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Newsletter

# Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds eNewsletter

Every Fossil Needs a Friend

#46—January 2021

## Thank You for Your Support!

You may have seen the email at the beginning of December where we asked for help in funding the Geologists in the Park (GIP) Intern at the Monument. Our goal to fund the remaining amount needed was \$3675; however, we raised a little over \$6,000! With the remaining amount, we can help fund the installation of a water line to the A-frame building which will eventually be used for temporary housing which is desperately needed to help attract quality staff and interns.

We are so grateful to all who contributed! There was one especially generous donation from two very dear and long-time members who have a special place in their heart for the Monument: Bob and Lisa Rennick. Their connection to the Monument is one I'd like to share here, as I'm sure many of you have your own unique story. Here's theirs:

"The reasons that we are fond of the Fossil Beds, its staff and its Friends is because it has been a kind of background theme for us ever since we moved to Colorado Springs in 1985. Lisa comes from the beautiful Black Forest of Germany; there they have the concept of "Hausberg" – the 'house mountain'. We've visited famous National Parks, we live near Garden of the Gods, and those are great, but the Fossil Beds is our personal "Hauspark", our home mountain park, small, intimate and friendly and very meaningful in many ways. We taught our daughter to cross-country ski at the Monument. It's a place for us to get in touch with the reality, legacy and wonder of Nature; for learning amazing things from the dedicated rangers, scientists and interns. And we never get tired of Ranger Jeff Wolin's movie and music. Our two grandsons and a grand-nephew all became Junior Rangers there, and whenever they visit from other parts of the country, they expect to re-visit the Monument. (An important family story is that shortly after they got their Junior Ranger certificates at Florissant, we took the boys to Arches National Park, and as we were walking a trail there, the 7-year old cautioned us to stay on the trail so as to not disturb the ecology that he had learned about at the Monument.) Innumerable out-of-town visitors that we've brought to the Fossil Beds remind us fondly how we showed them the trails and The Boulders and how to sniff the Ponderosa bark for vanilla, chocolate or butterscotch scents. We're not as mobile as we used to be, but with a little assistance we can still walk the paved Ponderosa Loop, sit on the benches and take it all in."

**What's your connection to Fossil Beds National Monument?** If you'd like to share it, we're openly accepting article submissions for future newsletters. Please send all materials to [editor@fossilbeds.org](mailto:editor@fossilbeds.org).



Lisa and Bob

## Meet the Intern: Astrid Garcia



**Astrid Garcia**

I'm originally from Southern California and came to Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument through the Latino Heritage Internship Program, which is a National Park Service Youth Program. As an Interpretation and Outreach Assistant, I assist visitors with questions about the park, but my primary focus is to engage Latino audiences through various virtual activities. I've collaborated with several people to create different projects that combine art with the science of the park. I worked with Ranger and Illustrator Karen Ceballos from Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument to create colorful works of art. One work depicts a multigenerational Latino family admiring a petrified Redwood stump (pictured bottom right), which was used to accompany a poem

em that I wrote with a poet, Franklin Cruz. Our poem conveys various aspects of Latino culture in a way that relates to the geology and paleontology of the park. Another illustration is a simplified map that shows a few fossils and their modern relatives now across Latin America and the Caribbean. This was created with assistance from the park paleontologist Dr. Herb Meyer. Moreover, I used a game that is popular in Hispanic and Latino culture that is similar to Bingo and called "La Loteria" or the "Mexican Lottery" to illustrate the geological, paleontological, and scenic resources of the park for families to enjoy through a game. In addition, I helped to diversify a couple of the virtual geology and paleontology camp activities such as comparing enchiladas, a traditional Mexican dish, to the rock layers of the Florissant Formation. I also created an interactive game in which kids can choose their own Eocene adventure. This game incorporates diverse characters that can be selected who all have different scientific interests. I'm providing many of these activities in Spanish along with providing Spanish captions to a few pre-existing park videos. This past October, I presented these projects at the Geological Society of America 2020 conference. I have been sharing my work using social media and will soon share these with educators across the nation. Many of the aforementioned activities are live on the [Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument website](#).



