

OREGON PALEO LANDS CENTER

April 2022

Our Mission Statement

The Oregon Paleo Lands Center (OPLI) works with the Gateway Communities of the mid-John Day Basin (Condon, Antelope, Fossil, Service Creek, Spray, Mitchell, Kimberly, Dayville and Monument) to build social and economic vitality through efforts:

To conserve, interpret, and promote the natural and cultural history of the John Day Basin/Blue Mountains through time.

To develop and connect, with partners, the John Day Basin/Blue Mountains' visitor services, recreational services, natural and cultural history education opportunities.

To welcome, educate, and connect visitors, schools, area residents and businesses at the Oregon Paleo Lands Center (OPLC), and through other media.

**Contact OPLI at:
Post Office Box 104
333 Fourth Street
Fossil, Oregon 97830**

(541) 763-4480

paleolands@gmail.com

www.paleolands.org

Presidents Message

Greetings to all who love the John Day River Region!

Your four-person, volunteer Board, (Jeffrey Kee, Bonnie Lofton, Steve Lundgren, and Richard Ross) continues working to keep your Paleo Lands Center running in 2022. The last 2 years have been a challenge for all. We are living through shifts in society that have put increasing pressures on volunteers, employees, community organizations, and learning centers, especially those located in small rural places like Fossil.



Demand for outdoor access has spiked in the John Day Basin. Oregon's US Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley have announced legislation to create a 66,000-acre National Monument in the Sutton Mountain area. The new monument would surround the Painted Hills Unit of the John Day Fossil Beds. New protected lands in the Basin, however, may add to demands for local services, from visitors, and local communities. This year Wheeler County wants to revamp its County Parks Master Plans (Shelton and Bear Hollow) and evaluate a new float-in Park on the John Day River. These plans will qualify for larger State grants. OPLI is providing technical support to the County on this project. We continue to work with Oregon State Parks under a 2017 partnership agreement, and to recruit volunteer Center hosts with State Parks help. If Hosting interests you, check out the details: <https://www.oregonpaleolandscenter.com/park-host>

Our Board recently re-affirmed our three-year strategy to find a strong partner to join us in operating the Center. And we plan to update the Interpretive Strategy, developed in 2016 with 5 Basin partners. We welcome feedback on the Strategy. See website home page: www.paleolands.net We are pleased to work with a new sponsor partner to update and re-print our Find Time regional guide, which can also be downloaded www.oregonpaleolandscenter.com We are happy to see a "return to normal", so far... marked by the September 2022 return of Cycle Oregon, using the Painted Hills Scenic Bikeway, whose creation the Center assisted. Last year donor support and grants helped re-stain the Center, and create the Center's first new online video exhibit, A River Flows Free. Donations and grants also covered normal operating costs, of about \$23000, which included our part time Center Coordinator.

Your tax-deductible donations are essential, to support operations and projects like these.

Thanks again.

**President,
Jeffrey Kee**



Andrew Dennis
Arthur Rabinowitz
Bonnie Lofton
Bruce Sorte
Carmen Almodovar
Carol Flo Hausafus
Carol Williams
David Griffith
Dean Fialka
Donald Podrabsky
Gary Bengere
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Scott Klag
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Mitchell Ornithopod Discovered

A Cretaceous ocean pounded the shore 103 million years ago near present day Mitchell, Oregon. Here the remains of an ornithopod dinosaur were discovered in 2021. University of Oregon's Dr. Greg Retallack compares this former ancient shore and temperate climate to the present-day coast near Arcata, CA. Conifer forests grew to the bluffs. A river met the sea at an estuary nearby. This Ornithopod, a land-based reptile, was about 20 ft long. One vertebra of that dinosaur was discovered in July 2021 near Mitchell by a group of researchers and amateur fossil hunters, including the Oregon Paleo Lands Center, led by the North American Research Group's Greg Carr. The fossil was found about 300 feet from another ornithopod bone discovered by Retallack's students in 2015.

Retallack doesn't know if the bones came from the same individual, or even from the same species. They haven't found a diagnostic piece such as a skull or tooth. These fossils, eastern Oregon's first confirmed terrestrial dinosaur bones, have provided bits of the paleontological puzzle of Oregon. Carr's team also found more fossils in the same formation that have not been identified.



Oregon's scarcity of dinosaur fossils has to do with the conditions that created Oregon. During the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods, much of Oregon was under the ocean. That left aquatic invertebrate and amphibious vertebrate fossils. They include a 25 ft plesiosaur marine reptile found near Mitchell in 2003 (a model of which is on display at the Oregon Paleo Lands Center), a Jurassic crocodile found near Dayville, and a pterosaur (flying reptile) found in the Mitchell area.



The ancient Oregon coast ran southwest from the Mitchell area to Port Orford 103 million years ago. The continent collided with the Blue Mountain Island Arc millions of years before the Mitchell ornithopod lived. The collisions folded and crushed coastal rock. Even after the ornithopod died, the folding continued. Retallack said the formation where the ornithopod bones were found is deep and folded.

Ornithopods, a diverse order of herbivorous dinosaurs, likely lived through much of North America. Their fossils have been found in the Rocky Mountains as well as California. The Mitchell Ornithopod may have died on the coastline or its body may have washed down a river and up on shore.

Oregon Paleo Lands Center Needs You!

You can support the Oregon Paleo Lands Center in a variety of ways. Your financial support now in 2022 is vital to continue our mission of exploring, teaching about, and protecting Oregon's paleo lands. Donor benefits include a 10% discount on retail merchandise at the Oregon Paleo Lands Center in Fossil, a regular newsletter with information about scientific discoveries, history, and news of the Paleo Lands, and advance notice of upcoming OPLI and partner organization events. All donations are tax deductible.

Interested in volunteering at the Center or serving on the Board?
Contact us at paleolands@gmail.com or www.paleolands.org or at PO
Box 104, Fossil, Oregon 97830 (541) 763-4480.