



Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds eNewsletter

#6—July, 2012

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The Walls are Up and the Roof is ON!!!

The days are busy and long for the construction workers on the new Visitor Center for the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. Every day, progress can be seen. Don't forget that you can watch the progress on nps.gov/flfo. Click on "webcam" on the right-hand corner. We hope that we will see many of you this summer at the Monument.

There will be tours of the new visitor center during the 25th Anniversary celebration on August 18, 2012. Watch the August e-newsletter for the final schedule for August 18, with many special events.

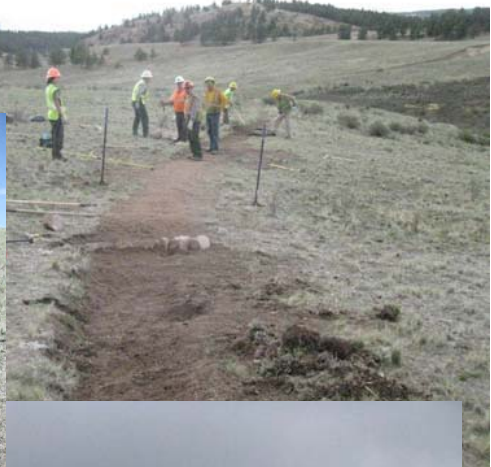


Photos by: Ashely Ferguson and Kelly Hattori, GeoCorps America

National Trails Day

by Lisa Patton, CUSP Volunteer Coordinator

Everyone at the Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) wants to thank you and the Fossil Beds for inviting us to share in National Trails Day, and for treating our crew to lunch! Led by John Schwabe, we had a great time working on the Hornbek Wildlife Loop with volunteers from the Friends and Frontier High School in Elizabeth, plus some of our favorite Fossil staff. While the day ended a bit early due to a big thunderstorm, we were able to move materials and complete about 100' of maintenance on this scenic trail. The group was also treated to a private guided tour of the Hornbek Homestead by the Fossil Beds staff. You all are fantastic neighbors! We look forward to working with you again and wish you the very best.



Thanks You's

The Board of the Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds NM wishes to thank the Cripple Creek & Victor Mine for the generous donation of \$3000.00 for the support of this summer's paleo intern Ashley Ferguson. Each year the Friends must raise approximately \$5000.00 to support one paleo intern. This intern is directly under the supervision of the Monument's paleontologist, Dr, Herb Meyer assists the paleo department with a variety projects over the summer.

The Board would also like to thank the Lake George Gem and Mineral Club for their very generous donation of \$500.00 for the paleo intern.

Summer Seminars

Our summer seminars started with a wonderful birding seminar - "Birding 101- The Bluebird of Happiness and Other Stories" On July 7, 2012, Debbie Barnes, Program Coordinator for the Aiken Audubon chapter the the Pikes Peak area, led an exciting day that started in the yurt covering bird topography, identification, how to recognize outdoors and nesting. Two short hikes helped participants try out their new skills. Each participant received 2 Peterson Field Guides (Eastern/Central and Western) from the American Birding Association. Debbie also prepared a field guide of the Birds of Florissant using her own photographs.



Unusual bird spotted in Birding 101!

Important Dates

Seminars - Finished for the 2012 season - Please join us again next summer for a seminar or two. We will be back to our regular offerings of 9- 10 seminars during the summer

Hornbek Homestead Day - Saturday, July 28, 2012, 10AM to 3 PM

Also—Heritage Day in Florissant with activities at the museum, Grange, and Firehouse
Saturday, August 4, 2012—

Dedication of the new Lake George Charter School - for info go to
lgschool@lgsco.org

Ute Dancing - at the Florissant Fossil Beds amphitheater - 7PM

Friday - Sunday, August 17 -19, 2012

Lake George Gem and Mineral Club Show in Florissant

Saturday, August 18, 2012 Friends 25th Anniversary (See Article)

Tractor Pull - Lake George

Sunday, September 23, 2012,

Friends Annual Membership Meeting/Pot Luck at 12 noon

Farmer's Market - Fridays from 7 Am to 1 PM - The Monument sponsored by the Friends will be there on August 3, 17, and 31 and September 14 and 28

Footnote to All Members

Please don't forget that when you visit the Monument, your Friends' membership card gets you a 25% discount on any of the Friends premium donation items.

Summer Intern

Every time I step out of the car at the Florissant Fossil Beds I get to admire the history of this wonderful Monument. The smell of sage, the bite of cool mountain air, and the grandeur of the clear blue sky allow me to fully appreciate my work here. I explore and protect dig sites where other paleontologists had come before me. I imagine them here, digging through the soft eroded shale and making discoveries of an ancient world. I get to see those discoveries while taking pictures of the fossil collections. To experience firsthand the dig sites where these amazing fossils were found and to see them in person is truly something else.