**Multigenerational Latino family admiring Big Stump**



## New Artwork and Publication Contribute to the Monument's Outreach in Sexi, Peru

By Herb Meyer

The Monument's Paleontology Intern Mariah Slovacek applied her artistic skills over the past few months to create the first reconstruction of the Eocene forest at El Bosque Petrificado Piedra Chamana in Sexi, Peru. Working as a Guest Scientist through the Geoscientist-in-the-Parks program, Mariah applied scientific information from our research at this site to provide two beautiful illustrations showing what this forest might have looked like. Her work was presented as a poster at the virtual conference of the Geological Society of America in October. This dry tropical forest was preserved in a volcanic landscape 39 million years ago. Mangroves shown along the shoreline are based on fossil wood and leaves found high in the Andes today, providing evidence for the geologic uplift of this region. Another illustration showcases some of the important trees of this forest along with microscopic thin sections of the fossil woods.

The Monument has informally interacted with this petrified forest site in northern Peru for the past 20 years, since December 2000. This has provided published scientific research, implementation of a detailed inventory and monitoring of the site, recommendations for conservation, and encouragement for the local village to understand and benefit from their globally unique resource. This involvement has remained active during COVID as Mariah created the artwork while FLFO's paleontologist Dr. Herb Meyer and his collaborator Dr. Deborah Woodcock of Clark University completed the first Spanish-language summary of their work for a new paper published in a scientific journal in Peru in November. The new article highlights our scientific discoveries for a Peruvian audience and makes a plea for nomination of the area as a World Heritage Site, which would help to better protect the area's Geoheritage values and provide sustainable economic benefits for local communities. We hope that Mariah's artwork will help everyone to better visualize the amazing diversity of Peru's ancient past.



New artwork by FLFO's Paleontology Intern Mariah Slovacek reconstructs the Eocene forest of Sexi, Peru



Key to important Eocene fossil woods and trees in the petrified forest at Sexi, Peru  
(by Mariah Slovacek)

## A Round of Applause for the Kids

The Fossil Beds began a partner project in 2019 to coordinate an art show that was supposed to be on display this past spring. The art show represents the work of over 100 kids from schools across Colorado. They researched the Monument and worked collaboratively to make art using the theme "Everything Changes in Nature" Their artwork has been hanging in the theater all fall. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, their work never got the full appreciation it deserved, but we can at least get a sense for their beautiful work here:







## Volunteer Trail Work at the Fossil Beds

By Mary Capps

A few years ago the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument was but a beautiful place to hike - with interesting trails, a friendly staff and breathtaking views. Then I became a volunteer Trail Worker and things changed. The images I saw in the Visitor Center film, *Shadows of the Past*, came to life as I became part of the Park legacy, learning to care for and preserve a wondrous kingdom of ancient and newly discovered treasures, and making these wonders accessible to people from all over the world by creating new trails, improving older ones, and sharing the story of our Park with visitors young and old. I was surprised how often folks would stop on their treks to ask a question about something they saw or wondered about; or simply asking what our trail crew was working on that day. I began memorizing the history on the Monument's Geologic Map on the way to work each day so that I could offer accurate answers to their questions and drop interesting info into our short bites of conversation about wild flowers and grasses leading into a description of what the landscape looked like 34 million years ago.

Our crew is fortunate to have a volunteer leader with over 10 years of experience in the Park itself, along with decades more with the California Department of Fish and Game. John Schwabe knows how trails function — not just to bear the footsteps of myriads, but also how trails drain away summer downpours, withstand harsh winter snow and ice, as well as protect both visitors and ecosystems alike. He taught us how to build water bars and how to slope trails that would withstand those assaults, yet look natural and inviting to our visitors. We learned how to trim branches just enough to allow ease of passage, but not so much that it looks unnatural. We were taught to be aware of aesthetics as well, coating newly trimmed branch ends with mud made from readily available dirt and a few drops of water from our canteens. After disturbing an area to improve access or direct traffic away from a dangerous or fragile location, or newly restored vegetation, John showed us how to rehabilitate the area using rocks, random branches & logs and forest duff (pine needles, moss, lichen, grasses etc.). It feels really satisfying to step back to inspect our work and realize it looks as though it's always been that way!

The youngest member of our core crew is 66, with younger volunteers joining us from time to time. We're a fun loving, hardworking group that enjoys the challenge of the projects that NPS trail work coordinator Parker Severson gives us, as well as the camaraderie we find in working together and deciding how we're going to accomplish each task. It's amazing how many brilliant ideas come out of our brainstorming when we're trying to figure out the best way to solve a tricky logistics problem.

My only regret is that I wish I'd started this many years ago like John and so many others! I've missed out on so much! If only I'd known! Now you, dear reader, *do* know! Come join us for a whole new outlook on our Park! It's life-changing!



