

Quarterly Newsletter

Friends Of Petrified Forest National Park

PARK HIGHLIGHTS



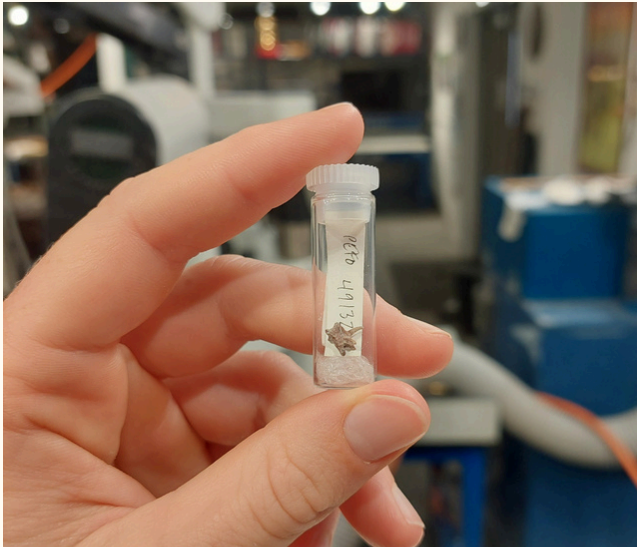
Backcountry and Off the Beaten Path Hikes



Petrified Forest National Park offers a wide range of hiking and backpacking activities for visitors, including several backcountry and Off the Beaten Path hikes. The staff and volunteers who lead and participate in these hikes are proud and excited to welcome new adventurers into the fold! For those who may be seeking not only a physical challenge, but also a rewarding and connective experience, Off the Beaten Path hikes are the perfect outlet for you. There are a total of 8 hikes that are currently open and available for hikers to explore, with details and directions offered at both of the park's visitor centers, and on the park's official website. We encourage anyone interested to get off the road and explore the park through these hikes.



Recent Discovery Within The Park



Above is a photo of the fossil discovered compared to a team member's hand. Courtesy of Petrified Forest National Paleontology team.

Friends of Petrified Forest National Park strives to support any and all departments and operations within the park, including the Science and Resource Management department. This past month, a very exciting report was published to announce the discovery and details of a new fossil reptilian found within the park. The discovery was reported on by NPR news and Newsweek, both aiming to highlight not only the rarity and importance of this discovery, but also the hard work and research done by the park's paleontology team. The research was led by seasonal paleontologist Alaska Schubert, who recognized that this fossil was a new species due to the spike attached to the vertebrae, and has named the specimen *Akidostropheus oligos*.



Above is a photo of seasonal paleontologist, Alaska Schubert. Courtesy of Petrified Forest National Park.

Thanks to artist Joschua Knüppe, we now have a colorful rendition of what this species might have looked like, pictured below.

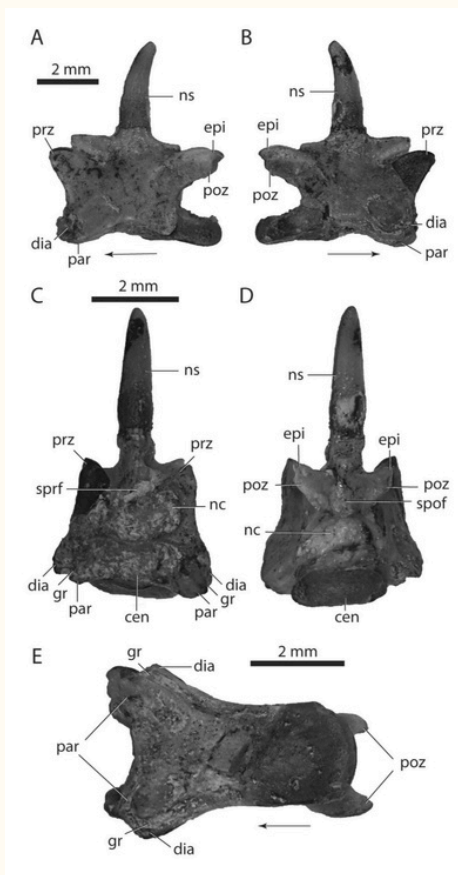


We thank the members and supporters who make these discoveries easier to promote through our purchase of a 3-D scanner for the Science and Resource Management Department. Pictured below is a comparison of the physical fossil to its 3-D printed counterpart, at approximately x15 scale.



Recent Discovery Within The Park: Why is it Significant?

The paleontology and fossil preparations team are proud to present the discovery of the new tanystropheid reptile, *Akidostropheus oligos*. The importance of this discovery lies with the size of the specimen compared to other specimens of the same group that have been found across the country. While the size of the specimen is minuscule, the weight of its discovery is not.



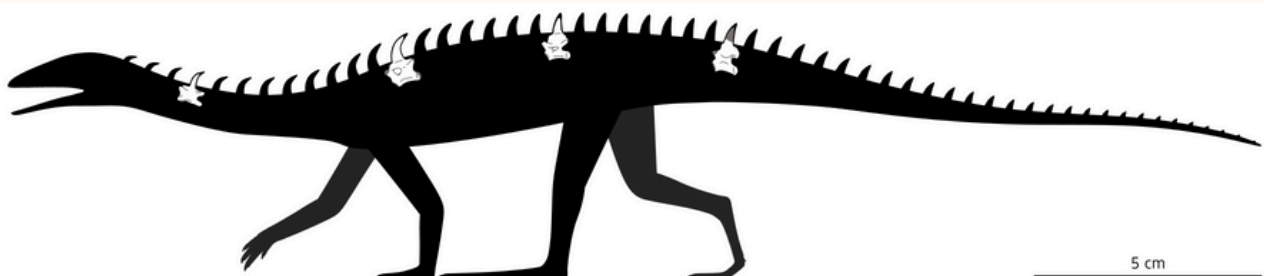
Above is a scientific figure of the fossil segment discovered. Courtesy of Petrified Forest National Park Paleontology team.

Alaska Schubert, a member of the park's paleontology team, says that the find is special, "Because the clade that it belongs to, Tanystropheidae, are very rarely found in North America, so not only is this a new species, but it is a unique find on a larger ecological level that shows that the group was wider spread than previously thought. Finding new species with such unique anatomy highlights the importance of microvertebrate fossil research, which has been historically overlooked in favor of the large, charismatic fauna, but is extremely important for more comprehensively reconstructing the environment and all the critters that lived in it, large and small."



Above is an image of the Paleontology team after removing a fossil "jacket", or plaster cover, which protects the fossil from the elements and allows for easier removal from the field sites. Courtesy of Petrified Forest National Park Paleontology team,

Pictured below is a skeletal reconstruction which can be found on the new species' wikipedia page. "By SlvrHwk - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0" <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=171539879>



What Do We Stand For?

We are a very small non-profit group that supports the education and research at Petrified Forest National Park. How do we do this? By acquiring new equipment (like the microscope and 3D scanner we purchased) for the park's scientists as they discover and interpret previously unknown species of ancient forms of life, discoveries of global significance. We have also funded park interns in the sciences and education departments. We are told by park staff that these interns do invaluable work in advancing the scientific and educational mission of the park, and often these interns go on to have meaningful careers within their own science and education disciplines.

Our Mission:

To support Petrified Forest National Park as a natural and cultural resource for education, recreation, science and research; to help educate the public concerning ways to use and enjoy the Park while preserving its many wonders; and to promote science and research in the Park.

Would you like to support us and our cause, or directly contact us?

Email:

info@friendsofpetrifiedforest.org

