

National monument celebrates grand opening of paleontology center



Nation Park Service Director Fran Mainella (left) and National Park Service Regional Director Jon Jarvis cut the ribbon on the new Thomas Condon Paleontology Center.

National Park Service Director, Fran Mainella, and over 500 visitors and scientists celebrated the opening of the Thomas Condon Paleontology Center in a ribbon cutting ceremony Aug. 13 at John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. Director Mainella was accompanied by National Park Service Regional Director Jon Jarvis and monument superintendent Jim Hammett.

The Thomas Condon Paleontology Center was designed to break the barrier between the general public and the science of paleontology. It accomplishes this by allowing the public to observe through a glass window while the paleontologists prepare the fossils they found. Each of the microscopes in the lab has a digital video camera attached to it so visitors can watch a television screen located in the lobby and actually see what the paleontologist sees and does.

Visitors eagerly awaited the opening of this center and seemed fascinated as they walked into the exhibit room. The exhibits contain eight murals, which correspond to the more than 400 fossils on display and the various ages of the deposits. The fossils rest on actual casts of the rock localities from which they were excavated. The exhibits demonstrate how paleontologists use the fossils they find as pieces to a puzzle. Each piece gets them a little closer to finding out exactly what the plants, animals and even ecosystems looked like over 40 million years ago. The center is not only visually stimulating, but it also contains a sound system, which produces

audio of what the animals may have sounded like.

The Thomas Condon Paleontology Center is not only a masterpiece in itself; it is surrounded by hundreds of miles of hills of all shapes, sizes and even colors. The different layers of the hills vary in color depending on their mineral composition and the type of weathering they experienced.

Director Mainella displayed her enthusiasm for the new center in her remarks, "Visitors are able to see fossils representing the most complete sequence of plant and animal populations from the Age of Mammals in the entire world here at John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. We know the scientific community also shares our excitement that the new paleontology center will serve as a catalyst for their work — and that more researchers are likely to be drawn here."

Paleontologists at the center are working daily to better understand these ancient plant, animals and ecosystems, but recognize they will never solve all the mysteries. Accordingly, this new center was designed with the intention of updating the exhibits as new discoveries are made. Paleontologist Ted Fremd reminds himself to "see and then think." The paleontologists at the center look at what the evidence is telling them and revise their theories accordingly. So, for years to come this new Thomas Condon Paleontology Center will help the paleontologists and the public better understand what took place here over 40 million years ago.

Former exchange student returns for a visit



(Back Row): Willy Gentry; (Front Row L-R): Jerry Gentry, Tate Gentry and Vera Pawlowsky.

A German exchange student who spent the 2003-04 school year with the Gentry family in Heppner came back this past week for a visit.

Vera Pawlowsky, who is now 18 years old, spent some time in California and then came up to visit Terri and Jerry Gentry and

their two boys Willie and Tate. She spent 10 days in Heppner and then has to head back to Germany in time for school to start. She will be in the 13th grade this year.

Her hometown is Ibbenbueren, which has a population of around 60,000.

Baker County horse tests positive for West Nile virus

The Oregon Department of Agriculture announced Aug. 10 that a horse from the Richland area in Baker County has tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). The horse demonstrated symptoms of incoordination and had stopped eating. The Baker County horse had not been immunized against WNV, but is still alive. In 2004, half of the 32 Oregon horses diagnosed with West Nile virus died or were euthanized.

According to Oregon State Veterinarian Don Hansen, it is important to note that the virus is passed by mosquitoes, not by horse-to-horse, or horse-to-human contact.

"Mosquitoes, however, can pass the virus to humans," says Emilio DeBess, public health veterinarian for the Oregon Department of Human Services.

The virus has also been reported in birds from Jackson and Malheur counties, demonstrating the statewide presence of this disease-causing virus. Drs. Hansen and DeBess urge the following actions to help prevent the spread of the disease.

Vaccinate horses. For the best protection, horses need to be given two doses: an initial dose and a booster dose 21 days later. If your horse has already been vaccinated with both doses, consult your veterinarian about the need for a booster at this time. If your horse has not been vaccinated you are encouraged to vaccinate now.

Control mosquito

breeding sites. Help reduce the number of mosquitoes in outdoor areas by draining sources of standing water. In this way, you reduce the number of places mosquitoes can lay their eggs and breed.

Protect yourself. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak mosquito biting times. Consider avoiding outdoor activities during these times or take extra care to use an EPA-registered insect repellent such as those with DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Wear protective clothing.

Observe and report.