**Volunteer Mary Capps repairing splintered handrail on the footbridge near the Homestead**



**Volunteer Trail Crew members John Schwabe, Ron Moore, Ruth Gulliver & Corky Capps working on the Geologic Trail**



**Our Volunteer Trail Crew making the trail above the Visitor Center safer and more accessible for visitors**



## The Visitor Service Award - 2020

Every year, usually in August, a Fossil Beds employee puts out a call for nominations for the Visitor Service Award which has been given out annually since 1991. This award is given each year to someone who exemplifies the epitome of excellent visitor service that enhances the experience of the visitor. The nominee can be a permanent employee, a seasonal employee, an intern or a volunteer. Since 1991, this award has been given to 37 people. Five people have been given the award twice and in 7 of the years, 2 people received the award. The special thing about this award is that people are nominated by their peers.

Congratulations to Jan Beals, a member and the treasurer of the Friends' Board, who is the recipient of the 2020 Visitor Service Award which she received during the Friends Annual Meeting held virtually in the fall. As the nomination stated, "Jan basically led the entire process of revamping the Hiking Trail Map that has been used for years. Her work on the map involved hiking all the trails, remeasuring them, working with numerous divisions, buying and learning many new computer programs, learning how to make programs accessible using software, organizing meetings and making a million decisions, edits and updates. This amazing effort will lead to increased visitor understanding, satisfaction and safety." (See article on the new Hiking Trail Map in this newsletter).

Jan has been a volunteer at the Florissant Fossil Beds NM since the October 2016. As a volunteer, she has worked in the Visitor Center, done patrols and worked on the Hiking Trail Map. She has been a member of the Friends since 2015 and on the Friends' Board since January 2019. She served on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, the Seminar Committee and the Donor Recognition Committee. She has just accepted the role of treasurer for the Friends.

Although not a Colorado native herself, (Jan was born in a small mining town in the Andes), her father was born in Colorado Springs and her mother moved there as a child. With her parents working internationally and most of her extended family living in Colorado, Colorado has always been "home" in an important way for the Beals family. In 1980, her parents built a home on the Tarryall outside of Lake George. Jan followed suit in the 1990's. She was employed as a researcher for almost 30 years for the University of Colorado Medical Center Campus. She retired in 2016. The Florissant Fossil Beds NM has become an important part of her retirement life.



Jan Beals

## Updated Hiking Trail Map

For many years now, the Florissant Fossil Beds has used the same Hiking Trail Map. Over the past two years, a group of volunteers, aided by Monument staff, updated the distance information for all the trails at the Monument. Taking advantage of current Global Position System (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) tools we were able to measure the length of the trails more precisely. Having these more accurate distances led us to update the Hiking Trail Map. At the same time, we provided facilities staff updated distances for the new trail signs for which they have requested funding.

This was a fun and interesting project. Jan Beals did most of the hiking and later completed the actual editing of the map. Randy Quick, a volunteer responsible for the Monument's GIS programs, guided the technical aspects of the project. We divided the trail system into 38 discrete segments and then tackled measuring the distance of each as precisely as possible with current technologies. This involved walking each segment multiple times using 2 GPS systems. For the shorter segments, such as those around the Visitor Center (VC), we used a 100' measuring tape to get the most accurate measures. Randy was able to get the same information using GIS programs. With these in hand, he developed "best" estimates for each segment. In consultation with Monument staff, we then calculated the distance of each trail. Finally, Jan tackled updating the Hiking Trail map handout. Judy Quick assisted in rendering the Map accessible to those for whom a spoken version is preferable.

In mid-December, the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument took delivery of 20,000 new Hiking Trail Maps that will soon be distributed. The Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds brokered the financing and printing of the maps. The F. Martin Brown Trust graciously provided the funds to the Friends of the Fossil Beds to pay for the printing the new Hiking Trail Map. The Friends, in turn, worked with Monument staff to ensure these funds reached the printer (see the article on the F. Martin Brown Trust by Jerry McLain)

We have attached the new map on the following page and provided a link to a downloadable version [here](#).

