

# THE JOHN D. COOPER ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL CENTER

June 29, 2012 Cooper Center Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2012, Historical Archaeology, Museum Archaeology Academia, Archaeology, Archaeology Laboratory, Archaeology Parham, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, California, California State University, California State University Fullerton, Cooper Center, CRM, curator, Curator for Archaeology, D. Cooper Archaeological and Paleontological Center, director, education, Edward Knell, Faculty Curator, Faculty Curator for Archaeology, Florida Museum of Natural History, hard seed processing, Jeannine Pedersen, Jere H. Lipps, Jim Parham, Meredith Rivin, Orange County, Paleontology, Paleontology Laboratories, Paleontology Laboratory, Professor of Anthropology, renowned scientist, Science, the Faculty Curator for Archaeology

**THE**  
**COOPER**  
**CENTER**



## **The Preservation of Orange County, California's Prehistory**

The John D. Cooper Archaeological and Paleontological Center is a partnership between Orange County through Orange County Parks and California State University Fullerton. The Cooper Center is committed to the preservation, curation, management, and use in research, education,

outreach, and exhibits of the artifacts and fossils that have been collected within Orange County over the last 40 years. The artifacts and fossils were obtained from sites in Orange County that have undergone cultural resources management (CRM) studies. Such studies are conducted as part of the permitting process for the construction of houses, office buildings, roads, freeways, and other urban developments. The collections at the Cooper Center include artifacts and fossils recovered since the 1970s. Together, the Cooper Center's archaeological and paleontological collections provide a fantastic chronicle of the history of life in today's Orange County.

The Cooper Center's archaeological holdings are diverse and range in age from at least 10,000 years ago up until 50 years ago. The Cooper Center's collection includes materials from all areas and environmental zones throughout the County including the coast, major and minor rivers, and foothill-zones. Sites from these various areas include, but are not limited to, villages, fishing, milling activities associated with acorn and hard seed processing, and stone tool manufacture. Some of the artifact types recovered from these sites include cogstones, metates and manos, mortars and pestles, shell beads, hammerstones, projectile points, scrapers, incised stone and pottery sherds to name a few. Archaeologists have also recovered historic artifacts from the last century, including glass bottles, barbed wire, and plastic toys. These sites and artifacts are not only the most extensive collection of Orange County history and prehistory, but they provide archaeologists with an extensive view of what life was like in Orange County.

The rocks of Orange County contain the fossilized remains of plants and animals from every major time period since the Jurassic – 180 million years of history. The study of these fossils provides an important link to the geological past and can be helpful in answering scientific questions important to Orange County and elsewhere. The Cooper Center's paleontological material has worldwide significance as it includes an unparalleled collection of marine mammals from the Miocene through the Pleistocene. The marine life collection includes invertebrates, whales, sharks, porpoises, walrus, and sea lions – not found anywhere else, including evolutionary links and new species. The collection also includes some of the few scraps of dinosaurs known from California, and terrestrial mammals and reptiles from the Eocene, late Oligocene, Miocene, and Pleistocene including brontotheres, crocodiles, snakes, sabre-toothed deer, an early bear, primates, camels, horses and sabre-toothed cats. Lifetimes of research and discoveries could stem from this collection.

The Cooper Center opened in July of 2011 and just recently became fully staffed. The staff includes Director, Jere H. Lipps, Ph.D., a renowned scientist with extensive academic, scientific and museum management experience and a passion for the history of life. Dr. Lipps joined the Center in January of 2012. Edward Knell, Ph.D., RPA, is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at California State University Fullerton, and serves as the Faculty Curator for Archaeology and

Jim Parham, Ph.D. was recently appointed as the Faculty Curator for Paleontology and will join the staff in the Fall. The Faculty Curators provide direction and guidance for the Archaeology and Paleontology collections at the Cooper Center. Jeannine Pedersen, M.A. is the Associate Curator for Archaeology and has and over fifteen years of experience working with cultural collections. Meredith Rivin, M.S. is the Associate Curator for Paleontology and has extensive experience in Cultural Resource Management in both paleontology and archaeology. The Associate Curators are charged with the tasks of managing the Center's Archaeology and Paleontology Laboratories, caring for and curating the artifacts and fossils, promoting and conducting research and assisting with education, exhibit and outreach projects. Under the direction of California State University Fullerton, the staff of the Cooper Center is the steward for Orange County's archaeological and paleontological collections.

At this point, only a small fraction of the Cooper Center collection has been inventoried – about 6000 specimens and 5,000 artifacts out of an estimated 2,000,000+ from over 900 paleontological localities and over 400 archaeological sites. Ongoing work seeks to curate the artifacts and fossils to meet and/or exceed federal standards of preservation and to provide state-of-the-art facilities where students, professionals, qualified researchers, and interested parties can study the collections. The Cooper Center also seeks to educate students of all ages and the public within Orange County (and beyond) about the history of where they live.

For more information please visit our website at <http://coopercenter.fullerton.edu/>;  
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