

**SVP Field Symposium 2010 Participants
John Day Basin Field Conference
June 7-11, 2010**



Front Row (left to right): David Levering, Nathan Carpenter, Jason Lillegraven*, David Whistler*, Richard Tedford*, Michael Woodburne*, Samantha Hopkins*, Scott Foss*, Barry Albright (co-coordinator), Everett Lindsay, Theodore Fremd (conference leader), Skylar Rickabaugh (co-coordinator).

Second Row (left to right): Julie Meachen-Samuels, Kristen MacKenzie (assistant), Linda Lillegraven, Jeb Bevers, Eric Gustafson, Andrew Woodford, Matthew Kohn*, Lanny Fisk, Patricia Holroyd, Lindsay MacKenzie*, Margery Coombs, Elizabeth Strasser, Elizabeth Lovelock, Kathleen Springer*, Robert Lillie, Maureen Babb.

Back Row (left to right): Joshua Samuels, Eric Scott*, Angela Matthias, Dale Hanson, John Zancanella*, Milton Graves, TJ Meehan, Darrin Pagnac*, William Matthias, Jonathan Hoffman*, Sarah Siren, Joshua Ludtke*, Lauren Berg, Jeff Oster, Helen Strassel (hidden, assistant), Jonathan Calede, John Orcutt, Karyn Patridge, Jennifer Cavin, Bruce Hanson, Kaitlin Maguire.

*** = Invited “faculty”.**

Field and Topical Conferences Committee Report

By Michael O. Woodburne, Chair. SVP Field and Topical Conferences Committee

The 2010 Field and Topical Conferences trip devoted to the John Day Fossil Beds took place from June 7 - 11. Ted Fremd, Skylar Rickabaugh, and Barry Albright, assisted by Kristen MacKenzie and Helen Strassel, wonderfully led the trip. There were 48 participants, of which 8 were students. We all had an enthusiastically productive and congenial time, and the Committee wishes to applaud the students who participated, because a major goal of the SVP in hosting these trips is to offer a hands-on mammal age field context to the future leaders of our Society.

This John Day Fossil Beds field trip was timely in that the last professional trip to the basin was over 15 years old (as part of the SVP Annual Meeting) and a lot had happened regarding upgrading the basic stratigraphy and chronology of the fossil beds since then, as well as many updates in basic systematic paleontology.

Our leaders guided the rest of us on our travels, being conducted in our spacious bus by our very congenial driver, Fred Oster, of "Experience Oregon" Bus Co, who saw to it that we reached every targeted site on the trip. In addition to being able to clearly see the passing geology, Ted kept up a valuable commentary on that geology and paleontology during the drives between stops. One of his most innovative suggestions was to encourage the 'old timers', Jay Lillegraven, Ev Lindsay, Dick Tedford, Dave Whistler, Margery Coombs, and Mike Woodburne to sit separately around the bus and to especially encourage the students to join them and get acquainted. This worked very well and was an extremely positive and friendly circumstance. Kudos, again, to Ted!

As also explained in our 150-page(!) standard-setting guidebook, we visited key John Day region sites, including the Clarno Nut Beds (where we overnighed in the rustic field station of instant volleyball fame), the new Thomas Condon Paleontology Center (with a tour of the top notch preparation/curation facilities, plus group photo), and other significant sites such as Painted Hills, Turtle Cove, Mascall Formation/Fauna sites, Roundup Flat, Bone Creek and other places with the stratigraphy now enhanced by the objectively important A-M unit designations developed by Ted, and the upgrades in both isotopic and paleomagnetic data added in recent years by Ted, Carl Swisher, Barry, and Eric Bestland. The trip was fittingly enhanced by a lively evening at the Snaffle Bit Dinner House in the town of John Day the evening prior to our final field day, with its quality and congeniality a continuation of the substantial and diversely 'snack-ified' lunches also provided for us on the trip.

The trip was an unqualified great success in all respects and we all enthusiastically salute the quality result provided by Ted, Skylar, Barry, Kristen and Helen.

Finally, we wish to recognize here J. Arnold Shotwell, one of the most important and influential contributors to Oregon geology and vertebrate paleontology, including the John Day fossil beds. We had hoped that Arnold would be a participant in this trip, but it turned out that he was unable to attend. Not being able to do it in person, we still offer our warm thanks and appreciation to Arnold.

Synopsis of “faculty” presentations

By Theodore Fremd, Trip Leader and Field Guide author
All photography by Eric Scott

In addition to a narrative keyed to surroundings provided by the trip leader both en route and at various stops, several of the participants were specifically invited to present a brief synopsis of their work as it pertained to the perspective of the surroundings. In rough order of their presentation, we were treated to talks by:



Josh Ludtke regales participants with agriochoerid lore at the Painted Hills Overlook

entombed in the sediments below the observation point and across the fault to the East, at Hatch’s gulch and other prominent localities.