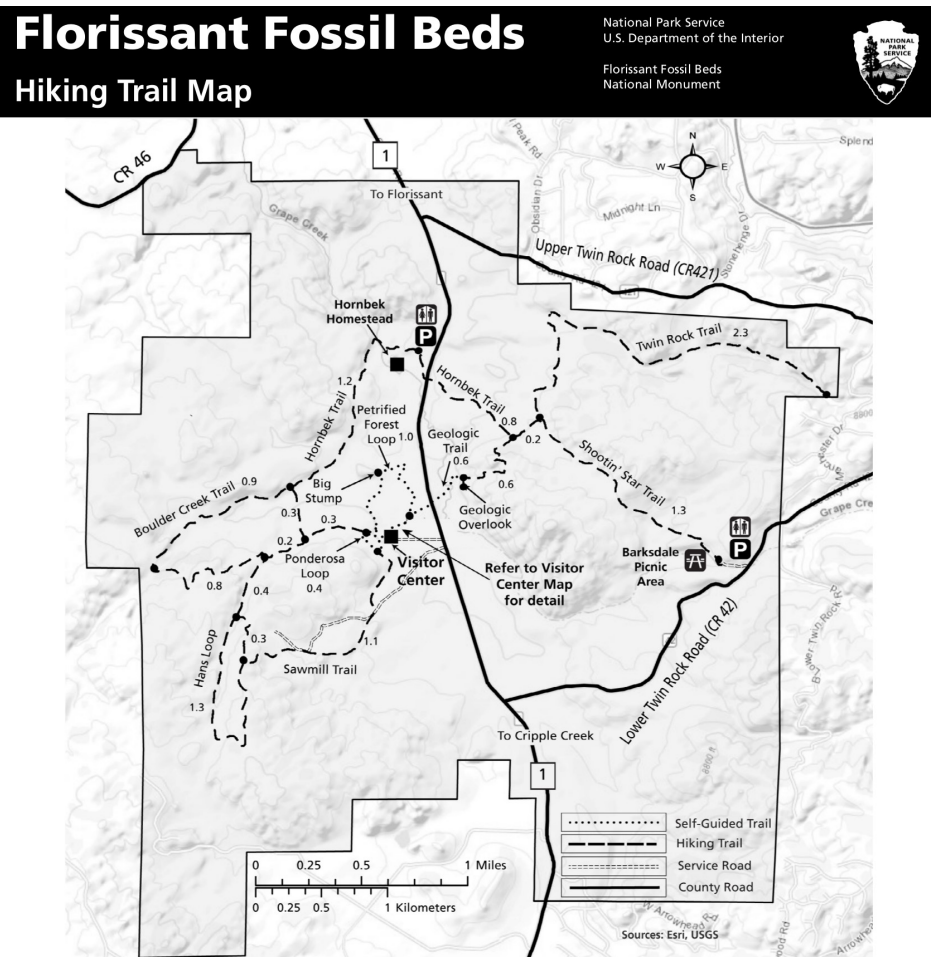
Some changes visitors will see:

- The details for each trail are presented in a table format making it easier for visitors to glean the information of most interest.
- On the front page, the background for the hiking map is topographic, giving hikers a better sense of changes in altitude on each trail. We also included elevation change information in the trail tables.
- We clearly defined trailheads. For the most part, these are the back door of the VC. For the Shootin' Star Trail, the Barksdale Picnic Area is the trailhead; while for the Twin Rock Trail we calculated distances for 3 trailheads: Barksdale Picnic Area, Hornbek parking lot, and the VC.
- The VC Area Map on the back is now bigger, allowing for more detail, including a depiction of the full Petrified Forest Loop.
- When we added up all the segments, we found that the Fossil Beds have 13.8 miles of trails. So, we changed our descriptions to there being 14 miles of trails (not 15) at the Monument.
  - ◊ Many of our trails overlap with one another. Not only was this the reason for the slight difference between 14 and 15 miles, but we now know that if one walked each trail separately, the total mileage would be almost 27 miles!



We now have a team and a system in place that can, as needed, more nimbly update both distance data and resources such as the Hiking Trail Map.

Thank you to everyone who helped with this project!




#### Introduction

14 miles of trails exist at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. The self-guiding Petrified Forest Loop offers the best views of petrified redwood stumps. Other trails provide excellent opportunities to view scenery and explore the modern ecosystem.

