

Conservation Connections

Newsletter of Plateau Restoration from Moab, Utah

Fall 2010

Service, Science, Education and Exploration since 1995



Morningside College students having fun on a multi-day kayak trip with us on the Colorado River as part of a class in Desert Ecology

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Bringing Back the Bottom

Thanks to our on-going partnership with Tim Higgs of the Grand County Weed Department, our student volunteers were able to join a restoration project on the banks of the Colorado River at Jackson Bottom, 25 miles from Moab. These “bottoms”, where the river can spill over onto a broad floodplain, are vital for wildlife, but have become inundated with the non-native shrub, Tamarisk. A 60-acre parcel was slated for mechanical removal of Tamarisk this year, and hopefully, re-establishment

of native species. 40 acres was cleared over last winter before we started the project and more was cleared in Fall.

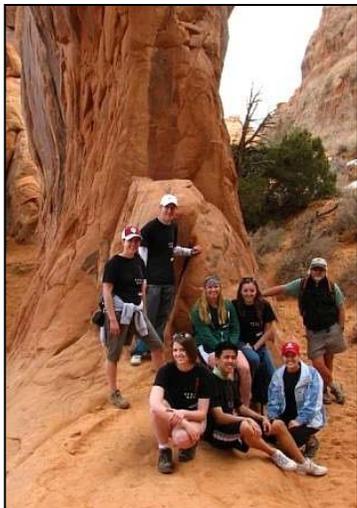
In the spring, 82 college students in our service-learning programs removed weeds, seeded and planted native shrub and grass seedlings in the cleared area. We followed this up with weekly visits to the site, through the end of June, watering and protecting the new plantings. In spite of the fact that the next invader, an annual exotic, Kochia, buried the site by Fall, the shrub seedlings

fared quite well. Volunteers seeded the newly cleared area in Fall as a part of our Moab River Rendezvous.

We also collected 20 foot-long cottonwood cuttings and planted them in holes drilled to the water table by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The idea was to get them rooting in the water table, about ten feet from the surface. This was quite successful, especially those that were planted in March, long before the shoots had sprouted new leaves. We hope to do more of this type of planting next spring.



Wild Rockies Field Institute after a day of shrub planting at Jackson Bottom (left) and spring-breakers from University of Wisconsin - Steven's Point plant native shrub seedlings (right).



Students from Univ. of Illinois enjoy a day off service-work hiking at Arches National Park

Second Annual Moab River Rendezvous

Our annual celebration and fund raiser, The Moab River Rendezvous, was held this year in the heart of Moab at the Moab Arts and Recreation Center and the amazing historic Star Hall. This event continues to feature some of the finest educators, authors and adventurers in the Intermountain West.

This year the gathering was

four days in length and featured a service project day, a BBQ social, a winter float on the Colorado River with rafts and replica boats, evening film festivals, a full day on Saturday with presentations, displays, lunch and a raffle, and a geology tour of Arches National Park on the last day.



A replica boat on the River Rendezvous float trip

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National Forest Foundation Extends Their Support

After a major fire in August 2008 that burned 3600 acres of upper Castle Valley near Moab, we gained support from the National Forest Foundation (NFF) to aid the rehabilitation of the



Newly sprouted pad on prickly pear "chunk" planted this spring in the burn area

burn area. After the first phase of the project was completed in April this year, NFF approved one year of additional funding for us to continue these efforts.

We planted about 1000 grasses, shrubs and prickly pear this Spring and have seen significant growth of these transplants. We were really encouraged by some of the new techniques we used. One was to propagate prickly pear by cutting live pads into 4-6 "chunks", which were then partially dried and planted in the top 1/4 inch of soil. These have since all sprouted new pads.

In addition to revegetation, there is concern about diffuse knapweed, a Utah noxious weed that was prevalent at fire-fighting staging areas. PRI staff re-surveyed the area and took out hundreds of knapweed plants.

Thanks also go to PRI members, whose contributions have helped to provide the cash match required by the grant.



PRI's Board President, Michael Smith plants seedlings of four-wing saltbush.

Fast Facts

Tiger Salamander

Type: Amphibian

Diet: Carnivore

Avg. life span: 12 to 15 yrs

Size: 7 to 14 in (18 to 35 cm)

Did you know? During courtship, a male tiger salamander sometimes impersonates a female in order to sneak in and deposit his spermatophore on top of the rival male's.

Raven

Type: Bird

Diet: Omnivore

Avg. life span: 13 years

Size: 24 to 26 in. (61 to 66cm)

Wingspan: 3.8 to 4.7 ft. (1.2 to 1.4m)

Did you know? According to legend, if the ravens leave the Tower of London, the fortress and the British Empire will fall.

Scorpion

Type: Bug

Diet: Carnivore

Life span: 4 to 25 years

Size: Average; 2.5 in. (6cm)

Largest 8.3 in (21cm)

Did you know? Scientists aren't sure why, but Scorpions are florescent under ultraviolet light.

Common Earth Worm

Type: Invertebrate

Diet: Herbivore

Avg. life span: Up to 6 years

Size: Up to 14in (35cm)

Weight: Up to 0.39oz (11.2g)

Did you know? Contrary to playground legend, if a worm is cut in half, two will not grow.

Source: nationalgeographic.com

Trees, Trees, Trees along the San Juan River

Seventy students in this year's Alternative Spring Break programs helped the BLM with a restoration project at Sand Island on the San Juan River in southern Utah. They represented six different universities, including University of Indiana, University of Wisconsin, Steven's Point, Central College and Coe College from Iowa, Colorado State and Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas.

The project included clearing trenches, and laying and connecting pipe for a drip irrigation system, planting 80 large and 100 small cottonwood trees, and wrapping the trees with fencing wire to protect them from beavers. Our students

all worked on the project at Jackson Bottom as well (previous page) and were able to compare strategies.

