



THE MOKI MESSENGER

November-December 2025
San Juan Basin Archaeological Society
sjbas.org

SJBAS Monthly Meeting: November 12

SJBAS Meeting – “The End of the Mimbres Culture in Historical and Regional Context” by Dr. Thatcher Seltzer-Rogers: Dir. of Business Operations, Deputy Dir., New Mexico Office of Archaeological Studies, Research Associate, Jornada Research Institute. A reception starts things off at 6:30 p.m. in the Center of Southwest Studies foyer. You may learn more about this talk at sjbas.org.



President's Message

Greetings fellow members:

I hope you have enjoyed the fall colors as the season transitions into winter. Current items of interest include:

The Annual Meeting and Holiday Brunch will take place on Saturday, December 6th. at 10:00 am in the Vallecito Room at the Fort Lewis College Student Union. Be sure to sign up! In addition to fun and food there will be a silent auction with many interesting non-artifact items related to Southwestern archeology. Contact Tammie Barger at tab2105@comcast.net to confirm reservations. You may also print [the reservation form](#) and mail it with a check to Mary at the PO Box address on the form.

The SJBAS presentation, *Introduction to Archaeology*, at the Durango Public library on September 30th drew over 40 people for an hour and a half orientation to the basics of archaeology. I presented a general orientation including the basic sciences involved and the key concepts of stratigraphy and archaeological context. Hunter followed up with a review of the local La Plata sites and their history, many of which are not publicly accessible. The last half hour involved hands on activities including knapping points, yucca twine, and pine pitch glue which culminated in an arrow, which was presented to Darcy Poletti who is the librarian who has facilitated SJBAS making 3 displays and 2 public presentations at 2 different libraries. There were handouts available concerning site etiquette and artifact collection regulations. SJBAS membership forms were also available and a few were taken away by participants.

SJBAS on the radio. The board approved spending \$250 to qualify for a matching grant from Alpine Bank to obtain 30 sponsorship announcements on KSUT. These will occur at the first of the month just prior to the monthly meetings for the next 10 months.

As you may know, SJBAS recently received a grant and there are several ideas floating about as to what would be the most effective use of the funds. The board solicits any ideas from members for consideration. Please submit these to Susan at sc53hicks@gmail.com.

Regards,

Paul Landrum
President

SJBAS 2025 Annual Meeting & Holiday Brunch, December 6

This year it will be held again the Fort Lewis College, Student Union, Vallecito Room at 10:00 AM - Saturday, December 6, 2025. The per person cost for the event is \$28.00. To make your reservations, follow this link to [the reservation form](#). Print and complete the form, and mail the form and check (Payable to SJBAS) to: SJBAS, Attn: Mary Moorehead, PO Box 3153, Durango, CO 81302. Please return your reservation form and check by November 19, 2025.

ALSO: Please bring a check to pay for your 2026 dues. If you have an item that you wish to donate as a door prize this year, please bring the item wrapped.

Volunteers are welcomed to help with set-up and clean-up. To volunteer or for additional information, contact Tammie Barger at: tab2105@comcast.net or call her at 713-248-5775

Field Trip Report: Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Park Service Day and Tour of Butterfly Panel, *Train Station* and a Remote Pueblo, Sept 26-27

Seven SJBAS members departed Durango early on a crisp September morning for our annual service day at the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Park. Under a special arrangement with the Tribe we spend a day doing trail maintenance and erosion control in exchange for free camping overnight in the Park and a guided tour of one or more of its outstanding ancestral sites the following day.



Upon

arrival, we dropped our camping gear at the Tribal Park Campground and piled into 4WD vehicles and followed our trail bosses, Ute Mountain Utes Rutherford Nills and his relative Calvin Nills to our work sites.

The amazing thing about our trail work is that it was always set next to Ancestral Puebloan rock art or structures. So, we were constantly in awe of our surroundings. Our first stop was

Butterfly Panel, a rock art site adorned with

double-spiraled petroglyphs, possibly representing a butterfly, along with other motifs; circles, an anthropomorphic figure, deer and some desert bighorn. The access route to the panel showed significant erosion from cliff runoff, making the trail both unstable and at risk of further degradation.



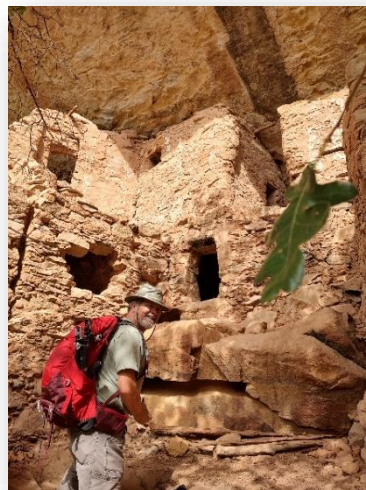
Later in the morning, the group hiked into what's called the *Train Station* site. Along the way we restored and stabilized the trail. We improved over one-half mile of the trail with stone and etched the trail edges with a pick line. The teamwork was excellent, and by mid-afternoon the route was once again in solid condition for both visitors and Park personnel. Rutherford was impressed with our speed, skill and progress, and so commented.

