt an ancient river channel. As it turned out this material was of a dino that is well represented in the collections of this museum. It was also deeply embedded in this thick and very hard sandstone – not an endearing feature to those of us doing the excavation. So, as it was a beautiful, warm, sunny fall day and we were in an obvious prolific fossil bearing material, we decided to spend more time looking around. It wasn’t a half hour later that we noticed some bone scatter sitting on the surface of a soft outcropping of clay.

After collecting this material we noticed additional bone protruding from this clay bank. Now, this was getting interesting. We went and gathered some digging tools and within an hour we had exposed seven articulated vertebrae, articulated meaning that we were finding these fossil bones pretty much as they were deposited 147 million years ago when this critter died. They were virtually undisturbed and intact. This very quickly went from being interesting to down right exciting. Finding articulated bones is not at all common. In the seven years that I have been going out to
do quarry work with this museum, this is only the second time I have found articulated bones. And that was only three small verts. In one hour we found more than twice that many, in better shape and much bigger.

This story gets better. After finding these seven vertebrae and getting all hot and bothered, we were running out of daylight. With great reluctance we packed up, re-covered the fossils with 6” of clay and headed back to the museum. The following day, also bright and sunny, found us out there again early. We cleared away the loose clay, exposing again the seven verts and continued the excavation by following these verts in both directions. In another two hours we were up to twenty-seven articulated vertebrae, a couple of ribs, two additional centra and a scattering of other long bones that would lead us further into the clay bank. We had also maxed out the limits of our Surface Permit issued by the BLM.

By the way, in that two hours we went from being excited to being ecstatic. That aside, we still had to deal with the realities of the limits of our permit. Phone calls were made and within a half hour the BLM, apparently caught up in the excitement of this find, extended the area of our permit and we were off and running again. One more trip out there and with the help of several other folks (the museum’s archaeologist being one, if you can imagine that) and we had exposed the beginnings of a bone bed going further into the clay bank with two clusters consisting of thin, delicate fossil bone and an angular nature that makes one just want to say, skull material. Now, how cool is that. All because Richard wanted to share what he had found. Thanks, Richard.

Stay tuned on this one. We are going out again tomorrow, braving the sub-freezing temps to see what we can excavate before the snows.

Bill Heffner

That’s it guys. Hope its enough material for your needs. Fire off a brief REPLY so I know you got this material. Electronic communication is still all very new to me.

B.
With the discovery of the “Goose-neck Site” recently, a host of interesting questions come up about the study of taphonomy, basically the science of how those bones got to be how and where they are today. From the root word for “death,” taphonomy covers all the processes starting at the moment of a creature’s demise through to the point where we discover and dig it up. A range of intriguing processes can occur in that interval: biological agents from bacteria to beetles to birds can modify carcasses; small or large weather events, sedimentary motions, or even earthquakes can modify burial; and then of course, the long involved process of fossilization with minerals from groundwater in maybe multiple steps. Add all that up and a fossil’s taphonomic history can be extremely complex and fascinating!

The population of bones, and their relationships to one another, builds a story of site taphonomy: how a site came to be put together in its always unique arrangement and occurrence. The Gooseneck Site is particularly great for this since a large number of bones were found in articulation, adjacent and “assembled” as the animal would have been in life. This presents invaluable information for reconstructing an animal’s posture, behavior and physical capabilities (for instance, how far up could that sauropod neck really stretch!?). The vast majority of sites yield isolated bones, where we have to guess whether they belong to one individual or many; occasionally, like in some of our Cedar Mountain sites, bones are associated, from a single individual but separated by various processes. Each of these conveys its own information to researchers, and the combination found at the Gooseneck Site is one that will take quite some doing to deduce all the details!

Hello museum members, and happy holidays to all of you! In the absence of Alison Sundahl, I will be overseeing the museum memberships again. Many of you are old friends and I am looking forward to familiarizing myself with the new names and faces. I am excited to be back in charge of sending you emails and updating your membership accounts.

Please remember, as I am sure that Alison gave you a heads up on, museum memberships are now $39.00 per year, still a fabulous bargain for:
1-Free admission all year long
2-Every Friday critter feedings
3- Newsletter
4- Cretaceous Christmas
5- Haunted Museum
6-Dino Eggstravaganza
7-Invitations and FREE admission to other special events and so much more!

Just taking into account the seasonal/holiday events that have been added as membership bonuses without a rate increase warrants the value of your membership at $39.00 per year. In comparing this to other institutional memberships, it is still a great value. In comparing it to admissions, well, there is no comparison. Membership to the museum allows us to update our exhibits and remain on the cutting edge of the scientific aspects of maintaining a world class facility.

Thank you so much for your important part in supporting this museum and our mission. You are key to the success of the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum. Thanks again and happy holidays!
Our requests for funding for the proposed Cretaceous Seaways and Taste of the Mesozoic exhibits are still pending at the time of this writing. Hopefully no news is good news. I’ll let you know more about these proposed projects next newsletter.

The Haunted Museum was a big success this year. With the help of Shanny Wilson’s entire class for two class periods and 18 other volunteers, who donated over 300 hours of their time, the two night affair was a huge success with over 600 visitors attending, many of them going through the halls multiple times. This profitable venture really helps the museum keep family activities available for your pleasure. A great big “Thank You” to all who helped make this the best year ever for the event. We already have a few new ideas for next year—we hope to see you again next year.

