

# OREGON PALEO LANDS CENTER

Sept / Oct 2017

## **Our Mission Statement**

*The Oregon Paleo Lands Institute works with the Gateway Communities of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument to build social and economic vitality through efforts:*

*To conserve and promote the region's ancient and living landscapes, including the Earth's most complete record of the Age of Mammals (past 65 million years).*

*To develop and connect, with partners, the region's visitor services, recreational services, and natural history education, that support Eastern Oregon's top destination.*

*To welcome visitors and area residents at the Oregon Paleo Lands Center.*

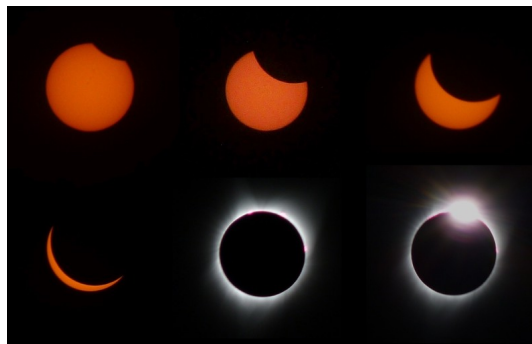
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## **Presidents Message:**

OPLI survived the solar eclipse! Thanks to Karen Masshoff, Lee Bouchard and Bonnie Lofton OPLI Center staff who met visitors preceding the August 21, 2017 event. Visitors from across our continent and many others got their first looks into the John Day Basin.

A couple of hundred visitors were able to take with them the updated Find Time brochure produced by the Oregon Paleo Lands Institute. Reprinting 10,000 of this popular visitors guide to the John Day Basin took significant investments by volunteers, board members and supporting organizations. The John Day River Territory group, Shelk Foundation and Board Member Richard Ross made cash donations while board members worked tirelessly on edits to get it updated and printed before the eclipse crowd descended upon the region. Contact the OPLI Center if your Basin Business wants to offer this guide to customers and visitors. In addition to a handsome map the guide highlights service providers, camping areas and heritage sites.



This year OPLI has been focused on improving Center functions and long term sustainability. In addition to some much needed exterior maintenance, support from the Wheeler Family Foundation allowed us to move the Plesiosaur sculpture off the main floor, finish some bookshelves, build some new display shelves and install some track displays on the main wall that will ease the installation of temporary (poster) exhibits.

The Center is the beneficiary of a Bonneville Environmental Foundation program grant which will be used to install photovoltaic panels on the roof reducing operating costs and offer up an accompanying educational program on renewable energy to local educators.

Implementing programs has taken up much of the Boards time this year and resulted in fewer grant applications submitted for ongoing support. And, so far grants that did get submitted were not funded this cycle.

So once again we are asking for your donations to help pay for operational expenses through the rest of this year.

Your ongoing support has allowed our small dedicated group to significantly reduce debts and improve the function of our fine building in Fossil, while still providing visitor and educational services in one of the most economically depressed counties in Oregon. The Board is currently working with a receptive state partner to evaluate joint operations of the Visitor Center. If all the pieces fall into place there is a good chance that utilization and staffing at the Center could significantly expand.

Thanks again. Consider joining the Board or becoming a volunteer and help us share the wonders of the John Day Basin.

*Jeffrey Kee*

*President, Oregon Paleo Lands Institute*

## Arrive Early, Stay Put, Leave Late

by: Richard Ross

The Solar Eclipse, despite its mad rush of visitors and flash mob traffic, was an inspiring celestial event on a cloudless summer morning. Most John Day Basin travelers followed the Oregon Dept. of Transportation's smart advice. "Arrive Early, Stay Put, Leave Late". Some who did not heed ODOT found themselves in miles of traffic on remote highways where the word "gridlock" seldom is heard included: the Painted Hills, State Highway OR 19 north of Fossil, downtown John Day, and US 26 east of Prineville. Those who arrived early enjoyed the relaxed pleasures of multi-day gatherings with friends and family, to share an unbelievable sky show. Three generations of our family celebrated at Service Creek on the John Day River.

This internationally promoted event put the John Day Basin on the map. The John Day Fossil Beds lived up the claim to be the park with the clearest skies along the path of totality. The National Park Service reported that visits to the Thomas Condon Center on August 20 were almost eight times higher than the previous highest record day. Most visitors in downtown John Day came from all over the West Coast. The Paleo Lands Center welcomed visitors from as far as Japan, Austria, New York, and Quebec. The Center estimated 3-5000 visitors in Fossil (population 475). All were impressed with the area and want to return.

The massive Oregon Eclipse Festival attracted 30,000 revelers for a week of music, dancing, yoga, and large-scale artworks on Big Summit Prairie, on a forest road 40 miles SE of Prineville. Oregon Public Broadcasting compared the setting to "driving onto the set of Mad Max 5". The Festival was "part carnival and part mystical", The Oregonian. "Psychedelic trance, a genre of electronic music that should have died in the 2000s, blasted for 22 hours a day..." except for a short break for the Eclipse itself (The Stranger, 8-22-17).

With all this unusual mix of activities and people, these unprecedented Eclipse events came off quite well with no major human-caused fires and disturbances, and with excellent public information and manageable traffic flows! We owe a lot of thanks for the advance planning by ODOT, state and local public safety officials, the National Park Service, Oregon State Parks, and the communities near the eclipse path, for making the Great Eclipse a safe and memorable experience for thousands of Central Oregon residents and visitors.



## 2017 Donors and Sponsors

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***Thank you for your support!***

## Oregon Paleo Lands Center Needs You!

You can support the Oregon Paleo Lands Center in a variety of ways. Your financial support now in 2017 is vital to continue our mission of exploring, teaching about, and protecting Oregon's paleo lands. Donor benefits include a 10% discount on retail merchandise at the Oregon Paleo Lands Center in Fossil, a regular newsletter with information about scientific discoveries, history, and news of the Paleo Lands, and advance notice of upcoming OPLI and partner organization events. All donations are tax deductible.

Interested in volunteering at the Center or serving on the Board?  
Contact us at [paleolands@gmail.com](mailto:paleolands@gmail.com) or [www.paleolands.org](http://www.paleolands.org) or at PO  
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