

(Address Correction Requested)

**SPRING, 2000**

# John Day Fossil Beds National Monument Newsletter

## National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

[www.nps.gov/joda](http://www.nps.gov/joda)

### **Twenty Five Years, Already?...**

Authorized by Congress and President Ford in 1974, John Day Fossil Beds National Monument was officially established on October 8, 1975, under the stewardship of the National Park Service.

Saturday, September 23rd, has been the day selected to commemorate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. That day, the monument staff will offer several programs for public participation and enjoyment.

Ranger conducted activities will include a Blue Basin Hike and the Fossil Road Trip. A finalized schedule of activities will be prepared a month before, and information on the event will be available by calling the monument at 541-987-2333. The monument is now 1 / 2,160,000 as old as the oldest John Day fossil beds layers.

### **Maintenance Chief Retires...**

Jerry Frisinger, who served as the monument's chief of maintenance for 16 years, recently decided to hang up the green uniform and go on to other more relaxing things. The nice thing about retirees is that they usually remain in the vicinity, so we can always call him and ask questions and advice--there is little doubt that we will do so frequently. Jerry's good natured approach to supervision and caring attitude towards his employees and coworkers will be greatly missed.

Jerry started his career in Canyonlands National Park in the early 1970s, then moved to Glacier National Park as a journeyman plumber. He then came to John Day in 1984 as the maintenance chief and has served here since.

Jerry and Sharon plan to remain in Grant County spending time working on their place, camping, and helping their neighbors and many friends.

### **Monument Acquires Additional Acres...**

This fall, the National Park Service completed the acquisition of a 960-acre tract within the boundaries of the Clarno Unit of John Day Fossil Beds National monument. The National Park Service and the American public now own 99% of the Clarno Unit. With this acquisition, the monument and the public acquired some spectacular fossil localities including

the Hancock petrified tree, the mammal quarry, and the famed Clarno nutbeds.

In addition, this acquisition completely changes the opportunities for visitor use and enjoyment of this unit of the monument. For the first time, we can begin to plan how we can expose visitors to these fine resources and the stories they contain as well as how to best preserve them for future generations.

### **Visitor Donations Put-To-Work...**

By the end of June, visitors to all three units of the monument will see brand new wayside exhibits at popular overlooks and pull-outs, funded in large part by visitor donations. Five new wayside exhibits at the Clarno Unit, four new waysides at the Painted Hills Unit, and four new waysides at Sheep Rock Unit, will replace 20-year-old waysides of now out-of-date design and information. The new exhibits will all be of standard National Park Service wayside design, and exhibit stories will reflect the latest scientific information regarding the fossils and geology of the area. These new waysides will join similar waysides installed last fall along the Blue Basin, "Island in Time Trail." The seven new waysides along this trail, along with three fossil replicas "in situ," interpret the remarkable fossil history of Blue Basin.

Plans call for the production of several more wayside exhibits in the next year, to be placed at key locations. This will include additional waysides at the new Mascall Formation Overlook, located at the southern end of the Sheep Rock Unit, off State Route 26. Currently the monument has over 40 waysides, averaging about \$2,500 each in cost.

### **New Visitor Programs Available...**

This spring and summer the monument visitor service staff will offer something old and something new. Schedules for the three programs vary with each month so interested participants should call the park for the latest schedule, at 541-987-2333.

Due to staffing limits and poor attendance, the Blue Basin Hike was discontinued a couple years ago. It is now offered again on a limited basis and has proven very popular, averaging 25 people per hike

so far this spring. This two-hour, ranger-conducted hike into Blue Basin will be offered once per month on a Saturday. The tours will begin at 10:00 am at the Blue Basin trailhead and feature the geologic and paleontologic story of this colorful badland amphitheater.

A new program, initiated and tested last fall, is our Fossil Bed Road Trip, or auto tour. Beginning at the Sheep Rock Unit visitor center, this caravan of personal vehicles is lead by a ranger vehicle through the southern portion of the Sheep Rock Unit. Traveling some back roads and paved roads, the convoy of vehicles reach scenic vista points where everyone parks and then gathers around the ranger to discuss the geologic landscapes of the fossil beds. This two-hour tour also starts at 10:00 am on Saturdays, and will be offered twice each month. The largest group this spring has been 13 vehicles transporting 37 visitors; a popular new program!

Another new program, originally developed last year as an education program for school groups, is the "Island of Ash - Simulated Fossil Dig." For a description of this new program, please see the article under "Education News." This program has proven so popular with students that the monument staff has decided to offer the program to the general public. Five such programs will be offered this summer.

