



The Uncompahgre Journal

September 2026 CHIPETA CHAPTER OF THE COLORADO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 43 Issue 6

Mark Your Calendar

Sep 2: [Montrose County Historical Society](#) monthly meeting with Leonard Felix on the history of aerial crop spraying in the Uncompahgre Valley. Pioneer Room, Friendship Hall, Montrose County Fairgrounds, 7:00 pm.

Sep 9: [San Juan Basin Archaeological Society](#) monthly meeting with Katie Williams on the organization of labor at Keet Seel and Betatakin. Lyceum, Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College, Durango, 7:00 pm.

Sep 16: [Chipeta Chapter](#) monthly meeting with Bill Harris and Fred Blackburn on traveling around the Colorado Plateau. Montrose United Methodist Church, 19 S Park St, 7:00 pm.

Sep 23: [CAS-GJ](#) monthly meeting with Stefania Wilks on Ancient Plant Use in the Northern Great Basin. Redlands United Methodist Church, 527 Village Way, GJ, 7:00 pm.

Our September Presentation

Traipsing Across the Colorado Plateau (Mis) Adventures with Fred

Bill Harris and Fred Blackburn will recount their shared backcountry experiences over the last 40-plus years while pursuing a better understanding of the past across the spectacular landscape called the Colorado Plateau.

Bill Harris

Bill is a long-time resident of Montrose, Colorado, and an avid outdoorsman. He joined the Chipeta Chapter of the Colorado Archaeological Society in 1984, served as chapter president for three years and was state president in 1988. He has been an active member of the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association since 1989. He served on the Dominguez Escalante National Conservation Area Advisory Council from 2010-2018. Bill also served as a board member of the Colorado Canyons Association from 2012-2022. He is an avid birder and an active member of the Black Canyon Audubon Society.

In 1984 he joined a White Mesa Institute pack trip into Grand Gulch led by Fred Blackburn. Since then, their paths have crossed many times. Those experiences are the focus of "Traipsing Across the Colorado Plateau - (Mis) Adventures with Fred."



Fred Blackburn

Fred Blackburn is a fourth generation Colorado Native. Born in the miners' hospital in Telluride, Colorado, Fred remains attached to the Colorado Plateau. He graduated from Fort Lewis College with a degree in Biology and an emphasis in Natural History. He received his teaching certificate for secondary science in 1990.

Fred began his career in Utah as a ranger at Natural Bridges National Monument. He was hired as one of the first two rangers hired for the fledgling Grand Gulch Ranger Program in southeastern Utah in 1974. Fred moved to Cortez, Colorado in 1979 to assist establishment of the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center.

Fred is published both as a researcher and author. "Cowboys and Cave Dwellers" 1997: Now in its eighth printing; "The Wetherills - Friends of Mesa Verde" 2009. Fred collaborated with photographer Claus Mrocynski in writing text for "Sacred Places of the Southwest," a coffee table book on special cultural places of the Colorado Plateau.

He has completed numerous research reports including an Inscription Report upon the major visited sites in Mesa Verde National Park, "Expeditionary History of Keet Seel" for Navajo National Monument. A thorough analysis of historical signatures found at Inscription House in Navajo National Monument. He has completed a synopsis of the Inscriptions and their history found in Long House near Marsh Pass, Arizona, Long Canyon and the upper reaches of Tseyi Canyon.

Fred and his wife Victoria continue documentation of data base with photographs of Prehistoric and Historic Inscriptions within the intact rooms of Aztec National Monument. A project begun in 2019 in collaboration with the National Park Service.

He is currently writing as well as preparing research archives for institutional curation.



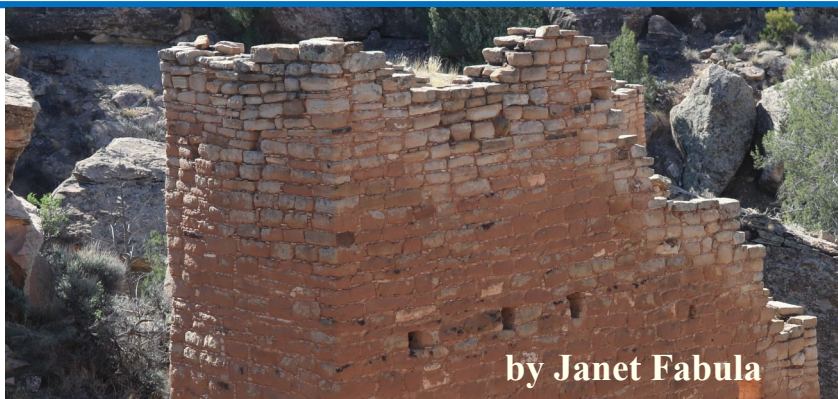
Images and art courtesy of Bill Harris

President's Corner

Have you ever heard somebody say "some days are just like that"? That is just what I found myself saying about most of these past hot, smokey, windy summer months. Thankfully the rhythm of the world and life continues, regardless. The sun faithfully rises and sets. The days slip by imperceptibly, and here we are in September.

