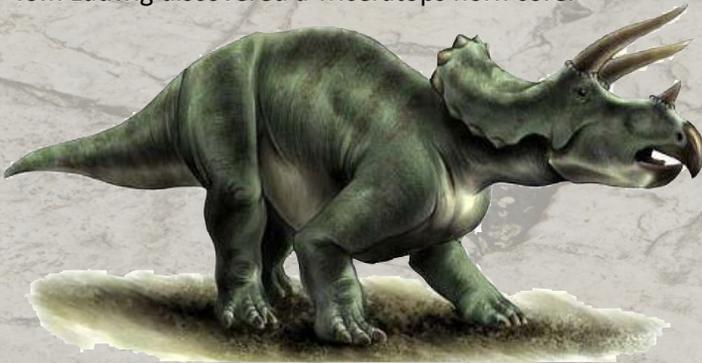




Volunteers Have ‘Fossil-iferous’ Field Find on Forest Grasslands

Written by Meghan Stump and Barbra Beasley, Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands

Paleontologist Barbara Beasley’s voice was full of excitement as she described a recent dinosaur find on the Thunder Basin National Grassland in eastern Wyoming. “This was a once-in-a lifetime experience for our Passport in Time volunteers,” she said. “Mother Nature preserved and stored this treasure for more than 65 million years – and last month Tom Ludwig discovered a Triceratops horn core.”



The plant-eating Triceratops may have been 30-feet long, with two large brow horns and a smaller horn on its snout. When this creature died 65 million years ago during the late Cretaceous, eastern Wyoming was a tropical environment.

Beasley led the group of 22 volunteers on the fossil excavation project at the Alkali Divide Paleontological Special Interest Area where the nearly 3-foot horn was found. The group was not expecting to find any large fossils at the site, so everyone only brought small bags to collect their findings. Called a “micro-vertebrate accumulation” by scientists, the site typically offers up fossils the size of a fist or smaller. “This herbivorous dinosaur’s 31-inch brow horn is remarkably intact and very well preserved,” said Beasley. “All volunteers worked eagerly to completely unearth this paleo-prize.”

The discovery was equally rewarding for the volunteers and students who helped with the discovery.

“It’s very exciting, it’s applying everything I’ve learned,” said first-time dino-digger and paleontology geodatabase technician Tirzah Abbott, a geology graduate from Beloit College in Wisconsin. “I’m excited to be part of the excavation and preparation.”



With a head that was 4-5 feet across, and 3 protruding horns, the Triceratops must have been intimidating to its predators. The brow horn pictured here is 31 inches.

Passport in Time is a USDA Forest Service volunteer archaeology, paleontology, and historic preservation program. Through the Passport in Time program, students and volunteers such as Tirzah get the opportunity to go out in the field and dig into their interests! PIT volunteers work shoulder-to-shoulder with professional Forest Service archaeologists, paleontologists, and historians throughout the U.S. on a wide variety of activities. For more information, please visit www.passportintime.com.

USDA FOREST SERVICE • ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

Colorado: Arapaho Roosevelt NF & Pawnee NG • Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, & Gunnison NFs
 Pike-San Isabel National Forests and Cimarron-Comanche NGs • Rio Grande NF • San Juan NF • White River NF
 Nebraska: Nebraska & Samuel R. McKelvie NFs • South Dakota: Black Hills NF
 Wyoming: Bighorn NF • Medicine Bow-Routt NFs & Thunder Basin NG • Shoshone NF

