

# Mesa Verde Foundation

*Stewards of an Ancient Treasure*

SPRING NEWSLETTER

2022



## LETTER FROM THE MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK SUPERINTENDENT

Late winter snow glitters in the sun, lingering in the shady spots around Mesa Verde National Park. We're appreciating the beauty and moisture of winter, but our thoughts are turning to spring and summer. We anticipate a busy visitor season, if last year is any indication. In 2021, the Park received roughly 562,000 visits, very close to the last pre-pandemic year (2019). Many of us are looking to get outdoors and enjoy national parks and other public lands!



The Visitor Center near the Park entrance is open daily, offering exhibits, information and interpretive sales items. The drive into the Park offers many spectacular views and points of interest. The Chapin Mesa Museum remains closed for renovations, including installation of handicapped accessible ramps. We're also in the process of designing new exhibits for the museum, with installation a year or so away. A new Park film is in production as well, slated for completion in 2023. The Mesa Verde Foundation is helping to fund all three of these projects.

The summer schedule of cliff dwelling tours is shaping up. Tour tickets will be available at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). Check the Park website at [www.nps.gov/MEVE](http://www.nps.gov/MEVE) and download the official NPS app for more detailed information about the Park, including videos, audio tours and podcasts. These resources can enrich your experience ahead of your visit and help you plan for the impacts that some of our large infrastructure projects will cause.

Major road projects will continue this year. These improvements will cause some sequenced road closures as we repave and improve the Cliff Palace Loop (currently closed with anticipated reopening in mid-June) and then the Mesa Top Loop and Sun Temple Loop. Work on the "Big Hill" will cause temporary traffic delays. Please check on closures and potential delays before your trip and again on arrival. You can still have a great visit to the Park, especially if you plan ahead.

We look forward to seeing you as the weather warms and coaxes wildflowers and songbirds into the stunning views of Mesa Verde National Park!

Kayci Cook Collins, *Mesa Verde Superintendent*

***"Check the Park website at [www.nps.gov/MEVE](http://www.nps.gov/MEVE) and download the official NPS app for more detailed information about the Park, including videos, audio tours and podcasts."***





## Film Project Update

Mesa Verde National Park is on track in production of a new visitor orientation film that shares the Park's significance primarily from the perspectives of tribal community members. In the spring of 2020, the Mesa Verde Foundation was awarded a grant from the History Colorado State Historical Fund to assist with the costs of preproduction and production. The remaining costs of preproduction and production are being covered directly by the Foundation.

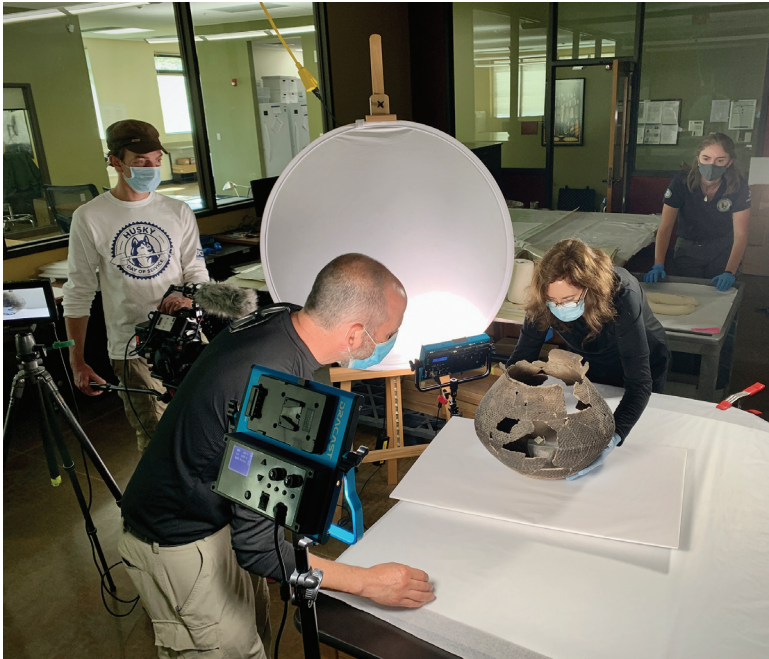
Boyd Productions, an Emmy Award-winning company with substantial experience working on national park films, and Jonathan Sims, owner of No Reservations Production and member of the Pueblo of Acoma, are collaborating on the film. Brian Vallo, Pueblo of Acoma, and Madeline

