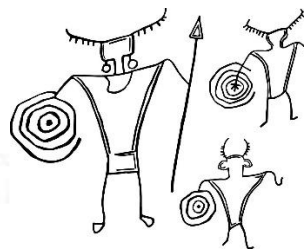


VESTIGES



September 2026
Volume 46
Number 09

Monthly Newsletter of URARA, the Utah Rock Art Research Association

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From the Prez

Rick Mathews

I cannot believe it's already a month until our Symposium!

Registration for Symposium is now open; more info below, p. 2. The committee members have been working hard, securing venues, organizing field trips and getting the necessary permission, booking awesome speakers and countless other tasks. Thanks to you all for your work to make this a great Symposium. Bluff is a unique area in Utah. There is so much to see in this part of Utah. If you can, take some extra time and explore. I am excited to go to Hovenweep again. I haven't been since I was a kid. Some other great places to visit include Natural Bridges National Monument, Bears Ears Ex-Monument, Edge of the Cedars State Park and Newspaper Rock Utah State Historic Monument.

We had a great Summer Picnic at Fremont Indian State Park. Park Manager Elizabeth Nagengast-Stevens gave us an excellent talk on the Fremont and then lead us on a short tour of imagery just next to the visitor center. The museum/visitor center will have the renovated exhibit open to the public in November. I plan on going back to see the new exhibits.

I'm excited to lead a field trip of the Smith Preserve at the end of September. Each time I go back, I see something I haven't seen before. Being a guide at the SFAP has taught me the excitement in re-visiting an area.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and I hope to see you in person at the Symposium!

September 2026

Registration Open for Symposium

Rein van West

Registration is now open for the URARA 2026 symposium in Bluff, Utah, October 8-12. Information is posted on the web page. We have three web pages open: a [general information page](#); a [field trip and workshop page](#); the [symposium schedule and speaker biographies](#). To protect sites we have kept the field trip and workshop page as well as the schedule/abstracts as viewable by members only. So, log-in when you come to the website.



We will be meeting at the Bluff Community Center, 190 N 3rd East, for the presentations, field trips, workshops, and the banquet. More information can be found [here](#) or the agenda and speaker abstracts are available [here](#). You can see field trip availability on the [Friday](#) and [Monday](#) field trip pages and workshops will be posted on the web. A detailed agenda and speaker abstracts can be found and downloaded [here](#).

As in past years, only members may register. Make sure your membership is up to date. You need to log into the members page of the [website](#) to register.

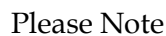
We have two constraints this year, the size of the meeting facility and the number of field trips. We are limiting registration to 150 members and will not allow registration at the door. You must register online by the closing date of September 20.

Field trip and workshop registration will be on a first-come first-served basis. *When you register for the symposium you will receive a confirmation email that will contain a password that will allow you to sign up for field trips and workshops.*

Once you are signed up for a field trip or workshop you will receive a confirmation. That confirmation will include instructions that will allow you to cancel your registration should your plans change. But the simple version is just go to the Friday or Monday field trip web page and there will be an option to cancel your registration. Note that registrations cannot be done for a group. Each individual in a family must register for the symposium and field trips separately.

New this year is the availability of Saturday and Sunday talks on line.

We are still ironing out some details on field trips. Many trips are located in the former Bears Ears National Monument, now (still) under the management of the Monticello BLM field office. Fees and permissions may need to be renegotiated.



- 1) There will be no plastic water bottles with water available this year; attendees are asked to bring their own water bottles and fill them at the available spigots for Field Trips and Speaker Presentations
- 2) Morning snacks on Saturday and Sunday will not suffice for breakfast; break times will feature fruit and coffee/tea and extras
- 3) URARA will provide lunch on Saturday and Sunday – provisions and condiments will be available for making one's own sandwich and snacks – this new offer is meant to bump up social time
- 4) Prepaid lunches on Friday and Monday field trips need to be picked up with your name on them and then filled w/cookie/fruit/chips – please bring your own drink
- 5) Please consider contributing an item or two to the silent and live auctions this year – the \$ raised goes to conservation/preservation projects this year
- 6) Contrary to earlier information, Twin Rocks Café will be open for both breakfast and lunch

Bluff Symposium Vendor Information

Rein van West

Vendors wishing to have a booth at the upcoming 2026 Bluff Symposium will need to register online again this year. Registration for vendors will open at the same time as for Symposium participants from August 20th-September 20th. When registration opens check the URARA website (www.utahrockart.org) and look for the symposium section of the events tab.

