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Newsletter

Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds eNewsletter

Every Fossil Needs a Friend

#54—March 2023

The A-Frame Is Alive Again!

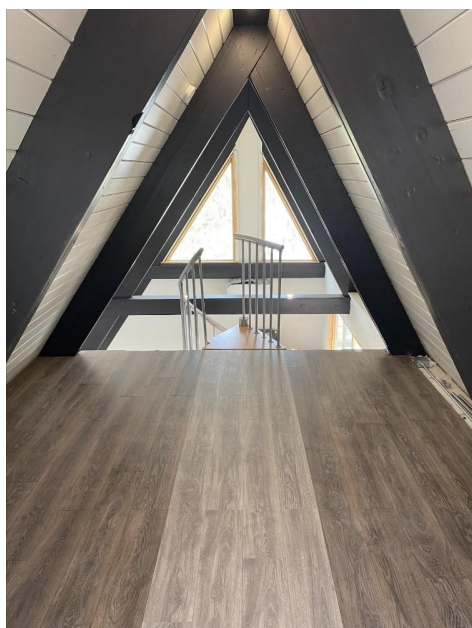
The A-Frame, also known as the Faller Building, is located off the maintenance road just past the maintenance shed. It consists of three levels: the basement which is a fossil collection site; the first floor which has been used for storage and a temporary office; and the upper-level third floor which was used for storage and accessed by a pull-down stairway.

Due to age and disrepair, the building had fallen upon hard times.

Originally slated as an education center, the critical need for employee housing overshadowed any other meaningful use.

Recently, an effort has been made to convert the building into an apartment for an intern and/or a summer seasonal employee.

The efforts by Parker Severson, Jeff Wilson, Jeremiah Stubbs, and one seasonal worker are clearly on display in the photos below:



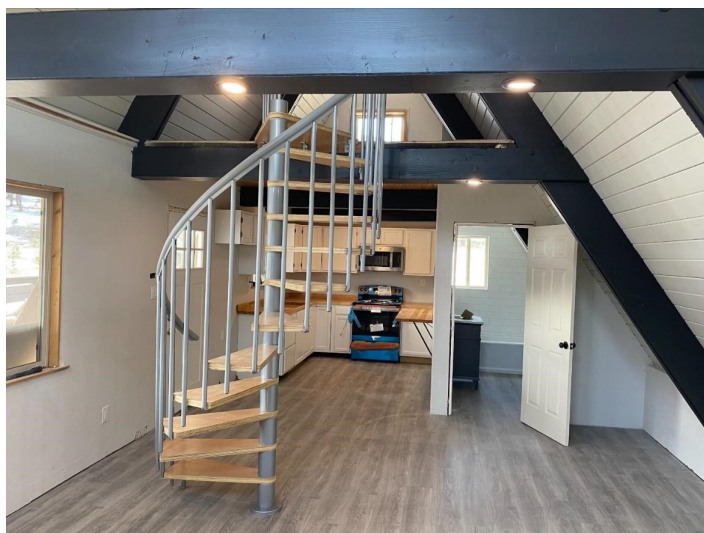
The pictures above show the view of the restored upper level which will be a single-use bedroom. New flooring, wiring, insulation, and lighting have been installed, and the walls and trim have all been painted.



This is the view of the redesigned living room on the first floor. A spiral staircase makes for easier accessibility to the upper level. A TV and a convertible sofa bed will be added so that it will be possible for two occupants to share the living space. New flooring, wiring, insulation, and air conditioning were installed. Painting has been completed with new trim to follow.



Everything in the newly installed bathroom on the first floor is new.



In addition to the spiral staircase, new lighting was installed. Trim work will follow.