*The Oak Canyon Dancers of Jemez Pueblo at Long House on Wetherill Mesa.*

Naranjo, a potter from Santa Clara Pueblo, will be highlighted. Vallo, an expert in Acoma architectural history, shows how design elements of Mesa Verde architecture persist in modern Pueblo communities. Naranjo discusses how her pottery is informed by traditions that date back to the Ancestral Pueblo people of Mesa Verde.

We are happy to report that the script is nearing completion. Boyd Productions completed filming winter scenery and will return to shoot aerial footage in the fall. Despite challenges of production during a pandemic, the project is expected to wrap up in spring 2023.





*Filming collection items with Mesa Verde National Park Curator, Tara Travis.*



*Brian Vallo, Pueblo of Acoma, takes in the view at Mesa Verde National Park.*

## Mesa Verde Foundation Nominated for a Prestigious Nonprofit Award

The Mesa Verde Foundation is honored to be nominated to receive an El Pomar Foundation Award for Excellence. "The Awards for Excellence program recognizes outstanding Colorado nonprofit organizations and individuals by presenting them with grant dollars for their impressive work supporting the people of Colorado. Since its inception, the program has provided more than \$6.5 million in grant support to more than 500 nonprofit organizations throughout Colorado (<https://www.elpomar.org/programs/afe/>)."

Award winners will not be announced until June, but we at the Mesa Verde Foundation are so pleased to be among the nominees that we wanted to share this news with our supporters.

Thank you, El Pomar Foundation, for recognizing us among the nominees.







*A Mexican spotted owl perches in an opening at Spruce Tree House. Photo Credit: NPS/K. Barnett (2006)*

## Whither the Mexican Spotted Owl?

**M**esa Verde began keeping records on the Mexican spotted owl in 1942, and still, as required by law, conducts an annual survey searching for signs of the owl in the Park. Yet no recent evidence has turned up.

This magnificent bird of prey appears to have disappeared from the Park. In fact, the last confirmed sighting of the species occurred in 2009. This owl, the 5th largest of the 19 species of owls, was listed as “threatened” in the US under the Endangered Species Act in 1983. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, “The spotted owl has long served as the flagship species for environmentalists across the nation, and the Mexican spotted owl is the Southwest’s most famous old-growth resident.”

What could have happened to cause this decline? Before we examine this question, let’s look at some facts about this owl:

- The females are larger than the males, measuring 16-19” tall, with a wing span of 42-45”.
- Unlike most owls, the Mexican spotted owl has dark eyes, ringed by light feathers.
- Life expectancy is 15 years.
- These owls roost during the day and hunt from dusk through the night.
- They hunt primarily from silent perches above the ground, watching and listening for prey.
- Their diet consists of small mammals like mice, voles and rats; they also eat birds, bats and reptiles.
- Their range of distribution is the Colorado Plateau of southern Colorado and Utah into Arizona and New Mexico and down into Mexico itself. This puts Mesa Verde at the northeastern edge of the range.
- The owl’s preferred habitat is steep-walled, rocky canyons and mixed, old-growth forests with uneven, multi-storied trees and a high canopy.



Owls are monogamous, forming long-term bonds. Outside of the breeding season, males and females are generally solitary. They return to their old nesting sites in late February when courtship begins. A clutch of 1 to 3 eggs is produced in late March. The female sits on the nest for about a month until the chicks hatch. The male hunts and delivers the prey to the female, who then feeds the babies. The chicks fledge in 4 to 5 weeks but are dependent on the parents until the fall, when they strike out on their own. The adult birds then separate until the following year when the cycle begins all over again.

