

ROCK TRAILS



Newsletter of the StateLine Gem and Mineral Society

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Meetings are held the first Sunday of each month
at 2:00 PM
at 201 W. Main St., Morenci, MI 49256



Pruning the Parks:

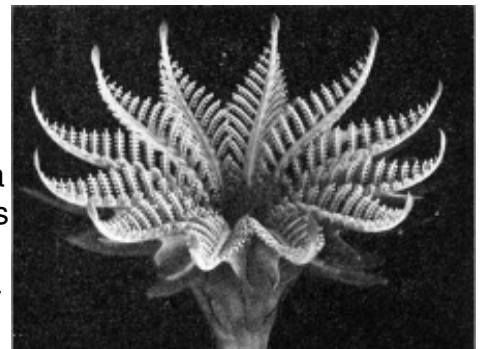
Delisted Over a Half-Century Ago, Fossil Cycad National Monument (1922-1956) is a Cautionary Tale

Situated just southwest of the little community of Minnekahta, South Dakota, which is in turn roughly 20 miles northeast of Edgemont (pop. 867), there is a 320-acre tract that used to be a national park. More specifically, this half-square mile in the southern Black Hills used to be Fossil Cycad National Monument .

Fossil Cycad National Monument never had a visitor center, a staff, interpretive programs, or anything like that. In fact, it was never open to the public.

Why Fossil Cycad was removed from the National Park System over a half-century ago is a very sad tale. Everybody who loves the national parks should learn this story and remember it well.

In 1892, a man named F. H. Cole was exploring federally owned land near Minnekahta, not far from his Hot Springs home. There, to his wonderment, he found that erosion had exposed hundreds of fossil plants in the 120 million year-old Dakota Sandstone Formation. This proved to be one of the world's greatest surface concentrations of fossilized cycads, a type of plant that resembles a fern or palm (though unrelated to them) and still grows in the world's tropical and subtropical locales. The photo accompanying this article shows a modern cycad (commonly pronounced sy-kad or sy-kud [with y as in "eye"]).



Cole had found what amounted to an entire fossil forest of cycads.

Cole sent photographs of the fossil cycads to Smithsonian Institution geologist Professor Henry Newton. In short order (1893), another scientist, Professor Thomas MacBride, published the first description of the site. The word was out.

Yale paleobotanist George Reber Wieland was keenly aware that the fossil deposit was extremely vulnerable to plunder or vandalism, being situated as it was on a remote tract of public land. Concerned that the fossil treasure trove might end up in "unworthy hands," or worse, Professor Wieland used the Homestead Act to gain ownership of a half-section of land (320 acres) containing the fossils.

In 1922 Professor Wieland offered to return the land to the federal government, provided that a national monument was created to protect the fossils. This was deemed reasonable, and the site, by now world-famous, was proclaimed a national monument by President Warren G. Harding on October 21, 1922.

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Pruning the Parks

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In his Proclamation 1641, President Harding explained that he was creating the national monument because: “.....there are located in section thirty-five, township seven south, range three east of Black Hills Meridian, South Dakota, rich Mesozoic deposits of fossil cycads and other characteristic examples of paleobotany, which are of great scientific interest and value....”

However, while all this negotiating and speechifying and handshaking was going on, nobody bothered to protect the fossil cycads from thievery. Even before the Fossil Cycad National Monument formally came into existence, illegal collectors had stripped away every last one of the hundreds of fossil cycads that had made the site worthy of national park status.

It's more than a bit ironic to consider the formal and informal arrangements that were made for stewardship of the site. Jurisdiction over the new national monument? That would be the responsibility of the Wind Cave National Park superintendent. Check. Day to day supervision of the site? That would be delegated to local ranchers. Check.

But for crying out loud, there was nothing there to supervise. The fossil cycads that could once be seen on the surface were already gone!!

This probably won't surprise you, but the Wind Cave superintendent made only brief, sporadic visits to the site. There isn't a single mention of Fossil Cycad in any of the Wind Cave superintendent's reports until 1933, more than a decade after the national monument was established. In that same year of 1933, the Wind Cave superintendent was asked to provide a fossil cycad specimen for display at the World's Fair in Chicago. He had to sheepishly admit that he didn't have one and couldn't get one.

In fairness to President Harding and others involved, it was known that the site had been stripped of its surface fossils, but expert opinion held that other fossil cycads might some day be exposed by erosion – in which event, it would be appropriate to have them protected. You could say that the park was established in the hope that there might eventually be “surficial in situ” fossil cycads for visitors to marvel at.

This is a mighty slim rationale for creating a national park, and an even slimmer one for maintaining its existence for 35 years without ever opening it to the public. But that's what happened.

Scientific research was conducted at the site on an intermittent basis, and it was determined (certainly by 1935) that numerous fossil cycads of excellent quality could be excavated at the site. These discoveries offered proof of the site's scientific value, but did nothing to counter the growing criticism of the site's national park status.

