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Newsletter

Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds eNewsletter

Every Fossil Needs a Friend

#51—June 2022

“From Stumps to Stars” - Florissant Fossil Beds Astronomy

By Mark Harter, FLFO Volunteer Ranger, Astronomy Lead June 2022

The Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument (FLFO) is world-renown for fantastic shale fossil deposits (insects and plants), petrified Redwood trees, 6,000 acres with 15 miles of pristine hiking trails, and a great Visitor Center with fossil displays. However, “*Half the Park is after Dark*” due to the spectacular dark skies to view the beauty of the universe.

The Colorado Rocky Mountains have some magnificent night sky scenery of stars, planets, galaxies, shooting stars, nebulae, and satellites. Unfortunately, those dark clear night skies are disappearing as the mountains become urbanized with people, homes, roads, and lights. Since 2010, Colorado’s population has grown a whopping 20% with more than one million people moving to Colorado from other states (perhaps you are one of them!). That makes our dark skies even more important to protect and keep as a special part of our mountain community.

Fortunately, FLFO is a certified International Dark Sky (IDS) Park by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) in June 2021. This rigorous certification recognizes the park’s exceptional dark-sky qualities, and FLFO joins an elite group of IDS-certified parks around the world (there are only 72 IDS parks in the U.S.). IDA’s mission is to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through environmentally responsible outdoor lighting. More at www.darksky.org. This reflects not only the natural Rocky Mountain beauty and isolation from city light pollution, but also the local Florissant community support for FLFO dark sky certification.

As an added bonus, FLFO provides a unique National Park Service (NPS) opportunity by hosting monthly astronomy-based interpretive programming opportunities and public Night Sky activities for all ages. FLFO is partnered with the Colorado Springs Astronomical Society (CSASTRO), which supported FLFO through the stringent IDS certification process with precise light pollution measurements for two years prior to IDS approval. CSASTRO is one of the largest astronomy clubs in the nation (300+ members), and provides telescopes and astronomers for monthly FLFO Night Sky events. Weather permitting, once a month the general public is invited to astronomy nights at FLFO where they can observe the dark skies with state-of-the-art telescopes and astronomy experts. We routinely have 40-50 participants, and during the summer months usually have 100-200 people attending. Many

people visit during the afternoon and then stay for the night sky viewings, proving that FLFO captures it all *"From Stumps to Stars"*!

The remaining planned 2022 FLFO Night Sky events are the following Friday nights (weather permitting): June 17th, July 15th, Aug 19th. (8:30-10:30 PM); Sep 16th. 8:00-10:00 PM, and Oct 14th, Nov 18th, Dec 16th (7:00-9:00 PM). Please plan to join us for one (or all) of these dark-sky astronomy events!

Mark Harter is a Florissant resident, and as a FLFO Volunteer Ranger leads the FLFO astronomy events. He is a new FLFO Friends member, retired military Veteran (Air Force), and works at the United States Space Force at Peterson Space Force Base, CO.



Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, Hornbek Homestead with Milky Way galaxy in background, approximately 200 billion stars. Photo credit: Mark Harter, October 2021.

A Happy 100th Birthday to Ric Bradley

On May 14, 2022, Ric Bradley, the first president of the Friends of the Fossil Beds, Inc., turned 100! His birthday bash, as he called it, was held on June 3rd and 4th, 2022. It started with a granddaughter, Mahani Teave, performing a piano concert at Grace and St. Stephens's Episcopal church in Colorado Springs on the 3rd followed by a memorial service for his wife, Dorry, in Shove Chapel at Colorado College. On Saturday the 4th, his birthday celebration was held at Barnes Science Center. Over 60 family members attended all the events along with many friends, former students and professors that he taught with.

Ric was born in Madison, Wisconsin in 1922. He received degrees from Dartmouth and the University of California at Berkeley. As a young physicist in the 1940's, serving in the Navy, he worked on the famed Manhattan Project at the California Institute of technology and Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. His many publications on surface and atomic physics won him election to the American Physical Society.

After earning his physics doctorate at the University of California at Berkeley, he taught at Cornell. He came to Colorado College in 1961 where he taught physics from the 1960's through the 1980's. He also served for 6 years as a much admired and beloved dean of the faculty at Colorado College.

Ric was married to his wife Dorry for 73 years. Sadly, Dorry died in 2020 and her memorial took place on the afternoon of June 3, 2022. They have 4 children, 8 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. Most of the family was in attendance for all of the events on the 3rd and 4th of June, 2020.

