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Springtime is a wonderful season to visit the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. All living things are engaged in an annual process of renewal and you can share in this natural transformation during your visit.

The Fossil Beds National Monument is now singing the songs of Spring and beckons the visitor to join in the chorus.

Please be weather aware and to check with the Fossil Beds to validate operating hours prior to your visit.

- 719.748.3253 -



A very sincere note of appreciation to the NPS staff members and the many volunteers that contribute to the Monument service offerings, maintenance requirements, and visitor care.

Your efforts ensure visitor enjoyment and sustainability of our local National Monument.

Please visit our website at FossilBeds.org



Table of Contents

[TOC](#) <----Returns to Table of Contents

A Florissant Fossil for the White City	Steven Wade Veatch	Page 3
Spring Astronomy - Florissant Fossil Beds	Mark Harter	Page 7
Great Backyard Birdcount	Sally McCracken	Page 9
Recruitment for Bookkeeper	Patty Glatfelter	Page 10
Bookstore Update	Linda Dolven	Page 11
Recruitment Customer Service	Linda Dolven	Page 13
Dark Sky Poster	Linda Dolven	Page 14
Speaker Series Review	Sally McCracken	Page 15
Additional Speaker Series Information	Fred Gustafson	Page 16
Spring Things	Fred Gustafson	Page 17
From the Archives	Jean H. Rodeck	Page 18
Friends of the Fossil Beds Board	Patty Glatfelter	Page 19
3 Generations of Superintendents	Patty Glatfelter	Page 20
Local Artist Spotlight	Michelle Melville-Speck	Page 21
CODA		Page 22



We are interested in stories of visitor experiences at the Fossil Beds for consideration in our next quarterly issue.

Send your story to: FossilBedStories@gmail.com



[TOC](#)

A Florissant Fossil for the White City by Steven Wade Veatch

The “Big Stump” at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, Colorado, is one of the larger petrified stumps exposed in the Monument: it measures 3.6 meters tall and is 3.7 meters in diameter at breast height (Meyer, 2003). This solitary petrified stump is all that remains of a tree that was more than 60 meters tall when a volcanic mudflow (lahar) buried its base during the late Eocene.

Big Stump is similar to the modern Sequoia (redwood) and is the type specimen described by Andrews in 1936 for *Sequoioxylon pearsallii*. An often-confusing aspect of paleobotany is that different organs (e.g., wood and leaves) that belong to the same living species are sometimes preserved isolated and unattached, in the fossil record. Therefore, it can be difficult to prove that they belonged to the same living species. For that reason they are sometimes given different names as fossils. At Florissant, *Sequoioxylon pearsallii* is the name assigned to the fossil wood, and *Sequoia affinis* is the name for cones and foliage. They likely belonged to the same species of tree when they were living, but this cannot be proven unless these organs can be found attached in the same fossil. Philosophies differ, however, and in 1953 MacGinitie placed *Sequoioxylon pearsallii* into synonymy with *Sequoia affinis*. (Synonymy in the fossil record refers to the situation where two or more scientific names have been applied to the same fossil taxon.)

The Big Stump has been depicted in early photographs and postcards that date back to the late 1890s. Geologist Arthur Lakes, on an early expedition to the area with paleontologist Samuel Scudder, marked the location of a “petrified forest” on his original watercolor map in 1878—the general area where Big Stump is situated.



Figure 1. This postcard, ca. 1894, shows a wooden framework built around Big Stump. From the E. Simmons collection.





Figure 2. A broken and rusted saw blade remains wedged in Big Stump from an attempt to cut it into sections and ship it to Chicago for the World's Fair. Image date 2003 by S. Veatch.

There was once a local effort to send this incredible fossilized tree stump to the World's Columbian Exposition (The Chicago World's Fair) of 1893. A plan was made in 1890 to remove the stump, transport it to Chicago by rail, and then rebuild it at the fair. Fortunately, the attempt to remove Colorado's prized fossil was unsuccessful. As it happened, the workmen's saw blades became permanently wedged in the fossil wood. The plans to send Florissant's famous stump to the Columbian Exposition were then quickly abandoned.

The World's Columbian Exposition, one of the greatest cultural events of the nineteenth century, was named in honor of Christopher Columbus and celebrated the 400th anniversary of his arrival in the New World.