#### Education News...

During April and May, several school groups participated in a new program called, "Island of Ash - Simulated Fossil Site." Students ranging from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade had fun working in an ash bed, uncovering fossils and collecting other data at the site as well. The most important discovery is at the end when someone asks, "Do we get to keep them?" This is when the reason for museums becomes clear. Museums take care of fossils, and national parks are big museums. Fossils in a museum are in the public trust, so they belong to no one person (not even paleontologists). Instead, they belong to everyone! Science involves building and sharing knowledge. All the student-paleontologists that visited on a field trip can be sure their fossils are being taken care of at John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, so they can come back and see them whenever they want to. The best part is they get to see what other scientists have found too! At the Island of Ash site, student-paleontologists discover that rhinos, 3-toed horses, sheep-like oreodonts, weasel-dogs and tiny beavers all lived at the same time in a deciduous forest environment similar to the forests of central China today.

Simulated fossil digs will be offered to the general public this summer on July 8 and 22, August 19, September 3 and 4. Space is limited. Call the visitor center at 541-987-2333 to sign up. The July 8 program is already full.

#### Workshops Offered to Teachers...

- **August 16<sup>th</sup> - Horse Fossil Study Kit Orientation** - OMSI, Portland
- **August 17<sup>th</sup> - Ancient Forests and Grasslands of Oregon** - OMSI, Portland
- **September 16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> - Teaching Geology at John Day Fossil Beds** -  
Day 1: Sheep Rock (near Dayville) / Day 2: Painted Hills (near Mitchell)

If space is available, the general public is also welcome to attend.

#### Paleo-News...

Monument paleontologist, Ted Fremd, writes ... "The 'John Day Associates' are alive and well. The paleontology staff has been working on a variety of new localities in 'basin margin' sediments, which include remarkable new assemblages. Placing these faunas and floras, as well as the more classic 'John Day' collections, into a detailed framework of biostrat, paleomag, tephrochron, pedofacies, and radiometric 'shelves' (that don't line up with the rest of the continent) is a fascinatingly complex correlation and paleoenvironmental puzzle. The bemusement grows as new material from trusty volunteers comes to light and we go further afield."

"The current amalgamation of pilgrims working on manuscripts in one stage of completion or another includes Mike Woodburne, Carl Swisher, Bob Hunt, Jim Martin, Barry Albright, Greg Retallack, Xiaoming Wang, Harold Brvant, Matt Kohn, Dale Hanson, and many others. ~~He~~ arewell to Erick Bestland, off to Flinders, but he still plans to collaborate on the Mascall Formation synthesis. Ted Fremd reports that the 'Eocene and Oligocene paleosols of central Oregon,' GSA Special Paper 344 (with Greg Retallack and Erick Bestland) was released this spring. Additionally, he is adding the finishing and/or foundational touches on multiple papers, a monograph, and a book that all should see release in the upcoming millennium."

"Our continuing collaboration and Memorandum of Understanding with the BLM is resulting in a wealth of shared data on paleontological resources in eastern Oregon. Shared funding for projects, planning, and overhead has allowed us to not only document and monitor fossil sites, but to also prospect, collect and conduct original research on paleontological sites that span thousands of square miles of NPS, USFS, USF&W, private, and BLM land."

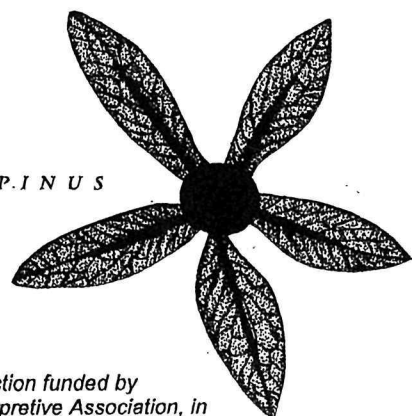
#### Two New Books Arrive...

The Visitor center recently added two new great books for purchase at the monument bookstore.

Oregon Fossils by William and Elizabeth Orr, is a book written exclusively about Fossils found in Oregon. The historical accounts within the book are just as interesting as the pictures of, and information about fossils found in Oregon. Of course, JODA is featured at length.

Common Fossil Plants of Western North America by William D. Tidwell, is a must for all those Paleobotanists out there. Complete with color photographs of plant fossils, this book discusses the various types of fossil plants, and the more common elements of the fossil flora of North America.

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