



The Fossil Beds Times

The official newspaper of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument

New Museum Celebrates Grand Opening



National Park Service Director Fran Mainella and Regional director Jon Jarvis cutting the ribbon at the grand opening.

The new fossil museum, and the new James Cant Ranch House museum were the focus of the day's activities.

In the late afternoon, a celebration and meal took place in the city park in the nearby town of Dayville.

For Information about the new Thomas Condon Paleontology Center give us a call at 541-987-2333, or visit our web site. www.nps.gov/joda

After many years of anticipation, the last stage of construction at the Thomas Condon Paleontology Center was completed this summer. Though the research center has been open and operating for well over a year, the primary visitor attraction, the fossil museum, has been under painstaking development. The new 2,500 square foot museum allows

people to walk through 40 million years of the Age of Mammals, viewing a myriad of fossils, large murals depicting past periods of time, and life-size models of prehistoric creatures and plants.

A huge success, the grand opening for the new fossil museum at the Thomas Condon Paleontology Center took place on Saturday, August 13. With 400 guests and honored dignitaries present, the opening ceremony and ribbon cutting began at 10:00 am.

Afterward, lunch services were provided at the Cant Ranch followed by several special programs, including laboratory tours.



Thomas Condon's granddaughter, Jean Condon Stanley, poses for a photo op next to a portrait of her grandfather during the celebration.



Visitors enjoying the beautiful and educational displays in the new museum.

Paleontology News

With the completion of the paleontology Center, the staff prepared and delivered several lectures at the annual meetings of the Geological Society of America in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology meetings held in Mesa, AZ this year. The scientific community was delighted with our news of the research center completion.

The slow, tedious process of compiling nearly 30 peer-reviewed research papers into a single volume to be published by the University of California continues, and it should be available for purchase in 2006. This is the first time in the 140-year history of paleontological research in the John Day Basin that such a compilation has been attempted. While a technical compendium such as this doesn't appeal to the average reader, it should sell briskly amongst the academic community throughout the world.

Paleontologist **Scott Foss** has expanded the reach of the paleontology program by accepting a new position as the BLM regional paleontology coordinator, with a new office in Utah. He will continue to work on paleontological resources in Oregon, only now focussing on those found on Bureau lands instead of National Park Service



A peek into the paleobotanical collections.

property. We hope to fill his vacancy with a qualified candidate in the not-too-distant future.

In the meantime, **Matt Smith** has eagerly begun to assume some of Scott's collection management duties and can be heard cheerfully mumbling to himself in the museum storage area as well as in his usual domain behind the glass in the new laboratory.

Regan Dunn, paleobotanist extraordinaire, continues her studies of the fossil plants of the basin, analyzing specimens collected from the Clarno Formation. Each specimen is being identified by morphotype and carefully examined for signs of insect damage.

Ted Fremd, as the Pacific West Region's Science Advisor, has been requested to help several parks with their fossil deposits, including such California parks as Joshua Tree, Sequoia-Kings Canyon, and Golden Gate, as well as sites in Hawaii.

"It's a tough job," he says, "but somebody has to do it."

News From the Prep Lab

After working until his fingers literally bled, and earning over 100 hours of comp time, while getting the specimens mounted in our new gallery our preparator and his girlfriend Ms. **Sarah Herve** took a much needed vacation down in Florida. While there they visited the new paleontology exhibits at the FLMNH and looked at them for inspiration for changes at home. Other than a few ideas about labels and mounts they judged that they had done a fine job and were well pleased with their efforts.

Upon returning from Florida while the work was still fresh in his mind Matt created a power point talk to present at the annual SVP meetings in Mesa, AZ. The subject was "*The Novel Use of Casts Within Museum Interpretive Exhibits*" drawing on examples from the newly opened galleries and was well received by his peers.

Laboratory Technician, **Cindy Kilpatrick** who is currently on seasonal leave did a wonderful job assisting in the production of the exhibits this summer and is sorely missed.

News From the Cant Ranch



The plank floor was rebuilt (complete with trap door and ladder down to the historic cellar), and the opening for the ventilation fan was converted into a small window.

Similarly, the 1930s bunkhouse was converted back to its pre-NPS interior, as all exhibit cases were removed and the original windows were uncovered. It is hoped that in the future, both the log cabin and the bunkhouse will serve as life-sized “exhibits” that will help visitors get a feel for early 20th-century ranch life. Throughout this process, there was ongoing consultation between the work crew, the park historian, the park’s historic photo collection, and some of the former residents of the Cant Ranch house including **Freda Cant** and **Bill Mascall**, in an effort to stay as true as possible to the original appearance and use of the structures.