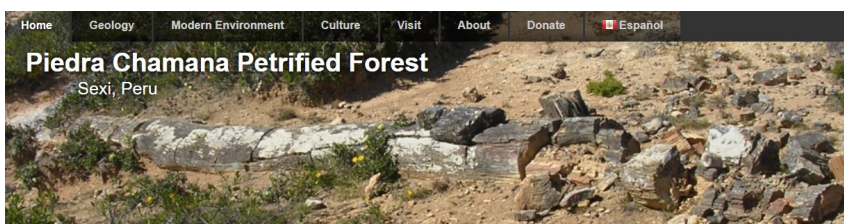
A newly installed kitchen has new cabinets, a microwave and stove, countertops, and flooring. A new sink will also be added.

The Friends of the Fossil Beds paid for the water line installation to the building. This task is now complete. The remaining large undertaking will be the installation and connection of the waste system which is slated to be completed this summer. The exterior decking and ramp are scheduled to be replaced sometime this year and the exterior of the building will be painted.

It is hoped that this remodeling effort will preserve this building for seasonal employee and intern occupancy for many years to come.

New Updates to Sexi, Peru Website

The Friends have hosted a website about our partner site at the Piedra Chamana Petrified Forest in Sexi, Peru since 2011. Many things have happened since then, both in new scientific research and the Friends support at the site. The webpages have just been revised by the Monument's Paleontologist Herb Meyer, Deborah Woodcock of Clark University, the Monument's Museum Technician Conni O'Connor, and Eleazar Rufasto Campos at Universidad Nacional Pedro Ruiz Gallo in Lambayeque, Peru. Check out the new updates at peru.fossilbeds.org.



El Bosque Petrificado Piedra Chamana (The Petrified Forest Piedra Chamana) is located in the northern Peruvian Andes near the village of Sexi. Trunks of ancient trees, fossilized after 39 million years, reveal the secrets of an extinct lowland forest. As visitors stand amidst the fossil woods, panoramic vistas of distant Andean ranges are visible across the horizon toward the Amazon River basin. At the rim of the Sexi Plateau, the landscape plunges into a valley comparable in depth to the American Grand Canyon as the Upper Chancay River flows 1700 m (5600 ft) below. The plateau itself reaches elevations between 2400-2600 m (7900-8500 ft) near the fossil site and hosts a variety of plants and animals adapted to its seasonally dry climate. Cultural traditions unique to this part of northern Peru include weavings done in the colonial style and hats crocheted from wool. The community of Sexi, with a population of around 450, welcomes visitors to come and experience its fossil resources and culture.

Click on the following images to learn more about Sexi and the petrified forest.



Financial Report for the Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds: 2022

2022 was a transition year financially for the Friends. Excitingly, we welcomed our new Superintendent, Penny Wagner. With her permanent assumption of these duties, we are able to return to actively developing plans whereby the Friends can best assist the Monument. Welcome Penny!

2022 Highlights:

- Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to **continue to provide needed support to the Monument**. As usual, we underwrote an advertisement for the Fossil Beds in the annual Teller County Guide. We also provided critical funds for school groups to enjoy—and learn from—visits to the Fossil Beds and Fossil Quarry. Addie Rich, an intern at the Fossil Beds in 2022, attended—and presented at—the Geological Society of America Conference in Denver with our support. Finally, we were able to pay for a new Dark Sky stamp, designed by FLFO staff member, Clara Peterson, for the Visitors Center.
- On a related note, we are excited to remind members of the over \$7,000 provided by the Friends, in 2021, for the waterline for the “A-Frame building.” This building is being refurbished to provide temporary housing for interns and others. Work continues on this building which will provide a critical resource for the Monument in coming years.
- **Our 2022 income was almost \$10,000.**
- The donation box in the Visitors Center continues to provide critical support: about \$4,800 in 2022. Donations, mostly from members of the Friends, yielded another \$1200. **THANK YOU!**
- **2022 Financial Summary**, as reported to the leadership of the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument and the National Park Service:

Income: \$9,687.28
Expenses: **-\$5,280.31**
TOTAL: \$4,406.97

Plans for 2023:

