



# Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds eNewsletter

#4—March 18, 2012

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## Visitor Center

Construction has begun again on the new Visitor Center at the Florissant Fossil Beds. Don't forget to log on at [nps.gov/flfo](http://nps.gov/flfo) and click on the webcams. You can watch the progress everyday.

## Soldier, Airmen Enjoy the Outdoors

Story and photos by Pfc. Andrew Ingram



*Park ranger Paul Zaenger tells Soldiers and Airmen from the Front Range community about the history of Black Canyon during a joint single Soldiers and Airmen camping trip to the Gunnison National Park Feb. 19.*

**4th Infantry Division  
Public Affairs Office**

Twenty Soldiers and Airmen wrapped in thick layers and wool hats looked disbelievingly at their campsite.

“This is where we are staying?” asked Army Pfc. KeAndra Wright, with a note of shock in her voice. “I can’t even see the ground.”

Snow, at least 2-feet deep, covered the ground and the picnic table. After a few

more stunned moments, one Soldier gave a war cry and dove into the snow, quickly followed by many of the campers.

The Sierra Club, The National Park Service, and Colorado Wilderness Rides and Guides sponsored the camping trip to Black Canyon in the Gunnison National Park with the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers and Single Airmen Initiative.

The guides and rangers held the event to give back to service members and encourage Colorado’s military community to become more involved in the out-

door activities offered in the Centennial State, said Jeff Wolin, Lead Interpretation Park Ranger at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.

“The national parks service cares for 397 of America’s most special places,” Wolin said. “These are places that belong to all Americans. When these Soldiers and Airmen are out defending our nation, they are defending democracy; they are defending freedom and they are defending our ideals. The National Park Service embody those ideals.”

The military and National Park Service share a bond dating back to 1872, when the cavalry guarded and tended Yellowstone, the world’s first national park, said Wolin. “We wanted to make sure that these Soldiers are enjoying their public lands,” he said. “We want to make sure that they realize these places are part of what they are defending.”

After a few minutes of horseplay, the military men and women cleared paths through the snow and set up tents to guard against the winter wind that would whip through their camp later that night. Once the camp was complete, the rangers and wilderness guides led the troops to a trail, where the Soldiers and Airmen spent the remainder of the daylight hours learning cross-country skiing.

While skiing proved a difficult challenge for many of the campers, the experience pushed them to find enjoyment in things they probably would not have expected, said Wright, a financial management technician assigned to Company A, 230th Finance Battalion, 43rd Sustainment Brigade. “I’m from Texas, so I had never seen snow before coming to Colorado,” Wright said. “It’s cold, but since I’m in Colorado, I figured I should probably try a new experience and see if I like it.”

Darkness fell before the servicemembers completed the cross country course, and headlamps illuminated the snow as the group slid back to its starting line and removed skis. Back at camp, the Soldiers and Airmen warmed themselves with bowls of hot soup and pasta before heading out to view the stars with local astronomers.

The next morning, the servicemembers ate breakfast and broke camp before taking a snowshoe hike around Black Canyon. “Snowshoeing was a lot of fun,” said Air Force Staff Sgt. Cederic Hill, space operator, 16th Space Control Squadron, 21st Operations Group, 21st Space Wing. “The view was amazing and the guides told us a lot about the wildlife in this area.” Hill said he hopes his positive experience during the trip would encourage more Airmen to become physically active during their time off. “Seeing Black Canyon was my favorite part of the trip,” said Wright. “Where I come from is very flat, so to see something like that is almost indescribable. I definitely want to see more Soldiers come out here. I know I’m going to come back this summer and check it all out again when it’s warm,” she said.

The trip concluded with a few hours of ice fishing at Curecanti National Recreation Area, before the long ride back to Colorado Springs. After two days of new experiences in the Colorado wild, Pfc. Ly Vang, infantryman, Company B, 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, said more servicemembers should travel and need to take advantage of the many opportunities life in the military affords them. “I’ve been to a lot of places like this, but I have never camped in the snow,” said Vang. “It was cold, wool socks and a warm sleeping bag are a must, but I would most definitely encourage other Soldiers to come out here and try it.”

Single Soldiers interested in participating in BOSS events should contact their company or battalion BOSS representatives, the Fort Carson BOSS Office at 524-2677 or attend one of the program’s bi-

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monthly meetings held at the Foxhole at 10 a.m., the first and third Wednesday of each month.