Currently I am working toward a Geology degree with an emphasis in Biology at Idaho State University. Paleontology has always been my dream career since I was about eight years old so when I started at the college I made sure to get a position at the Idaho Museum of Natural History. Vertebrates are my main focus and I was delighted to learn that I would be working with Pleistocene mammals. There was something missing though, where was the field experience? I wanted to dig for the fossils, to make my own discoveries, not just catalog them. When it came time to find a summer job I came across Florissant Fossil Beds. Paleobotany is practically nonexistent at Idaho State University and I believed it would be a great opportunity to expand my horizons, who knows; maybe I would enjoy it more than working with vertebrates. I got the internship and was ecstatic to learn that I would have the opportunity to work on Inventory and Monitoring and, as I discovered later, fossil photography as well, two areas I was hoping to get more experience in. In one moment my goal of working out in the field had been reached.

My experience here, to say the least, has been astounding. Who wouldn't want a job where you get to hike the wonderful Colorado Mountains and dig holes? I've learned so much about working in the field as well as fossil photography and organizing collections. I have gained practical experience that will help me build my foundations as a paleontologist. I will graduate next year with a degree in Geology and then I will move on to my Masters. Perhaps I will come here again for my research. Even if I do not I want to thank everyone at the Florissant Fossil Beds for making the experience a life changing one. I also want to thank the Friends of the Fossil Beds for giving me the opportunity to work with the wonderful people here. Thank you for helping a young scientist's dream come true.

Cheers,

Ashley Ferguson, Paleo Intern



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Florissant Fossil Beds
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Florissant, CO 80816
719 – 748 - 3253
www.nps.gov/FLFO

Florissant Fossil Beds News Release

Release Date: June 21, 2012

Contact: Jeff Wolin, jeffwoln@nps.gov, (719)748 - 3253

As wildfires loom, volunteers help monument prepare safety zones for buildings, rare fossils

FLORISSANT, CO – For three days this week, more than 200 volunteers are helping National Park Service (NPS) wild-fire crews clear fire-safe buffers around buildings and priceless fossils at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.

The outpouring of community help comes as the monument is on alert to a major wildfire on the western horizon. The 1,145-acre Springer fire is burning about 7 miles from Florissant Fossil Beds, which preserves thousands of fossils of ancient wildlife and vegetation in the Rocky Mountains about 35 miles west of Colorado Springs.

The work Thursday through Saturday comes during a critical “window of opportunity”: The availability of two NPS fire crews, between assignments on the fire line in an unusually busy early summer season. In the park are a 4-member crew from Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado and a seven-member team from Bandelier National Monument in northern New Mexico.

“The fire crews told us, ‘If we had help, we could do more,’ ” said Keith Payne, Florissant Fossil Beds superintendent. “The next thing you know, we’ve got all these volunteers. We are extremely grateful.”

First up Thursday are more than 100 youth volunteers supplied by the Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP), a community-government alliance that works for the welfare of the 2,600-square-mile South Platte River watershed near the monument. The CUSP volunteers, most of them ages 13-17, are from five churches in Missouri.

On Friday, the monument will host more than 30 volunteers from Peterson Air Force Base and Schriever Air Force Base in Colorado Springs. Saturday’s roster is expected to include more volunteers from Peterson and Schriever, plus Fort Carson Army post in Colorado Springs, El Paso County REACT # 6122 (Radio Emergency Associated Communications Team), and Boy Scout troops from Woodland Park and Colorado Springs. “We’re trying to get ahead of the game by reducing fuels and thinning to make a more defensible space near park structures,” Payne said. “We knew the areas we wanted to treat, and we had worked out the details. We were just waiting for the availability of folks and funds.”

With chainsaws and other equipment, the NPS fire crews are removing selected trees, trimming forest “understory” where needed and clearing away “ladder fuels” through which a spreading wildfire can climb and cause greater damage both to structures and to the forest.

The volunteers gather the “slash” of cut and downed materials and load it onto small utility task vehicles or UTVs. The UTVs carry the slash away to a flatbed truck, which hauls the material to a non-visitor-use area to be piled for burning next winter when fire-safety conditions permit.

“The key here is the community-building with other partner organizations that we’ve been working with for several years – the military in Colorado Springs and with CUSP,” said Rick Wilson, chief ranger at Florissant Fossil Beds. “When we said we needed help, they said, ‘How much and how soon?’ They were right here.”

The 6,000-acre monument remains open, but most hiking trails on the west side of the park, where the work is concentrated, will be closed through Saturday. Ranger-led programs for park visitors will continue on schedule.

The work is focused primarily on about 16 acres within a 60-acre area of the monument near structures: The old and temporary park visitor centers, the “A-Frame” education building, picnic areas, boardwalks, the new visitor center now under construction, and open-air shelters over the monument’s famous petrified stumps of 35-million-year-old redwoods. The goal is to create “defensible space” by clearing potential fuels to a distance of 330 feet – a little more than the length of a football field – around structures.