- **The levels of intern support will increase.** Financial support of the scientific work of the interns is a primary goal of the Friends fundraising activities. Superintendent Wagner and Dr. Herb Meyer have forwarded plans to request up to \$10,000 in support of the work of 5 interns in the coming year. These funds will support projects ranging from investigations of Florissant fossil mammals, paleosols (a stratum or soil horizon that was formed as a soil in a past geological period), and fossil birds. Funds are also requested for Hillary Cephress-McLean to attend Association for Materials & Methods in Paleontology (AMMP) Fossil Preparation Conference in Seattle in April 2023.
 - a. At our February meeting, the Friends Board approved this intern support, pending official requests from Monument staff.
- **Increased use of the \$5,000 allocated in the “Grant to Park.”** Funds up to \$5,000 per year are available to the Superintendent to be allocated at her discretion. In the past, Superintendents have used these

- monies for supplies for the Night Sky Program; shale from the Fossil Quarry; pencils for the Junior Ranger program; first aid courses for staff and volunteers; and a myriad of other, generally small, expenses not easily paid for by federal funds. We expect that, now that she's on-site, Superintendent Wagner will make strategic use of these funds.
- **Increased fundraising efforts.** In February, the Friends Donor Recognition and Fundraising Committees decided to combine efforts becoming the Donor Recognition/Fundraising (DRF) Committee. Comprised of Gary Censoplano, John Schwabe, and Michelle Melville Specks; this committee plans to more actively target requests for donations. Of special note, they have developed a series of products that they plan to gift to those making donations. Included are some wonderful t-shirts and socks celebrating the Monument's Dark Sky designation, cards based on the paintings and drawings of talented Friends' artists, and wonderful handmade Christmas ornaments. Expect to hear more soon: the details of this enterprise are still being developed.

In closing, as we consider 2023, we are excited to be returning to more of a "business as usual" model as the pandemic wanes.

A final note of thanks to Jeff Brandt, who served as the Friends' Treasurer for many years. He moved into an advisory role in late 2020, mentoring Jan, the current Treasurer. A recent move from Jeff and Penny's beloved home in Divide necessitated Jeff's resignation from the Board. Thank you for your years of work, Jeff!

-Jan Beals

The Great Backyard Bird Count – Saturday, February 18, 2023

Saturday, February 18, 2023 dawned cold but sunny. All of the helpers running the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) event began arriving at about 8:30 AM. We put up the tables both in front of the Visitor Center of the Florissant Fossil Beds NM and in the patio at the back of the building. We were ready. Those who helped with the event were Gary Censoplano, Jerry McLain, Therese Johnson, Mike Britten, and Sally McCracken from the Friends and Jenyva Fox and Kara and Luke Laszezyk from the Aiken Audubon Chapter of Colorado Springs. We were happy to have had a great PR article in the Pikes Peak Courier in the edition just before the count.

Altogether, we had 12 people join the bird walks to help count birds for the event. Nine different species were counted with a couple of special sightings. The birders saw a red-tailed hawk, a Townsend's Solitaire, and a flock of approximately 75 Bohemian Waxwings which was determined to be irruptive for this area. A picture of the waxwings was sent in along with the count to ebird.org to substantiate its presence in this area.

The other birds counted were the Pikes Peak region regulars such as a Steller's Jay, Pigmy Nuthatches, Clark's Nutcracker, and the Common Raven. In all, over 100 birds were counted. The data from this count was sent to ebird.com where data from all over the world will be collected for use by scientists in determining species decline, the effect on species from climate change, changes in migration patterns, and much other important information that will help us keep birds healthy.



Participants of GBBC Search for Birds at the Monument

The final count for 2023 won't be available until sometime in March as counts are coming in from over 190 countries from the 4 days. Last year, 7099 species were counted. Each year the numbers increase. If you are curious about the final statistics and all of the scientific findings, check in with ebird.com in March.

A good time was had by all. Plan on joining us next year for the event that will be held in the middle of February. Watch for the announcement in the Friend's newsletter.