The "Train Station" name, given by earlier explorers, refers to the series of stone outcroppings and structures near the river — that looks like a steam locomotive. There is a panel on the west side of one face, and an unusual and intricately built structure on the East side of the rock ridge, with both Pueblo III petroglyphs and some modern pictographs of what looks like Old Fort Lewis. Our work there not only improved access but also protected site viewing access.

After completing the day's service work, we returned to the Tribal Park Campground, where a cool evening breeze and soft light over the canyon made for an ideal campsite. We shared snacks and made dinner around a nice fire, accompanied by good stories and as the stars appeared, sat in quiet appreciation for the privilege of spending the night in such a protected and sacred landscape

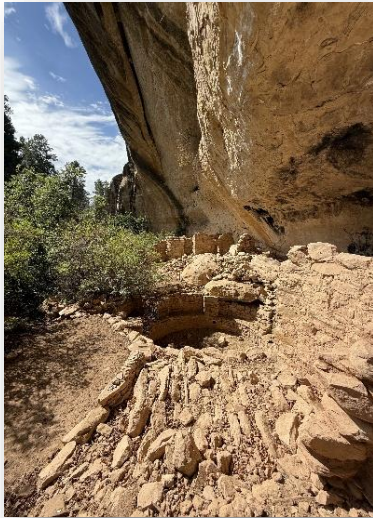


On Saturday morning, our two trail bosses changed hats and became guides for a visit to a remote site we are protecting by not naming it. It is an extraordinary Ancestral Puebloan site dating to around A.D. 1120. The complex contains approximately 60 rooms and four kivas, with T-shaped doorways indicating strong Chacoan influence.



Evidence of animal habitation such as bear and ringtail cat was obvious. The site had not been frequently visited, and the two ladders built by the Ute Mountain Ute Park Maintenance, were now in need of repair with the trail overgrown with plant, logs and fallen trees. I suggested to Rutherford that this may be our Service Day site in the spring.

Nestled at the top of a small canyon running south and west, the site offers a powerful sense of presence. The guide shared both archaeological insights and traditional Ute perspectives on the site's enduring cultural significance.



This year's Ute Mountain Ute Service Day combined practical conservation work with cultural exploration — a perfect reflection of the SJBAS mission to learn, preserve, and give back. Participants expressed gratitude to the Tribal Park staff for their collaboration and hospitality, and all agreed that continuing this annual partnership is an invaluable experience for our members and for the preservation of these remarkable sites.

Service day participants were Lorie Hansen, Tammie and Joel Barger, Rusty Chamberlain, Lorraine and Hunter McCleary and Thomas Polich.

Submitted by Thomas Polich, VP, Trip Leader San Juan Basin Archaeological Society (SJBAS). Photos by Joel, Thomas and Hunter.

Field Trip Report: El Morro Nat'l Monument, El Malpais Nat'l Monument, Acoma Pueblo, Sept 3-5

Our trip began at El Morro National Monument, best known for its 800-year-old mesa-top pueblo, centuries-old rock inscriptions and the best natural watering hole for miles. The trail to the Pueblo follows a steep rock-hewn trail out the back of the visitor Center. On the top the trail passes through the partially excavated late 13th century pueblo village of *Atsinna*. The full pueblo had over 300 interconnected rooms with a central plaza. The ten or so viewable rooms are a small part of the whole village area.



After taking in a 360-degree view, including the surrounding storm clouds and lightning. We followed the trail along a narrow ridge to another village called *North Atsinna*. The trails then wends its way down to the inscription area, the earliest European ones which to 1598; indigenous petroglyphs are much older. A park ranger met us there and gave us a 30-minute overview of the Spanish inscriptions. The natural pool near the inscription wall collects rain water and was actually the main attraction for travelers in the area.

On Thursday, the group met in Grants, NM for the drive to Acoma Visitor Center and Museum. While we waited for the tour bus and guide we chatted with two Acoma potters about the connection between Acoma and the neighboring pueblo of Laguna.

The short bus climbs a steep narrow road to Skycity. Our guide, whose nick name is Gubby,



gathered us at the north wall of the monastery attached to the big adobe church. Gubby, one only a few dozen Acoma Pueblo members who lives in SkyCity, talked about the history of the Acoma people before the Spanish arrived and the not so happy history after. After conquering Acoma and massacring many residents the Spanish destroyed most remnants of the Acoma culture and built a church where a giant kiva stood. The Spanish also had the Acomas bury their religious leaders within the adobe walls of the church. Because it is

essentially an indigenous cemetery, the church was not destroyed during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and still stands today.