At Stop 1.2, **NPS Thomas Condon Paleontology Center staff**, including NPS preparator Jennifer Cavin, paleontologist Josh Samuels, collections manager Chris Shierup, and paleobotanist Liz Lovelock were available for impromptu orientations/discussions about this relatively new facility.

In the evening, a banquet was provided at the **Snaffle Bit Dinner House**, and all participants signed a card for **J. Arnold Shotwell**, one of the most accomplished John Day Basin paleontologists in history. Dr. Shotwell had planned to be the “mystery guest” during the trip but had to withdraw for health reasons.

As the bus passed through the town of Prineville, **John Zancanella** offered a perspective of the cooperative agreement between the NPS and BLM in the John Day Basin. Arriving at Painted Hills, walkers began to climb up the Overlook Trail for a grand perspective of the strata visible from the top. Here, **Lanny Fisk**, offered a solid framework for the tectonics of the basin, and the genesis of the faulting that led to the current topography. At the same overlook, Josh **Ludtke** presented an overview of the Agriochoeridae, fitting to the Painted Hills overlook on the basis of the abundant remains of *Agriochoerus*



NPS Preparator Jennifer Cavin enthralls visitors in lab.



Darrin Pagnac discusses the Barstovian at the Mascall Overlook

On Day Two, the first stop was the Mascall Overlook, Stop 2.1. **Darrin Pagnac** provided an overview of the Barstovian and Hemphillian mammalian assemblages entombed in the strata visible from this perspective, and **Jonathan M. Hoffman** offered an overview of ungulate diversity. At the second visit to the Thomas Condon Paleontology Center, **Matt Kohn** gave an overview of the isotope work he and others have been performing in the basin and how it informs our understanding of global climate change and tectonics.

and different tools for documenting specimen localities and sites, using high resolution stereopair photographs taken for this purpose. At Stop 2-3, **Liz Lovelock** pointed out a remarkable deposit of petrified wood preserved within the Picture Gorge Ignimbrite across the valley. Stop 2-4 was a good opportunity for **Barry Albright** to give an overview of the recent paleomagnetic work that was completed in the area, with the Roundup Flat section visible from this spot providing the key transitional sequence. Stop 2-5 led the participants to some fossiliferous exposures of the Haystack Valley member of the sequence. At Stop 2-6, **Samantha Hopkins** offered an overview of aplodontid biostratigraphy in the region and a critique of previous investigations.

At Stop 2-2, we discussed cyclic prospecting



Matt Kohn discusses isotopes at the NPS Paleo Center

The next and final day involved a hike to the Clarno Nut Beds, which proved to be somewhat strenuous for a few participants. At the site, **Bruce Hanson** offered an overview of a “allostratigraphic” interpretation of the outcrops and furnished participants



Mike Woodburne on "the one that got away".

with his map. At the same site, **Lindsay MacKenzie Lindsay MacKenzie** spoke of the depositional environment of the nut beds and contrasted it to work she has recently performed on Cambrian strata in China. **Eric Gustafson** provided an entertaining recollection of the “early days” when he as a camper at Hancock. **Jay Lillegraven** did not disappoint in his official role as The Ogre and Court Jester throughout the trip, noting some typographical faux pas in the official field

guide (that have been repaired in the final sales version of the book).

En route to the final stop at the “Twickenham” region, **Dave Whistler** provided a narrative of the prospecting work he has been involved in at the classic “Diamond C” localities visible from the road. We were pleased to be led into the Collins Ranch locality, Stop 3-3, by the landowner **Adam Temple**, who generously offered his residence for our final “break” in a splendid paleontological setting. Everyone used the time to relax and celebrate the trip prior to heading back via an alternate route. The return actually deviated from the road log furnished to the participants in that the Twickenham-Bridge Creek primitive route was followed. At some points on the journey, the tail end of the bus hung over sheer drops to the river hundreds of feet below. Readers are advised to follow the route proscribed in the log (through scenic Gird’s Creek), as the former route can become impassable in certain conditions.



Prospecting in the Haystack strata

On the return trip, **Kathleen Springer** offered a synopsis of cooperative agreements between federal agencies and public museum, using the San Bernadino County Museum as an example that others would be wise to emulate. Member of the SVP Ethics committee, **Eric Scott**, provided a no-nonsense review of ethical behavior by members of the society and an update on recent committee activities. BLM regional paleontologist **Scott Foss** batted cleanup with an overview of PRPA, the 2009 Paleontological Resources Preservation Act.



Scholarship students enjoying a huge feast at the John Day banquet: "You should have been here!"