***“So what is happening in Mesa Verde that may explain the failure to see a Mexican spotted owl since 2009?”***

So what is happening in Mesa Verde that may explain the failure to see a Mexican spotted owl since 2009? Nathan Brown, the Park’s interim Chief of Natural Resources and Biologist/Wildlife Lead for Mesa Verde and Yucca House National Monument, recently commented: “The canyons have not disappeared. Fire has not removed the historic Douglas fir stands in the canyons. We have no idea why the owls have left.”

Brown offered the following assessment of possible contributors to the bird’s decline:

1. Range contractions often start at the edges of historic ranges, and Mesa Verde has been at the northeast edge of the owl’s range for some time.
2. The canyons in the Park have been shifting from quasi-mesic (moist) to quasi-xeric (dry).
3. He believes the pack rat population (the main food source for owls in the Park) has remained robust, but no comprehensive survey has been conducted.

In conclusion, Brown reiterated the current speculation among wildlife biologists: simply put, less water due to climate change and the mega-drought throughout the Southwest has led to a shrinking population of the Mexican spotted owl.

## HELP US MEET OUR GOAL!

The Mesa Verde Foundation is on a mission to supply wildlife-proof food lockers for Morefield Campground. You can sponsor a food locker for only \$1,500!

Each sponsored locker has a brass plate attached to recognize its sponsor.







Steve Kestrel, *Run River Run*

**B**onhams, the international auction house, is partnering with the Mesa Verde Foundation by including donated and commissioned art in Bonhams auctions throughout the year.

This provides a wonderful opportunity for artists and collectors to make significant donations to the Mesa Verde Foundation. The art will be sold at a special 0% commission in consideration of a required 20% minimum donation of the auction sale amount to the Foundation. Since Bonhams hosts a variety of auctions throughout the year, many types of art and collectibles are acceptable, provided they are of significant value and approved by Bonhams.

The first piece of artwork auctioned through this partnership, *L'avion* by Claude Venard, sold on October 21st for \$46,562.

On April 26th, Bonhams is hosting a western art auction that will include three pieces benefiting the Mesa Verde Foundation. The pieces include two sculptures by Steve Kestrel and one painting by Mian Situ. Kestrel donations are *Little Dipper* and *Run River Run*. Mian's is *Alert at Dusk*.

## Art is making a difference to the Mesa Verde Foundation!

### Steve Kestrel

Colorado sculptor Steve Kestrel works in stone and bronze. He grew up in Southern New Mexico, at the interface of the Chihuahuan Desert and the Sacramento Mountains, where he and his family raised and trained quarter horses, and he experienced a land of contrasts in ecosystems, flora and fauna. Steve's pieces have shown around the country, from Colorado and Wyoming to Texas and New York. He has earned numerous awards, including *Best of Show* at the Coors Western Art Exhibit at the National Western Stock Show, the *Gold Medal for Sculpture* at the Phoenix Art Museum, the *Prix de West Purchase Award* at the National Cowboy & Western Museum in Oklahoma City, the *Whitney Gallery's 50th Anniversary Award* at the Buffalo Bill Historical Museum and many more.



## Mian Situ

Born in Southern China, Mian Situ received his formal art training in his native province of Guangdong, formerly Canton. He graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Guangzhou Institute of Fine Art and later earned a Master's in Fine Art. Mian's paintings reflect his upbringing in the rural countryside of China. His deep-toned, impressionistic paintings of the backcountry often focus on people going about their daily lives in their small villages and farming communities. Mian's artistic versatility is also evident in his exquisite portraiture, as well as his more recent works inspired by western historical themes and American landscapes. Since 1995, he has won many national awards. In 2018, he received the *Prix de West Purchase Award* at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. His numerous awards at the Autry National Center's Masters of the American West show include the *Artist's Choice Award* in 2017 and the *Purchase Award* in 2002, 2009 and 2015.