| Hiking Trail               | Trailhead           | Roundtrip Mileage | Elevation Change | Difficulty | Description  |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|--|
| <b>Sawmill Trail</b>       | Visitor Center      | 2.6               | 310              | Moderate   | The varied terrain provides a good example of Colorado's Montane Life Zone. Forests of pine, spruce, and fir; meadows frequented by elk; ridgetop viewing of Pikes Peak; and shaded streams make this a favorite.  |
| <b>Hans Loop</b>           | Visitor Center      | 3.6               | 380              | Moderate   | The Hans Loop is an extension of the Sawmill. The trail follows a gentle ridge that provides vistas of Pikes Peak and also a stroll through a scenic valley.   |
| <b>Boulder Creek Trail</b> | Visitor Center      | 3.0               | 265              | Moderate   | This trail winds through ponderosa pine forest and skirts wet meadows. At its western end, pass by a formation of giant eroded granite boulders.   |
| <b>Hornbek Trail</b>       | Visitor Center      | 3.9               | 320              | Moderate   | Following meadows, the trail to the Hornbek Homestead crosses land once covered by ancient Lake Florissant. After the Homestead, cross County Road 1 (CR1) and climb to the crest of a hill that overlooks the ancient lake bed and the mountain ranges beyond. The Hornbek Trail connects with both the Geologic Trail (east of CR1) and Boulder Creek Trail (west of CR1). |
| <b>Shootin' Star Trail</b> | Barksdale           | 1.3*              | 160              | Moderate   | This trail follows an old roadbed and leaves the meadows to travel through the ponderosa pine forest. Look for signs of former agricultural activity.  |
| <b>Twin Rock Trail</b>     | Visitor Center      | 3.6*              | 375              | Moderate   | The trail intersects with both the Hornbek and Shootin' Star Trails. It features quiet views of rock formations, open meadows, aspen groves, stream habitats, willows, and pond life. Signs of wildlife are common.  |
|                            | Hornbek Parking Lot | 3.3*              | 420              |            |  |
|                            | Barksdale           | 3.5*              | 280              |            |  |

\* Shootin' Star and Twin Rock Trails mileages are one-way.

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| Self-Guided Trail   | Trailhead      | Roundtrip Mileage | Elevation Change | Difficulty | Description  |
|---|----------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|--|
| <b>Petrified Forest Loop</b>  | Visitor Center | 1.1               | 70               | Easy       | This trail leads through the bed of ancient Lake Florissant. It passes numerous giant petrified redwood tree stumps, including the colorful "Big Stump."   |
| <b>Ponderosa Loop</b>  | Visitor Center | 0.4               | 40               | Easy       | This short wheelchair-accessible trail leaves the exhibit area and enters the modern forest past ponderosa pine, aspen, Douglas-fir, and spruce trees. A highlight of this trail is a modern pine tree growing out of a petrified redwood.                                       |
| <b>Geologic Trail</b>   | Visitor Center | 0.6*              | 105              | Moderate   | This trail highlights over a billion years of geologic history in the Florissant valley. It passes over the ancient lake bed, crosses County Road 1 (CR1), then ascends past the remnants of a massive pyroclastic flow, and ends at a scenic overview of the Florissant valley. |

\* Geologic Trail mileage is one-way

### Visitor Center Area Features

#### Outdoor Exhibit Area

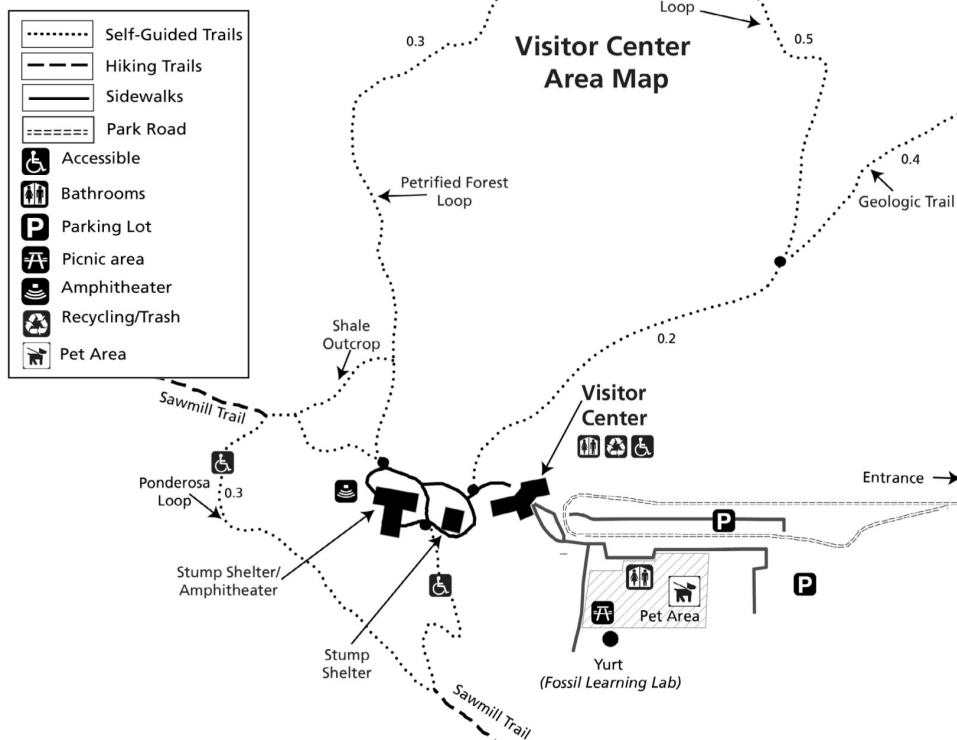
Behind the Visitor Center are two shelters covering petrified redwood trees, exhibits, and the amphitheater.