Participants Arrive at the Monument to Take Part In GBBC

Interpretation Program Update

Jeff Wolin, Lead Interpreter

The division of interpretation and education has been busy getting ready for the summer. We hired two Scientist-in-the-Parks interns named Dale and Ashlynn. They will help run 3 summer paleontology/geology camps. We rehired Amanda Miller back into her position as education technician. We will soon be hiring another interpretive ranger for the season. We will also be contacting schools to plan for the summer camp. We have also been busy taking a lot of requests for field trips and also requests for visits to schools.

Facilities Updates

Jeff Wilson, Facility Manager

Facilities will have a much lighter project load this season, with only 1 funded trail project during the month of September. This will help focus efforts on in-house routine maintenance on buildings, trails, and utilities, and show the new employee around. It's about quality, not quantity this year! Projects on deck:

- Continued work on the A-frame; in-house. Along with a contracted project to install a new septic system this year
- 1 MHYC\ NPS trail project this year on the Shootin Star trail. 9\5-9\29
- Replacement of the lighting in the Visitor Center; exhibit space, bookstore, and exterior lighting will be updated and dark sky acceptable (exterior)
- VC restroom update: partitions, sinks, faucets, hand dryers, and lighting
- A few more new picnic tables to replace existing wooden ones
- Hiring a new WG-5 Maintenance Worker to replace Jeremiah

Time in Florissant

By Steven Wade Veatch

The valley is the way it should be,
formed over an endless flow of time.

Volcanoes erupted:

Mudflows

rushed

downhill

mixing rocks, boulders, and soil—knocking down trees,
tossing them like twigs, snapping them apart,
and burying them. Time turned trees into stone.

From this destruction, a lake formed.
Water skippers danced on its surface,
caddis flies landed on nearby willows,
and fish lurked in its depths.

Consider the fossil insects and plants trapped
in layers of time; and a sleeping mammoth
at rest on a layer of lost pollen, covered
with Ice Age gravels.

An old homestead sits by Grape Creek,
its timbers whisper the past of early settlers.
A few pine trees, marked by the Ute people,
show this was once their home.

This land, where life has stretched
across time, from past to present,
magnifies how short time is for me,
and just when I learn
how to live,
it's over.



Petrified redwood “Trio” at the Florissant Fossil Beds. Original artwork by Charles Frizzell.

**APRIL IS NATIONAL
POETRY MONTH**



Florissant Fossil Beds – Spring Night Sky

Mark Harter, FLFO Volunteer Ranger, Astronomy Lead

Our Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument (FLFO) Night Sky Program is off to a great start in 2023! This article highlights two major activities already this year and summarizes the FLFO Night Sky Program schedule for the rest of the year.

First, in January 2023, FLFO completed a 13-page annual International Dark Sky Park (IDSP) Report. This was our first annual IDSP report since becoming a certified Dark Sky Park in 2021. The IDSP Annual Report provides details to the International Dark Sky Association in order to maintain our dark sky certification including a summary of FLFO's Night Sky Programs in 2022, seasonal light meter readings to verify dark-sky worthiness, community public programs, and FLFO partnerships that foster solid relationships. Some highlights for the 2022 reporting period: FLFO hosted 15 public Night Sky Programs in partnership with the Colorado Springs Astronomical Society (CSASTRO), from which 1,031 guests attended from 38 states and 4 countries. Additionally, in 2022 FLFO was featured in the popular magazine *5280*, in the article "Your Guide To Stargazing in Colorado". *FLFO was also featured on the cover of Reflector magazine, the premier astronomy magazine in North America, with a spectacular Milky Way picture of the Hornbek Homestead taken by astrophotographer Mark Harter. So it was a great year for FLFO astronomy in 2022!*

Second, our FLFO Night Sky Program was a big success with 67 guests, 12 CSASTRO astronomers, and 14 CSASTRO telescopes. Despite the chili weather (11 deg F), very good viewing was available to observe several planets (Venus, Jupiter, Mars), nebulae (Orion, Crab, Owl), galaxies (M31-Andromeda), and plenty of satellites (including a partial Starlink chain). Some special guests from the Colorado Springs Gazette were present doing a story that was published on March 6, 2023, in the Gazette, which has a circulation of 160,000 people in the Pikes Peak region. The story included interviews from CSASTRO astronomers and FLFO Volunteer Ranger Mark Harter, along with several astrophotography pictures taken from FLFO. The article was very well received with many positive comments.