After the church, we toured the town. Gubby showed us where the Acomas rebuilt their kivas disguised as houses. They are identified by ladders built from long vigas. Throughout our tour, we had many opportunities for stopping to visit with potters and make purchases. At the end of the tour, several of us skipped the bus ride and walked down a very scary set of stone steps to the visitor's center.

After lunch we gathered at the El Malpais Visitor Center. It is a lovely building with a wall of windows looking out over the lava flow or Malpais in Spanish. The ranger there was very engaged in answering our many questions about the Malpais and sites in the local area. Some of us wanted to check out the Acoma-Zuni Trail. In the end, we all went and enjoyed a pleasant 2-mile hike to end a busy day.

On Friday our group split up for this day. Half went off to see Zuni since it is so close and is on the way home. The Zuni contingent recommends Zuni as a trip for next year. The other contingent explored the sites along the East side of El Malpais including a pueblo ruin excavated in the late 1940's. The first stop, always a good move, the BLM's Visitor Center. The attendant was very helpful and sent us on our way with directions to the Ditter site.

There is an Eastern trailhead for the Acoma-Zuni trail but we skipped that and went on to the Sandstone Bluffs. Up on these bluffs one has a 180 degree view out over the lava filled valley. It is also a great place for kids to expend their energy. The La Ventana Arch is quite dramatic. It is viewable from the parking area and has a paved path for a closer view.

Our last stop in the monument was the Lava Falls Trail. It was fun trying to find the cairns to stay on the trail. The landscape here is interesting. No dirt, just black lava. All along the one-mile “trail” are collapsed areas which the trail sometimes goes through. We found only one lava fall.

From the Lava Falls we left the monument and headed south to the Ditter site. It takes some doing to get to the Ditter site as there is no sign pointing to it. But the three of us enjoyed the effort and found the site. It is a mid-13th century Pueblo III village with about 35 rooms and a large unroofed kiva. It was excavated in 1947-49 by Alfred “Ed” Ditter Jr. and R.J. Ruppe Jr. After exploring the pueblo, we returned to our cars, said our good-byes, and headed home.

Trip participants were Rick and Lisa Stockwell, Hunter and Lorraine McCleary, Tom and Denise DeHudy and Rusty Chamberlain

–Rusty Chamberlain, trip leader and SJBAS board member

Field Trip Report: Sinagua Sites around Sedona, Ariz plus Museum of Northern Arizona, October 15-17

Nine SJBAS members took to the road to explore some of the furthest reaches of the Ancestral Puebloan culture. We started with a guided tour of the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff where we learned that Sinagua is out as a description of this section of the Ancestral Puebloan world. Descendant communities simply prefer Ancestral Puebloan. Continuing our tour of this wonderful museum we sampled many other aspects of the Four Corners cultures. [Including that Ted Danson of *Cheers* was raised across the street from the museum and continues to support it. His father was the founding director.]





That evening all participants gathered for dinner at a restaurant that met everyone's culinary requirements.



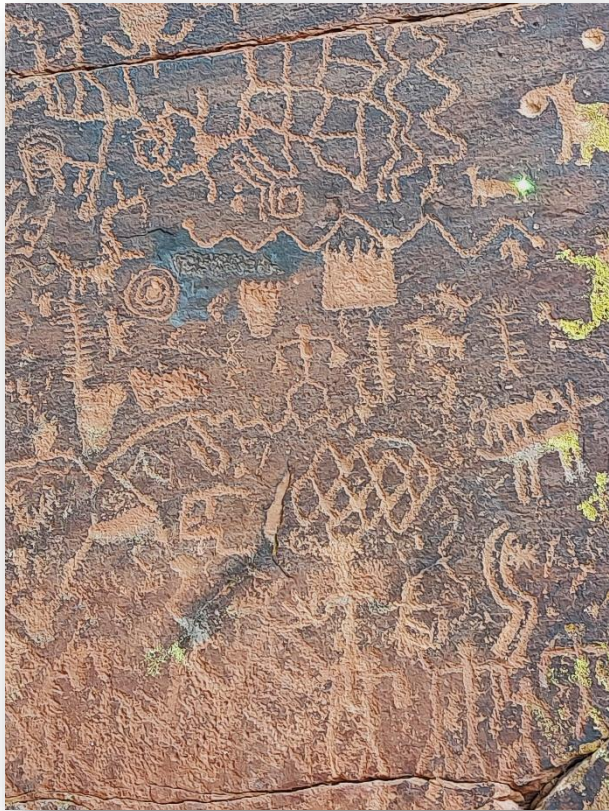
The next day we headed down the Mogollon Rim to Sedona where we visited two heritage sites of the culture formerly known as Sinagua—Palatki and Honanki. The Palatki site included a guided tour that was especially informative about the rock art. For example, the diamonds seen above depict a rattlesnake.

