

“A Brief History of the Grand Staircase – Escalante National Monument”

**by
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Mathew Zweiful is an archaeologist for the Grand Staircase – Escalante National Monument.

Matt stated that the Grand Staircase – Escalante National Monument was designed as an outdoor laboratory. This is due to the wide diversity of geology and cultural resources within the monument. The western portion of the monument is a part of the “Grand Staircase” that extends from Kanab to the Bryce Canyon region. The central region consists of the Kaiporowits Plateau that is rich in dinosaur remains. The eastern portion consists of the canyon lands around Escalante.

The cultural resources within the Monument include the Virgin Anasazi in the south and the Fremont in the north.

Matt presented the history in the form of a timeline.

Time (BP – Before Present)	Climate	Habitation Groups
13000 BP	Cool/ Moist End of the Ice Age	Paleo Indian Hunter / Gatherers (large game)
9000 – 6000 BP	Hot and Dry	Archaic Hunter / Gatherers (small game) Set patterns of seasonal migrations
4000 BP	Cooler / Moister	Archaic Hunter / Gatherers
2000 – 0 BP	Like today	Formative period (later prehistory to present) – Farmers

Matt then talked about the “Formative” period in the area around Kanab and within the Monument.

The Kanab area consisted of Anasazi “farmers” that had a relatively stable habitation existence. This is in contrast to the Fremont who were summer farmers and then Hunter / Gatherers. They had a more mobile life style.

Matt noted an unusual characteristic when examining human remains from this time period. Hunter / Gatherers usually had worn but otherwise “good” teeth. Conversely, the Anasazi “Farmers” had “bad” teeth that he thought would have been very painful. He attributes the poor teeth to the diet of corn – that contributed to over 70% of the diet.

Some interesting dates:

0 AD - the introduction of the bow and arrow into the Kanab region. This technology was imported from the North and West.

200 AD – the introduction of “dry” farming. This technology allowed the farmers to move onto the “up lands” and not rely only on land near river basins.

450 – 500 AD – the introduction of ceramics

1050 AD – the introduction of corrugated pottery

The people in the formative period had good homes, good food supply and time for social interaction.

1100 AD – people from the Kayenta area crossed the river and moved into the Virgin Anasazi and Fremont areas. The people were assimilated into the population with some but not all of their ideas being adopted.

1250 AD – Farming ends. Some people left, some stayed and some moved into the area. Those remaining are the ancestors of the Paiutes.

Go to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Staircase-Escalante_National_Monument to learn more about the Monument.

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John Mangels