#### Visitor Center and Bookstore

The visitor center contains exhibits, fossil displays, and the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Bookstore.

#### Shale Outcrop

Located just north of the amphitheater is an outcropping of shale that is a remnant of ancient Lake Florissant.



### Protect Your Park Protect Yourself

#### For More Information:

Florissant Fossil Beds  
National Monument  
P.O. Box 185  
Florissant, CO 80816  
[www.nps.gov/flfo](http://www.nps.gov/flfo)  
(719) 748-3253

### Protect Your Park

- Pets are prohibited in all park areas and trails. However, there is a pet exercise area within the picnic area located off the main parking lot at the Visitor Center. Pets are also allowed along public roads and in parking areas. All pets must be on a leash of 6 feet or less.
- Horses and pack animals are prohibited on all trails and developed areas but are allowed off trail. Ride in a dispersed manner to prevent the creation of unapproved trails.
- Collection of any natural or cultural objects such as fossils, petrified wood, rocks, flowers, etc. is prohibited.
- Bikes, ATVs, and snowmobiles are prohibited.
- Do not feed, approach, or disturb wildlife.
- Camping and campfires are prohibited.
- Pay park entrance fees and observe park hours.

### Protect Yourself

- Florissant is located at 8,400 feet of elevation.
- Drink plenty of water and pace yourself to avoid altitude sickness.
- Lightning is common during summer afternoons. Seek shelter, stay low, avoid standing next to trees or on ridges.
- The sun is intense. Use sunblock and hats.
- Wildlife may carry diseases and may bite or scratch. Do not feed, approach, or disturb wildlife.

Fall 2020



## F. Martin Brown Trust

By Jerry McClain

Frederick Martin “Brownie” Brown was a nationally known entomologist, science teacher, writer and researcher. He taught at Colorado College and was one of the founding faculty members of Fountain Valley School south of Colorado Springs in 1930. The school was established with the financial support of Spencer Penrose and Brownie was a driving force behind the Broadmoor Hotel’s first ice rink (the predecessor to the World Arena) and the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo.

During WWII he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and taught at the Army Air Forces Intelligence School in Pennsylvania, attaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He returned to Fountain Valley School as chair of the science department, retiring in 1973. He engaged in extensive research in entomology throughout his life in Ecuador, the Yucatan and the Lesser Antilles as well as trips through Colorado on a variety of geological and biological studies.

In 1976 Brownie began a long association with the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, identifying and comparing fossil and modern insects. A large part of the insect collection housed at the Monument was collected by Brownie in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

He was a prolific writer, co-authoring over 250 scientific papers as well as a number of high school and college textbooks. His works were published by the New York Entomological Society, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Denver Museum of Natural History, among others.

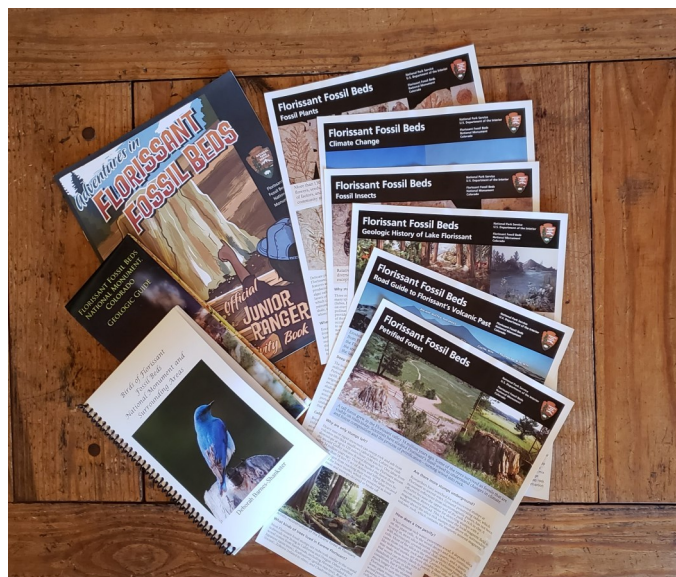
Brownie was born in New York City on March 24, 1903 and died in Colorado Springs at age 90 on May 20, 1993. He is buried in the Florissant Cemetery.