Trivia question: Where might George Lucas have gotten the inspiration for Princess Leia's hair buns? Our guide said that this petroglyph (left) is one of the earliest depictions of the squash blossom hair style of the Hopi.

At noon we headed to nearby Honanki Heritage site for lunch and a self-guided hike of the village. Honanki offered some impressive standing ruins and rock art on the nearby cliffs. The best rock art, however, would come on the third day.



On Friday we visited the Crane Panel just southeast of Sedona. The site was ably staffed by more volunteers. In fact, we were so impressed by all of the volunteers who stepped into the breach caused by the government shutdown.



Pictures of the Crane Panel (left) do little justice to an almost interactive calendar created more than 800 years ago that depicts the seasons and when to plant. There is even a sculpted rock that uses the sun to project the skyline of important area mountains.



With that we closed out our trip. Thanks to the following members who made the trip even more enjoyable. Tammie and Joel

Barger, Rick and Lisa Stockwell, Dianne Pauls, Lorie Hansen, Chris Anderson and Lorraine and Hunter McCleary.

SJBAS Needs Trip Leaders!!

Perhaps the best reason to join SJBAS is to go on trips like those described in this issue. Trips nowadays are led by the same small group of members. If you want SJBAS to continue offering quality outings we need your help. Organizing most trips is surprisingly easy; maybe take a couple of hours. For example, a wonderful 2-3 day trip similar to the one to Flagstaff-Sedona is right in our backyard. Coronado State Monument just north of Albuquerque has astonishing preserved pictographs. Nearby is Petroglyph National Monument. And in Albuquerque is the State Museum. Or Bandelier National Monument. You may camp or motel it. Organizing this trip is easy but they won't happen without you. Contact Rusty at chambrke@aol.com. Tell him you want to be an active member of SJBAS and lead a trip.

Upcoming SJBAS Events for 2025

[Contact trip organizers for details.
See sjbas.org for the latest version of the full-year calendar.
Dates and event descriptions may change]

November 12	SJBAS Meeting – “The End of the Mimbres Culture in Historical and Regional Context” by Dr. Thatcher Seltzer-Rogers: Dir. of Business Operations, Deputy Dir., NM Office of Archaeological Studies, Research Associate, Jornada Research Institute. 7 PM, Center of SW Studies
December 6	SJBAS Annual Meeting and Brunch – Vallecito Room, Fort Lewis College.

Educational Opportunities on Southwest Archaeology and Culture As Compiled by Betsy Moore, SJBAS PAAC Coordinator [If not offered nearby they can be seen on Zoon]

September 13 – mid-December	Exhibit of “Ute Knowledge: Colorado’s Original Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math” at the Animas Museum. Check the Animas Museum Web site for hours.
November 13	“Harmonizing Tradition: Navajo Music and the “Beauty Way” in Archaeology” by Tash Terry (Diné) and Elena Higgins of Indigie Femme delve into the profound role of Navajo music in preserving history, identity, and the Diné philosophy of the “Beauty Way” (Hózhó Jígo).. 4:00 – 5:00 PM. You may register for this Crow Canyon Zoom presentation here .

SJBAS Elected Officers and Board Members

President	Paul Landrum
Vice President	Thomas Polich
Secretary	Susan Hicks
Treasurer	Mary Moorehead
Communications chair	Byron Kellogg
Membership chair	Tish Varney

Field Trip Program coordinator	Rusty Chamberlain
Education/PAAC representative	Betsy Moore
<i>Moki Messenger</i> editor	Hunter McCleary
Programming chair	Janice Sheftel
Publicity chair	Rusty Chamberlain
Social chair	Tammie and Joel Barger
Webmaster	Lyle Hancock

SJBAS Membership renewals are due by January 31st each year. Individual dues drop to \$15 after June 30. If you need to renew a lapsed membership or join SJBAS, please complete the [SJBAS Annual Membership Form](#), make your check for \$25 (\$50 family, \$10 student) payable to 'SJBAS' and mail with the Annual Membership Form only to: SJBAS, Attn: Treasurer, P.O. Box 3153, Durango, CO 81302. New members need to just print and complete the Annual Membership Form; sign the membership form, Liability Waiver and Proper Etiquette forms; write a check to SJBAS for the appropriate amount; and mail the one-page Annual Membership Form and your check to our Chapter Treasurer. Please keep your signed Proper Etiquette forms for your records.