Mian Situ, *Alert at Dusk*



Steve Kestrel, *Little Dipper*

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The Bonhams Western  
Art Auction catalog is  
available online at  
[https://www.bonhams.com/  
live\\_auctions/27415/](https://www.bonhams.com/live_auctions/27415/)





# Mesa Verde Foundation Fall Tour Is Back!

Mesa Verde National Park • October 14th – 17th, 2022

## This is a once in a lifetime opportunity!

After two years of pandemic-related interruptions, the Fall Tour is back! Join tour leaders Dr. Andrew Gulliford, Professor of History and Environmental Studies at Fort Lewis College, and Christopher Lewis, expert basket weaver and fiber artisan of the Zuni Pueblo, for a four-day tour of Mesa Verde National Park. Mesa Verde, one of 12 original UNESCO World Heritage sites, is home to thousands of ancient artifacts of Ancestral Puebloan tribes. During these four days, you will visit cliff dwellings and get an in-depth look at the history of the Ancestral Puebloans who lived at Mesa Verde. Tour cost includes guided tours of some of Mesa Verde's most iconic sites, 3 nights' lodging (based on double-occupancy), six meals, an exclusive reception with the Park Superintendent at the superintendent's residence (built by Jesse Nusbaum in 1921 on the rim of Spruce Tree Canyon) and a private viewing of artifacts from the museum's collection with Dr. Tara Travis.

### Tour Cost:

\$1,300: Non-member

\$1,200: MVF Fellow

Early Birds who register by July 1st, will receive \$100 off the registration fee.

\$65 per night single supplement for guests not sharing a room.

To register, or for more information, contact the Mesa Verde Foundation's Executive Director, Shannon Clifford, at 303-321-3120 or by email at [shannon@mesaverdefoundation.org](mailto:shannon@mesaverdefoundation.org)

## Tour Leaders

### Dr. Andrew Gulliford

Andy is Professor of History and Environmental Studies at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, where he teaches courses on wilderness, national parks and environmental history. Andy is the author of *America's Country Schools*, *Sacred Objects*, and *Sacred Places: Preserving Tribal Traditions* and *Boomtown Blues: Colorado Oil Shale*, which won the Colorado Book Award. For the centennial of Mesa Verde National Park in 2006, he edited seven new books on Mesa Verde published by the Durango Herald Small Press. His most recent book, *Outdoors in the Southwest: An Adventure Anthology* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2014) won two New Mexico-Arizona Book Awards as well as the Colorado Book Award.

### Christopher J. Lewis

Christopher Lewis lives in the village of Zuni Pueblo in western New Mexico. He is a member of the Badger Clan and a child of the Corn Clan. He is a fiber artist and basket and textile scholar. Christopher has worked the last 11 years to revive basketry in Zuni. He has also collaborated with other Pueblos to revive their textile arts. Christopher is a Native Scholar on the Cedar Mesa Perishables Project. He has studied Ancient Perishables such as baskets, textiles, wood and feather work from the Greater Southwest housed in major museums.



# Botanist Alice Eastwood & Mesa Verde National Park



Excerpt ©Andrew Gulliford from **Bears Ears: Landscape of Refuge and Resistance** (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2022). Used with permission.

The American West has always had extraordinary women, but few of them have stopped to pick the flowers. Alice Eastwood, a Canadian-born, 1879 Denver high school graduate, was a determined young woman who not only picked flowers, she named them. In turn she had plants named after her. She explored the Southwest when single women were supposed to be home, married, and raising families. Instead, she made enormous contributions to botany and plant science in her 94 years, and she did it all with grit and grace. In California, Alice Eastwood named 125 new plant species. The genera *Aliciella* and *Eastwoodia* were named for her. In her lifetime she wrote 310 scientific articles, named 395 plant species, and had 17 species named for her. At age 68 on a botany trip in California she walked 20 miles the first day and 10 miles on day two. Eastwood officially retired at age 90.



