

# Mesa Verde Foundation

*Stewards of an Ancient Treasure*

SPRING NEWSLETTER

2021



## LETTER FROM THE MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK SUPERINTENDENT

Hello again as we await spring and the optimism it brings. We here at Mesa Verde hope you and your family enjoyed a safe and healthy holiday season. We've experienced a less than robust snowpack this winter, so we may see fewer wildflowers and more blowing dust over the next few months. Despite this, spring is always a time for a fresh start, and we intend to take advantage of the beauty that nature provides us.



One news item I'd like to share with you are the tours we plan to offer this summer. These tours include Cliff Palace and Long House, with special tours of Square Tower House, Mug House, and Spring House. We have not yet released dates for the tours, as we are also planning for major road work projects this spring and summer. Please check our website, [www.nps.gov/meve](http://www.nps.gov/meve), for more information and updates.

The Mesa Verde Foundation has prioritized the installation of handicapped accessible ramps in Chapin Mesa Museum and is committed to securing funding to make the museum more accessible to visitors. Construction of the ramp should begin in late spring or summer. Unfortunately, the museum will remain closed for now, but we look forward to welcoming everyone into the building when it is safe to do so.

Another noteworthy item worth mentioning is the Executive Order requiring masks be worn inside all Federal buildings, and on Federal lands where distancing cannot be maintained. With this and the rollout of vaccines, we look forward to the day when we can gather again.

As the weather warms and the daylight lengthens, we hope you take advantage of the chance to get outdoors (safely) and enjoy the impending return of spring. Thank you.

Cliff Spencer, *Mesa Verde Superintendent*



*Special tours of Square Tower House, Mug House, and Spring House (shown here) will be offered this summer. Once dates are released, they will be available on the Park's website, [www.nps.gov/meve](http://www.nps.gov/meve).*



# International Dark-Sky Park

**M**esa Verde National Park seeks designation as an “International Dark-Sky Park” and is hoping for an affirmative vote by the Board of Directors of the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) in the coming weeks according to Park Superintendent, Cliff Spencer.

The International Dark-Sky Places Program (IDSP) recognizes and promotes excellent stewardship of the night sky. It was founded in 2001 to encourage communities, parks and protected areas around the world to preserve and protect dark sites through responsible lighting policies and public education. Dark-Sky Parks are public or private spaces protected for conservation that implement recommended outdoor lighting practices and provide dark-sky programs for their visitors. As of February 2020, there were 130 certified IDSPs in the world, including many U.S. national parks as detailed below.

Mesa Verde has monitored its skies for years, inventoried every exterior light, changed fixtures and bulbs, and installed dark-sky friendly lighting at the Far View Lodge complex and all employee housing. For its part, Aramark—the outside contractor that runs the lodging and food operations in the Park—is upgrading to downward lighting at its facilities. Up until this past October, when the pandemic forced the cancellation of a number of activities, the Park hosted an annual Star Party at Morefield Campground.

The rigorous application process must be initiated by a person or a group. In early 2020, David Quinn from our partner organization, the Mesa Verde Museum Store Association ([www.mesaverde.org](http://www.mesaverde.org)), took the lead in filing the application on behalf of the Park. In addition to documenting specific designation requirements, such as monitoring light pollution, directing lights downward, shielding all



outdoor lighting, and keeping lighting temperatures at less than 3000 kelvins (a soft, warm light), strong local community support is required. The towns of Mancos and Cortez have submitted enthusiastic letters of support. The application is reviewed by an IDA program manager, who submits it to the Dark-Sky Places Committee, which in turn makes a recommendation to the IDA Board of Directors for final approval.

If approved, Mesa Verde would join a growing cohort of national parks on the IDA Dark-Sky Parks list, including Arches, Big Bend, Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Bryce, Canyonlands, Capital Reef, Death Valley, Grand Canyon, Great Basin, Great Sand Dunes, Joshua Tree, and Petrified Forest. Other national monuments in Colorado with the designation include Hovenweep and Dinosaur.

While the Ancestral Puebloans had no written record, it is known that the sun, moon, and stars were crucial in their rituals, architectural planning and construction, and seasonal plantings. Residents of Mesa Verde would have experienced a supernova in 1054, which is a star that exhibits sudden, intense brightness lasting weeks or months due to an internal explosion, and a brilliant comet in 1066, along with other astrological phenomena such as solar and lunar eclipses.