## SUMMER SEMINARS - 2012

The 15th year of the Summer Seminars at the Florissant Fossil Beds NM are being dedicated to the Friends' 25th Anniversary Celebration to be held on Saturday, August 18, 2012 at The Nature Place in Florissant. Planning is going on right now for this year's seminars. There will be less offerings this summer because of the many other activities that are being held this year, including the building of the new visitor center. The final schedule will be available for registration on May, 1 2012.

Last summer, we had hopes of offering a full day seminar on the Snowmastodon Project at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. In communications with both Ian Miller and Kirk Johnson from the museum, it was determined that they need do a similar program for the museum before they can do a full day program somewhere else. We will continue to book them for a seminar in the future.

In the meantime, the Friends' members have been invited to two programs being held at Colorado College on Monday, March 26, 2012 being presented by Ian Miller and Kirk Johnson. See the description below. We hope to see some of you there.

1) 1:00 am on Monday 26, 2012 at Shove Chapel on the Colorado College campus. Kirk R. Johnson's presentation about Ancient Denver's, Snowmastodon and Fossil Record of Paleoenvironments and Climate Change followed by book signing of Kirk Johnson and Ian Millers' new book "Digging Snowmastodon: Discovering an Ice Age World in the Colorado Rockies."

2) 7:00 pm on Monday, March 26, 2012 at the Gates Common Room on the 3rd floor of Palmer Hall on the Colorado College Campus. Evening Presentation by Ian Miller, "Digging Snowmastodon: Discovering an Ice Age World in the Colorado Rockies" followed by book signing.

The presentations are free and reservations are not required. For a map of Colorado College campus visit [www2.coloradocollege.edu/welcome/campus\\_map/](http://www2.coloradocollege.edu/welcome/campus_map/).

## Friends of Wild Lands--Colorado Senator Mark Udall is seeking your support and comments on possible legislation for new wilderness areas

THIS IS OUR BEST OPPORTUNITY FOR PROTECTING WILD NATIONAL FOREST AND BLM LANDS IN CENTRAL COLORADO CANYONS AND MOUNTAINS IN NEARLY TWO DECADES. Please consider making comments.

The process is simple:

For an overview of the proposals click on [Protecting our Outdoor Heritage](#).

Click on [Arkansas River Canyon Maps and Comment Form](#) to learn more about the proposed **Arkansas River Canyon. And Browns Canyon Wilderness**.

Senator Udall is also asking for support for several areas in Summit, Eagle and Pitkin Counties that have been thoroughly explored, mapped and reviewed by local conservation groups, county commissioners and other stakeholders. So don't stop with Browns Canyon.

Click on [Central Mountain Maps and Comment Form](#) to continue your review and comments.



Please include any personal experiences you have had in any of the areas, as well as more general comments about the lands which Senator Udall is considering for protection. Share this alert on your Facebook, Twitter or other social media or by email to your friends and family. Give them a chance to speak up for wild lands, as well. **THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS IMPORTANT PROCESS!**

## THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT 2012

On Saturday, February 18, 2012, 10 hearty people braved the early morning chill to spend 2 and 1/2 hours hiking at the Florissant Fossil Beds sighting and counting birds. The event was part of the National Great Backyard Bird Count that occurs for four days every year in February in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The statistics gathered every year are used by scientists, researchers, teachers and others to gauge the effects of climate change, the health of all bird species and to be alerted about species that are in trouble.



*The hearty souls ready for fun.  
Photos by Lenore Hotchkiss*

Crow, Raven, Pine Grosbeak, Junco, and the Stellar Jay were joined by a Northern Harrier which we don't see as often. The National statistics for the entire 4 day count was larger than last year. The total species count was 618. The total number of birds counted was 17, 349, 976 and over 103,960 check lists were submitted, ours being among them.

Hot drinks and delicious goodies were available in the yurt where the fire in the stove warmed us. Several of the participants have already committed to doing this again next year. One Friend's member commented that it was a special treat to hike the Monument with a totally different emphasis.



Our count at the Monument netted us 17 different species and over 50 individual birds. Expected species such as the

A thank you goes out to Sara and Bob Miner who helped with the event and are Life members of the Friends, If you wish to know more about this event, search GBBC to find many articles and interesting information about birds. We hope that many more of you would consider joining us next February for this fun event.