The symposium will be held in the Bluff Community Center, Saturday and Sunday, October 11-12, and vendors will be able to set up along the back and sides of the center. Fortunately, the location is the same space as the speaker presentations. There is a limit of ten (10) vendors this year.

Please note:

- Vendors do not need to be URARA members.
- The vendor fee is \$15 and a donated item to the auction.
- An 8-foot table and two chairs can be provided by the event location. You may bring your own table of the same, or smaller, size if you prefer. All vendors will have a ten-foot space, one table, due to size constraints this year. You may bring a smaller 3-foot table that fits behind your table. More information will follow vendor registration.
- Please bring your own extension cords.
- Secure Wi-Fi should be available for your use.
- More information on location; unloading and set up will be on Friday evening.

If you have questions or attempt to sign up for a space and are unable to do so, please contact Rein van West, arcticwild@gmail.com



Happy campers, summer picnic, Rick Mathews

Field Trips Update

Tina Tan

September

We have 2 upcoming Field Trips planned for September: one to the Smith Preserve, and another planned for SE Colorado. Please watch for the registration openings, usually about 2-3 weeks out. As always, both FTs will be capped at 12 max, including the leaders.

Symposium Field Trips

The Bluff Symposium is coming up! For those of you registered for Symposium Field Trips, a couple of things to note:

- A reminder that the land managing agencies typically ask that we do not share field trip site locations or post photos of sites we visit on social media platforms.
- Please remember that your phone camera may automatically have location tagging turned on. If you share photos with friends or family, that photo may have the GPS location embedded in that photo. Please ensure this is turned off - if you need instructions for how to do this, you can google it – for example - iPhones, see <https://mashable.com/article/how-to-turn-off-location-on-iphone> and for Android phones - see <https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/3467281?hl=en> You can also find YouTube videos that will walk you through this.
- Similarly, if you are using a GPS app, like GAIA, check and make sure the points/photos you take are not set to be shared to the public. (This is true for GAIA - ask me how I know...)
- Some of the FTs will require carpooling due to the need for high clearance 4WD to access the Trailhead. A few of the sites have restricted the number of vehicles that can be at the TH so please, everyone, try and car pool as much as possible.
- If we have bad weather, like we did in Kanab last year, please be prepared if we have to cancel the FT due to road conditions. (And we appreciate your understanding if that is the case).
- If you need to cancel on the FT you have signed up for, please do it as soon as possible. Some of the FTs have waitlists, and I'm sure the waitlisted folks will appreciate knowing about an open spot sooner than later.

Lastly, if you were not able to get on a FT of your choice, remember that our BLM Monticello permit for some of these sites is valid for a year, so it's possible we can offer up another trip to that site at a different time (CAVEAT: as long as I can find FTLs to lead it). Just let me know what FTs you'd be interested in for the future, and I will be happy to see what I can arrange.

SE Colorado Field Trip October

Tina Tan

This foray to eastern Colorado will bring attendees to two of the finer rock art sites on the Southern High Plains, near La Junta, Colorado. Visit Hicklin Springs and sites in the US Army Pinion Canyon Maneuver Site.

Thursday, October 1, 2026: we have permission to visit the Pinion Canyon Maneuver Site, a US Army property that contains many different high plains petroglyphs. US Army archaeologists will accompany us onto the site to show us some of the highlights of the many petroglyphs existing on the property. It took nearly a year to arrange for the permissions to visit the PCMS, and we are very grateful to the PCMS archaeology staff for allowing URARA to access this otherwise off-limits location. If you are interested in learning more about the rock art at the PCMS, pick up a copy of Larry Loendorf's *Thunder and Herds: Rock Art of the High Plains*, as this book deals principally with the rock art existing here.

