

Issue 9
April 2015

*Working Together We Can
Make a Difference.*



The Monolith.

Petrified Forest Visitation Jumps

Last year, the number of visitors coming to Petrified Forest National Park, 836,919, was the most since 1995, when the internet was just getting started. The increase continues a trend over the last three years, during which attendance has grown 36%. Had the government shutdown in October of 2013 not occurred, each of those three years would have shown healthy gains in visitation.

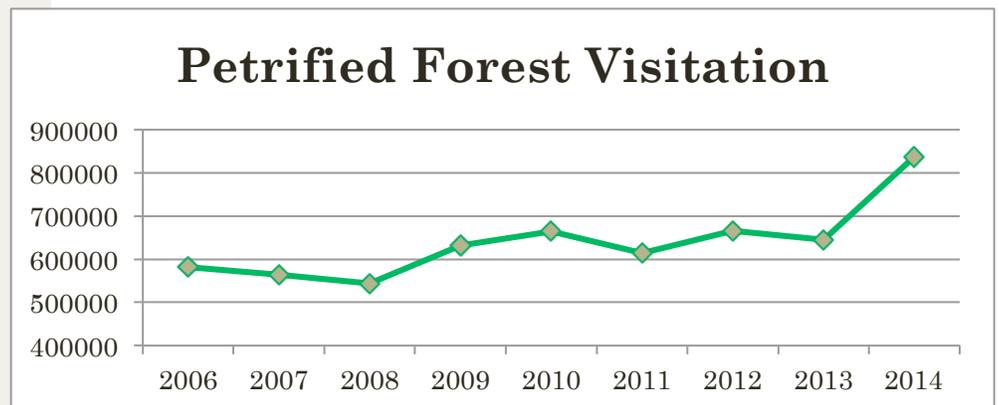
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Petrified Forest Visitation Jumps

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There are many reasons for this increase, although we're speculating on all of them since we will never know for certain. Low gas prices and a recovering American economy are first among them. Gas prices have affected park visitation since the gas crises in the 1970's. In fact, as it happens, the record for visitation to Petrified Forest was in 1972 (over 1.2 million people), the year before the first gas crisis in 1973.

It is also true, we believe, that some of the actions that we have taken have had a positive effect on the number of visitors. We have made an effort to be more welcoming and not threaten all visitors with the consequences of wood theft. We have created new visitor opportunities with our "off-the-beaten-path" series of hikes and have provided new exhibit signs and new designs for our newspaper and park brochure. We have supported events such as the popular "Pedal the Petrified" bike tour in September and the new Petrified Forest Marathon that was started last year. The Painted Desert Community Complex was named a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. We have made an effort to get stories in the press about the park and have grown our social media presence, including monitoring the things people say about us on Trip Advisor and Yelp.

Starting very soon, the National Park Foundation will begin a nationwide marketing campaign that will run through the National Park Service's 100th anniversary year of 2016. It will be called "Find Your Park" and we expect that it will bolster our visitor numbers further over the next two years.

These numbers are only important as a reflection of what we hope is the growing relevance of Petrified Forest National Park to the American public. As an agency that is accountable to the American taxpayers, our relevance is always tested, whether through the budget process, competition from potential mines, or any number of other issues. We hope these numbers show the potential for broader support for Petrified Forest.



Young visitors studying petrified wood along the Giant Logs Trail behind Rainbow Forest Museum.



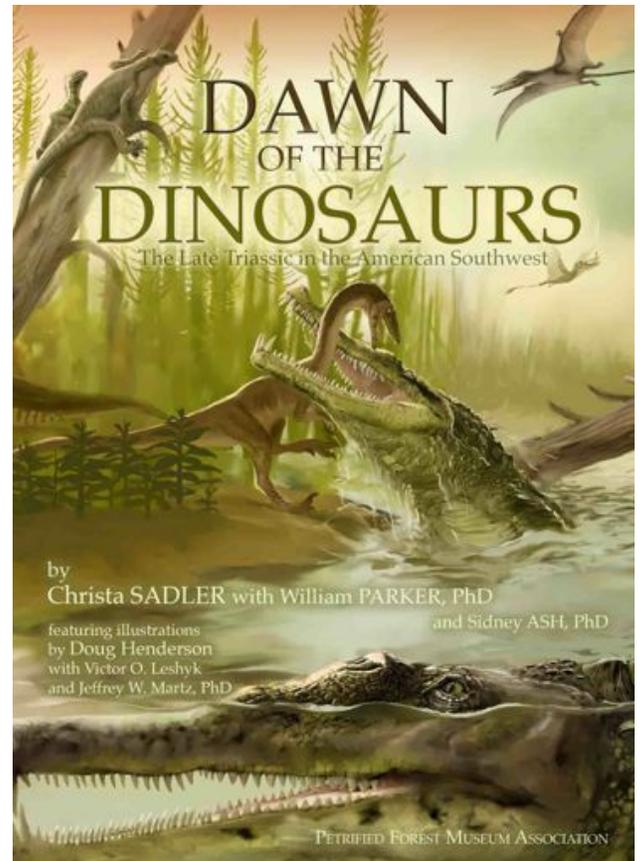
Restored balcony of Visitor Center within the Painted Desert Community Complex.

Petrified Forest Museum Association

While the Friends of Petrified Forest are the new kids on the block, the Petrified Forest Museum Association (PFMA) was established in 1941 and has been serving the park ever since. PFMA sells books, videos, and other items at bookstores in the park and their on-line store at www.petrifiedforestbookstore.com. Sales items are specifically aligned with the park's research and education activities. The proceeds from PFMA sales are provided to the park in the form of front desk staff and cash aid. Cooperating associations, such as PFMA, are active in almost every park unit across the country.