## SHORT STUFF/UPCOMING ACTIVITIES - TIDBITS

Watch your mail for your official invitation to the 25th Anniversary celebration. Sign up as soon as you can as seats for the banquet are limited.

Mark your calendars for the March 26th programs at Colorado College. (See seminar article)

Mark your calendars for the National Trails Day event at the Monument on Saturday, June 2, 2012 hosted by the Friends in partnership with CUSP (Coalition for the Upper South Platte). Please call Lisa Patton at CUSP (748-1033) to sign up as a volunteer. The Friends are supplying the lunch and snacks.

The Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds have made a donation of \$500.00 on behalf of all of our members to the National Park Foundation to be put in a fund for the husband and 2 young children of Ranger Margaret Anderson who was shot and killed while on duty at Mount Rainier National Park. We also send our deepest sympathy to her family.

The Friends' Board supported a \$5000.00 proposal to the F. Martin Brown Publications Board for additional funds to complete a project undertaken by lead Interpretive Ranger, Jeff Wolin. The project is the production of a CD of children's songs about National Park Service areas. It is being produced in partnership with New Orleans Jazz, Eastern National with support from the Friends. The \$5000.00 was granted to the project on March 15, 2012. Many thanks the F, Martin Brown Fund. Proceeds from the sale of this CD will benefit Junior Ranger programs in all National Park Service areas. More about this project in future E-newsletters.



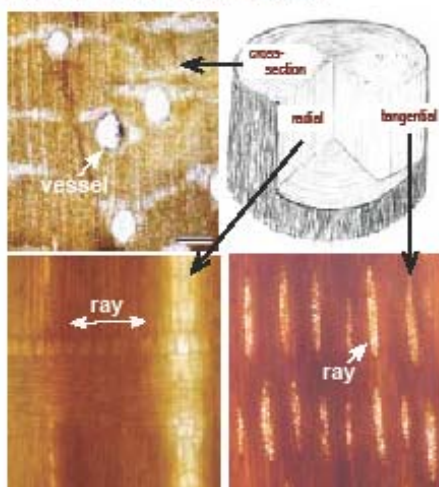


## Sexi Peru Project



Over 40 species of plants can be recognized among the permineralized specimens. All are flowering plants (Angiosperms), the largest and most diverse group of plants living currently. Two broad categories can be distinguished based on the anatomy.

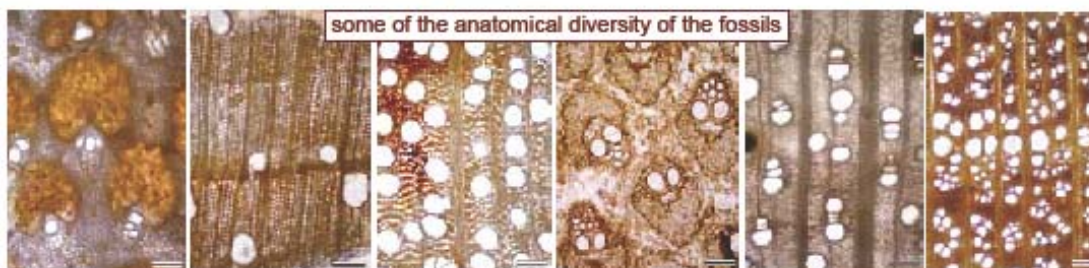
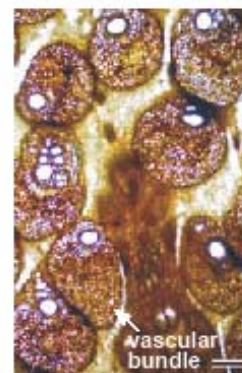
**Home**



1. The majority of species have wood made up of vessels, fibers, and rays. The microscope sections on the left show a wood with large, widely spaced vessels (cross section) and rays arranged in a regular pattern (tangential section). The radial section shows a ray along its long side extending from the inside to the outside of the tree. The largest specimen in the fossil forest (below), with a trunk .75 m in diameter and more than 10 m long, has wood of this type. scale is .25 mm



2. About one-third of the species have water-conducting elements (vessels or xylem) in vascular bundles, as in the cross section on the right. In fossils of this type (monocots), surface features are often present that can aid in distinguishing species. The specimen on the left has persistent leaf bases whereas the one on the far left is smooth and has leaf scars. Both are palms.



Fossil wood only tells part of the story. Learn more by reading about the fossil leaves of Sexi.



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<http://peru.fossilbeds.org>