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PREHISTORIC TRACKWAYS NATIONAL MONUMENT

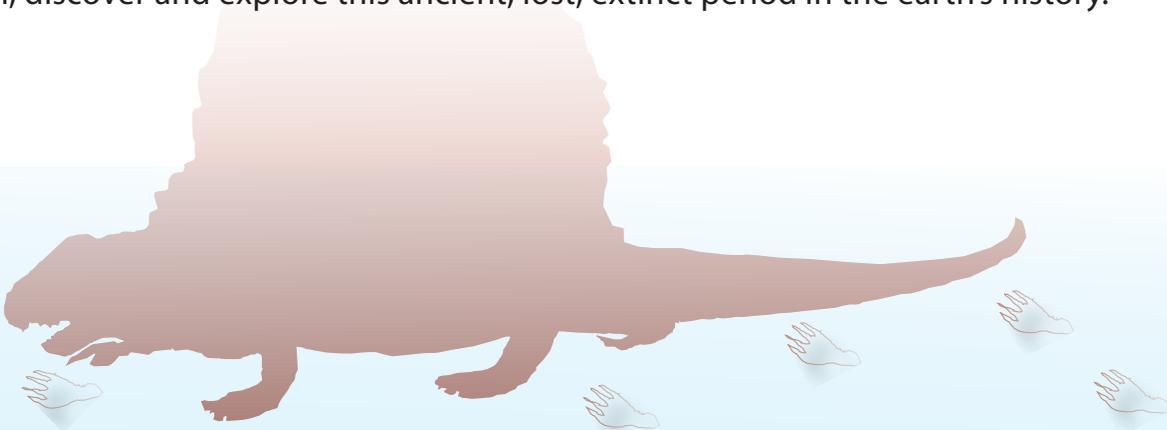
Track your way to 280 million years ago...

a time when Las Cruces, New Mexico was located near the equator. It was a tropical environment, a coastal area located next to an inland sea. The vegetation was thick with trees that had broad, bamboo-like trunks and conifer-like leaves. Fern-like plants grew densely from the ground. Large amphibians and reptiles were on top of the food chain. Smaller amphibians and reptiles fought for survival. Various insects made their homes amongst the swampy landscape. This was a time tens of millions of years before the dinosaurs and hundreds of millions of years before humans.

At Prehistoric Trackways National Monument this world has been caught in red mudstone from tracks to mudcracks and gas bubbles. Hundreds of fossil sites in and around the Monument preserve different parts of this ancient ecosystem.

Marine fossils tell of times when the sea took over parts of the land and then receded, leaving shells, corals and microscopic organisms behind in thick slabs of limestone. Multiple layers of petrified wood laid out and buried (some even burnt and turned into petrified charcoal) show a picture of violent weather causing blow downs. Both plant fossils and plant impressions display what the botanical environment was like. Miles of tracks from tiny amphibians to large reptiles show where animals roamed, what they ate, how they walked, and how they lived. Even insect and invertebrate tracks and burrows display how these small creatures roamed around.

This incredible fossil record has received worldwide recognition. It has been studied and continues to be studied by scientists, museums and research facilities from all over the world. Because of its importance, on March 30, 2009, it was established by Congress as a national monument to be protected for perpetuity. Present and future generations will be able to learn, discover and explore this ancient, lost, extinct period in the earth's history.



The Bureau of Land Management is in the process of writing a resource management plan for the Monument to be completed in 2012. In the meantime, there are no developed hiking and equestrian trails, and no interpretive signs. Roads are not maintained and there are no facilities. There are OHV and mountain bike trails, which are rugged and require appropriate skills and equipment.

The Prehistoric Trackways National Monument is public land; people are free to visit but should be aware of the harsh desert environment. Be prepared with water, sun protection, and appropriate shoes and clothing. Make sure to let people know where you are. The fossil sites are not marked and not easy to find. The most accessible place to see trackways is at "The Discovery Site." The coordinates for this location are on the back of the flyer, but there are no developed trails leading to it.

The quarry located off of Permian Track Road is closed to the public.

Watch out for rattlesnakes.

The terrain is rough and uneven. Watch where you put your feet and hands.

All the wildlife have the potential to bite and sting, including the vegetation.

Pack out your trash.

Do not collect and/or damage the paleontological resources.

Bring plenty of water, appropriate gear, and food. People have become lost in the Monument in their OHVs. BLM is not responsible for the recovery.

Do not drive or ride off designated routes.

Target Shooting:

Recreational target shooting is currently allowed in and around the monument. When using public land for shooting, it is important to recognize that there are others using this land as well.

Be aware of the following stipulations:

- Find a safe backdrop. Shots fired across open desert can travel more than a mile.
- Take all used targets with you.
- Shoot only retrievable, freestanding targets. It is illegal to shoot at trees, bottles, or other objects.
- Do not shoot within 150 yards of any man-made object, camp, domestic livestock, or occupied dwelling.



Directions to the Monument:

Coming from the north (I-25): At the Doña Ana Exit: From NM320 (Thorpe Road) in Doña Ana, go west to US 85, then go north about ½ mile to Shalem Colony Trail. Turn west on Shalem Colony Trail, which curves to the south. Go about 1.5 miles until you cross over the Rio Grande, then take a right onto county road Rocky Acres Trail. After turning on Rocky Acres Trail, go approximately ¼ mile and then turn left onto Permian Tracks Road.

Coming from the south (Las Cruces): Travel on Picacho Avenue / Highway 70. At the stop light with Shalem Colony Trail, go north on Shalem Colony Trail for approximately 5.5 miles. Prior to reaching the Rio Grande, you will reach a county road, Rocky Acres Trail. Turn west on Rocky Acres Trail. Go west approximately ¼ mile. Permian Tracks Road entrance is on the left-hand side.

Cross over a cattle guard and continue to the west. This road, beyond about one mile, is for high-clearance 4WD vehicles only.

Track your way out to the Discovery Site, where 2,500 slabs of trackways were excavated by amateur paleontologist Jerry MacDonald and now make up the Jerry MacDonald Paleozoic Trackways collection at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science.

There is no trail leading out to it, but here is a map and the site coordinates. Large reptiles, small amphibians, and conifer leaf imprints are still visible.