It wasn't until the early 1950s — by which time the principal supporters of Fossil Cycad National Monument had already died, and there were still no surficial fossil cycads to be seen – that the National Park Service professed a serious interest in getting the park delisted. Finally, in January 1955, South Dakota Representative E.Y. Berry responded to a National Park Service request and introduced legislation to abolish Fossil Cycad National Monument.

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Pruning the Parks

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It was S. 1161, introduced during the 84th Congress, that finally got the job done. The bill, which received strong support from the National Parks Association as well as the Interior Department, was signed into law on August 1, 1956, and became effective September 1, 1957.

The 320-acre former park was turned over to the Bureau of Land Management on December 6, 1957. Due to the "high resource value" of the fossils remaining below the surface, the BLM is unlikely to ever dispose of it .

The tract, which is now divided (north and south) by a highway, has been leased for grazing. There is no public access, nor is there even a single sign indicating that this land was once a national monument.

<https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/2008/08/pruning-parks-delisted-over-half-century-ago-fossil-cycad-national-monument-1922-1956-cautionary-tal2805>



How Do You Become a Rockhound?

Buy a large bag of marbles and carry it with you whenever you go looking for rocks. Every time you pick up a rock and put it in your pocket, take out one of the marbles from the bag and throw it over your left shoulder.

Any time you see one of your marbles, pick it up along with the rock nearest to it - the rock goes in your pocket, the marble into the marble bag.

When you have finally lost all of your marbles, you are a rockhound!



Top Ten Signs You Might Be A Lapidarian

1. You have ever had to respond “yes” to the question, “What have you got in here, rocks?”
2. You have ever taken a 22-passenger van over “roads” that were really intended only for cattle.
3. You have ever found yourself trying to explain to airport security that a rock hammer isn’t really a weapon.
4. Your rock garden is located inside your house.
5. You have ever hung a picture using a Brunton as a level, and your rock hammer as your hammer.
6. Your collection of beer cans and/or bottles rivals the size of your rock collection.
7. You consider a “recent event” to be anything that has happened in the last hundred thousand years.
8. Your photos include people only for scale and you have more pictures of your rock hammer and lens cap than of your family.
9. You have ever been on a field trip that included scheduled stops at a gravel pit and/or a mullock heap.

And the #1 sign you might be a lapidarian:

10. You have ever uttered the phrase “have you tried licking it” with no innuendos intended.

Bench Tips

by Brad Smith

LAYOUT TOOLS

Dimensions on some features of a design can be fluid while others must be accurate for the design to work. When precision on a piece is important, good layout techniques are essential.

These are the tools that I rely upon to get holes in the right place, to achieve correct angles, and to cut pieces the correct length.

I like crisp sharp lines to follow, so I often coat surfaces with a dark marker and scribe my layout lines onto the metal. A square makes quick work of checking right angles or marking where to cut, and the thin center punch helps me mark a place to drill holes exactly where I want them.

Finally, a good set of dividers is probably my favorite layout tool. They let me quickly mark a strip for cutting, swing an arc, and divide a line or curve into as many equal segments as I need. I keep at least one set of dividers in every toolbox.



INVENTORY RECORD

In an ideal world each of us has a complete pictorial record of all pieces of jewelry in our inventory. We use the pics for marketing, and we use the record for insurance. We use it to remember which items have been sent out on consignment, or we use it to mark which items we're taking to a show. And eventually, we note in the record the pieces that have sold.

Unfortunately, we don't always have time to take good pictures of each piece for a detailed inventory. In situations like this I've been able to make a quick group shot with the help of a smart phone, a camera, a scanner, or a color copier. The quality is more than sufficient to accurately identify the pieces.



See all Brad's jewelry books at
[Amazon.com/author/BradfordSmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/BradfordSmith)

Upcoming Events



Sunday, October 1, 2017

State Line Gem & Mineral Society

monthly meeting

2:00 p.m.

201 W. Main St.

Morenci, MI 49256

Sept. 30 - Oct. 1

TRAVERSE CITY, MI

Grand Traverse Area Rock & Mineral Club

Annual Show.

Sat 9 am - 5 pm; Sun 10 am - 4 pm.

Heritage Center,

322 Sixth St.

Traverse City MI

Oct. 20-22

MASON, MI

Central Michigan Lapidary & Mineral Society

Annual Show

Fri 6 -9 pm; Sat 10 am - 6 pm; Sun 11 am - 5 pm.

Main Arena

Ingham County Fairgrounds

700 E. AshSt.

Mason MI

Oct. 13-15

WARREN, MI

Michigan Mineralogical Society

Annual Show

Fri 9 am - 6 pm

Sat 10 am - 7 pm

Sun 11 am - 5 pm

Macomb Sports & Expo Center

Bldg P, 14500 E. 12 Mile Rd.

Warren MI

Oct. 21-22

CLIO, MI

Flint Rock & Gem Club

Annual Show

Sat & Sun 10 am - 5 pm.

Carter Middle School

300 Rogers Lodge Dr.

Clio MI



Happy Halloween

Rock Trails

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