# “Conversations from the Mesa”

## Mesa Verde Foundation Webinar Series

### Upcoming Webinars

*All Webinar times are in Mountain Daylight Time*

#### Wednesday, April 14th, 4:00 p.m.

*Rare Plants and Wildflowers of Mesa Verde National Park—Tova Spector, MVNP*

#### Wednesday, May 12th, 4:00 p.m.

*The History of Mesa Verde National Park—Dr. Andrew Gulliford, MVF & Fort Lewis College*

#### Wednesday, June 9th, 4:00 p.m.

*Mesa Verde National Park Museum Collections and Curation—Dr. Tara Travis, MVNP*

#### Wednesday, July 14th, 4:00 p.m.

*How Park Archeologists Assess and Treat Fire-Affected Cultural Resources in Mesa Verde National Park—Christine McAllister, MVNP*

Webinar registration links will be sent to our email address list. If you are not currently receiving our emails, please provide your email address on our website contact page at [www.mesaverdfoundation.org/contact/](http://www.mesaverdfoundation.org/contact/). In the contact box, please comment “add me to your email list.”



# Mesa Verde Foundation Fall Tour

Mesa Verde National Park • October 8th – 11th, 2021

**J**oin Dr. Andrew Gulliford, Professor of History and Environmental Studies at Fort Lewis College, and Christopher Lewis, expert basket weaver and artisan of the Zuni Pueblo, as they lead a four-day exclusive tour of Mesa Verde National Park.

Mesa Verde National Park, one of 12 original UNESCO World Heritage sites, is home to thousands of ancient artifacts and remnants of Ancestral Puebloan tribes. During this four-day tour, you will visit cliff dwellings and learn about the history of Ancestral Puebloans who lived at Mesa Verde. The tour will include tours of some of Mesa Verde's most iconic sites with Dr. Gulliford and Mr. Lewis, lodging (based on double occupancy), six meals, an exclusive reception at the Superintendent's home in the Park, and a private viewing of items from the museum's collection with Dr. Tara Travis.

The Mesa Verde Foundation is thrilled to offer this incredible behind-the-scenes, in-depth experience. Please be aware that certain parts of the tour will involve rigorous up and down hill walking and climbing.

## The tour offers unique encounters including....

- Guided hikes to Long House and Spring House.
- A chance to experience the wonders of the Park in a small group setting with acclaimed author and historian of the American West, Dr. Andy Gulliford, and descendant of Ancestral Puebloan people, Christopher J. Lewis.
- A wine and cheese reception with the MVNP Superintendent at the Superintendent's residence in the Park.
- A private viewing of artifacts from the Park's museum collections with Dr. Tara Travis.
- A basket making demonstration with expert weaver Christopher Lewis.
- Presentation and documentary viewing with Dr. Laurie Webster, Southwest Archaeologist and perishables expert.
- Unlimited opportunities to ask questions and hear different perspectives.

### Cost:

\$1,200: Nonmember

\$1,100: MVF Fellow

\$65 per night single supplement

50% deposit required to register



To register and for more information, contact Mesa Verde Foundation at

303-321-3120 or

[info@mesaverdefoundation.org](mailto:info@mesaverdefoundation.org)

Space is limited! Reserve today!





## Mesa Verde National Park World Heritage Site

As many of our readers know, Mesa Verde National Park is a World Heritage Site, an honor bestowed on the Park by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In fact, Mesa Verde is one of the twelve original sites in the U.S. as designated in 1978, but what exactly does this distinction mean?

A World Heritage Site is a landmark or a natural area that has legal protection from the government that has jurisdiction over it, i.e., the National Park Service in this case. Such sites contain elements of cultural and natural heritage considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. They can be ancient dwellings, historic structures, buildings, cities, deserts, forests, lakes, monuments, mountains, or wilderness areas. In the case of historic structures, the buildings should “signify a remarkable accomplishment of humanity.”

There is a strict process for nominating and evaluating sites. Once approved, a site continues under the sovereignty of the UN member country, which also retains responsibility for the management and protection of the site. In the U.S., the Secretary of Interior is responsible for making nominations. Included in the twenty-three World Heritage Sites in the U.S. are other national parks such as Everglades, Great Smoky, Yellowstone, and Yosemite.

There are ten criteria for designation: six of them pertain to cultural characteristics, and four are for natural sites. At least one criterion must be met. Mesa Verde matches up well on several of them, including:

- a site that is a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- a site that bears unique or exceptional testimony to cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or has disappeared;
- a site that is an outstanding example of a type of building, architecture, or technological ensemble;
- a site that is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement or land-use or human interaction with the environment.