Now we start up our regular 3rd Wednesday of the month meetings. Beginning with September 16. I promise we will all thoroughly enjoy our esteemed speakers for this month. Please do come for a pleasant evening with friends, both old and new. We all have some catching up to do after our summer vacation.

As always, Janet Fabula

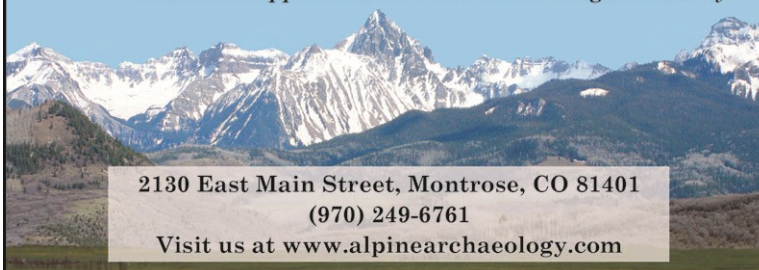


by Janet Fabula



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Proud to support the Colorado Archaeological Society



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The Uncompahgre Journal
Published 9 times annually
by the
Chipeta Chapter
of the
Colorado Archaeological Society.
P.O. Box 593
Montrose, CO 81402
Submissions for publication
may be emailed to:
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Chipeta Picnic — August 19
Cerise Park Shelter

Photos courtesy of Sally Johnson



Continued next page

More Picnic



From the Editor

The earliest known stone tools were manufactured between 3.3 and 2.6 million years ago, depending on whom you want to listen to. By the time Neandertals made it to Europe during the mid-Pleistocene (about 240,000 years ago), our ancestors were quite skilled at breaking rocks for tools. Wooden tools are not as well documented, probably because wood decays readily, except under very specific and rare circumstances. Bones, and more rarely teeth, were also shaped and manipulated as tools. A recent article documents the use of rhinoceros teeth as tools.

Interesting. The first thing that caught my attention was that there were rhinos in Europe. In fact, there were two different species of rhinos. But the next rather surprising idea was that the Neandertals may have used rhino teeth as tools. What was the inspiration for this research?

The authors had noticed that in a small number of Middle Paleolithic sites in Europe, rhino teeth were numerous. However, neither postcranial nor cranial rhino bones were common in these sites. Why were the teeth preferentially collected, and what were they used for? Clearly, the Neandertal groups weren't bringing entire rhino carcasses back to their shelters, nor were they simply collecting skulls. Because of this purposeful collection of teeth, and because of the indications of damage to them, the authors reasoned that the teeth had been used for tools. In order to evaluate how and for what purpose they may have been used, they designed a series of steps to try to reproduce the marks left behind on the teeth. They reasoned that the teeth were either being used as hammers for the manufacture or resharpening of a stone tool, or as anvils, i.e. stationary platforms on which to flake stones.

