FOSSILS

Digging for hidden treasure

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were, two-horned rodents and three-toed horse. All diggers were given paper packs in which to keep their ﬁnd. Film consisting were also distributed so that the participants could keep smaller objects for later research and identiﬁcation. Some participants were lucky enough to uncover a few larger bones. Pat Cerny of Burke, South Dakota, found a full camel vertebrae in outstanding condition. Carol Linsen of Ainsworth uncovered part of a large leg bone most likely from either a camel or horse. Jerry Adler of Hastings discovered a horse or camel bone which the team "jacketed" or cast to preserve and study.

"Jacketing is a three-step process, beginning with the paleontologist digging a pedestal of dirt around the object to support it. This is done by cutting dirt away from underneath the edges and sides of the object. Later, tissue paper is placed around the object in preparation for the plastert cast (the plastert will not stick to the paper). Lastly, the plastert jacket is applied to the object in strips similar to those medical bandages used to treat broken bones. This jacket is then used for transport of the object."

Every fossil is given its own ofﬁcial number in order of ﬁnding per paleontologist. The ﬁrst fossil found this year by Tucker would have been labeled as #1000-004. These members are permanent and assist researchers in keeping track of all recorded fossils.

"Nebraska is one of the best places to ﬁnd fossils in all of North America," Tucker said. "We expect to ﬁnd the largest remains at the site. We have yet to ﬁnd a bone that is well preserved."

Mike Voorheis (left) was excited when Pat Cerny from South Dakota found a full camel vertebrae in outstanding condition.

Throughout the four different tours to the fossil bed, bones and/or teeth were discovered that belonged to rabbits, beavers, two-horned rodents and three-toed horses.

Highway Salvage Paleontologist from Lincoln were on hand to help participants of the 3rd Annual Sand Hills Discovery Experience dig for fossils in a fossil bed north of Bassett. Those attending were able to dig in the beds, use the screening tables, or just watch to see what was going on.

Shane Tucker (left) graduate student from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and practicing Highway Salvage Paleontologist helps Jerry Adler (right) of Hastings, NE, prepare the casting of a leg belonging to either a horse or camel. Shane will remove the bone from the site and take it to Lincoln for further study.

These fossils were on display at the Ainsworth Community Schools during the Sand Hills Discovery Experience. These fossils, which included camel, horse, rhinos, etc., have been found throughout areas in Nebraska.

Barb Lamb (fourth from the left) assists these younger attendees in looking for bones and teeth. Barb is a member of the Sand Hills Discovery Experience Committee.

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Ainsworth, Brown County, Nebraska
Wednesday, July 21, 2004
Vol. 123, No. 29