Thousands were employed in the development of 633 acres of fairgrounds and the construction of 200 buildings in Chicago's Jackson Park. Many of the fair buildings were located along constructed waterways fed by Lake Michigan. The Court of Honor buildings (14 main buildings) were covered in white stucco. Visitors, after seeing these white buildings, began to call this the White City. After three years of planning and building, and at a cost of twenty-eight million dollars, President Cleveland opened the fair on May 1, 1893. Ticket prices were 50 cents for adults and 25 cents for children.

Visitors to the Columbian Exposition enjoyed more than 65,000 exhibits and attractions. The fair contained many marvels and introduced Americans and the world to picture postcards, carbonated soda, hamburgers, and a gigantic wheel (built by George W. Ferris, Jr.) that visitors could ride. The fair also introduced the nation to the Pledge of Allegiance and a new holiday—Columbus Day.



Figure 3. This ticket admitted the bearer into the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a landmark event in American history and culture. From the Michele Veatch Collection.



Most of the states and territories had exhibits at the fair, including Colorado. The Colorado building had a wide variety of displays from the Centennial State. If Big Stump had been cut and quarried into sections, the Colorado building would have been a likely destination. Colorado Day was celebrated September 12 at the fair without Big Stump—Colorado’s famous fossil remained at the Florissant Fossil Beds, intact. Although Big Stump did not make it to the Columbian Exposition, other Colorado fossils probably made it to the fair, perhaps even fossils from Florissant.



Figure 4. View of the Colorado building at the World’s Columbian Exposition. Stacks of petrified wood appear to be on either side of the entrance to this building. Photo from the Michele Veatch Collection.

Some photos of the Colorado building depict stacks of petrified wood by the entrance. Because the Big Stump didn’t reach the Columbian Exhibition, I think this petrified wood is from Florissant. I contacted the Field Museum to see if they still had some of this petrified wood. The Earth science curator said they had some unidentified petrified wood in the basement. I went to the Field Museum, met the curator, and examined this petrified wood. It was not fossil wood from Florissant. The origin of this wood in the museum’s basement is unknown. The wood in old photos of the Colorado Building might have come from Florissant and is no longer at the museum. We may never really know what became of the fossil wood in the photos or where it originally came from.



By its closing date on October 30, 1893, more than 27 million people had visited the White City. If Big Stump had been removed and displayed at the fair, this oddity of nature would have been lost. This magnificent fossil is now protected by the National Park Service, and visitors to the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument can view Big Stump in its geologic setting.



Figure 5. Fortunately, Big Stump did not make it to the White City but remains for visitors to the Monument to enjoy. Image date 2003 by S. Veatch.

Acknowledgements

I thank Bob Carnein for improving this manuscript. I also benefited from many discussions of the Big Stump with park ranger Jeff Wolin. I dedicate this article to him.

References and further reading:

Andrews, H.N., 1936. A new Sequoioxylon from Florissant, Colorado. *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden* 23 (3): 439-446.

MacGinitie, H.D. 1953. *Fossil Plants of the Florissant Beds, Colorado*. Carnegie Institution of Washington Publication 599:1-198.

Meyer, H.W., 2003. *The Fossils of Florissant*, Smithsonian Books, Washington, D.C., 258 p.



Spring Astronomy - Florissant Fossil Beds Night Sky
Mark Harter, FLFO Volunteer Ranger, Astronomy Lead
March 2025

Spring Finally Arrives! Anyone ready for spring? Well, it formally arrives from an astronomical perspective with the Vernal Equinox on March 21, 2025, and for many it can't get here soon enough! We now say farewell to the spectacularly clear winter constellations of Auriga, Taurus, Orion, Canis Major, and Gemini as they progress westward out of view. For stargazers, the new spring season brings warmer weather and welcome changes in the night sky as we greet new Spring constellations including Ursa Major (Big Dipper), Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Hydra, and the Spring Triangle, all of which are rich with interstellar beauty.

Some great news for FLFO! The International Dark Sky Association (IDSA) just recertified FLFO for another year as an International Dark Sky Park (IDSP), which requires the most stringent level of light pollution requirements. This is the fourth year in a row that FLFO has achieved IDSP status. There are only about 80 other locations in North America that have this designation. We work closely with our Florissant community to educate and minimize the impact of urban light pollution, which has harmful effects and unintended consequences to natural habitat as well as human circadian health cycles. We should all be proud of FLFO's IDSP certification, and invite the community to come out and enjoy the dark night skies!