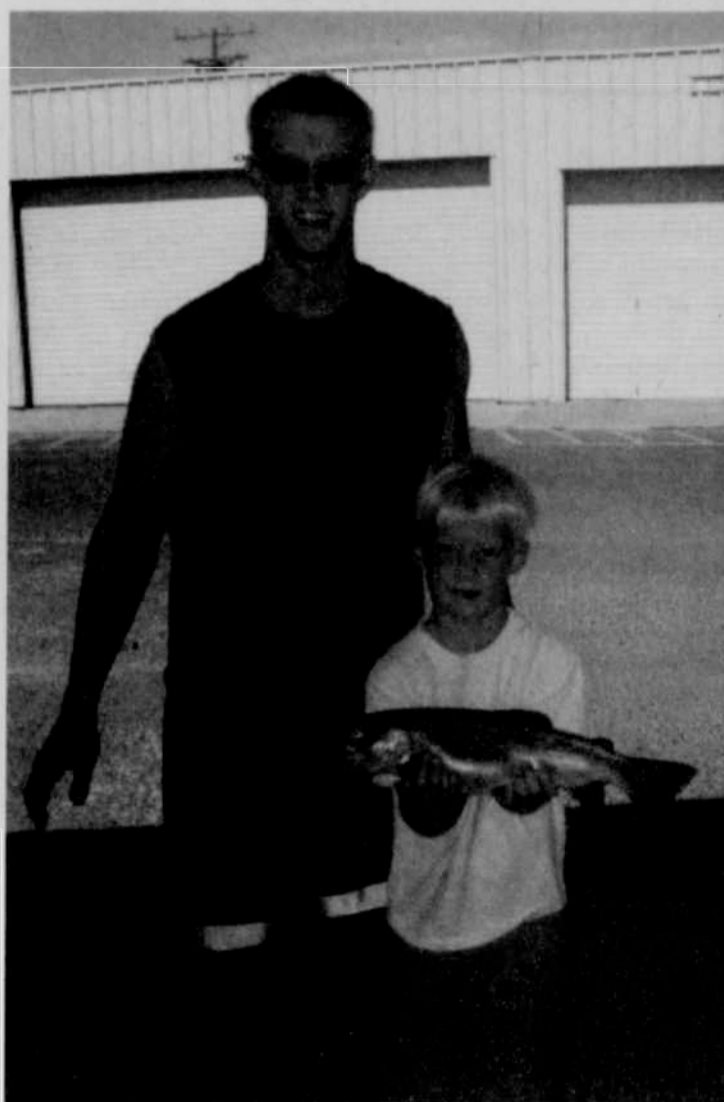
The virus can infect the central nervous system of horses and cause symptoms of encephalitis. Clinical signs of encephalitis in horses include weakness or paralysis of hind limbs, hyper excitability, ataxia (incoordination) and convulsions.

It is important to note that not all horses with clinical signs of encephalitis have West Nile encephalitis. Call your veterinarian immediately if you witness any of the above symptoms in your horses.

Victorian Rose reopens after flood

The Victorian Rose, located on May Street in Heppner, will reopen its doors Wednesday, Aug. 17 at 10 a.m., after the business was flooded with 2-½ inches of water Monday night, Aug. 8, said owner Marti Luther. The store's inventory had to be removed from the building and stored for several days while the pipes were fixed and the floors repainted.

Brothers bring in the summer catch



Enjoying the great summer weather, brothers Luke and Kevin Murray caught an 18-inch rainbow trout Aug. 15 in Willow Creek.



Heppner Fire Department extinguishes a grass fire below the high school last Thursday. The fire was reportedly started by workmen installing a fire hydrant in the area. It took firemen a little over an hour to completely extinguish the blaze. No damage was reported.

St. Patrick's to offer Light Weigh program

For those who are concerned with their weight, or are struggling with diets there will be an orientation presentation of the "Light Weigh" program at St. Patrick parish hall on Monday, Aug. 22 at 7 p.m.

This presentation will include the "Light Weigh" bible study and a

video. The program draws on the teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Therese of Lisieux, and, of course, the example Jesus gave by overcoming temptation in the desert.

Everyone is welcome to attend this program.

Open House to be held at senior apartments

An open house tour of the St. Patrick's Senior Center apartments will be held Saturday, Aug. 20 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be door prizes and refreshments.

Farewell reception to be held for Wisharts

The members of Heppner Methodist Church are holding a reception on Sunday, Aug. 21 in honor of Jim and Cam Wishart, church members who are moving to Hood River. The reception will be held after church at approximately 11:30 a.m.

Blue Basin hike offered

John Day Fossil Beds National Monument will offer two ranger-conducted hikes into the spectacular Blue Basin fossil beds. Each two-hour hike will feature the geologic landscape and fossil history of the basin.

The hikes will begin at 10 a.m., both Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 20 and 21. They will start at the Blue Basin trailhead, located three miles north of the Sheep Rock Unit visitor center, along State Route 19.

Participants should bring good hiking shoes, a sun hat, jacket, water bottle and camera.

For further information, call (541) 987-2333.

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