Quoting from UNESCO’s own description of Mesa Verde: “The Mesa Verde landscape is a remarkably well-preserved prehistoric settlement landscape of Ancestral Puebloan culture, which lasted for almost nine hundred years from c. 450 to 1300 ... This rich landscape provides a remarkable archaeological laboratory for enhancing our understanding of the Ancestral Puebloan people ... The exceptional archaeological sites of the Mesa Verde landscape provide eloquent testimony to the ancient cultural traditions of Native American tribes. They represent a graphic link between the past and present way of life of the Puebloan Peoples of the American Southwest.”

*The Mesa Verde Foundation is proud of its mission to promote understanding and appreciation of Mesa Verde National Park and to develop financial and other resources to support it. We couldn’t do it without YOU—our Friends and Fellows—on this incredible journey!*

# Squeaks!



*Four-month-old Squeaks was caught by a wildlife camera along with his siblings and their mother, Notch, on March 8, 2019. Photo: Santa Ana Pueblo Department of Natural Resources.*

**On February 12, 2020**, the Department of Natural Resources of the Santa Ana Pueblo, 25 miles northwest of Albuquerque, fitted a transmitter collar on a male mountain lion estimated to be sixteen-months old. As the young cat was emerging from sedation, he was heard emitting squeaking sounds, probably trying to communicate with other mountain lions. As a result, the attending wildlife staff christened him “Squeaks.”

The collar transmits location data twice a day to a satellite. This data can be downloaded and plotted by Pueblo staff using Google Earth. Glenn Harper, head of the Pueblo’s Rangeland & Wildlife Division, has mapped Squeaks’ travels since he was collared a year ago. By the end of February this year, there were approximately 4,000 pings.

Shortly after the collar was activated last year, Harper could see that Squeaks returned to his mother and two sisters, and that he began making short forays on his own by April.

Squeaks permanently left the Pueblo’s 79,000 acres on July 5th and traveled about 560 miles north and west, entering Colorado on August 24th. He spent time along the Mancos and Florida River watersheds east of Mesa Verde and continued pushing north towards Durango. It appeared that Squeaks wanted to establish his own territory—an area that would have good cover, abundant prey (small mammals like beavers and raccoons, mule deer, and elk), females for breeding, and the absence of another dominant male. At one point, it seemed that Squeaks might establish himself on the agricultural mesas south of Durango, but that potential territory was abandoned.

Squeaks entered Mesa Verde by the end of September. Nathan Brown, the Park’s Biologist and Wildlife Program Lead, says that there are multiple mountain lions in the Park at any time, although their numbers cannot be accurately established. In fact, the network of canyons in the northern part of the Park has been designated as critical habitat for lions by the Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife. However, since lions tend to seek cover and sleep during daylight hours, sightings are rare. Brown did mention that an interaction between a lion and some hikers was reported on the Knife Edge Trail in the Park last summer.

Harper recounted that Squeaks’ last known day in Mesa Verde was October 30th, Day 303 on the Julian Calendar (the calendar named for Julius Caesar), which is how the data is recorded. Squeaks made multiple explorations into the Park, but in the end, he didn’t stay. Harper’s guess is that Squeaks encountered another male so had to move away from its territory. Males mark their territory by making mounds scented with urine and clawing tree trunks to make visual marks (hikers should be on the lookout for these marks!). Squeaks moved to the south and west, coming within nine miles of Cortez on the south and six miles of Towaoc on the east.



The data shows that Squeaks seems to have established a core area three to four miles outside the Park's boundaries, where he appears to be doing well, making kills on a regular basis. Harper knows when and where a kill has been made when multiple location readings stack up in the same place at night. Males can weigh up to 200 lbs. and have powerful neck and jaw muscles. Mountain lions usually kill by ambush, pouncing on a prey's back which often breaks the prey's neck. Their bite can suffocate the prey. Lions can drag their prey 1,000 feet to a protected area, and they often spend five or six days on a larger mammal like a deer. They cover the carcass with branches and leaves when they leave to find water or to sleep.

Mountain lions (also called cougars or pumas) can be eight feet long, with the tail making up one-third of their length. Females are smaller than males. They usually have two or three litters in their lifetime consisting of two or three kittens, with the mother acting as a single parent. Young females usually go off on their own around two years-old, and males tend to leave sooner. Long, powerful hind legs give them the ability to jump 18 feet in the air, and they can cover up to 40 feet in a single leap. Life expectancy is ten to thirteen years.