Full Moon, Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument



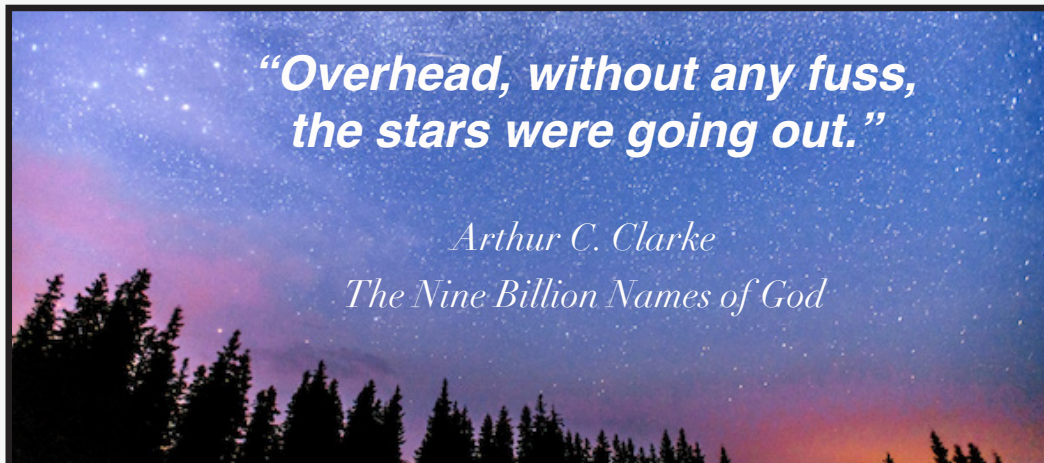
Florissant Fossil Beds Astronomy Programs. The Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument is proud to continue our Night Sky Astronomy Programs in 2025. We closed out the 2024 FLFO astronomy year with a record number of visitors to our Night Sky Programs (over 1,000 visitors), and we're hoping to eclipse that (pun intended) with a whopping 5 FLFO Astronomy & Night Sky Program events scheduled for 2025! These are all warm-weather events (yay!), so bring your lawn chairs and blankets to enjoy the panoramic views of the Milky Way. As usual, we'll be supported by CSASTRO astronomers and telescopes for every event! Hope to see you all out at one (or all) of our FLFO Astronomy Night Sky events!

- o Saturday, June 21 "SUNday in the Park" (solar astronomy @ Visitor Center, 9am-12 noon)
- o Saturday, June 21 (9:00-11:00pm viewing)
- o Friday, July 25 (9:00-11:00pm viewing); weather backup is Saturday night, July 26, 2025
- o Friday, August 22 (9:00-11:00pm viewing); weather backup is Saturday night, Aug. 23, 2025
- o Saturday, October 18 (8:00-10:00pm viewing)

FLFO Astronomy Volunteers Needed! Are you interested in astronomy? Would you like to be an important part of the FLFO Volunteer Ranger team? If so, we need YOU! We're looking for 2-3 more volunteers to support our FLFO Night Sky Astronomy Programs. The commitment is minimal: 3-4 times/year, helping set up and tear down (cones and light markers), and directing traffic (turning off car lights, pointing people to the Visitor Center). It's so easy, even a caveman can do it! If interested, please let Mark Harter or Michael Frederick know and we'll gladly talk with you about it!

Mark Harter is a Florissant resident, and as a FLFO Volunteer Ranger, leads the FLFO astronomy events. He is a retired military Veteran (Air Force), and is an Aerospace Engineer supporting the United States Space Force and Office of Space Commerce.

Science Fiction



THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The 2025 Great Backyard Bird Count was held on Saturday, February 15th. The Friends of the Fossil Beds NM hosted our 12th Great Backyard Bird Count, which is an international citizen science event held for 4 days every year during the 2nd weekend in February.

We were so fortunate again this year to have Joe LaFleur, a local birder, leading our count walks. Joe's book, "Mountain Birds of Teller County, Pocket Guide, is sold in the Monument's bookstore run by the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. Joe has a weekly column in the Pikes Peak Courier with hiking suggestions or articles on specific species of birds seen here in the Pikes Peak region. We had good weather this year and those who participated in the bird count listed 18 individual birds and 8 different species.

Over 200 countries participated in the 4 day count. The final data isn't quite finished, but as of today, March 13, 2025, here are the basic statistics for the 2025 count:

of countries - 217

#of participants - 828,113

#of species counted - 8,073 (158 more species than last year)

#of lists submitted- 387,652 eBird lists

of lists submitted - 611,066 Merlin Bird ID's

We hope that some of you reading this will consider joining us next year, as it is really a fun event which helps scientists all over the world gauge the health of bird species everywhere.



