

History of UFOP Southwest Chapter 1/2/12

The Utah Friends of Paleontology (UFOP) was the idea and creation of Dave Gillette who was then the State Paleontologist of Utah. It was officially formed on September 11, 1991, with four chapters: The Great Basin Chapter in Salt Lake City, the Castle Valley Chapter in Price, the Uinta Basin Chapter in Vernal, the Utah Valley Chapter in Provo (now combined with the Great Basin Chapter), and the Cache Valley Chapter in Logan (now closed).

The Southwest Chapter was established by Andrew Milner in Cedar City on November 17, 1999, and the first speaker was Jim Kirkland, the State Paleontologist of Utah with the Utah Geological Survey. Talks were held at the Southern Utah University and Lynn White, Andrew's wife, served as Secretary. Lack of interest and help led to minimal activity in 2000 and 2002.

In February 2000, Dr. Sheldon Johnson, while leveling a hill on his private farmland in St. George, overturned many large blocks of Navajo sandstone which contained fossilized dinosaur tracks. Dr. Johnson was committed to preserving these tracks and the State of Utah Geological Survey and the city of St. George became involved in the preservation effort.

In October 2001, Andrew Milner was hired by the city of St. George to direct the recovery and preservation efforts at the dinosaur track site, now "The St. George Dinosaur Discovery Site at Johnson Farm."

In mid-2002, two track site volunteers, Darrell and Terri Wade, agreed to reactivate the Southwest Chapter, and on October 25, 2002, By-Laws were voted on and accepted and officers elected. Since then, this chapter has held monthly meetings in St George and/or field trips to various locations in the southern Utah area. Several of the chapter members have been involved in the discovery and preservation efforts of the fossils or as docents at the Dinosaur Discovery Site since the tracks were discovered in 2000.

The Southwest Chapter is now the largest state chapter with about 60 members (the highest being almost 100).