



John Day Fossil Beds

The official newspaper of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument

Paleontology Center Opens to the Public

After much anticipation, the staff of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument has moved into the new Thomas Condon Paleontology Center. This facility is the newest research center in the National Park Service. It is dedicated to the study and interpretation of ancient life during the Age of Mammals as preserved in the John Day Fossil Beds.

Sharing new discoveries and study methods is an important part of any public research facility, and the building is designed to make scientific processes visible.

In the new facility, windows permit visitors to view scientists in the laboratory and collections storage spaces. New exhibits, currently in planning and production stages, will depict the knowledge gained from the John Day Fossil Beds and illuminate the process of science. In addition, a state-of-the-art audio-system in the center's theater room will enhance recorded and live presentations.

As always, park rangers are available to give informal or formal talks and programs relating the monument's story. However, the monument staff is still in transition.



A window into the new laboratory invites visitors to have a look at paleontology in action.

The Cant House renovation project will be complete in early May, when administrative and natural resources staff will move into the second-floor headquarters offices. The site historian will staff the first-floor museum, featuring new exhibits on local history.

The museum collections staff has been moving specimens from curatorial spaces at the Federal building in John Day to their permanent home at the new center.

Similarly, the laboratory staff has been busy installing and testing new equipment, such as several microscopes and a sand-blasting unit. The installation of the new exhibits should be completed in spring of 2005.



Museum/Paleo News

“Everywhere there was an air of unhurried thoroughness, of people being engaged in a gigantic endeavor that could never be completed and musn’t be rushed.” - Bill Bryson, on visiting the British Museum of Natural History – and what to expect at the Thomas Condon PaleoCenter!

There are major projects that the museum/paleo staff are working on these days, if not full-time, at least dominantly.

These are the Paleontology Center museum gallery exhibit materials, the operations and development of equipment in the new museum laboratory, the gradual movement of the natural history collections to the museum dedicated storage, and editing the NAPC John Day Basin Symposium Proceedings Volume.

In addition to these focal points, emphasis is being placed on deployment of the Cant Ranch exhibits, multiple ongoing research projects, Science Advisor tasks, and other business as usual. Casting, molding, and specimen acquisition from collections, donors, lenders, and the field is ongoing.

The next issue of the Museum/Paleo News will include details about some of the exciting, unexpected, and important discoveries that have been made in the Hancock Mammal Quarry.

These include a new genus and species of brontothere; enigmatic evidence of what appears to be Achaenodon (ask Foss for details); and the mysterious isolated canine of what may be the earliest nimravid in North America, or ... something else.

Also, word on new paleobotanical locality work being performed by **Regan Dunn**, all of the great work being accomplished in the laboratory by **Matt Smith** and soon, again, Ms. **Cindy Kilpatrick**. The results of the seminars Scott, Regan, and Ted are giving over at the University of Oregon, a list of papers for the symposium volume, a list of visiting researchers this year, a list of ... you get the idea.

News From the Prep Lab

Now that we have completed the move from the barn at the Cant ranch to our new facilities in the Thomas Condon Paleontology Center, we are busy settling in and setting up shop. New furnishings continue to arrive and augment our ability to prepare specimens from all the diverse strata located within the John Day Basin.

Some ongoing work includes the molding and casting of well over two hundred specimens from the University of California in Berkeley, the LA County Museum, and the University of Oregon. We are also preparing a jacket containing the remains of a large oreodont, *Merycochoerus*. The specimen was collected near the painted hills and brought in from the field with the help of a BLM helicopter.

In the immediate future (about the next eighteen months) all of our efforts will be directed towards providing specimens and assisting in their installation into the new TCPC exhibits.

Hikes and Tours to Begin

This April, the monument staff will be starting up the popular ranger hikes and ranger-led auto tours of the John Day Fossil Beds.

There are now two ranger hikes offered once per month from April through September, one at Blue Basin in the Sheep Rock Unit, and one at the Painted Hills Unit. Each hike lasts about two hours.