Friday, October 2: we will visit Hicklin Springs, a site that contains rock art spanning archaic through historic times. Hicklin Springs is notable for its considerable collection of archaic petroglyphs, including various atlatl and abstract images. Also present are a few interesting pictographs in a dark red ochre.

Accommodations can be found at La Junta, Colorado (motels and campgrounds).

Registration will open 2-3 weeks prior to Field Trip Start Date.

Trip Leaders: Bob Crifsai and Tina Tan

1. URARA holds no responsibility or liability for those participating in field trips.
2. Four-wheel-drive is recommended for high-clearance areas. Car-pooling is recommended, and is required for the final leg of some trips.
3. Many of the field trips involve hiking, easy to strenuous, through rough terrain with substantial brush where one may encounter unfriendly creatures, so be sure to pack appropriate footwear, hiking clothes with a jacket for that sudden rainstorm, a hat, and sunscreen. Don't forget your camera. Participants are responsible for bringing along plenty of water to ensure healthy hydration.
4. Plan to provide your own lunch, snacks, and drinks.

Green River Service Project

Troy Scotter

When: 13 Oct 2026 11:00 AM, MDT

Where: North of the town of Green River

This event is to assist the BLM in protecting a rock art site near Green River. We have scheduled it the day after the symposium so that participants can participate on their way home. We need 8-12 volunteers. We will be helping the BLM install a buck and rail fence to protect a rock art site. We will be moving log segments to build the fence. Bring heavy clothing, gloves, eye protection/sunglasses, a sun hat, sunscreen, lunch, and drinks.

We will be meeting at Swasey's Beach at 11:00 a.m. Tuesday Oct 13. Swasey's Beach is about 20 minutes north of the town of Green River on the east side of the River.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/kJMihZYUHbUKMs6XA> It is roughly three hours from Bluff if you are starting from there.

Swasey's Beach is a popular camp site/rafting put-in and take-out. To get there use the I-70 business route through Green River turn north on Hastings Road which is close to the Comfort Inn just east of the bridge over the Green River. Stay on that road heading north until you get to the Swasey's Beach campground meeting point.

This is a good quality road unless rains have created some wash outs. Most vehicles shouldn't have a problem getting to Swasey's Beach. From there we may consolidate for the last part of the route.



Summer Picnic Rein van West

Women's Rock Art

Anne Whitfield, CRAA President

ONLINE CRAA-URARA SHARED PRESENTATION

Presenter: Linea Sundstrom

Title: Invisible Women, Cave Men, and M&M's. Finding the Hidden Half in Rock Art.

Date/Time: September 17, 2026 7:00 pm MDT

It is a delight to announce an updated version of a presentation Linea Sundstrom has given in the past. I heard about this research from two young archaeology professionals: one male, one female. The implications suggest a new take on imagery folks thought little about. Her research is fascinating and the conclusions are refreshing!

A sample of 235 images from cartoons and educational materials (murals, dioramas, and book illustrations) tacitly reveals cultural biases about who made rock art and why. Statistical analysis of these images shows that educational materials are just as prone to cultural biases and untested assumptions as cartoons. Women's rock art has remained largely invisible because no one thought of looking for it. But researchers are now finding the hidden half, as examples from the Northern Plains demonstrate.

Biographical Data: Linea Sundstrom is a private contractor specializing in North American archaeology, ethnogeography, and rock art. She has over 45 years' experience in the archaeology of the northern plains and is the author of Storied Stone: Rock Art of the Black Hills Country (University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills: A Contextual Approach (Garland Publishing, 1990), Culture History of the Black Hills (J&L Publishing, 1989), and numerous articles on northern plains archaeology and history. She received the Heizer award for ethnohistory in 2003, the Luebke award for Great Plains studies in 1998 and 2009, and the Wellmann award for rock art research in 2015.

