

Minutes of UFOP SW Chapter Meeting on April 17, 2019

Jaleesa Spor was presiding, as Bill was out of town. She welcomed the 21 attendees, and asked Elisabeth to read the Minutes of our February meeting.

*Elisabeth indicated that those had already been posted on our UFOP web site.

She made an official announced that she would be stepping down as the chapter secretary on May 15, 2019 on her 80th birthday, after having enjoyed this position since 2003, which produced a well-earned and appreciated applause. She introduced Jennifer Bennet who had offered to replace her, earning herself an applause as well.

*After announcing that there was \$1900 in our chapter account, Alan-our treasurer- read aloud a letter written by Bill, our president. Here it is:

" Southwest West Chapter Utah Friends of Paleontology

April 12, 2019,

Dear members:

The Utah Friends of Paleontology is dedicated to preserving Utah's fossil resources through public education and volunteer work with sponsoring institutions. The St. George Dinosaur Discovery Site through its exhibitions and programs, the Museum strives to inspire critical thinking, awaken curiosity, and deepen understanding about the natural world.

The management and board of the Dinosaur Discovery site is increasing its public outreach and education programs. The board of the SW Chapter is considering partnering with the Discovery site to amplify our outreach and educational goals. The Discovery Site is going to create a "Friends of the SGDS" group. This group will sponsor talks and have field trips like UFOP has; but, it will have more resources to support the activities. The support will be money and marketing. In addition, the Friends will encourage volunteer participation at the site and work with the management and staff to enhance the volunteer experience. To accomplish these goals the UFOP Board is considering donating most of the chapter funds as 'seed money' for the speaker program.

UFOP will host one more meeting this spring; Dr Jim Kirkland will be here on May 15th. Also at that meeting we will discuss whether to hold the UFOP Statewide Conference in the spring of 2020. This year's conference is June 7 thru 9 in Moab. Registration is available online at utahpaleo.org. Please consider going, these meetings are always great fun.

Also, remember elections are in the fall, please consider becoming an officer of the SW chapter.

In last month's volunteer meeting Bill Biesele discussed some plans for the chapter. He stated the chapter would "change into" the Friends of SGDS. That was wrong, and he apologizes. The local chapter is part of the state organization and only the state organization could eliminate the local chapter. Whether this chapter remains active or not will be decided by the chapter board after this fall's election. The board feels the Friends of SGDS will be better at promoting UFOP's goals in southwestern Utah. We will be discussing this with Dr. Kirkland in May, and with the state organization in June.

If you have any questions or concerns, please respond before June's meeting so they can be addressed by the board.

Sincerely yours,

The Board of the SW Chapter of UFOP"

The membership was given the opportunity to ask questions, either immediately or after the presentation, but none were asked.

It was brought to the attention of the members that Andrew had undergone a heart operation on Monday, April 15th, during which 5 stents were put in. All was well, and he would be back at work in about a week.

*Jaleesa then introduced our speaker, Robyn Henderek.

Robyn Henderek began her career working in Grand Canyon National Park studying the fossil remains in the caves of the canyon. During her time at Grand Canyon, she assisted nearby parks with managing their paleontological resources, including co-authoring the first-ever Paleontological Resource Inventory Report for Wupatki National Monument. After a few years exploring Deep Time as recorded in the geology of the national parks and monuments of Arizona, she took a brief break from paleontology and moved to New York City to manage the clean-up of federally-owned hazardous waste sites with the United States Environmental Protection Agency. She recently returned to the West and is back with the National Park Service as the geologist for Zion National Park. Robyn has a dual bachelor's degree in Geology and Anthropology from Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania.

The title of her presentation was:

Prehistoric Paleontologists? Fossil Remains and Split Twig Figurines in Grand Canyon's Caves.

Robyn started by reminding us that this was the 100th year of the creation of Grand Canyon as a National Park. Since then official spelunkers found 930 million years of life preserved in its rock formation and listed around 300 caves formed by exposed limestone degraded by acidic rainwater gathered in aquifers. Many of these caves contained fossils of the ground sloth, California condor, American cheetah, North American horses, goats, empire bats including fur, pelt and dung, that became extinct 11,000 years ago. In some caves--mostly very difficult to get to-- cairns and figurines were found made of split twigs together with fossils of mammals like desert bighorn sheep, mule and deer. Nobody has been able to figure out if these figurines were placed in the caves before or after the extinction of the animals. Of the 300 found caves, only 118 have been inventoried, and only one is open to the public. The access to the caves containing figurines always seems more difficult than to those without any. The figurines stem from 4900-3200 years ago from a Desert culture. Robyn would like to correlate dates and climate models to see if making the figurines was a spiritual way to "ask" for more or less rain during 1700 years...

After ending her presentation Robyn answered a good many questions.

Jaleese thanked her for her interesting talk accompanied by many pertinent photographs, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Submitted by Elisabeth Nipperus, Secretary UFOP SW Chapter
May 3, 2019