Recruitment for Friends' Bookkeeper Position

Calling all “numbers savvy” members of the Friends!

The Friends are still seeking bookkeeping assistance with the management of our new Quickbooks online accounting system. You would be assisted by long-term board member, Patty Glatfelter, who is the current Treasurer.

We have also a very supportive volunteer CPA- Jean Verrier, CPA, who has helped us through this transition to Quickbooks in the past year. We have developed a robust relationship with the Colorado Gives Foundation, that is also guiding us through the complex establishment of the Vim Wright Legacy Fund that we will bring to fruition this year.

If you have interest and bookkeeping skills, please contact Patty Glatfelter jspg@live.com. She will be able to give a more in-depth description of the position. Monthly board meeting attendance is encouraged, but not mandatory. We meet via zoom one Wednesday evening a month at 5:30 pm for approximately 2 hours.

We look forward to hearing from you!



Useless Trivia Note:

Bookkeeper is one of the few English words with 3 consecutive double letters. There are some that suggest bookkeeper is the ONLY word in the English language with 3 consecutive double letters.

...but who really knows all those words in the English language...



Bookstore Overview and Offerings

Linda Dolven

Friends of the Fossil Beds Spring Newsletter 2025

Hello, this is Linda, and I represent the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Bookstore at the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.

Spring is near and we are gearing up for a busy spring and summer visitor season. The bookstore had great sales revenue for the year 2024, and we are striving for a better one in 2025. The RMC supplies our bookstore and others in Colorado and Wyoming with unique merchandise that is not available in other retail stores. These items include many items that are specific to each individual location. After the sale of these items, RMC then returns a percentage of the received funds to their bookstores as direct financial aid to use for educational purposes.



The bookstore is receiving some spring orders now to replenish what has been sold and will continue doing so throughout the spring and summer season. There is a broad selection of tee shirts and hoodies in stock, along with geology, paleo books and National Park books, coloring books, games, and field guides. We have adorable kids' bears, fox and deer ball caps, and too many other items to list here. Our Wild Tribute stump and butterfly tee shirts are available and selling well. Wild Tribute gives back 4% of the sale of the tee shirts to the Monument.

Please come and check everything out.



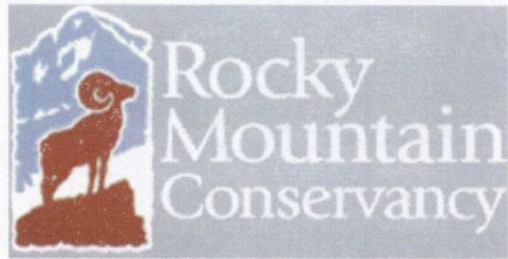


We have a long-awaited new night sky poster that will be introduced soon. They are ordered along with matching magnets, stickers and postcards. We will also have other night sky products available including coffee mugs, beverage (wine) tumblers, gaiters, bandanas and socks.

RMC is also in the process of hiring a new seasonal clerk to help with the store and visitor center. I am attaching a copy of the job description and where to email questions or submitting a resume.

Please stop by to see our merchandise and hike the beautiful trails - spring is calling!
Thanks for your support.





NOW HIRING!

**Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument Seasonal Retail Clerk –
Approximately April to September 2025**

**Variable hours (which may include some weekend, evening, and
holiday shifts) up to 40 hours per week, \$20.50-\$21.00/hr.**

This position operates the retail sales outlet at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument managed by the Rocky Mountain Conservancy.

- Assists assigned Monument staff in providing information to visitors of all ages.
- Conducts cash and credit retail transactions in an accurate, efficient, and friendly manner using a cash register and credit card machine, and remits proceeds as needed.
- Maintains a clean and inviting sales space and restocks merchandise. Performs the associated duties to ensure the store is operated efficiently and safely.
- Answers questions and provides information to the public about the Fossil Beds and Rocky Mountain Conservancy mission, programs, activities, products, and locations.

Required Experience:

Cash-handling and customer service experience required.

Desired Qualifications:

- Marketing or sales
- Knowledge of public land-managing agency policies, procedures, and communication methods.
- Knowledgeable in the fields of local natural and cultural history.