Due to past interest in this subject, we will extend the usual time given an online seminar, if the audience wishes further discussion.

Check the URARA web site for link.

Symposium Workshop “Hematite in Pictographs”

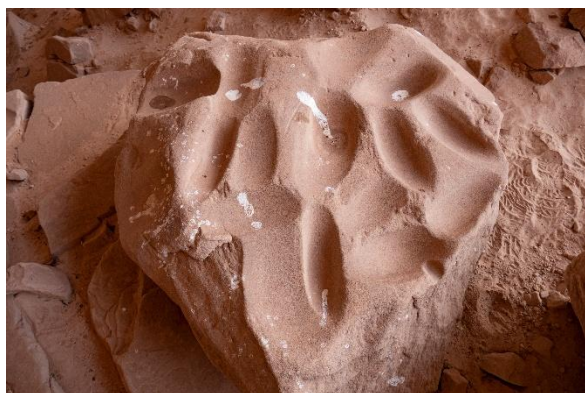
Carol Patterson

Connie Massingale will hold a hands-on workshop on the use of hematite in pictographs; Discussions will cover procurement of ochre in the landscape, processing of it in preparation to be mixed with binders and other materials to create a liquid pigment, creating yucca brushes for application, and finally an opportunity to re-create paintings of your own on sandstone slabs. I encourage people to bring a mortar and pestal to emulate a “paint pot” and grind up some paint while singing.... Here is a journal entry I wrote several years ago:

Journal 3_10_21 Paint Pots



Rattle Cave is a very large alcove in a side canyon off Cottonwood Wash near Bluff, Utah. It is so named from a beavertail rattle found in a kiva partially excavated in the cave floor. The walls have colorful handprints in stable regions of the walls. The large fallen boulders have deeply carved ovoid basins on their tops and gently sloping sides. (pictured in the center of this picture).



These ovoid depressions are different from corn grinding metates that are found lined up in a row, and wide enough to accommodate two hand manos. These small deeply carved basins appear to be organized in a non-linear pattern. Their placements create a relationship between one ‘pot’ with the next pot and at varying levels slightly above or below the other. This would allow different colors of paint to be added to an adjacent pot and mixed in as needed. Water and a binder such as animal fat was added to make the paint stick to the sandstone wall surface.

Clifford Duncan, Ute elder told me that small paint pots grouped in one spot were attended by ‘paint parties’. One village living in this area would invite the young girls from several different villages to come for a few days and grind paint together. They would sing songs as they did, and after they had ground the different color paints, they would give the paint powder to the medicine man for their ceremonies. In gratitude, the medicine man would give each girl a little bit to take back to their own village.

I can imagine hearing the young girls arriving and gathering inside the alcove, with soft murmurs and occasional giggling as they mingle and cluster in groups of their friends. When the mothers and grandmothers, and other family members have settled in their groups, the girls are handed bags of different colored rocks to grind. Three or four may crouch on one boulder around the pots, while two or three others sit down on a larger flat boulder. They pull out a few rocks and decide what color to start grinding. They may start with yellow, color of the north, and then blue, color for the west, that is plentiful yet tricky to get a sky blue from the pale blue green that they have. Red paint is for the south, and white for east, traditional colors for the ancestral Zuni, Keres and Hopi. After grinding enough paint, the girls decide to test their colors. They dip their nimble hands in paint and press them on to a pre-arranged spot on the wall.



I did not photograph the white, but I remember it being present to the right of this group. White is unstable over time and tends to fall off after 300 – 500 years. Curiously, the lower row of yellow prints has additional painted interior lines. The Zuni believe that the life force within every living being will exit out of the body at death, through the feet and hands and is represented by the whorls on your fingertips and palms. I realize that the whole painting ritual incorporates a spiritual dimension that is carefully painted into the handprints by the girls in their paint-grinding ceremony.

