

Interior



Shelves

The Greatest Dinosaur Show on Earth

By Dan Chure, NPS

One of the great spectacles anywhere is the vast wall of fossil bones exhibited in-place at the Quarry Exhibit Center at Dinosaur National Monument. Here one can gaze upon dinosaurs bones just as they were deposited on an ancient river bed some 149,000,000 years ago and have the opportunity to touch and feel the actual bones. It is an experience with ancient life and the deep past that has not been available anywhere else.



High up on the quarry face a majestic skull of the giant plant eating dinosaur *Camarasaurus* gazes down on visitors in the Quarry Exhibit Hall.

The dinosaur deposit is not only an interpretive resource but an outstanding museum collection of international scientific significance. Paleontologists and geologists from around the United States and the world visit to conduct traditional studies on the morphology, biology, and evolutionary relationships of the fifteen different species of dinosaurs and other creatures entombed in the sandstone. The relationship between the bones and the rock that surrounds them has been permanently preserved by leaving the collection "in the field." This allows for many studies that could not be done otherwise, such as determining how many bone deposition events are present in the sandstone, the geometry of the river bed and channel, width and depth of the river, and effects of water currents on bone movement, just to name a few.

Preserving a museum collection in place poses special challenges. At Dinosaur, the major issue is building stability. The swelling soils surrounding the Visitor Center eventually threatened to cause a building collapse at anytime and without any warning. As a result, the building was closed in the summer of 2006. Visitors could no longer see the very site and resource for which the Monument was created in 1915 and the scientific community could no longer study the bones.

Thanks to funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 a multi-million dollar partial demolition, stabilization, and rebuilding project was undertaken. Work was greatly complicated by that fact that all the construction work had to be done above and around the wall of bones without damaging them. Such an effort had never been attempted before anywhere. In October 2011, the building was reopened to the public and scientific community.

A grant from the National Park Foundation will allow NPS personnel to begin monitoring environmental conditions of the building and the cracks crisscrossing the bone wall, as well as develop a long term collections monitoring and conservation program for the fossil deposit. They are currently working with the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology on this project.

Dinosaur was the first site in the world to approach the preservation of fossil collections in-situ. While it is a challenging approach, it has been wildly successful with scientists as well as the public. Similar, in-place exhibits can now be seen elsewhere in the US as well as Europe, South America, and China.



Enclosed within the Quarry Exhibit Hall some 1500+ dinosaur bones are preserved in place just as they came to rest on the floor of a long ago river. This in-place preservation in a sandstone layer 150 feet long and 50 feet tall makes for a very unusual museum collection.

Moments of Inspiration

By Erin McKeen, Interior Museum

Works of art can serve many different purposes. Some artworks tell stories and some are primarily used as decoration, but all artworks have the power to incite our emotions. This last quality is the guiding purpose of the Art-in-Office Program in the DOI Office of the Secretary—to keep employees in touch with the resources managed by DOI and thus serve as “moments of inspiration.”

The Art-in-Office Program is a collection of 350 pieces of fine art managed by the Interior Museum staff. The collection consists of paintings, drawings, photography, graphic prints, and sculpture that are inspired by the work and mission of the DOI. Among these artworks are depictions of natural landscapes, wildlife, and cultural groups and events.

Given the popularity of the Art-in-Office Program, more art requests are received than can be accommodated. Consequently, the program is restricted to office space of select senior staff within the Immediate Office of the Secretary, Office of the Solicitor, and Office of the Inspector General in the Stewart Lee Udall Department of the Interior Building. Within these key office spaces, the artworks provide a visual public relations function by communicating the mission of DOI to its visitors.

Some artworks of particular interest in the collection include lithographs by Paul Pletka, photography by Clyde Butcher, illustrations by Murray Tinkleman, and almost 100 serigraphic prints by Charley Harper.

Interior Museum staff is responsible for managing the selection and installation of these artworks as well as ensuring the proper long-term care and stewardship of the collection. Proper framing, rotation of art on display, and periodic conservation services help keep the artwork looking beautiful and preserved. In this way, the Art-in-Office Program is a successful example of balancing the desire to display these works of art with the need for preservation so that they may be enjoyed by generations to come.



Pictures from the Interior Museum Art-in-Office collections:

Above: “Tall Tail” by Charley Harper, Serigraph print, ink on paper.

Left: “Pecos National Monument” by Jerry Ingram, Painting, acrylic on canvas, c. 1970.

Creative Federal-Private Partnership for FLAG

By Gwenn M. Gallenstein, NPS

In June 2011, Flagstaff Area National Monuments (FLAG) Superintendent Diane Chung and Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA) Director Robert Breunig signed an agreement providing a creative solution for the curation of Flagstaff Area National Monuments (FLAG) archives, objects, and specimens housed in a Mission 66 house at Walnut Canyon National Monument. The partnership agreement allows for the storage of the FLAG collections in a new state-of-the-art, climate-controlled, sustainable collections storage building at MNA in exchange for the FLAG Curator maintaining an office at MNA and serving as the NPS collections point person for the private institution.

Founded in 1928, the Museum of Northern Arizona was instrumental in the establishment of Sunset Crater Volcano, Walnut Canyon, and Wupatki National Monuments which comprise the Flagstaff Area National Monuments. Since that time, MNA has curated thousands of FLAG archeological collections and natural history specimens resulting from MNA sponsored excavations and surveys. MNA also curates collections from other nearby parks such as Grand Canyon National Park, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and Navajo National Monument to name a few, as well as from nearby national forests, tribal lands, and other DOI bureaus.

During the summer of 2011, approximately 100,000 FLAG archives, archeological objects, and natural history specimens were moved to the new Easton Collection Center at MNA from a house without fire protection. The FLAG collections include prehistoric objects such as pots, projectile points, and sandals; pressed plants, fluid preserved reptiles, and small mammal and bird study skins collected from the monuments over the years, and more. These collections are primarily used by staff, researchers from nearby universities, and local tribes who recognized the inadequate storage conditions at Walnut Canyon but still wanted the collections to stay in Flagstaff.

The Easton Collection Center, officially, was awarded the highest possible Leadership in Environmental Engineering Design (LEED) rating of platinum, and the Engineering News Record selected the building as the “Best of the Best” greenest building for 2009.

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