It is exciting to note that The Gazette ran a wonderful article in its March 6th edition on Dark Sky programs which featured the Fossil Beds and all of the other places in Colorado that have been designated as International Dark Sky sites. Congratulations to all who have made this designation for the Florissant Fossil Beds NM possible.

Dates for the Dark Sky Programs for 2023

- April 21, 8 – 9:45 PM
- May 12, 8 – 9:45 PM
- June 9, 8:30 – 10:15 PM
- July 21, 8:30 -10:15 PM
- August 18, 8 – 9:45 PM
- September 8, 7:30 – 9:15 PM
- October 13, 7 -8:45 PM
- November 10, 7 -8:45 PM

Jeff Wolin, Lead Interpreter at the Florissant Fossil Beds, sends out the eStrat Column each week with news from the Monument. His February 15th edition featured the information on the following page:

"Volunteer Mark Harter completed the FLFO Report for the International Dark Sky Park (DSP) Certification requirements last week. This was a major effort that took over two months collecting FLFO information including Outreach, Dark Sky measurements, Partnerships, and the Lighting Management Plan. The 11-page comprehensive report covers FLFO Dark Sky activities through December 2022. Ashley Wilson, Director of Conservation for the International Dark Sky Association (DSA) told Jeff that it was an excellent report and that FLFO is doing great things for the DS Community.

So please come out and join us at one (or several) of these events to experience "*Stumps to Stars*", and show your support for FLFO, CSASTRO, and IDSA throughout the year. And remember -- "*Half the Park is After Dark*"!



The Rocky Mountain Conservancy Bookstore

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy offers interpretive merchandise sales for the Florissant Fossil Beds Bookstore and other locations throughout Colorado and Wyoming. The Conservancy returns a percentage of the sales of merchandise to their bookstores as direct financial aid.

The Fossil Beds Bookstore has a large order of spring and summer merchandise being processed for pending delivery in the coming weeks. These orders will include new Night Sky Items: tee shirts, drinkware, gaiters, and headbands. We will also be offering our bird, wildflower, tree, mammal, scat, and track field guides for identification on your hikes along with wooden hiking sticks. The Florissant Bookstore is going to add an identifying "Colorado Mushroom Guide" and bring back the great book "Edible and Medicinal Plants. Dr. Meyer's recommended Paleo books are available on the shelves including new ones, "The Big Flat" by Reinhard (Bud) Wobus and "The Language of Butterflies" by Wendy Williams.

Please stop by our bookstore to check out our national park's books, puzzles, children's games, toys, Wild Tribute Tee shirts, and many other items for sale. Our spring and summer hours will be 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM 7 days a week starting later in March.

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy and the Florissant Fossil Beds Bookstore appreciate your support and the financial aid it provides to our Monument.



A Note by the Paleontologist

By Herb Meyer, Paleontologist

I want to express my sincere gratitude to The Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds for your steadfast support of the Monument's paleontology program during my 28 years at Florissant. You have sponsored many paleontology interns, provided seminars on paleontology for the public and supported travel that otherwise would not have been possible.

One of the missions of NPS is to "extend the benefits of conservation throughout the world." International travel in the Park Service can be challenging to arrange, but in part through your support, I have been able to collaborate in nine countries during conferences and field excursions abroad. Most noteworthy has been your partnership for our project at the Piedra Chamana Petrified Forest in northern Peru, where your generosity has provided direct support for the village of Sexi, production of new educational materials about the site, hosting a new website, and travel for Peruvians to visit Florissant to learn about our conservation efforts here. As well, your support made it possible for me to give presentations about Florissant and Sexi at meetings not only in Peru but also Thailand, China, Japan, Germany, and Brazil, bringing international recognition to Florissant.