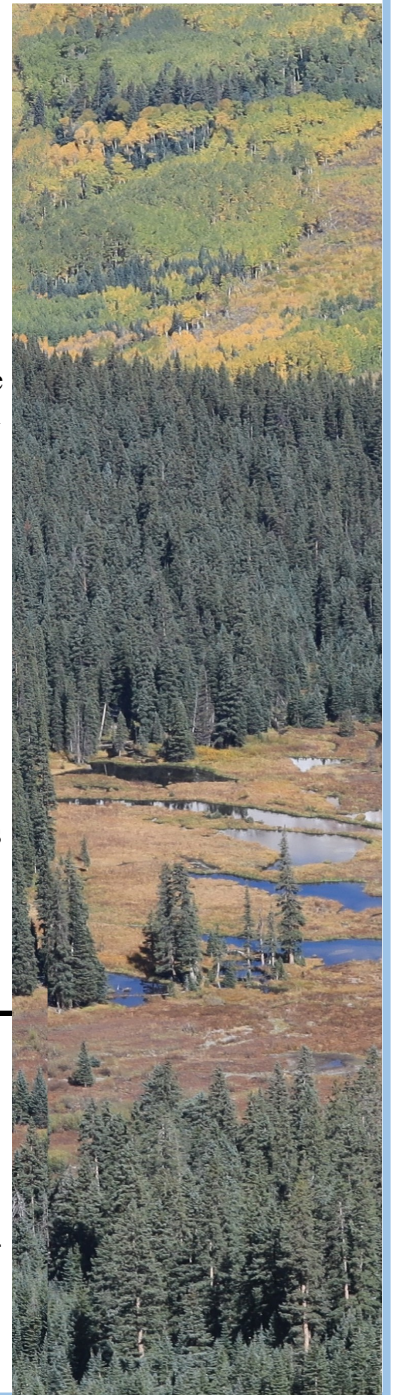
So they procured some modern rhino teeth and performed various stone-flaking activities to see what kind of scars/marks would be left on the teeth. They used the teeth to flake two types of raw material: quartz and flint (as the two most common raw materials found in Neandertal assemblages), and they experimented with rough knapping and retouch, and with using the teeth as anvils. Four teeth were used to knap flint, five were used to retouch quartz, and two to retouch flint. Ten teeth were used as anvils. They also did some abrasion and compaction tests on the modern teeth to try to reproduce the effect of burial for thousands of years in cave sediments.

As you might expect, the abrasion and compaction experiments did not reproduce the kinds of marks found on the ancient rhino teeth. However, the knapping experiments were more positive. Their results and conclusions were quite detailed, but in short they concluded that the marks on the ancient rhinoceros teeth were probably caused by "direct percussion:" i.e. the teeth were used to strike off flakes in the process of sharpening stone tools. One interesting side note: Neandertals seemed to have a preference for molars that were essentially worn flat, which the authors characterized as teeth from senile rhinos.

References

Sanz-Royo, Alicia, Juan Marín, Delphine Vettese, Antigone Uzunidis, Cyrielle Mathias, David Pleurdeau, Magali Fabre, Christophe Falgueres, Christine Hatte, Qingfeng Shao, Camille Daujeard

2026 Elucidating the use of rhinoceros teeth by Neanderthals: Between experiments and the fossil record. *Journal of Human Evolution* 214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhevol.2026.103829>



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Membership Application

Date: _____

Name: _____

Street or RR Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

(email required to receive Chipeta Chapter newsletters & field trip info)

Check One:

_____ New

_____ Renewal

Annual Dues* (includes state CAS dues): Check one

_____ Family (2 or more members same household)\$50

_____ Individual\$40

_____ Student (Circle if Individual or Family)\$25

_____ Secondary (Circle one) Individual (\$10) or Family... (\$15)

_____ Opt out of printed Southwest Lore

* Southwest Lore is the journal of the Colorado Archaeological Society: a .pdf is posted to Member365 for download. Effective soon, if you want a print copy, you will have to go to the state CAS website and pay an additional fee.

Photos by Dennis DeVore



Code of Ethics

As a member of the Colorado Archaeological Society, I pledge to:

- Uphold local, state, and federal antiquities laws.
- Respect the property rights of landowners.
- Report vandalism to appropriate authorities.
- Support only scientifically and legally conducted archaeological activities.
- Conduct field and/or laboratory activities using professionally accepted standards.
- Not condone the sale, exchange, or purchase of artifacts obtained from illegal activities.
- Be sensitive to the cultural histories and spiritual practices of groups that are the subject of archaeological investigation.
- Accept the responsibility, if serving as principal investigator, to publish the results and make the collection available for further study.

Signature: _____ Other Family Signature: _____

Make checks payable to "Colorado Archaeological Society" and mail the signed application to:

Chipeta Chapter
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CHIPETA CHAPTER WEBSITE

- <https://www.chipetachaptercas.org>

TO JOIN OR RENEW:

- Go to the Chipeta Chapter website and follow the membership links.

Program for Avocational Archaeological Certification (PAAC)

For information, visit:

<https://www.historycolorado/paac>

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Field Trip Committee

Leigh Ann Hunt, Joe Oglesby, and George Decker

For more information on upcoming field trips and to sign up, please contact the field trip leader

Masthead photo courtesy of Bill Harris. All other unattributed photos are by the editor.