Harper became concerned about Squeaks when data showed he was in the same place for about ten days last Fall. Lions usually leave a kill for water, but perhaps there was a good-sized puddle nearby, or the meat may have provided sufficient moisture. When this kind of long-term data stacking occurs, other possible scenarios are that the animal may have become snared in a trap or broken a leg. Collars can be programmed to go into "mortality mode" after eight hours without movement. In this case, just when Harper was about to initiate a search for Squeaks, the lion left the kill and resumed more normal patterns of movement.



## Community Partner Feature

The Mesa Verde Foundation is pleased to announce our new Community Partner, Yellow Car Country Wines, located in Cortez, Colorado! We debuted our Lodging Partners Program in the fall of 2020, and are now extending it to community and Mesa Verde regional businesses. Community Partners support the work of the Foundation and are committed to our mission of promoting understanding and appreciation of Mesa Verde National Park.

Yellow Car Country Wines is independently owned and operated by Jim and Jean Wooton who share a passion for creating acclaimed grape wines, fruit wines and mead. You can visit their store, tasting room and newly renovated outdoor patio space in Cortez. Or visit their website <https://www.yellowcarcountrywines.com/>, to place an online order.

Yellow Car Country Wines patrons have the opportunity to contribute a \$1.00 donation for each purchase, to directly benefit the Foundation. A Yellow Car Country Wines bestseller is their Canyon Gold, made from a Thompson grape with a twist of Rosé. They are also renowned for their unique wines infused with seasonal fruits like apricot, plum, chokecherry, peach and holiday wines such as apple cinnamon, pumpkin and cranberry.

By purchasing Yellow Car Country Wines you are also supporting the Foundation. Cheers to that!



[www.yellowcarcountrywines.com](http://www.yellowcarcountrywines.com)  
1345 South  
Broadway Street  
Cortez, CO 81321

# Mesa Verde Foundation Announces Formation of Legacy Society

The Mesa Verde Foundation has launched a Legacy Society to document and recognize those who are leaving gifts to the Foundation through their estate plans. Donors may use their wills, trusts, beneficiary designations of life insurance policies and retirement plans, and other estate planning instruments to make such gifts, which will have a significant impact on Mesa Verde National Park for generations to come.

Many supporters increasingly wish to leave a legacy gift to their favorite nonprofits, which is why the Mesa Verde Foundation Legacy Society has been created. Legacy gifts will help the Foundation to:

- Support the Park's mission to protect its cultural, natural, aesthetic and wilderness values;
- Champion educational programs for visitors and members of associated tribes;
- Preserve the delicate remains of cliff dwellings and archeological sites;
- Improve the ways in which visitors interact with and experience the Park;
- Protect and preserve the extraordinary collection of Ancestral Puebloan and other artifacts.

We invite you to join our founder Legacy Society members by making your gift commitment now. If you have already made such a commitment, please let us know. For more information or to discuss this form of giving, please contact us by e-mail at [shannon@mesaverdefoundation.org](mailto:shannon@mesaverdefoundation.org) or by calling 303-321-3120.

## Donor Testimonial

*I Can Make a Difference. You Can Too!*

*I've learned how important Mesa Verde National Park is worldwide and yet how fragile its ancient dwellings are today. Mesa Verde Foundation plays a vital role in interpreting and preserving the Park for future generations. The Foundation's support of preservation work on dwellings is essential.*

*I'm leaving a legacy gift in my will to Mesa Verde Foundation that will go into a permanent endowment, to keep on giving year after year, forever. If the time is right for you, a legacy gift can also help you make a difference, too.*

*Long live Mesa Verde Foundation and Mesa Verde National Park!*

— Jim Wilkins  
Mesa Verde Foundation  
Legacy Society Member  
and Board Member



## Get YOUR Mesa Verde National Park license plate and support the Park!

Ordering your Mesa Verde National Park license plate is easy!

Visit [www.mesaverdefoundation.org/about/](http://www.mesaverdefoundation.org/about/) for details.





# 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: an MVF decal, 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, Phoenix, 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 (museums, archaeological sites, etc.), 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 homepage, 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.) And Thank You for your sustained support of the programs and initiatives of the Mesa Verde Foundation!

### Mesa Verde Foundation Board of Directors

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In Memoriam

### Executive Director

Shannon Clifford, MSNPA



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