Both Ric and Dorry were big champions for the establishment of the Florissant Fossil Beds NM. Ric testified in Congress in favor of the establishment of the Florissant Fossil Beds NM. He also testified in Congress against dams in Dinosaur NP and in favor of the Wilderness Act in 1964.

He became the first president of the Friends of the Fossil Beds in 1987. He had known Estella Leopold from childhood in Wisconsin. She got Ric involved with helping to establish the Monument. As a member of the Board of the Friends, Dorry designed the first t-shirt/sweatshirt for the Fossil Beds. Her original drawings are still in the archives of the Friends. As staunch supporters of the Fossil Beds, they always attended the many big events. (See the picture of the 25th Anniversary of the Florissant Fossil Beds NM establishment).

Ric loves music. He sang in the Colorado Springs Choral for 25 years and the Colorado College Choir for 31 years. He also composes music, is a pianist, actor, and watercolor painter. He has a wonderful sense of humor with a great sparkle in his eyes. He and Dorry enjoyed other interests over the years including many camping and cross-country skiing trips with family, friends, students and faculty members.

The Board of the Friends of the Fossil Beds wish Ric congratulations on his 100th birthday. We thank him for his tireless effort to establish the Florissant Fossil Beds NM and his interest over many years in the Friends and the development of the Monument.



Ric Bradley telling a physics problem to be solved by guests of his 100th Birthday Celebration.



This picture is a classic. It is a photo of the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the Fossil Beds as a National Monument. In this photo from, left to right, is Stephanie DiCenzo, Kent Borges, Estella Leopold, Betty Willard, Vim Crane Wright, and Dorry and Ric Bradley in front of the Trio. Estella Leopold, Vim Wright, and Beatrice Willard, were the three women who stood up against the bulldozers to save the fossil beds in the late 1960s.

Congrats to Superintendent Penny Wagner!

We'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate Penny Wagner as the new Superintendent of the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. Penny served as the Interim Superintendent of the Monument at the beginning of this year. She will officially begin her role as Superintendent of the Monument on July 31st. The Friends welcome Penny back for the permanent position.



Donor Recognition Report

This spring, after a long, serious endeavor the “Donor Recognition Plan” between the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument and the Friends of Florissant Fossil Beds Inc. was signed and approved. This Donor Recognition Plan will be in effect for ten years. The document defines the criteria and procedures for thanking donors and describes the form and duration of recognition for different types and levels of donations.

Currently all financial donors receive a thank you letter from the Friend’s recognition committee stating in general terms how the financial gift will be used, including our nonprofit status and tax deduction information. For donations of \$50 or more, the Fossil Beds Superintendent or a delegated NPS representative will send an acknowledgement letter for the donation. Larger donations will receive a Thank You Certificate also from the Superintendent.

Plans also include designing and erecting a Donor Recognition Board /Wall. This will be done with direct coordination with Park Staff and Friends Committee members, meeting the construction requirements of the Park, including location, materials, architecture and presentation. This process is in the very early stages; the Donor Recognition Committee would appreciate any suggestions and contributions from the membership.

Jan Beals and Gary Censoplano have been instrumental in developing a format for recording donor’s information with a primary goal of recognizing the gift, no matter how small, and contacting all donors in a professional and timely manner. For two plus years, during the COVID epidemic, the Friends have had no special events for fund raising. Income came from the cash donation box and from generous donors. The Friend’s value our donors and will continue to do so in the future.

Currently Board and other Friend’s members are using their creative and artistic talents to develop greeting cards and postcards to be used as donor and membership recognition gifts. The paintings, drawings and photographs will be of Florissant Fossil Beds key features, recognizable petrified stumps, trees, trails, buildings and great vistas including some rarely viewed vistas and unique rock formations. The planned completion date will be in the fall for the Friend’s annual membership meeting. If successful, the cards and post cards may be used in the future for fund raising.

Have a Safe Summer!

Respectfully,

John Schwabe,

Donor Recognition Committee
Member



**We Love
Our Donors!**

Introducing Our New Board Member, Michelle Melville Speck

Our board is pleased to announce our newest member joining the Friends board who brings a wealth of skills and love of the Fossil Beds. She and her husband Ed Speck moved to Florissant in 2008 and retired here in 2013. “We love the geology, history, and beauty of the area, particularly Pikes Peak and the Fossil Beds. I was truly inspired by the pioneer spirit conveyed at the 50th Anniversary celebration.”

She is a creative individual who enjoys painting, cooking, reading and watching wildlife at their home and at the Fossil Beds. Spending time with friends and their puppy, Bear, keeps her busy. Growing up in New Mexico in a family who relished wildlife and the outdoors prepared her for an appreciation of our special place at the Monument.

