From The Director
by Dr. Kenneth Carpenter

After many years as the museum’s Office Manager, Connie Leighton has decided to retire and travel with her husband. In her place, we welcome Claire Bennett, as my Administrative Assistant. Claire comes to us from Houston, Texas.

In the Dinosaur Pit, the reassembly of Camptosaurus skeleton into a new pose has been completed. The old, static “kangaroo”-pose, has been replaced with a more active looking four-legged run. Currently the skeleton is under-wraps as we continue with the other skeletons. The first dinosaur skeleton the museum displayed, “Al”, the Allosaurus, has been partially taken apart for remounting. It will be in a more dynamic pose chasing the Camptosaurus. Eventually, all four skeletons in the pit will be standing upright and arranged so as to tell a story. All of these changes are steps towards a new museum.

Field work this summer was hampered by the fire ban in the region. Still, John Bird managed several trips to the Suarez Sisters’ site near Green River. The site produces the bones of the small plant-eating theropod, Falcarius.

We hope eventually to have enough bones to mount a real-bone skeleton, which will be a first for this dinosaur. Some of my former volunteers from Denver, as well as two students from Hokkaido University joined me for a week looking for new sites in the Cedar Mountain Formation. John DeVilbiss, from USU’s Public Relations and Marketing, joined us for 2 days. He is planning a short article on his visit. The field work results were surprisingly bad, with few bones found, and nothing of scientific value.

In mid-July, I went to Japan planning to give a public lecture on feathered dinosaurs. Unfortunately, due to flight delays, I arrived too late and the event was cancelled. On a happy note, my luggage did catch up to me in Tokyo the day before I left to come back to the States.

Finally, John Bird has been heading up a crew cleaning up the paleontology collections space on campus. This is a monumental task being undertaken to make the rooms presentable for VIP tours that I will be conducting as part of the push for the new museum.
It has been a busy and enjoyable three months since my inaugural report for the USU Eastern Prehistoric Museum newsletter. I am settling into my position and becoming more familiar with the collections every week. The breadth of the archaeological materials held at the museum still astounds me on a regular basis. A review of the catalog records revealed that the museum houses well over one million artifacts created and utilized by prehistoric cultures across Eastern Utah!

My first week at the museum started with a staff trip to the new Natural History Museum of Utah in Salt Lake City. I met with Duncan McCalfe, Curator of Archaeology, and his collections staff to discuss common issues with archaeological collections. This was a very productive and positive meeting, which should lead to collaboration in the future. The following Saturday it was off to Blanding for the Utah Statewide Archaeological Society’s Annual Meeting. It was great to see so many people from across the state of Utah passionately engaged with the preservation and understanding of our shared cultural resources.

Within the museum, I have spent much of my time focused on existing issues within the archaeological collections. I have reorganized the collection laboratory at the museum with the goal of providing discrete workspace for collections inventory and artifactual research in addition to secure storage and record keeping space. I am also reorganizing our off-site storage to accommodate collections associated with curation agreements expected for repossession within the next year.

With the help of several dedicated volunteers, we are in the midst of a complete inventory of the archaeological collections. A number of issues with specific collections have come to light during this process, highlighting the need for a detailed assessment of the entire archaeological collection. I have also been working with the Hansen collection, which many of you saw displayed in the temporary exhibit gallery several years ago. This collection has now been fully identified, cataloged and photographed. Materials from this collection will continue to be incorporated into both new and existing exhibits. We have had several new collections repositioned with the museum as well, from both Nine Mile Canyon and the Moab region.

In addition to my work with the collections at the museum, I have had the opportunity to visit several active archaeological projects in the region. Charmaine Thompson, archaeologist for the Manti-La Sal National Forest, introduced me to James Allison, BYU, and helped facilitate a visit to his field project at Wolf Village, Goshen UT. This Fremont site has a number of interesting architectural features, including the largest pit structure recorded at a Fremont site. Like many Fremont sites, the artifacts recovered include gaming pieces, figurine fragments, and personal adornments such as pendants. The following link provides some more information on this exciting and ongoing project. This trip also included a visit to BYU’s Museum of Peoples and Cultures, where I met with the director of the museum as well as the staff of the Office of Public Archaeology, also housed within the museum. http://fremontfarmers.blogspot.com/2011/08/friends-of-wolf-village.html