The four-year backlog, of museum scrapbook entries, is nearly caught up. Work-study student Jennifer Hutchinson is the miracle worker who bravely faced the multiple boxes of material and sorted it into usable stacks that she then artistically placed in the scrapbooks. Thank you Jennifer for a job well done.

Several service learning students and student volunteers are also helping me with a face-lift for the Huntington Mammoth base. Years of dust, UV light, walking, and who knows what else conspired to make the old base look tired and unloved. We have removed the old vegetation and are in the process of putting down a new base layer of plaster and burlap over expanded metal lath. Once this is done, we will be searching for $3500 or so to allow us to complete a diorama type reconstruction of the marshy habitat that proved to be the undoing of the mammoth.

Service learning student Katie Diegneault has been a great help on several projects this fall. She has recently gone through the library and made sure all catalogued material is in its rightful place, assisted in the haunted museum preparations, as well as helped with the mammoth base reconstruction. She is a great worker, never complains about the jobs she is asked to do, and is always on time and smiling. Thank you Katie for all your assistance.

We are nearing the one-year anniversary for the public feedings for the alligator, soft-shelled turtle, and varanid lizards. The recent frigid weather and snows have cut into our recent visitor numbers for these events, but for the year we have averaged nearly 30 visitors per feeding and one new family membership per week. Many thanks to all of you who have attended the feedings as well as an invitation to see a feeding first-hand if you have not yet done so. Remember, your family membership allows you unlimited number of visits to the museum at no additional charge. If you haven’t renewed yet, please do so before the first of the year to avoid the price increase.

The Cretaceous Christmas activities were well attended despite having to compete with four other local Christmas events the same day. The Carbon High choir sang Christmas carols, Santa and Mrs. Santa were in attendance, and a multitude of children enjoyed multiple craft activities.
The Christmas/Solstice Range Creek Excavations

Happy Holidays from the Hall of Archaeology and Collections! Bill Heffner and I closed up the last field sites in Range Creek in late October/early November after the first winter storms -- just in time to see big bear tracks in the snow at camp.... we mapped and gps’ed artifacts, and backfilled two excavations. The CEU archaeology students have been analyzing lithic and ceramic artifacts in the lab, and I am submitting samples for radiocarbon assays, tree-ring dates, pollen, starch and phytolith samples, and writing reports. One of the most exciting recent finds is a classic Fremont ceramic pipe found by UVU archaeology intern Leslie Gerber during the excavation of one of the habitation structures at the Burnout Site.

Keith Hansen Collection

In collections, we are cataloging the Keith Hansen collection, and preparing artifacts for a special exhibit in the gallery. The exhibit is scheduled to open in March and run for three to four months. Everyone involved feels it is a privilege to be able to work with such amazing artifacts, and we are so grateful that they will be a permanent part of the museum collections. It has been a treat working with Virgene Hansen of East Carbon and her son Mark Hansen, who now resides in New York City.

Barb Benson and Craig Royce in Museum Collections

Barb Benson, current president of the Castle Valley UFOP chapter, is the new assistant registrar/temporary collections manager at the museum. Barb is working on the accession and registration of more than 2300 artifacts from the Keith Hansen collection, including projectile points and bifaces, ground stone, pottery, animal hides, bone whistles, beads and tools, and wooden tools, which she also helped catalog and pack at the Hansen home prior to bringing to the museum. She is a lot of fun to work with and has brought a high level of competency and organization to collections, and has already mastered our NPS computer cataloging system.
Craig Royce, the president of our local USAS chapter, is our new volunteer collections intern. Craig is helping with the Hansen collection also-- packaging artifacts for storage and display and assisting with the conservation of artifacts, in addition to assisting with exhibits, Cretaceous Christmas, and the many other things that he does to help us at the museum. He is a great asset!

Marvin and Jeanette Evans Donation
Marvin Evans has donated a set of three small polychrome puebloan pots to the museum in memory of his wife Jeanette Evans, and they will contribute to our comparative collection of pottery from modern puebloan cultures and the ancestral puebloan cultures in southeastern Utah. The Evans collection includes a seed jar and bowl of Santa Clara redware dating to circa AD 1940-1960. One is a signed polychrome bowl made by “Madeline Mary”.

The new “Hall of Archaeology”
Come and visit the new and improved Hall of Archaeology. You can sit and read stories in the authentic Ute tipi built by Dr. Don Burge, and listen to information about each of the cultures of eastern Utah by dialing the numbers on the displays using your cell phone, thanks to our public relations director Christine Trease. We have also added several new examples of Ute beadwork and photos to the beadwork display and done a little revamping of the some of the other exhibits, and added a Mesa Verde style ancestral pueblo jar to the pottery on display upstairs. Our education director Lloyd Logan is finishing up the restoration of the base of the Huntington Mammoth in time for Christmas! Soon he will install a base next to the mammoth for an ice age Bison latifrons skeleton that is being donated to the museum.
Range Creek Flute Update!

We are pleased to report that we will soon have a date on the Range Creek flute. Dr. Tammy Rittenour of the USU Luminescence Lab is conducting analyses and we should have her report within a few weeks. We will be collaborating with our Hopi and Ute partners to interpret and report these data, and will develop an interpretive, multimedia display of this important process.

Range Creek Movie

I put together some photos and video clips to create a short Range Creek “movie” that can be viewed on the museum archaeology blog at:

http://thedirtonarchaeology.blogspot.com/

Peace on earth, I hope your holidays are wonderful --

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