The Blue Basin Hike covers about one mile, with several stops to address the colorful landscape and fossil history along the trail. This hike begins at the Blue Basin trailheads.

The Painted Hills Backcountry Hike traverses three miles of scenic landscape not normally viewed by the public. It begins at the Painted Hills picnic area. Hikers should remember to bring water, walking stick, a hat, and good hiking shoes.

Become a Junior Park Ranger

John Day Fossil Beds National Monument offers a challenging Junior Ranger program that kids of all ages can complete by either visiting the monument or sitting in front of their computer.

Information on the program is available on the monument website at www.nps.gov/joda, or from monument staff, who can be reached at 541-987-2333.

For those who prefer to drive to scenic spots with a ranger and learn about the geologic, historical, and fossil features at each stop, there are now two ranger-led auto tours.

The Sheep Rock Auto Tour begins at the Thomas Condon Visitor Center and travels 12 miles through the Sheep Rock Unit of the monument.

The Painted Hills Auto Tour begins at the Painted Hills picnic area and travels six miles through that unit of the monument.

Kids who successfully complete the Junior Ranger challenge will receive a Junior Ranger badge, a certificate of completion, and the bi-annual monument newsletter. Also, with the Junior Ranger's permission, their photo will be displayed at the monument visitor center along with photos of other junior park rangers



Ranger leading a hike into the Blue Basin.

Monument Welcomes New Staff Member

The administration division has a new permanent employee! She is actually a familiar face, because she has been working at the monument for over 16 months.

Jessica L. Smith, who prefers to be called "Jessy," was offered and accepted the position of Office Automation Clerk. Jessy, who is 26 years old, is married to Pat Smith and has lived in Grant County all her life.

Her pride and joy is her dog Junior whom she lovingly calls her child. Jessy is very happy and excited to join the crew at the John Day Fossil Beds, and we are thrilled to have her working with us.

New Trees Planted Along Waterways

In April, Ben Phillips and his TEC youth crew from John Day spent a day on Bridge Creek at the Painted Hills assisting NPS staff with tree plantings in the picnic area and along the creek. Close to 100 native willows and dogwood cuttings from the Monument Soil & Water Conservation District nursery were planted using a one-man power auger to drill the holes. Initial survival counts were over 80% in August. Protective plastic tubes were



Two TEC Crew Volunteers hard at work.

placed around the trees to reduce damage from beavers, deer and elk, which all use the stream side vegetation. NPS field crews spent several days placing 7.5-foot-tall wire cages around trees along the John Day River in the Sheep Rock Unit.

The nearly 200 willow and cottonwood trees that were planted in 2002 had grown from 3 to 10 feet tall over the summer. Then elk moved down to the fields along the river in the fall and ate them

off above the 6 foot plastic tube protectors. The new cages were placed during the summer of 2003 to protect the tree from all browsing and to allow them to really take off and grow.



New Trees Growing along Bridge Creek

Over the next few years, visitors will notice the new tree galleries showing up along the river. In future years these trees will provide much needed shade over the river, bank stability to reduce erosion, and great nesting habitat for birds.

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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Chasing Butterflies Part II

During 2003 Sue Anderson, a naturalist from Sisters, Oregon, was funded to conduct a survey of the butterflies found on the Monument. Working from June to September in all 3 units (Sheep Rock, Clarno, and Painted Hills), Sue was able to locate 47 of the 95 species that could potentially live in this area. This entailed a lot of walking, the use of several volunteers, including her daughter and park staff, and some very careful stalking of the butterflies.

All identification was done using binoculars, field guides and close-up photos of each species so that we did not have to sacrifice any individual butterflies for voucher specimens.



While resting, an Anise swallowtail was captured on film.

Being a professional photographer, the quality of the photos Sue took of each species is amazing!

Plans for 2004 are to survey for spring and early summer species missed last year and to concentrate on the butterflies using the wildflowers of the Painted Hills.