At our prior meeting, Duncan McCalfe had invited me to come visit the Range Creek Field Station during the field season ( http://nhmu.utah.edu/range-creek). I followed through on this invitation in mid-July, joining the University of Utah-led field school for several days in
Range Creek. I was very excited to visit this canyon system since so much had been written about its archaeological resources during the last decade. I was not disappointed. I was able to explore some of the canyon with a survey crew, observe the active excavation of a Fremont pithouse, and enjoy the food and hospitality of the research station and university staff. I even got to give the field school students a lecture on paleoethnobotanical research. I will be returning to Range Creek on October 5th, as part of a Castle Valley Archaeology Society (CVAS) sponsored field trip. Please contact CVAS directly if this sounds like an interesting opportunity to you. [http://www.utaharchaeology.org/Chapters/CastleV/castlecurrent.html]

The road improvements in Nine Mile Canyon continue. Most of the road is now paved all the way to the Great Hunt panel, making this one of a kind prehistoric art gallery easily accessible to visitors. I recently joined the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition out at the Nine Mile Ranch for their fall gathering. It was great to see people from a number of states out there to appreciate and support the cultural resources of the canyon. [http://www.ninemilecanyoncoalition.org/]

As with any archaeological site, we ask that you show your respect for the artwork in Nine Mile Canyon through the practice of proper rock art site etiquette [http://www.utahrockart.org/etiqt.htm]. If these magnificent displays of human creativity speak to you, you may want to consider becoming a Nine Mile Canyon site steward. This program is BLM-initiated and volunteer-dependent. There will be an informational meeting for the site steward program in the Museum classroom on October 30th at 6pm. Please stop by if this sounds like something that might interest you.

The summer was bracketed by two great picnics in Pioneer Park, jointly sponsored by CVAS and the Utah Friends of Paleontology. CVAS meets in the museum classroom on the 3rd Thursday of each month. I would encourage any members of the community interested in the archaeology of castle country to attend these meetings and join this great avocational archaeology group. The membership is very friendly and knowledgeable about Utah archaeology.

I recently had my first opportunity to visit the Uintah Basin, where I attended the Utah Rock Art Research Associations annual symposium [http://www.utahrockart.org/]. I enjoyed a visit to the McConkie Ranch rock art panels in Dry Fork Canyon as well as the talks at the symposium in Vernal. I will be attending the Great Basin Anthropological Conference in mid-October, where I will present some recent research examining the meals represented in coprolite specimens recovered from the Colorado Plateau. Please stop by and introduce yourself if you happen to be attending! [http://gbac.whsites.net/index.html]

Finally, the museum is designing a new “introduction to archaeology” exhibit. This exhibit will be placed near the entrance to the Hall of Archaeology and will provide a framework to help patrons appreciate the research behind the other exhibits in the hall. Design meetings begin this coming month and I am always willing to listen to ideas. So, stop by, introduce yourself, and spend some time musing the people who have called castle country home as you explore our exhibits.

MEMBERSHIPS

I am pleased to introduce Claire Bennett as your new memberships coordinator. I feel certain that she will bring new life to the membership program.

You will have the opportunity of meeting Claire at the Member’s Appreciation Dinner upcoming in December. Claire will be emailing and postal mailing out information concerning this event, so watch your mailbox for more details.

We have a new Member at the Allosaurus level. Thanks to Karen Norquist for her support of the museum at this generous level.

Claire can be contacted by email at claire.bennett@usu.edu or by phone at (435) 613-5755. Please direct any questions to Claire. I will miss the membership affiliation, but you probably haven’t heard the last from me! Sincerest Regards, Christine
A couple months back we found fossilized crinoids in a sandstone boulder while surveying for fossils in the Mancos formation. Crinoids or sea lilies as some have called them, have been found in the Mancos before but they are rare. To collect them required heavier equipment than we had with us, so we resolved to come back at a latter date.

On the 1st of August, Casey Dooms, Ralph Escamilla and I, picked up the equipment needed to safely remove the crinoids from their resting place and set out for the day. Thanks to our GPS locating the crinoids was quick and easy. The work was hard but we were determined and after a few hours we had our prize.