Before he died, Brownie established the F. Martin Brown Trust to help support publications, knowledge, and education “of the natural history of the Florissant area, especially as it applies to the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument and/or the adjacent areas.”

Grants to the Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds from the FMBT have helped to fund many valuable publications and projects (pictured to the right) – the Geologic Guide map, the Birds of Florissant Fossil Beds book, thousands of Junior Ranger books, hiking guide site bulletins, rack cards, and several editions of trail maps. In addition, FMBT funds have helped support visitor center films and exhibits, Junior Ranger music albums and badges, and the purchase of art show display panels.



F. Martin Brown (Brownie)



## The Great Backyard Bird Count 2021

The 2021 Great Backyard Bird Count will be held this year from Friday, February 12- Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup>. This is the 9<sup>th</sup> year that the Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds have sponsored the event. We have had several years where we held the event at the Fossil Beds and we had up to 100 Yes Club students, their teachers and families come to count birds and do many bird related activities. In 2019, we held the event at Aspen Valley ranch in Woodland Park as the Fossil Beds were closed because of the government shutdown.



The Great Backyard Bird Count is an international, citizen science event that is held each year in February in an effort to capture a worldwide count of bird populations. It began in 1998 and is an event that is run in a joint partnership with the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This count helps us to learn more about how bird populations are doing around the world, how to protect them and keep track of endangered species. The statistics from this yearly count help scientists all over the world implement conservation measures wherever necessary. In the count of 2020, there were 268,694 participants from 194 countries. There were 6,942 species counted and 27,270,156 total birds counted. If you wish more info about the 2020 count, go to [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

This year we will not be hosting the event at the Fossil Beds because of COVID 19 but encourage all of you to celebrate the event by doing a count with family and/or friends for at least 15 minutes anytime during that weekend. Even better is to do several counts during the weekend in another place. In order to record your observations and submit the data, log on to [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) and you will see 3 ways to send in your data. The third way listed would probably be the easiest unless you wish to have the suggested apps.

The Friends are offering a virtual event to celebrate the Great Backyard Bird Count. On Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> in the evening, Debbie Barnes is going to do a virtual program on Bird Identification. Many of you will remember Debbie for the several Bird seminars she has done for us at the Monument. She also published the book "Birds of Florissant." She has done a similar book for Cheyenne Mountain State Park and is just finishing one for Mueller State Park. To spend a day in the field with Debbie is a sheer delight. Be watching your emails for information on how to join her program.

There are so many resources online to help you celebrate the weekend. [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org), [ebird.org](http://ebird.org) bird web cams and bird programs on YouTube offer a wide variety of great activities with amazing pictures of birds. Here are some fun ideas for you and your family and friends:

1. Make pinecone birdfeeders
2. Make suet for your birdfeeder
3. Do a bird scavenger hunt.
4. Join the local Audubon Club. Here in the Pikes Peak region, it is the Aiken Audubon Chapter. All of their programs are taking place on Zoom. Just email [AikenAudubon@gmail.com](mailto:AikenAudubon@gmail.com) for info on membership and programs.
5. During the count, go to [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) and watch the world map that is showing where bird counts are going on around the world.

The Friends hope you'll be able to take part in this year's count!!!

