

Paleontological Resources Management

May 2014

BLM Colorado hosts more than 4,000 known fossil localities throughout the state that involve at least 68 different geologic formations, which have produced millions of fossils. Many of these are scientifically important, with paleontological resources still on the ground, or collected using a BLM permit and curated in collections. These collections are available to the public at local and national museums, universities and geologic surveys. Two fossil-related scenic byways and five fossil-themed trails are interpreted for the public on BLM-administered lands. The BLM partners with a number of involved individuals, organizations and groups to help manage the public's paleontological resources in Colorado.

More than twenty museums across the United States have fossil collections from BLM lands in Colorado. Many of these have visiting researchers, who continue to make new discoveries on these finds.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES - HIGHLIGHTS

BLM Colorado offers two national scenic byways where the public can interpret fossils, Dinosaur Diamond Prehistoric Byway in west-central Colorado and the Gold Belt Tour in southeast Colorado. The BLM partners with municipalities, museums, other agencies and groups to support tourism, scientific, educational, recreational and economic benefits for these byways.

BLM Colorado is home to five interpretive trails that detail historic and recent dinosaur discoveries, marine creatures and small early mammal skeletons.

- The Garden Park Fossil Area, an Area of Critical Environmental Concern and a National Natural Landmark, has produced many new species of dinosaurs and other fossils since 1877 – Royal Gorge Field Office.
- At the Kremmling Cretaceous Ammonite Locality, large coiled ammonite fossils are studied and interpreted along with a trove of many other species of fossil marine life – Kremmling Field Office.
- Since 1986, the Trail Through Time/Mygatt-Moore Quarry has hosted thousands of visitors each year to view seasonal fossil excavations and fossils seen along the trails – McInnis Canyons NCA.
- In the Fruita Paleo Area, an interpretive trail highlights the wonder of the fossils found there, including large new species of dinosaurs as well as smaller dinosaurs, crocodilians, mammals, turtles, snakes, lizards and a flying reptile – McInnis Canyons NCA.
- The nearby Dinosaur Hill Trail interprets the geology of the area and is home to the historic scientific finds of the 1900 and 1901 *Apatosaurus* and other dinosaur excavations of Elmer S. Riggs from what is now the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History – McInnis Canyons NCA.

Fossils also occur in many of the 67 currently designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and are often part of these designations, as well as that of the many National Landscape Conservation System units in Colorado.



The BLM in Colorado maintains an on-going and active paleontological resource management program to facilitate scientific and educational use, tourism, interpretive uses and appropriate recreational collection of fossils.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES – RECENT PROJECTS

Scientifically-important fossils from Colorado are the subject of many publications and are prepared, curated and exhibited as a part of ongoing projects. Publication of fossils found on BLM Colorado lands include new examples of dinosaur skin, tracks of prehistoric creatures, small digging mammals, camels, mammoth, large hippo-like titanotheres, extinct crocodile forms, clam-shrimps and ancient trees. Many of these fossils are now in museums.



Hippo-like titanotheres teeth (WRFO)



Mammoth dig (SLVPO)



Tail of a croc- like aetosaur (CRVFO)

The Kremmling Cretaceous Ammonite Locality is highlighted in a video series about the fossils, background and public visitation opportunities. This series ties in with the onsite trail, which is themed, “An Ocean on Top of a Mountain.” The video boasts large coiled ammonites, *Placenticerias*, and related fossil marine fauna. Ammonite specimens from the area are on display in local museums.



Filming (KFO)



Placenticerias ammonite (KFO) on exhibit, University of Colorado Museum of Natural History



Youth engagement at the “An Ocean on Top of a Mountain” trail (KFO)