*Eastwoodia elegans*

She became an early paleoethnobotanist. She helped identify plants unearthed in Wetherill excavations at prehistoric sites in Mesa Verde after first visiting Mancos Canyon on July 14, 1889. She helped study Ancestral Puebloans by understanding the plants they had used. She worked with Richard Wetherill at Cliff Palace in Mesa Verde, and with his brother Al she had one of the great adventures of

her life in southeast Utah. Alice taught at East High School in Denver for 11 years. Because of her wise real estate purchases in Denver and Durango, she was able to retire from teaching at age 31 to spend the rest of her life botanizing. Regional botanist Al Schneider told me, “The properties were bought as investments and when sold returned her sufficient money to feed her flower frenzy.”<sup>i</sup> Eastwood became well known in Colorado and Utah and far beyond. She helped start botanical collections now

at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. She gave 1,400 plant specimens to form the nucleus of the University of Colorado herbarium, including 17 species which she named from Montezuma County, Colorado.

By 1892 Eastwood had become co-curator at the California Academy of Science’s herbarium

in San Francisco. She would travel the West finding and identifying new plants. Eastwood edited ZOE: A Biological Journal, and in 1892 she published “Notes on the Cliffdwellers” where she wrote, “Corn, squash and beans were the chief crops; the walnuts now and then discovered were probably from further south with the cotton which has been found on the pod, spun into thread, and woven into cloth . . . seashells have been found matted in the hair of the dead . . . willow twigs fastened together something like the slats of Venetian blinds formed the outside cover, the coffin of these prehistoric people.”<sup>ii</sup> An astute observer, she noted, “Coarse grass with stiff stems, *Oryzopsis cuspidate*, was tied into bundles to make brushes, probably for their hair. The wild

(Continued)



tobacco, *Nicotiana attenuate*, is common near their homes and in the canons where their houses stand like statues in the rocky niches the wild fruits are more abundant than elsewhere, leading to the belief that to some extent they were cultivated.”<sup>iii</sup>

But if her gumption and perseverance were often tested in the field, the ultimate challenge came in 1906 in San Francisco during the city’s epic earthquake. She thought nothing about herself or her possessions; instead, she saved plant specimens from the California Academy of Sciences. She hurried into the collapsing building to climb five stories of twisted railing on broken stairs to retrieve 1,497 type specimens. Fires erupting down the block, she retrieved the Academy’s historical records and irreplaceable botanical specimens by her quick thinking and by hiring a team and wagon to haul them to safety. “My own destroyed work I do not lament, but it was a joy to me while I did it, and I can still have the same joy in starting it again,” she wrote. “All my pictures and books are gone and many treasures that I prized highly; but I regret nothing for I am rich in friends and things seem of small account.”<sup>iv</sup>

What a long life Eastwood lived at the intersection of archaeology, anthropology, botany, and the Old West. Alice Eastwood dedicated her life to science, and she enjoyed every minute of it. We appreciate her for her adventurous, pioneering spirit, her scientific tenacity and productivity and her contributions to Mesa Verde.

<sup>i</sup> Andrew Gulliford, “Go Ask Alice: A famous botanist who picked flowers in Southeast Utah,” San Juan Record, April 22, 2020.

<sup>ii</sup> Alice Eastwood, “Notes on the Cliff dwellers,” ZOE: A Biological Journal, Vol. III, San Francisco, CA: 1892, p. 375-376.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Alice Eastwood, “Letter: May 7, 1906,” in Marcia Myers Bonta, ed. American Women Afield: Writings by Pioneering Women Naturalists (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1995) 89.

*The information contained in this article was provided by Dr. Andrew Gulliford. If you would like to learn more about Alice, the history of the Southwest, and the Ancestral Puebloans who lived at Mesa Verde, Andy’s book entitled **Bears Ears: Landscape of Refuge and Resistance** will be published in September by the University of Utah Press.*



**The Mesa Verde Foundation Board of Directors** is thrilled to welcome our newest member, Stephanie Foote. A Denver native, Stephanie graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in Economics, followed by post-graduate studies in

Civil Engineering. After a career in the energy industry, she was elected to three terms on the Denver City Council, serving as President in 1987/88, after which she served as Chief of Staff to Denver Mayor Wellington Webb during the building and completion of Denver International Airport.