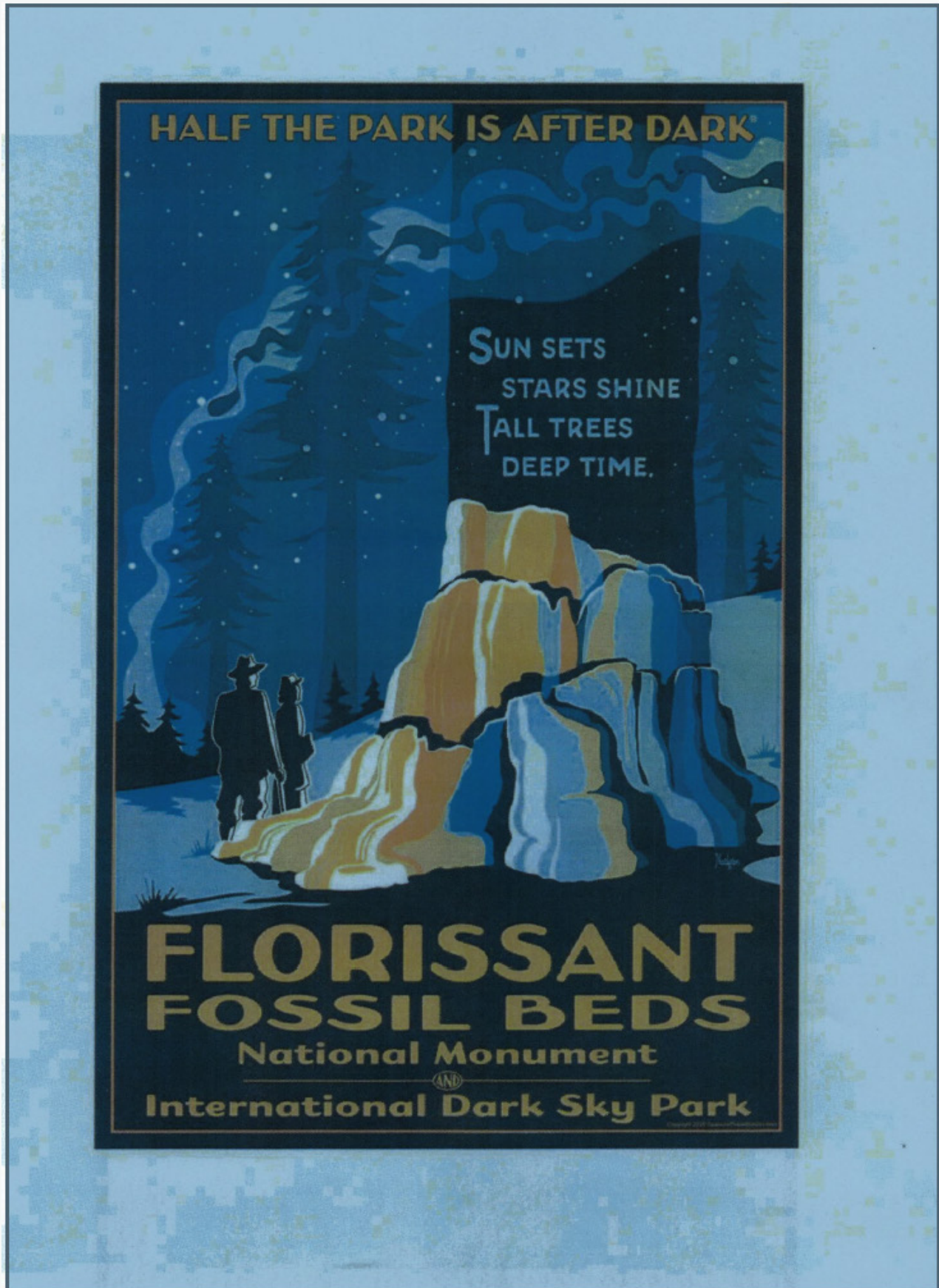
For a full description of duties and qualifications visit:

www.rmconservancy.org/work-with-us/employment/

**Email questions or apply by submitting a resume
to Opportunity@RMConservancy.org**



Dark Sky Poster will soon be available in the bookstore



Speaker Series Review

Sally McCracken

The Board of the Friends offered its first webinar of the year on Saturday, March 15th, at 10am. Susan Campbell presented a program “Building Healthy Resilient Forests With Ecological Restorations”.

Susan’s presentation focused on understanding threats faced by our forests, such as droughts, fires and insects. It looked at ecological restorations as a very viable way to give us a shared understanding of some of the restoration projects that she had worked on.