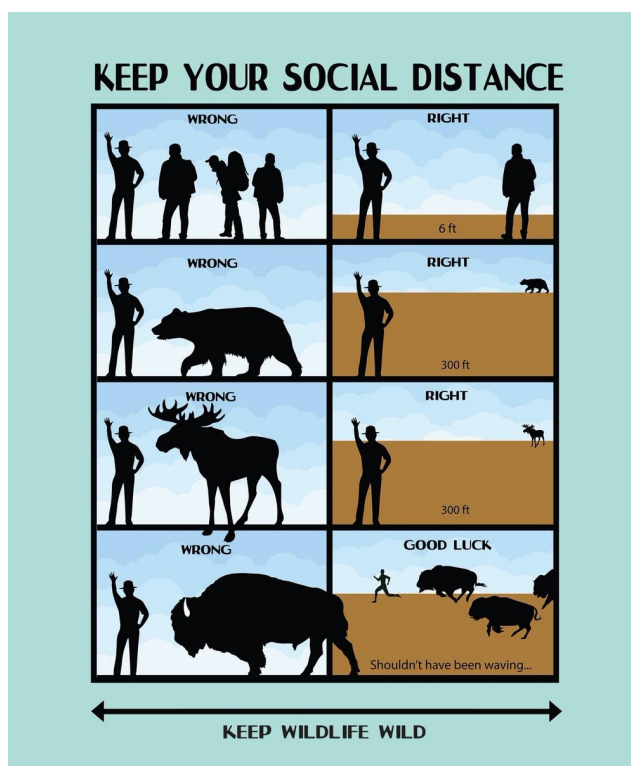


## A Message from the Superintendent

While many of us are glad to see 2020 in the rearview mirror, it was certainly a year we will remember! The year presented significant challenges for the staff of Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, but it also offered us some opportunities to stretch our capabilities in new ways.

After Colorado Governor Polis put a “Stay-at-Home” order in effect in response to the coronavirus pandemic, park staff took a few days to prepare for our new reality, and on March 28 we closed the visitor center and main gate. The park landscape remained open, including the Hornbek and Barksdale trailheads, so visitors were still able to enjoy the trails. Nearly all staff shifted to telework, though our Chief Ranger continued to report to the park to maintain an employee presence and Facility Management staff came in periodically to check on buildings and utilities. Teleworkers set up home offices and gradually adapted to a new way of operating, including communicating via virtual meetings that were frequently punctuated by “can you hear me?” and “you’re on mute!” Our Lead Interpreter began ramping up opportunities for virtual visitors, adding new virtual tours and activities to the park website, along with a virtual junior ranger badge and virtual visit passport stamp. Some socially distanced outdoor work was also accomplished, including a roadside clean-up on Earth Day and a boundary fence survey. But mostly we were busy planning for what was clearly going to be a very different kind of summer season.

Once Colorado shifted to a “Safer-at-Home” status some staff were able to return to work in person, allowing us to begin preparing to reestablish some visitor services while minimizing Covid-19 risk to the extent possible. Staff worked together to construct a new outdoor fee kiosk, establish a one-way entrance corridor through the visitor center and one-way exit trail outside the building, print and post Covid-19 signage, affix social distancing stickers, acquire PPE and additional cleaning supplies, develop new cleaning protocols, and develop virtual and socially distanced ways to on-board and train seasonal employees. On June 8 we opened the front gate, sharing a sense of relief and excitement as the flag was raised and we were finally able to begin welcoming visitors. Things were different than they usually are. Park Rangers greeted visitors at an information table on the front patio rather than inside the visitor center and operated outdoor “pop-up” interpretation stations that allowed for social distancing instead of conducting traditional interpretive walks. Interns developed virtual activities for Paleontology Camp and Latino outreach activities that had to be canceled. Our new park film was posted to the website rather than premiered at a public event. However, a variety of behind-the-scenes outdoor projects continued as planned with only minor modifications. Among these the visitor center picnic area was upgraded, trails were maintained, exotic plants were controlled, paleontology sites were monitored, new research on Pleistocene geomorphology was initiated, beautiful new wayside exhibits were installed, wetland restoration was planned, and new roofs were installed on buildings at the Hornbek Homestead! This fall when cold weather arrived, we moved operations back indoors. With relatively low visitation this time of year we are able to maintain social distancing as visitors pass through the visitor center. The theater and museum exhibits remain closed, but items can be purchased at the bookstore. The year ended



with the fantastic news that the acquisition of 280 acres that were generously donated to the park by a conservation minded citizen was completed. The new park property provides improved access to the west side of the park for critical wildfire mitigation, and planning for that work is beginning.

We all greatly missed our traditional summer activities this year- night sky events, yoga hikes, art programs, and excavation demonstrations, among others. And we missed seeing the smiling faces of many friends, volunteers, colleagues and partners even more. But we feel fortunate that we were able to continue to serve the public, with visitation remaining at near normal levels. We will continue to benefit from our newly developed virtual communication skills and improved ways of accomplishing work with distant partners in efficient ways that reduce the need to travel. We've developed some excellent new virtual content that will remain available to be enjoyed by students and members of the public who can't visit the park in person. We've learned how to be kinder and more understanding with each other. And of course, our amazing resources, beautiful scenery and wildlife are still here and doing just fine. We welcome 2021, knowing we can take on whatever challenges the new year brings our way!

Bring  
on  
2021 !