Retiring from the city in 2003, Stephanie’s subsequent roles included President of the Rocky Mountain Roundtable, an initiative of then Mayor John Hickenlooper that conducted a series of high-level policy discussions among academics, corporate CEOs, elected officials and other experts in conjunction with the Democratic National Convention. In 2008, Stephanie became President and CEO of the Girl Scouts of Colorado, charged with merging five statewide councils, developing and strengthening the new organization, increasing philanthropy and growing the membership. She retired in June of 2020.

In addition to serving on the Mesa Verde Foundation Board, Stephanie is currently involved with the Rotary Club of Denver, Score A Friend Inc., the University of Colorado Foundation and Club 20 on Colorado’s Western Slope. She has decades of civic involvement, serving as the board chair of the Rose Community Foundation, the Girl Scouts of Colorado, Western State University and the YMCA of Metro Denver. In addition, she has been on the boards of various nonprofits including Colorado Ballet, Colorado Health Institute, the Institute of International Education, the Colorado Tourism Office, the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission and the International Women’s Forum of Colorado.



# Fellows and Friends: Our Champions

Mesa Verde Foundation Fellows and Friends are the champions of our organization. They provide critical financial support to promote understanding and appreciation of Mesa Verde National Park. They help us meet our mission of funding capital improvements, special projects and educational endeavors for the Park's cultural and natural resources. Their annual commitments are essential in promoting, preserving and protecting the incredible treasures of the Park.

## Friends of Mesa Verde Foundation Levels

*Friend member benefits include discounts on MVF programs, invitations to MVF events and bi-annual MVF newsletters.*

**Mesa Verde Contributor** \$100 - \$249

**Mesa Verde Sustainer** \$250 - \$499

**Mesa Verde Partner** \$500 - \$999

## Fellows of Mesa Verde Foundation Levels

*Fellow level memberships receive all Friend member benefits plus discounts on MVF tours, special MVF Fellows-only experiences, exclusive events and receptions in Denver, the Four Corners Region, Santa Fe and the Park and additional benefits for the following levels:*

**Spruce Tree Fellow** \$1,000 - \$2,499: one set of eight unique 5x7 folded notecards by photographer Todd Bacon.

**Balcony House Fellow** \$2,500 - \$4,999: two sets of eight unique 5x7 folded notecards by photographer Todd Bacon, and a Mesa Verde National Park Annual Pass.

**Cliff Palace Fellow** \$5,000 - \$9,999: three sets of eight unique 5x7 folded notecards by photographer Todd Bacon, and one annual America the Beautiful Pass to all National Parks.

**Mesa Verde Society** \$10,000 and Up: four sets of eight unique 5x7 folded notecards by photographer Todd Bacon, one annual America the Beautiful Pass to all National Parks and complimentary behind-the-scenes tours/programs at Mesa Verde National Park and other venues, and special, one-on-one tours/receptions with Park Superintendent and other Park personnel or archaeologists.

If you are interested in setting up a monthly or quarterly contribution to the Mesa Verde Foundation in order to join others at one of our Fellow levels, start by going to [www.coloradogives.org](http://www.coloradogives.org). Once on the home-page, select "Donate" and then "Find A Nonprofit". Enter "Mesa Verde" in the search box, and click on the "Donate" button under Mesa Verde Foundation. Mark the "Other" option. At that point, you can customize your giving amount, frequency, start date, and much more. (Just like other sites, you'll need to create an account at Checkout.) Thank you for your sustained support of the programs and initiatives of the Mesa Verde Foundation!

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Simply visit [mesaverdefoundation.org](http://mesaverdefoundation.org) and make a one-time \$30 license plate donation. Once the donation is processed, you will be issued a PIN number that you will use when registering your vehicle with your county motor vehicle office. Please be aware that to issue the plate, the state will charge an additional (one time) \$50 fee to process your order.