

## Minutes of UFOP SW Meeting on February 21, 2018

As Bill was absent, VP Ann Sherwood opened the meeting at 7 p.m. welcoming the 19 attendees. She announced that there had been 41 membership renewals paid in total since January and reminded those who had not renewed yet and still wished to be a member to do so, indicating renewal notices in the back of the attendance list.

Elisabeth read her Minutes of the January meeting which were sent previously by e-mail to all SW members. They were approved, seconded, and written into the record, to be subsequently posted on our website by our webmaster.

Joanna gave her financial information indicating a balance of \$2,354.07 in our account. Ann asked Fred Overkamp to elaborate on the WAVP Conference as he was one of the 6 UFOP volunteers who helped out with registration in exchange for free admission to talks and food. On behalf of the organizer, Tracy Thomson (also one of our members), she thanked said volunteers for their time and help.

Diana Azevedo, the Director of the SGDS Museum, was asked to remark on the new paving stones that were being laid down on the museum walkways. The opportunity to buy these pavers at \$100 apiece and having names, dates etc. engraved upon them in order to raise funds had been opened up at the beginning of this year. At the January meeting the attendees had voted favorably to buy 5 pavers with money from our account: \$500. The text to be engraved would be determined in due course.

Ann then asked Fred to talk about the annual GEOFest in Bryce Canyon to be held on July 27 and 28. He and Bill had volunteered for the last three years and they hoped others would follow. Fred spoke about these previous events and what they did to attract visitors to their booth: show how fossils were prepared by working on a few, answering questions, giving short overviews, etc. They had a clicker to count the amount of visitors, e.g. 500 people in two days.

Ann then introduced our guest speaker Lauren Parry, a PhD. candidate in Geoscience at UNLV. Her dissertation research aims to view mammoth paleoecology in the SW on the individual population and community levels and includes deciphering resource or predator-driven controls on mammoth population sizes, as well as niche overlap between Channel Islands mammoths.

Lauren took us to the Pacific Ocean across from Ventura, where there are 5 islands, all currently undeveloped, resembling miniature versions of how California looked like in the Pleistocene Epoch 1,65 - 11,7 Mya: rocky terrain, beaches, high cliffs, rugged and isolated. During that time all the islands were interconnected.

The islands are named Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, San Miguel and Santa Barbara and were made into a National Park in 1980. Santa Rosa was the last one to become part of the Park, in 1986. It lies 40 nautical miles from Ventura's Visitor Center, and together with Santa Cruz and San Miguel Islands it has the most fauna and flora, including mammoth remains (extinct 11,000 years ago) discovered in 1994 when a fossil skeleton was found, comprising the most complete specimen as yet.

The first publication on the *Mammuthus columbi* took place in 1873, but it was not till 1998 that the first *Mammuthus exilis* (pygmy mammoth) fossil was found. It took three years of (seasonal) careful digging to excavate the site and have the remains lifted by helicopter to the mainland, starting with a tusk fragment and ending with a skull.

It has been assumed that the mammoths (12-14 ft. tall with giant curved tusks) swam the channel to get to the islands. Then the pygmy mammoth (4-6 ft. tall) entered the picture; there was no evidence of any kind of transitional animal, although 13,000 year old in-between sizes of mammoth remains have been found.

Did the pygmy also swim over from the mainland, did the two species eat the same food and live in harmony, could there have been dwarfing or interbreeding? Lauren is now studying the tusks and excavated teeth of both mammoths to find answers. We wish her lots of patience, perseverance, and luck!

*Meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.*

*Submitted by Elisabeth Nipperus, Secr. UFOP SW Branch*

*March 17, 2018*