

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **August 25 - 28, 2015**

Destination: **Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument**

Leader: **Foxie Mason**

Number of Participants: **9**

Nine enthusiastic SJBAS travelers drove across western Colorado and most of southern Utah to participate in a tour of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (GSENM), August 25 - 28, 2015. The trip itinerary included a stop at the Big Water, Utah GSENM Visitor Center for an extremely interesting talk by James Cates, about the discovery of a wide variety of (more than 4,000) late Cretaceous Era dinosaurs, some never identified. About 400 have already been excavated by more than 123 different academic paleontology programs and institutions.

Next day, a planned tour of Virgin River Ancestral Pueblo sites was to occur with the GSENM archaeologist, Matt Zweifel out of Kanab, Utah. Due to an unexpected half-day torrential downpour which closed the road to the sites, the group met with Matt for more than 3 hours of presentations about his work and research in the Monument. The morning was capped by a back of the house tour of the Paleontology Laboratory at the BLM Administrative Center where we viewed the ongoing work on a variety of dinosaur specimens and enjoyed an al fresco lunch with Matt on the BLM outdoor porch. That afternoon we had an exceptionally informative visit to Pipe Spring, which became a National Monument in 1923. Located in the "Arizona Strip", the site is located at a spring critical to the Paiute Indian tribe, and has a storied history. First serving as a stronghold fort against Navaho raids, then as Brigham Young's cattle ranch, and later as a "sanctuary" and holdout for the multiple wives of Mormon pioneers who were evading the investigations of U.S. Marshalls seeking to prosecute polygamists.

Next day the group traveled to the north portion of the Park and visited the GSENM Visitor Center at Escalante, Utah. The original plan was to tour Fremont Ancestral Indian sites along the Escalante River, with a BLM guide, but events conspired against us. Our BLM guide was sent to Washington State to fight the fires there and our attempt to "self-guide" ourselves along the river trail were thwarted by high water runoff from the previous day's rainfall which prevented us from making the necessary river crossings to reach a number of panel and occupation sites. We, however, hiked the Upper Calf Creek Trail and enjoyed the wonderful Utah canyon country. On the last day, we visited Anasazi State Park, operated by the State of Utah and enjoyed a talk by the Director, Mike Nelson, after which the group departed for home.

- Prepared by: Foxie Mason