Her professional history as a special education teacher, interior designer, court reporter and representative for three different Colorado colleges gives the board a deep well of experiences to help develop our programs and outreach. We look forward to the enthusiastic contributions she will offer the Friends and the Monument.

A Monumental View



A panoramic view of Pikes Peak looking eastward from the southwest corner of the Monument.

Philanthropic Partnership Agreement Signed!

by Patty Glatfelter

After a series of twists and turns the Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds, Inc. has signed off on the ten year Partnership agreement with Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. This seventeen page document outlines the goals and responsibilities between the Friends and the Monument. The introduction to the Agreement is as follows:

The NPS recognizes private philanthropy as both a noble tradition for establishment and support of national parks and a vital element of the success of today's National Park System. A number of national parks exist because motivated citizens contributed time, talent, and funds to create them. Gifts of land or easements have helped establish or enlarge many parks. Donated artifacts enrich park stories in visitor centers and museums across the nation. Philanthropic support helps fund trail improvements, park improvements, youth programs, interpretation, site and species recovery, and other critical park functions. Philanthropy offers people opportunities to participate actively in the creation and care of their national parks in the 21st century. The NPS embraces philanthropic support as a key strategy for stewardship of the parks and programs entrusted to our care. The NPS and partners promote partnerships as a way to accomplish mutual goals, leverage resources, increase productivity and collective competencies, and nurture a supportive and collaborative culture for the benefit of parks and the public.

If you think you may have talents, ideas, or resources to contribute to this effort with the Friends feel free to contact the board through the Friends' website: www.fossilbeds.org

We would love to add your service to this remarkable organization's success.

Join Us at the Monument This Summer!

By Jeff Wolin, Lead Interpreter, Florissant Fossil Beds N.M.

It is quite a relief to say that we plan to return to normal interpretive operations this summer. This will include regular interpretive talks in the amphitheater, walks on the Petrified Forest Loop, tours of the Hornbek Homestead on weekends, and opening up the yurt as a hands-on learning lab. Rangers Amanda and Lauren will be primarily running those programs. It's also exciting to announce that we are once again hosting our 5-day-long Geology and Paleontology Day Camps. We will be hosting Cresson Elementary from Cripple Creek and two schools from Fountain Fort Carson District 8. We have two wonderful interns Rory and Tara who will run those programs. Rory and Tara will also be operating a "Junior Ranger Station" where kids can get books and badges and participate in hands-on activities. Lastly, we will continue to host our monthly Night Sky Programs with the Colorado Springs Astronomical Society. It should be a fun summer and allow us to really help connect people to the park.



BACK TO NORMAL

Seminar News

On Saturday, June 11th, Dr. Vince Matthews presented a fascinating virtual seminar on the glaciation of Colorado. The information presented is in his new book, "Land of Ice." While spending some time on the "Ice Age Trail" in Wisconsin, where Vince now lives, he began to think about doing something like that in Colorado. He took a 5,000-mile, 28-day trip through Colorado and collected an incredible amount of data and pictures. From the dunes to loess, the Princeton Glacier, hanging valleys, Twin Lakes, Turquoise Lake, Niwot Ridge Research Station, hot house, cool house, the Pinedale period, glaciers and ice patches, the Arapahoe glacier, patterned ground and so much more, Vince wove an amazing story of Colorado's glaciation. His presentation was very well attended, and we are so very grateful for his willingness to share his wisdom. Thank you, Vince!

We do record all our virtual seminars and look forward to finding a way to share them.

Future seminars

We are beginning to look at scheduling some in-person seminars this summer. As soon as they are scheduled, we will send out the information. In the fall, we will be offering a field trip for members only to Corral Bluffs, a hidden gem on the eastern edge of Colorado Springs. Corral Bluffs is the center of the paleontological universe. The rocks of Corral Bluffs and Jimmy Creek Park preserve the history of the extinction of the dinosaurs and the evolution of mammals and their ecosystem.

This is an historic area with evidence of habitation from 4,500 years ago to the days of the trappers, cowboys, and ranchers. In 2019, NOVA did a documentary on Corral Bluffs entitled "Rise of the Mammals," which focuses on how mammals took over after an asteroid wiped out the dinosaurs. Fossils found in ordinary rocks reveal a dramatic new picture of how rat-sized creatures ballooned in size and began to evolve into the vast array of species that rule our planet today. Be watching for information on this field trip as reservations will need to be made to attend.