Highlights of the presentation included the following:

- Healthy, resilient forests, and their benefits.
- Threats faced by our forests today, like severe wildfire, drought, and insect epidemics.
- How ecological restoration can improve forest health and make forests more resilient to threats (so they can provide all the benefits we love).
- Discussion of restoration projects in our area, including highlights of methods, materials, and concepts involved:
 1. The remarkable resilience building of Zeedyk one-rock dam projects near Gunnison, benefiting Gunnison sage grouse and cattle ranching. (*Ed: Additional Info [Here](#)*)
 2. Wetland revegetation and restoration on Sheep Mountain near Fairplay, reducing erosion, strengthening native plants and water quality.
 3. Tarryall Creek/China Wall restoration near Lake George, reducing erosion for better stream and fish health.
- The human benefits of working on collaborative restoration projects (all 3 projects involved multiple agencies, community and nonprofit partners, plus volunteers).

We hope to offer more webinars in 2025 and will possibly schedule some in-person seminars. Be watching for emails that will tell you more about our upcoming programs.



More on Speaker Series



The Friends of the Fossil Beds have initiated a new speaker series that debuted on Saturday, March 15 with a presentation entitled, “Building Resilient Forests with Ecological Restoration”, offered by Susan Campbell. This presentation is described on the previous page.

The presentations are intended to deliver high quality, informative talks relevant to the our natural environment and the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. These talks will be presented by highly qualified subject matter experts and are intended to enlighten audience members in the topic of discussion.

This series will be presented via the Zoom online protocol with occasional in-person gatherings.

Future topics of presentation will be announced a minimum of two weeks prior to date of scheduled delivery, and links will be provided for easy registration.

We look forward to your attendance and topic suggestions.



*Spring is nature's overture
A symphony of awakening
With a hint of what's to come*

The Fossil Beds & Mother Nature

*Invite you to the annual
Celebration of beginnings*

SPRING!



Spring is a great time to get into those hiking shoes and get out on the trails.





April / May 1997 Issue of the Florissant Fossil Beds Newsletter
Superintendent's Musings
Jean H. Rodeck

Stump shelters cover the petrified trees, protecting park resources for the future; plans and budgets fill up the files, also protecting resources for the future; and people fill up the visitor center, enjoying the resource and helping us protect them for the future. This is the view from my desk as the 1997 season gets underway. The budget and staffing are threadbare again this year, but we are working together to make ends meet, to something extra, and to provide the best in resource protection and visitor services.

During the past year I have learned a lot about the people who care about his national monument. WE are blessed with people who work hard to bring small underfunded area to internation recognition. They include employees who work fulltime or in the summer. There are those who take time out of their lives to volunteer at the park or join the /friend of the Florissant Fossil Beds.

We NEED our Friends group. We appreciate your work and support. Perhaps, we don't always say THANKS or say it often enough. Now that the stump shelters are up, and the trees protected FOR THE TIME BEING we need to ask for your continued interest and support.

All the good things I see happening at the park demonstrate the benefits of the partnerships we have forged. The NPS, Rocky Mountain Nature Association, Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds, and a remarkable crew of volunteers, make up a strong and productive organization that does wonders for preserving resources and serving the public "for this and future generations."

So this is a love letter, long overdue, to you ALL. Being here and working with everyone has turned into more of a joy than I ever anticipated. Thank you for the opportunity to work with this partnership to get even more done in the years to come.

Jean H. Rodeck, Superintendent





Friends of the Fossil Beds Board Members

Front: Jean Rodeck, Therese Johnson.

Left to Right: Rick Wilson, Sally McCracken-Maertens, Bev Harms, Jan Beals, Gary Censoplano, Michelle Melville-Speck, Patty Glatfelter, Laine Weber, Wendie Warner, Mike Rodriguez, John Schwabe (on couch), Jerry McLain.

Participants on zoom: Fred Gustafson, Wayne Johnston, Linda Laverty, Amy Wolin.





Jean Rodeck, Marin Karraker, Therese Johnson

*3 generations of Superintendent leadership at the
Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.*

You can help support the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument
by visiting [Colorado Gives](#).



Local Artist Spotlight



Michelle Melville-Speck is a Friends' Board member and a local artist of note. The watercolor painting of the Hornbek Homestead is a wonderful example of her talent.

The Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument offers a variety of compelling subject matter for visiting artists.

You are invited to capture the spirit and beauty of the Fossil Beds on your canvas.

We welcome submissions from local artists for inclusion in our quarterly Newsletter.



CODA

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Nothing ruins your Friday like finding out it's only Wednesday!



Available at the
Bookstore.

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