I also appreciate the assistance the Friends have given to our paleontology intern program by helping with travel expenses, housing, and in some years support of intern stipends. More than 60 interns have had the opportunity to gain new experiences, and in many cases begin their careers, by working at Florissant. Much of our paleontology program has accomplished has benefited from their contributions and the Friends' support.

As my official retirement comes, it doesn't really mean retiring. In an 8th-grade assignment about careers, I wrote about becoming a geologist. That ambition has no end. I look forward to more traveling, always with a geologic map or guidebook in hand. But I also look forward to ongoing participation in the Monument's projects in geology and paleontology as a volunteer "Paleontologist Emeritus." We have several projects upcoming this summer in which I plan to collaborate, including studies of Pleistocene geology with Professor Bob Anderson from University of Colorado Boulder, dating zircon crystals in sediments with geologist Ned Sterne, testing a new stump shelter design with our colleagues from the University of Pennsylvania, searching for new fossil mammals with Professor Jaelyn Eberle and her graduate student Stephanie Tkacik from University of Colorado Boulder, and looking for paleosols (fossil soil) with Professor Dennis Terry of Temple University and his graduate student (and former FLFO paleontology intern) Ariana Miranda. I appreciate the Friends' financial support for these two students, Ariana and Stephanie, whose thesis committees I will be on as their graduate work progresses. Also, my long-time collaborator Dr. Deborah Woodcock and I are applying to the National Science Foundation to continue our work in Peru.

There's one thing to always remember. When the Congressional Record was published in 1969 enabling the legislation for Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, it clearly indicated that a paleontology position was to be established as the highest priority for the new monument in its first year. And that, my Friends, is a mandate, coming directly from our country's lawmakers. NPS neglected to fulfill that mandate for 25 years! That must never be allowed to happen again. The position of a Paleontologist is not a luxury, but rather a fulfillment of purpose. This place was set aside due in part to the efforts of two of my close mentors and colleagues, Dr. Estella Leopold and Dr. Harry D. MacGinitie. Both contributed significantly to scientific discovery at Florissant, and their public activism and testimony before the United States Senate were critical to the Monument's establishment. They were paleontologists, and they understood that the sole purpose for defining the new monument was paleontology. The Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds have championed that

purpose! There is so much yet to be achieved in paleontology at the Florissant fossil beds, and we should always look forward to that future.

Thank you, Friends, for the role you have played in supporting my career at Florissant!

News From the Board

The Friends will be financially supporting five graduate students this year with our contributions totaling close to \$10,000. One is a graduate student from the University of Colorado who will be starting a project on Florissant fossil mammals including fieldwork. The second one is a graduate student from Temple University (a former FLFO intern) who is starting a project on Florissant paleo soils including fieldwork. We will be funding travel for a current intern to attend the Association for Materials and Methods in Paleontology (AMMP) fossil preparation conference. Finally, financial support will be provided for two grad students at Fort Hays State University who will be describing two Florissant fossil birds; here no fieldwork is involved.

We will have people representing the Florissant Fossil Beds at both the WIPS (Western Interior Paleontological Society) conference being held on March 25- 26 at Colorado School of Mines in Golden and at the CSGM (Colorado Springs Gem and Mineral Society) show on June 9 -11th.

Our latest virtual seminar was held on Saturday, February 25th and was presented by Addie Rich who was an intern last year and is now in Utah continuing her studies. The title was “Geologic Mapping in Florissant Fossil Beds NM using GIS collection methods.”

The seminar committee will be planning both the in-person and virtual seminars for the coming months at the end of March.

Congratulations to Penny Wagner, the Superintendent of the Florissant Fossil Beds NM, and her family on the birth of their 3rd child, Carol Grace. Mrs. Wagner will be on maternity leave for 3 months. An interim Superintendent will be chosen within the next couple of weeks.