“Fire hazard conditions are extreme right now, and any small ignition such as a lightning strike could seriously affect the park,” Wilson said. “Firefighters need a ‘defensible space’ to work from around these structures.”

Wilson said this week’s work is centered on the west side of the monument because it is from that direction that an approaching wildfire most likely would come. In previous years, the park has focused fire-safety efforts around its north, south and east borders. “We are completely surrounded by private landowners and subdivisions, and so all our previous efforts to remove fuels have focused on protecting those park neighbors in case a fire ever started inside the park,” Wilson explained. “Now we are we are trying to focus on protecting resources inside the park, too.”

Wilson said the Springer wildfire was “an active threat” earlier in the week but now is regarded as “a good reminder and motivator” for fire safety. “We also understand that if it’s not contained and if the winds pick up, there could be a spot fire that could take it across the canyon and start racing towards us again,” he added.

Payne said the ranks of volunteers for this fire-safety operation have been filled. But he said that if members of the community still want to help out, they can contact the Coalition for the Upper South Platte at 719-748-0033, or via email at cusp@uppersouthplatte.org.

Sexi Peru Project



Home

Growing concern for the integrity and longevity of popular tourist attractions has prompted the global "geotourism" initiative. In order to responsibly manage the fossil site at Sexi, the principles of geotourism are being considered when developing The Petrified Forest Piedra Chamana for visitors.

"Geotourism" Defined

According to the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations (2010), geotourism sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environments, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents." Geotourism therefore maintains ties to the conservation goals of ecotourism and sustainable tourism while additionally considering "place." In effect, geotourism aims not only to protect natural resources, but also to preserve the culture and history that help make specific destinations attractive to tourists.



Prior to the 1990s, the paleontological significance of Sexi was unknown. Subsequent research has revealed the importance of the fossils, and given rise to the development of geotourism in the town and fossil forest.

Sustainable Geotourism in Sexi

Because of subsistence lifestyles and distances from major cities, economic opportunities for the people in Sexi are very limited. However, geotourism is a possible source of jobs and other economic activities to improve the peoples' quality of life. Revenue from geotourism services, such as leading guided tours and accommodating visitors, could supplement the local economy currently supported by small-scale farming and raising livestock.

Donations are managed by The Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds, Inc. To support the current projects at Sexi, please review this form.

National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations, 2010, About Geotourism, accessed June 24, 2011, at http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/about_geotourism.html.



Looking Forward

The present goal is to encourage visitors to come see the fossil forest through cultural immersion travel. However, while the citizens of Sexi look forward to hosting visitors, additional resources are currently necessary to make geotourism at Sexi a lasting reality. Anticipated projects to achieve this goal include creating the new museum's exhibits and developing an interpretive route through the fossil forest for visitors. Protection of the fossil sites still requires fencing to inhibit damage from animals and illegal collecting. Additionally, although scientific research has recently revealed much about the Sexi's Eocene environment, many questions remain unanswered, such as those surrounding the ancient forest's structure and composition. Donations previously received by The Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds on behalf of the Association for the Preservation and Defense of the Fossils of the District of Sexi, a partner nonprofit, have gone toward a variety of projects, such as:

- Installing the museum's exhibits and infrastructure
- Producing and printing an interpretive brochure
- Providing on-site travel support to visiting scientists
- Sponsoring an internship necessary to create this Web site



Update on the 25th Anniversary Celebration

It is approximately 30 days to the Friends 25th Anniversary celebration on Saturday, August 18, 2012. We hope that you will be joining us for the various activities and events during the day and for the banquet at 5:30. We still have spaces for the banquet. See the information below about the day. A registration form is included.

(Print and mail to:

Friends of Florissant
Box 851
Florissant, CO 80816

----- Name
(s): _____

I/We will be attending the 25th Anniversary of the Friends Banquet on August 18, 2012.

___Enclosed please find my check in the amount of \$_____ (\$40.00 per person) for ___ guest(s).

I/We would like to make an additional donation to the Friends. Please find my contribution of \$_____ enclosed.

I/We are unable to attend, but I/we are enclosing a donation to support the Friends efforts . \$_____

Donations can be specified for a certain program such as support of an intern, wagon wheels, Post to Parks, education programs, Sexi, Peru museum or other things of interest to you.

(E-mail address) _____

(phone number) _____

Please make checks payable to: Friends of Florissant.

Contact Sally McCracken with questions 719-687-9204.

We have reserved 12 rooms at The Nature Place for those who may wish to stay overnight after the banquet. The price is \$104.00 (per person) which includes the banquet, the room and Sunday breakfast.

Please call Sally to reserve a room ASAP (719-687-9204)