Clifford never liked the word ‘shaman’. He argued that it was a foreign name given to medicine people in Europe and Asian. In this land, the medicine people who work with plants, can call on spirits to enhance healing. These men had special knowledge, called Indian doctors who did “doctoring” on sick people. The paint was used in ceremonial rock paintings, ground-paintings, for prayer sticks, and body painting. The painting parties were sacred rituals done with prayers for all the relations in the four directions represented by the colors.

Archaeology Club Is Back

John McHugh

The Blessed Sacrament School's "Shovel Bums" archaeology club (5th – 8th grade) held its first meeting of the autumn season on August 27th. After a review of some of the rudiments of Great Basin Archaeology, Southwestern Cultural Chronology, and diagnostic artifacts, the students planned out where they would be stewarding rock art along Utah Lake and gave some thought to the cultures that had inhabited that region and their lifeways. Afterward the club went full-on Paleoindian and spent a half-hour throwing spears with atlatls.

The Shovel Bums plan to go into the field to steward, document, and protect Native American rock art in the Lake Mountain area (western shore of Utah Lake) on September 11th, 25th and October 2nd and 9th.



7th grade "Shovel Bums" Fang Yu Wang (left) poses with Alessia Rigby while throwing spears with atlatls on the first archaeology club meeting of autumn 2026.



Atlatl in hand, 5th grader Lincoln Pack takes a break in between throwing spears during the first session of archaeology club at Blessed Sacrament school.

Rock Art in the News

For 100 years, scientists thought these red markings were natural. *Scientific American* 1 June 2026
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/oldest-cave-art-in-the-u-k-discovered-inside-wales-cave/>

Ancient cave paintings can harbor human DNA for millennia *Scientific American* 02 July 2026
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/ancient-cave-paintings-can-harbor-human-dna-for-millennia-scientists-find>

In painted caves, ancient human DNA clings to the walls *ScienceNews* 20 July 2026
<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/ancient-human-dna-cave-walls>

Calendar; Trips and Events

September 17	CRAA-URARA online presentation by Linea Sundstrom
Sep 26, 10:00	URARA Field Trip Smith Reserve, Rick Mathews
October 01-02, 8:15	URARA Field Trip SE Colorado Area Bob Crifasi and Tina Tan DATE CHANGE!
Oct 8-12	URARA Symposium, Bluff, Utah
Oct 13, 11:00	Green River Service Project

URARA symposia and field trips (FT) are available to members only. Members will be notified by email when a field trip opens for registration, usually about 3-4 weeks before a trip. If a trip is full when you try to register, your name is added to a wait list. You will get another notification if and when someone drops out and you can be added to the trip. <https://urara.wildapricot.org/>

CRAA and URARA are currently doing monthly ZOOM presentations on alternate months. CRAA will have January, March, and May (Summer months off), and October (December off).

URARA will have February, April, Sept, and November. <https://coloradorockart.org/>

American Rock Art Research Association (ARARA) is hosting on-line events. Free access is granted to URARA members. Registration at: <https://arara.wildapricot.org/Lectures>

Desert Archaeological Society (DAS), St George, meets on the second Wednesday of the month. Saturday field trips once a month. Accessible on-line via Utah Tech University ICL .
<https://reg125.imperisoft.com/ICL/ProgramDetail/3837333038/Registration.aspx>

Grand Junction Chapter, Colorado Archaeological Society (CAS) meets regularly on the fourth Wednesday of each month <https://www.casgchapter.org/public-meetings>

URARA Board and Officers

Utah Rock Art Research Association: Box 511324, Salt Lake City, UT 84151-1324.

www.utahrockart.org . Contact information - utahrockartresearchassoc@gmail.com

2026 URARA Board and Officers

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Vice President	Carol Patterson
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Treasurer	Carol Duecker
	John McHugh
	Darlene Koerner
	Tina Tan
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Coordinator Lead		
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Color Country	Cedar City	Diana Acerson
Color Country	St. George	Nina Bowen
Color Country	Richfield	Steve Acerson
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