

VESTIGES



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President's Letter

By Ben Everitt

Here's a book that the student of rock art might find either enjoyable or depressing, depending on his approach to the subject: *The Spell of the Sensuous*, by David Abram, Pantheon, 1996. The title doesn't give much of a clue that the book is about language and communication, especially written language, and its relationship to human perception of the natural world. Abram's primary thesis is that human language is fundamental to how we perceive the natural world. When humans forsake pictographic writing and take up the phonetic alphabet, they lose an important psychological link with their environment. They lose the mental pictures that connect them to the living, breathing universe. Thus one might conclude that it is impossible for western technological mankind to even pretend to appreciate the life and thought of pre-literate or pictographic people, who lived in Nature, in a time when sitting around the fire and singing the epic legends was the primary means of communicating wisdom. Abram discusses pre-literate people and cultures on the cusp of discovering alphabetic writing, using examples as diverse as Australian Abos, Apaches, and the ancient Greeks in the time of Socrates.

As he says: "In the oral animistic world of pre-Christian Europe, all things had the power of expressive speech, and the medium of this collective discourse was the air. In the absence of writing, human utterance--- was inseparable from the exhaled breath. This invisible yet palpable realm of whiffs and scents, of vegetative emanations and animal exhalations, was also the unseen repository of ancestral voices, the home of stories yet to be spoken, of ghosts, --- a kind of collective field of meaning---."

It's a good read, and an interesting thesis, but I think maybe Abram underestimates the flexibility of the modern human mind. Give it a try. Close the door on the Tribune and the outdoor magazines, Verizon and Garmin, and unroll your bed under a tall pine up on the plateau. Listen to the wind sing in the long needles, and watch the stars roll west through the tossing branches. All of creation is in conversation. Arcturus in the west and the Great Swan overhead mark your time and place

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and assure that the world is turning as it should. The rattle of dry leaves tells of a long hot summer. A little chill is bringing news of the first snow on the high-top and that the deer will be moving down. Their midnight footfalls lead to the spring just under the canyon's rim. Chattering birds talk of the last currants up on the limestone ledges; scurrings among leaves tell of chipmunks caching pine nuts for the coming winter. The distant crashings of a bear looking for something to eat means it's time to stir the coals and throw a couple more sticks on the fire. You have but to open the ears of your soul and you can learn everything you need to know for tomorrow.

URARA Holiday Party

Submitted by Barbara Green

We are excited to have the same venue as last year, Bicentennial Park.

Date: Monday, December 9, 2013

Time: 5:30 pm, potluck.

Place: Sandy City Parks Pavilion, Bicentennial Park, 440 East 8680 South

Easy to find: there is a traffic signal light at Main Street and 8720 South. Drive east to the end (about nine blocks), take a left and then a right. The building is east of the tennis courts. Lots of parking. Parks Department rules apply (no alcohol).

Barbara Saxon will be calling you to organize the potluck. Please bring your favorite dish. URARA will furnish the honey-baked ham. If you have questions, please contact Barbara Saxon (801-262-4432) or Barbara Green (801-466-7702). Please come and enjoy your fellow URARA members and an interesting program.

San Rafael Leases Withdrawn

On November 14th, we were excited to learn that Utah BLM Director Juan Palma had deferred the sale of oil and gas lease parcels in the Molen Reef area. We considered the threat to rock art posed by the proposed sale of lease parcels in the Molen Area in our Preservation Session in Moab. During the break-out session, we organized a committee to protest the upcoming sales. Our strategy was to prepare a map indicating the rock art sites which could be damaged by oil and gas development. We were concerned about the cumulative effects of airborne sediments and chemicals associated with drilling, vehicular traffic and the development of pipeline and transportation corridors. In addition, new and improved roads could heighten the accessibility of sites and contribute to vandalism. We shared the concerns of the Hopi Preservation Office, that only 8.5% of all the parcels being offered in the San Rafael Swell had any type of cultural inventory, and those inventories were over a decade old. We could not find any inventories for the Molen Reef in SHPO files.

On October 23rd, Steve Manning and Diane Orr met with Utah BLM Director Juan Palma and nine of his staff members. The purpose of the meeting was to protest the sale of 14 lease parcels, about 33,000 acres, located in the Molen Reef Area. Many of the rock art sites in this area are eligible for listing on the National Register because of their potential to provide information important in understanding the prehistory of the region. Director Palma and his staff were generous with their time and attention. We discussed the scientific importance and cultural diversity of the rock art

sites in the area. We showed photographs of rock art styles in the Molen Reef area, documenting the rich cultural diversity of the area. Jon Bailey and Steve Manning provided pictures of delicate Barrier Canyon panels, outstanding Fremont panels and beautifully painted and carved Ute panels. Kip Robertson printed many of the photographs for our presentation. We emphasized the long habitation history of the area. Recently, a Ferron resident found a Clovis spear point in Molen Reef, pushing habitation in the area back 15,000 BP.

We presented a large map of the proposed sale lease parcels and rock art site locations in the Molen Area. The map was not a scientific inventory but it did establish the high concentration of rock art sites in the area. Michael Firmhaber provided the scientific know-how to create a map using several software applications to adjust to the BLM lease parcel map. He located rock art sites based on UTM's, field notes, and photographs of URARA members and local supporters from Price, Ferron and Castledale. Together, we identified more than 110 sites, containing one to seven panels, on the borders of, or included in the proposed lease parcels to be sold. Forty-two of our identified sites were not included in the three Rock Art ACECs in the lease parcel areas. This meant that significant rock art sites would not be protected by special stipulations or management if the oil and gas lease parcel sales proceeded as planned. Thanks to everyone on our committee, with a special thanks to Jonathan Bailey, Steve Manning, Troy Scotter, Quent and Pam Baker, Dr. Larry Loendorf, Leslie Wertz, Nina Bowen, Layne Miller, Blaine Miller, Nancy Mason, John Beuttler, Joe Brame, Bill Hirt, Gary Clark, Ken Andresen, Inga Nagel, Carol Patterson, David Sucec and many more URARA members, we were able to present important new information to stop the lease parcel sales in the Molen Area. Diana and Steve Acerson assisted our review of rock art sites on lease sale parcels in other areas of the San Rafael Swell. With their help, we participated in the deferment of the Price River corridor and the Lost Springs area.

Justin Abernathy, Utah BLM attorney, has requested that we build a permanent file in their office documenting the cultural resources in the Molen Reef Area. We will provide copies of our research and add more sites and photographs as provided by you, our membership. This file will provide an ongoing argument for oil and gas lease parcel deferment. The message of this campaign is clear: what we don't document, we can't protect. Rock art inventories are critical to our preservation efforts. A second message of this campaign is that the BLM decision-making process can work when it is fairly executed. The Utah BLM Director Juan Palma made a correct and courageous decision to defer large acreages in order to assure the protection of cultural resources.

We were pleased that the Salt Lake Tribune editorial staff agreed. Salt Lake Tribune Editorial: "The Bureau of Land Management did the right thing when it pulled federal land parcels in Emery County from a planned auction of drilling leases in order to further study the potential impacts on sensitive archaeological sites.

Utah BLM Director Juan Palma is responding, as he has an obligation to do, to objections from the public and conservation groups. Hardly the "radical environmentalists" portrayed by Utah's two senators, those organizations and individuals have conducted a thorough inventory of the ancient rock art in the areas in question — more thorough than the BLM has the funding to do. Addressing their concerns is responsible management, and Palma should be applauded, not criticized."



Photo by Jim McNeil. URARA Symposium Fieldtrip, October 2013, Moab

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2013 URARA Board

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