PFMA has undertaken this year to update and re-publish *Dawn of the Dinosaurs*, by Christa Sadler, with assistance from park paleontologist, Bill Parker. The book will have updated and greatly expanded text to reflect recent discoveries in the park as well as new graphics in a new format. Books should be on shelves this summer.

The park and PFMA plan to expand their relationship this year by offering "field institute" classes in the park. Expected to start this year as half-day or full day classes, future options may include multi-day classes. PFMA will bring in expert leaders, occasionally from park staff but mostly from outside the park, to discuss topics of interest. Already planned for this year are classes on natural history, geology, photography, rock art, and paleontology. Classes may be stationary (night sky photography, for example) or may involve backcountry travel with hiking and 4WD excursions. A fee would be charged to participants to cover costs incurred as well as to support the park.



Dawn of the Dinosaurs cover art.
Copyright Victor O. Leshyk. Courtesy of PFMA.

A multi-day class will be offered at Petrified Forest this year, led by the Grand Canyon Field Institute: a paleontological and geological exploration of Petrified Forest. PFMA will see how a multi-day class works, and the Grand Canyon audience will get to know the "other" national park in Northern Arizona.

PFMA has been invaluable in their willingness to help the Friends get off the ground – accepting donations before the Friends had 501(c)3 designation and a bank account, paying stipends to summer interns supported by Friends donations, and other behind the scenes support. Many more opportunities exist for collaboration between PFMA and the Friends of Petrified Forest.

Friends Support Petrified Forest National Park

Friends of Petrified Forest, broadly speaking, have made very generous donations to Petrified Forest National Park over the last three years. Here is an accounting:

Summer science interns	\$8,350
Wayside exhibits	\$650
School transportation grants	\$2,000
Painted Desert Inn	\$2,000
Lab equipment	\$10,000
Tawa Trail construction	\$60,990
Unrestricted	\$600
TOTAL	\$84,590

Some of these donations were made to the National Park Foundation (\$63,990), and some to the Petrified Forest Museum Association before the Friends had a bank account (at least \$14,000). They have all had a direct and important role in improving the park’s ability to achieve its mission. Thank you for your support!

At a recent Board meeting of the Friends, board members reiterated their support for the park’s science programs suggesting the Friends help Petrified Forest become “the premier park in the nation for science”. Along those lines, the park’s science and science communication internships are the primary fundraising opportunity for 2015.

Interns have provided the following help to the park in recent years.

Paleontology

Student interns have been an integral part of the park paleontology program since its inception in 2002. Interns provide much needed field and lab support for paleontological inventory, monitoring, excavation and fossil preparation. Without this assistance the program could not accomplish much of this work. The internships also provide much needed experience for students, providing them with hands-on work in the basics of paleontology and geology. These skills translate directly into opportunities for graduate school and future employment. Many of the park paleontology interns have gone on to graduate school, and several are now full time professors and museum curators in the field of paleontology.

Archeology

The student internship program in archeology is vital to better understand the archeological history of the park. Students from across the country spend summer months learning about the archeology of the southern Colorado Plateau. They develop skills which will help them in future professional careers. Without their help, the park would not be able to accomplish nearly as much research as it has over the last few summers. In addition to working in the field, student interns are required to plan and carry out their own independent

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Friends Day in September

National Public Lands Day is Saturday, September 26. Petrified Forest National Park will have its second annual Friends Day on Friday, September 25, followed by a fall Volunteer Day on Saturday.

Friends Day will include guided tours to interesting spots in the park as well as a nice dinner for anyone signed up to receive the Friends of Petrified Forest newsletter.

Public Lands Day will be the fall Volunteer Day and, as with recent volunteer days, work will include the removal of more internal fence on the Paulsell Ranch. If enough people are present, work crews will be designated. There are many miles of barbed wire that are no longer needed. Removal of this fence gives wildlife an easier time of it on these lands.

Camping on Friday night will be permitted.

More details to come as the events get closer. If you have any questions, contact Brad Traver at Brad_Traver@nps.gov.

Thanks, as always, for your support of Petrified Forest National Park!



Work on the Paulsell Ranch in 2014.

Welcome!

Welcome to Judy Bischoff, recent NPS retiree and newest member of the Friends of Petrified Forest Board! Thank you, Judy, for joining our team and for your generous donation!

Friends Support Petrified Forest National Park

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research projects which must be presented at a professional meeting. This spring, research from the last two summers will be presented at an invited session during the 80th Annual Society for American Archaeology Meetings. This is one of several professional conferences showcasing the latest research from Petrified Forest National Park.

Ecology

The park has been able to shuffle some funding and will hire a permanent wildlife biologist onto the staff this year for the first time. An intern for that program would allow the park to focus attention on both

continuing the long-term herpetological study that has been underway for over 20 years and improving the health and size of the prairie dog population in pursuit of eventual reintroduction of the endangered black-footed ferret.

Each ten-week internship costs approximately \$1500 in student stipends. The Friends Board is supporting one archeological intern and would like to challenge others to help support an intern in both paleontology and ecology. Your donations in support of the 2015 summer internship program would be most welcome.

Join the Friends Group today!

You can be a member of the Friends of Petrified Forest National Park! Contact Kevin Dahl for more details.

kdahl@npca.org

For specific information about park projects, contact the park superintendent, Brad Traver.

Brad_Traver@nps.gov

Visit the park's official website to learn more about the park and its resources.

www.nps.gov/pefo/



The Friends Group helped with rock art recording on new lands in 2014.