This project was designed as a follow-up to mechanical treatments of Tamarisk and Russian Olive, done in part to reduce fire risk in the Sand Island Recreation Area. Heavy equipment was used to mulch the understory while leaving existing mature cottonwoods in place. The addition of new trees will also provide more shade and enhance the camping experience at Sand Island.

As a part of this project, we were also able to update the information kiosks we installed in 2005 to reflect this newest project.



Jessica from Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas, plants a small cottonwood tree on the San Juan River.

Moab River Rendezvous.....cont from p. 1

Our presenters this year were adventurer/author Jon Waterman, author and law professor Robert Adler, river historian/author Roy Webb, fish biologist Tilton Jones, educator and historian Richard Quartaroli, author/geologist Wayne Ranney, and adventurers/historians Tom Martin and Dave Mortenson with their historic replica boats.

In addition to folks meeting new and old friends from all over the west, presenters and participants got to discuss nuances of river history, natural history and issues. In a great example of such interaction, Tilton Jones and Wayne Ranney realized that the native fish and geology both suggest that The Columbia and Colorado River basins were likely connected 5 million years ago.

Many thanks must go out to our generous sponsors: Moab Area Travel Council, Northwest River Supply, Ye Ole Geezer Meat Shop, Wet Dreams River Supply, Univ. of Utah, Grand Canyon River Guides, Canyon Country Zephyr, Garfield Estates Vineyard and Winery, Grand River Winery, Grand Canyon River Heritage Coalition, Leif Johnson Resource Marketing, Peach Street Distillers, DeBeque Canyon Winery, REI, River Management Society, Off the Beaten Path, Canyonlands Field Institute, Castle Creek Winery, Kevin Fitzgerald, Charlie Gerhardt and Tom Till Photography. We could not have done this without their support and it gave us a fun raffle with prizes galore.



Making new friends and enjoying lunch at Balanced Rock on the Arches geology tour

So add November 11-13, 2011 to your calendar and come join us in Moab for some early winter fun! Take a look at www.moabriverrendezvous.com, the event website, for content and photos from last year's and this year's events. This site will be updated site regularly.

National Parks Trivia

- The most visited park is Great Smokey Mountains, over 6.4 million visited in 2009, more than double the visitation of Grand Canyon, the second most popular park.
- U.S. National Parks are home to the highest point in North America (Mt. McKinley/Denali N.P. Alaska) and the largest cave system in Mammoth Cave N.P. Kentucky.

- The Park system contains 392 areas, including national parks, monuments, battlefields, lakeshores, scenic rivers and more- in every state except Delaware.
- In 2002, Colorado's Great Sand Dunes became the newest National Park. It contains the largest sand dunes in North America, spilled against the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

- With the stroke of a pen, President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, securing 40 million acres of land in the 49th state, doubling the size of the national park system.
- The first automobile permit for a National Park was issued at Mt. Rainier National Park in 1908. It cost \$5 and was good for a year.

Alternative Break Still a Hit



Coe college students express their joy at Arches National Park

Our Alternative Spring Break program is coming into its 16th year and is still proving to be one of the most popular services we offer. 2011 promises to bring students from as far as University of Alaska, Anchorage and Keene State, New Hampshire as well as returning schools from Iowa and Colorado.

Here are some comments we got from UNLV students after their program this year:

- "this experience has been amazing! I've learned so much about the earth....."

- "This has been the best service-oriented trip EVER."
- "I learned a lot and am taking loads of knowledge home with me."
- "you have reassured me about my love for this country and our environment."
- "Thank you for everything – skills and memories that will last forever."
- "..... such a great experience and education."
- "Thanks for giving me the opportunity to help the environment, gain some knowledge"

Thanks to all the students who help us take care of the place we call home.

Americorps helps with revegetation

This year Plateau Restoration partnered with Canyonlands Field Institute to host an Americorps Member, Dave Malutich. Through this collaboration, Dave was able to gain experience teaching students in the Field Institute's outdoor education programs as well as make a significant contribution to our revegetation efforts.

Dave helped with follow-up work at Jackson Bottom, maintenance of Plateau Restoration's native garden, weed control and revegetation in Castle Valley and native plant collection.



Americorps member, Dave Malutich digs out a large Diffuse Knapweed plant in the Porcupine Ranch burn area.

To learn more about Plateau Restoration, become a member or contribute to our restoration efforts, please visit our website

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How we accomplish our mission

Plateau Restoration was founded in 1995 to provide meaningful, fun-filled outdoor adventure opportunities for students and the general public to participate in the preservation and rehabilitation of public lands through service and science-based adventure learning programs. Our focus is on building a connection with nature and to encourage an active role in long term conservation. Our goal is to enlighten, inspire and involve the public in our efforts to protect and restore the native wildlife habitats of the Colorado Plateau.

We raise funds through membership donations, grants and services we provide. Members of the public can learn more about the natural and cultural history of the area while helping support our mission by signing up for a Volunteer Vacation, a Geotour or Ecotour, (land and/or river-based).

We also provide native landscaping services to the Moab community. Our native plant nursery has staged plants for future planting on National Park Service, US Forest Service and BLM land, and we are now starting to propagate more wildflowers to support pollinators.



Native bunchgrass, Sand Dropseed, in the Porcupine Ranch burn area, Castle Valley. These were planted this spring as single culms, split from grasses collected elsewhere.

*"You were the best
guides into the desert we
could ever hope for."*

Madeline, Montana

Plateau Restoration, Inc.

A 501(c) (3) tax exempt non profit organization

Mission

To protect and restore native habitats of the Colorado Plateau through hands on education, landscape restoration, revegetation and research.