The Cant Ranch Oral History program is enlarging its collection of interviews, and progress has been made in transcribing the recordings and organizing the supporting documents such as images and genealogical records. In July, a new cultural history exhibit panel was installed at the Painted Hills unit; almost all of the text and images came out of oral history interviews conducted in the past few years. Volunteer Sarah Smith contributed many hours of her typing skills to make some headway in transcribing the backlog of recorded interviews.

During its first full year in operation as an historical museum, the James Cant Ranch museum saw over 5,000 visitors, preservation work on the outdoor structures, a new interpretive program called the Cant Ranch Walk, two history volunteers, the beginnings of social studies formal education programs, and progress on the oral history program.

Visitors have continued to enjoy the peaceful picnic setting offered on the Cant Ranch grounds, and the historic lower orchard is now more accessible for picnicking a little further away from the highway.

This summer, many picnickers may have noticed a student work crew led by seasonal maintenance employee Brian Adams. They made progress on preserving nearly all of the historic structures: the watchman’s hut, log cabin, Christina’s cabin, and chicken house all had roofs and some other features replaced, such as portions of the walls. The 1890’s log house, formerly the fossil demo lab, underwent big changes; the display platform was removed, along with the electrical wiring, ventilation fan, and floor.

Interpretation at the Cant Ranch Museum was increased by volunteer Al Cummings, who worked two days a week answering visitors’ questions and telling yarns about his own early days “on the ranch.” Also, attendance at the new ranger-led Cant Ranch Walk program has been growing slowly. Offered about once a month starting in April 2005, the program involves a walk around the James Cant Ranch Historic District with interpretation of the historic structures and landscape features. Depending on weather and interest areas, the walk may take visitors around the barn and watchman’s hut area, or through the Cant Ranch house interior. The program will be offered again starting in the spring of 2006.

Remember, too, that you don’t have to wait for the next scheduled program! There is almost always an interpretive ranger on duty at the Cant Ranch who is happy to answer all of your questions and lead a tour around the grounds or the house if you request it.



The log house is now more structurally sound.

September's Burn

This September, in partnership with BLM and adjoining landowners, John Day Fossil Beds National Monument burned approximately 8,500 acres of NPS and BLM land near the Foree Unit of the Monument.

The purpose of the burn was to reintroduce fire to the ecosystem and in doing so, reduce the coverage of western juniper and sagebrush.

The burn was successfully conducted over a two-day period and met all of our objectives. Next year, another unit of approximately the same size to the north is scheduled for a similar burn.

leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations

A portion of the act creating the National Park Service



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

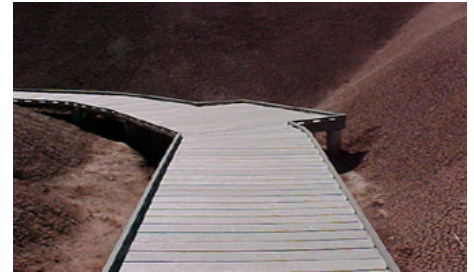
Painted Cove Trail Made More Accessible

The painted Cove trail at the Painted Hills unit of the monument has received some much needed repairs.

One of the park's most popular viewing trails, the 1/4 mile painted Cove trail was originally constructed in the mid 1980s and possessed a boardwalk that was 130 feet long by 3 feet wide. The old boardwalk was constructed of wood with a wood block foundation, and since its construction the wood block foundation had rotted away, leading to many tripping hazards, and limited accessibility.



The old boardwalk was not accessible to people in wheel chairs.



The new board walk offers an opportunity to more visitors.

This last summer the boardwalk was reconstructed to meet ADA regulations including slope percentage and four level rest and interpretive areas. The park widened the boardwalk to 5 feet and extended it to 310 feet making it wheelchair accessible from the parking lot. The new boardwalk was made from recycled Trex lumber and a concrete post and pier foundation. The life expectancy of the decking materials is 30 years and posts and piers should last indefinitely.

JODA Welcomes New Staff Member

A big welcome to **Shirley Hoh**, a long time NPS employee, who recently joined the staff as the Chief of Integrated Resources Management.

In this position Shirley will be handling issues surrounding the Cant Ranch Historic District and the non-paleo related natural resources at the park.

Shirley comes from Tonto National Monument in south-central Arizona, and takes the position recently vacated by Ken Hyde, who transferred to

Sleeping Bear Dunes. Shirley has worked as a park ranger, interpreter, and natural resource specialist in several parks including Theodore Roosevelt National park, Tonto National Monument, and San Juan Island National Historic Site.

We all look forward to working with her!