Skidmore's Archaeology Field School, 2004

South Park, Colorado

The site of this year's field school was South Park, Colorado, a high altitude [9500 ft] intermontane intermontane valley west of Colorado Springs and south of Breckenridge. We made our home base home base in Breckenridge and crossed the Continental Divide daily on the way to our field sites in field sites in South Park.

South Park was inhabited by Native Americans beginning about 14,000 years ago, and was continuously utilized by various Native American foraging peoples well into historic times. At the At the time of first contact with Europeans, several Ute bands inhabited the region. This breadth of breadth of human occupation has created a rich archaeological record

Field School Goals

The archaeology field school was designed to introduce students to the basic field and lab techniques techniques utilized by professional archaeologists engaged in field research. Students were able to able to learn these basic techniques, and apply them to a real research problem: understanding the understanding the prehistory of this important cultural area. An important added element in the field in the field school was the integration of non-professional volunteers local communities, creating an creating an important public education and outreach component in our research program

Students, Volunteers and Field Work Leaders

The Student Archaeologists

Aaron Gaylord [UAlbany '04]

Erica Larsen [Yale, '07]

Meara McNally '06

Rebecca Swank '06

Nichole Abbott '05

Rebekah Baranoff '05

Emily Clark '06

Field Techniques

•**Survey:** Field crews walk over prospective site areas, searching for signs of human activities: lithic activities: lithic scatters from stone tool making, structures and raw materials used in tool making. In making. In the study area, most of the raw material is petrified wood.

Crew on survey

Petrified wood quarry

The route *up* to the site

•**Mapping:** Once located, artifacts and stone debitage are flagged and mapped, establishing their establishing their positions on the site. In addition to mapping surface finds, students mapped mapped features encountered below surface through excavation.

Setting up the total station for surveying [Sue and Erica work with a research associate]

Hilltop Site: flagging and mapping artifacts [Rebekah]

Mapping an excavation unit [Emily, Richard Wilkinson, Meara (L to R foreground)]

•**Geomorphology and soil analysis:** Students learn to interpret stratigraphic layers and and evaluate soil types, as clues to past environments.

Aaron Gaylord, Nichole Abbott and Rebecca Swank [L to R] examine stratigraphy in a gully.

The group studying soils

•**Excavation:** additional artifacts, charcoal and possible house floors emerged from this this year's excavations.

Excavation unit with floors [fl] and post-molds [circles].

Laboratory Analysis

Every hour spent in the field yields many hours of laboratory work, and each day ended with students working in the lab on materials and paperwork generated during the fieldwork portion of the field school. Our lab facilities were created with the help of local volunteers, the Town of Fairplay and Park County, Colorado, and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Washing [Aaron], drying [Emily] and cataloging artifacts [Erica, Rebecca, Meara]

Meara & Susan Bender examining an artifact for use wear.

The day's activities are logged into journals.

Field Trips

The field crew visited Rocky Mountain National Park to view prehistoric elk hunting drive lines and blinds, and Ute wickiups, traveled to Middle Park to visit the University of Wyoming's field school and examined chert quarries, made several trips within South Park to learn about Pleistocene geology, local chert quarries and sedimentology, and had lessons in flint knapping and spear throwing with an atlatl, or spearthrower.

Hunting blind

U. Wyoming excavations

Nichole & Erica go hunting

Public Education

In addition to the close working relationship with volunteers from the local communities, the students created posters explaining various aspects of their work, and presented these posters in the cities of Fairplay and Breckenridge.

Poster session

We – students, volunteers, research associates – worked long hours, climbed high hills, made important discoveries, saw beautiful sights and sites, made new friends and participated in an exciting and very productive field season. My sincere thanks to all, for all your energy, high spirits, and good work!

Susan