The second week of September Ken and I were in the field with some members of Ken’s old crew from Denver. We surveyed part of the Cedar Mountain. We found a slab with pterosaur tracks and another sandstone slab with small dinosaur tracks.

The third week in September volunteers from the Chicago Field Museum helped us at the Suarez site. This site has yielded almost 2000 bones, composed mainly of Therizinosaur (24 plus individuals) and a very large Nodosaurid. Progress is slow, the lower part of the site is in sandstone. We map the sandstone blocks and what fossils are exposed and number them for future reference.

The weather was good most of the trip, with the exception of one day when the washes flowed with silt laden water. This gave Ken an opportunity to teach us about the movement of sediments in a water channel. Later we found evidence of ancient water flowing, preserved in the rock layers.

The last week in August we visited the Suarez Site and was able to remove several more fossil bones. I would like to thank all the volunteers who so generously give of their time to help the museum in its goal to preserve the past. To all the volunteers, thanks for your efforts on our behalf and for you friendship, I have enjoyed working with all of you.

John
Greetings! As I write this article, fall is in full glory, the golden aspens and red mountain maples creating a beautiful show of color against the pines and spruces, in the mountains surrounding Price. I hope you had a chance to get out and enjoy the beauty that nature provides at this time of year.

I recently led a tour of the San Rafael Swell for senior citizens from Price and East Carbon. Many of these folks had lived in the area nearly all their lives and had never visited this wonderful area in their own backyard. The Buckhorn Wash pictograph panels and spectacular canyon walls, a dinosaur track in the rock, the wedge overlook of the Little Grand Canyon (created by the San Rafael River over millions of years), claystone balls up to six feet in diameter, and a visit to the Cleveland-Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry all elicited astonishment from this appreciative audience.

For history buffs, this area was the hideout for Butch Cassidy when he robbed the mine payroll in Helper. The Old Spanish Trail (the primary trade route between Santa Fe and Los Angeles) also made it’s way through the Swell for nearly 30 years in the early to mid 1800s. This trail has been described as 2700 miles of the “longest, crookedest, most ornerary pack trail in the history of the United States”.

A frequent comment from the seniors was “I had no idea this area was so beautiful – I have got to come back.” If you have never been to the San Rafael Swell, you owe it to yourself to stop by the Information Center at the Museum and pick up a map for a self-guided tour of the Swell and then go!! Although the majority of the roads are gravel, most are easily traveled by passenger car as long as you avoid rainy days.

I have given numerous informal tours to visitors to the museum this summer and early fall. They all seem amazed that there is anyone “on staff” who is willing to take time to talk to them and answer their questions and are very appreciative of the individual attention. Many of them have said that this is the only museum they have ever visited where someone asked if they had questions and then took the time to answer them. This is just another way your museum is educating the public and creating an image of the Prehistoric Museum that will stand out when compared to other museums.

If you have some time to spare and want to help make this museum stand out from other museums, we can always use docents in the spring and summer. Think you don’t know enough to help? Don’t worry, we will provide training. Please call Lloyd at 435-613-5760 to volunteer.

Now that school has started, school tours are beginning to show up on the schedule, these tours take up some of the slack from the declining numbers of summer tourists. In addition to being a lot of fun for the kids and museum staff, school tours are an excellent way to introduce children to science in a friendly setting. School tours are still free with two weeks advance notice – please call Lloyd at 435-613-5760 to arrange your tour.

Mark your calendars for the afternoon of December 15, 2012 and plan to attend the Cretaceous Christmas celebration here at your museum.

Don’t forget to renew your museum membership – we have a variety of memberships that should meet the needs of almost anyone. Museum memberships are also a great gift for friends and family members.

**Cretaceous Christmas**

The museum will be holding a Cretaceous Christmas celebration on December 15th from 1:30 to 4:30 with free admission during the event. There will be live holiday music early on, Santa Claus from 3:15 to 4:30, 10% off everything in the gift shop all day, and for the first time, Operation Teddy Bear will be at the museum from 3:00 to 4:00 handing out teddy bears to children of military personnel.
Prehistoric Museum
155 East Main Street
Price, Utah 84501
Visit us on the web at
http://museum.ceu.edu

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