

# HISTORY

## FIRST DRAFT

# Ancient Ute traces found in ponderosa pines

To the undiscerning eye, that pine tree deep in the forest with a large chunk of its bark missing, which long ago healed into an oval pattern, may look simply like a tree that suffered an unfortunate accident. Perhaps the tree was hit by lightning or fell victim to an insect attack or served as a scratching post for a bull elk. Such trees barely register with most of us.

To a growing group of archaeologists and historians, however, the tree may provide evidence of something entirely different: It may indicate a spot where Ute Indians peeled the bark from a tree and used the inner layer for ceremonial or medicinal purposes.

Such trees are called "culturally scarred" or "culturally modified trees," and they are being increasingly scrutinized and documented by experts, who realize that many of the trees still standing are nearing the end of their lifespans.

"There is a growing awareness of the fragile nature of the resource," said Mark Mitchell, lead researcher with the PaleoCultural Research Group, a nonprofit organization based in Broomfield. Mitchell has

led a study of culturally modified trees in the mountains near the San Luis Valley.

"Ponderosa pines are where we mostly see this, and their lifespan is 400 to 500 years," he said. "A lot of the trees we study are already 300 to 500 years old." Given the possibility of wildfire or windstorms that could destroy the trees, there is an urgency to document and learn as much about them as possible and a number of people are considering the best way to do that, he said.

They include private archaeologists, people with federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management and representatives of the Ute Indians.

There has been some dispute over exactly why the Utes and members of other Indian tribes peeled the bark from pine trees to get at the cambium inner layer. Early American explorers and some more recent examiners maintained that Indians used the bark as a food source when other food was scarce or nonexistent.

But representatives of the Utes and many modern experts say that

is not the case.

"We found them all over the Ashley National Forest (in Utah) when I worked there," said Alissa Leavitt Reynolds, now an archaeologist for the Grand Junction Field Office of the BLM. "The Utes we worked with told us they were mainly used for medicinal purposes."

Celinda Kaelin, president of the Pikes Peak Historical Society, agrees. She conducted a lengthy study of culturally modified trees in the Pikes Peak region and worked closely with several Ute consultants on the project. One of them told her "that these trees were primarily used in Ute healing ceremonies," she wrote in a lengthy paper she published about her findings.

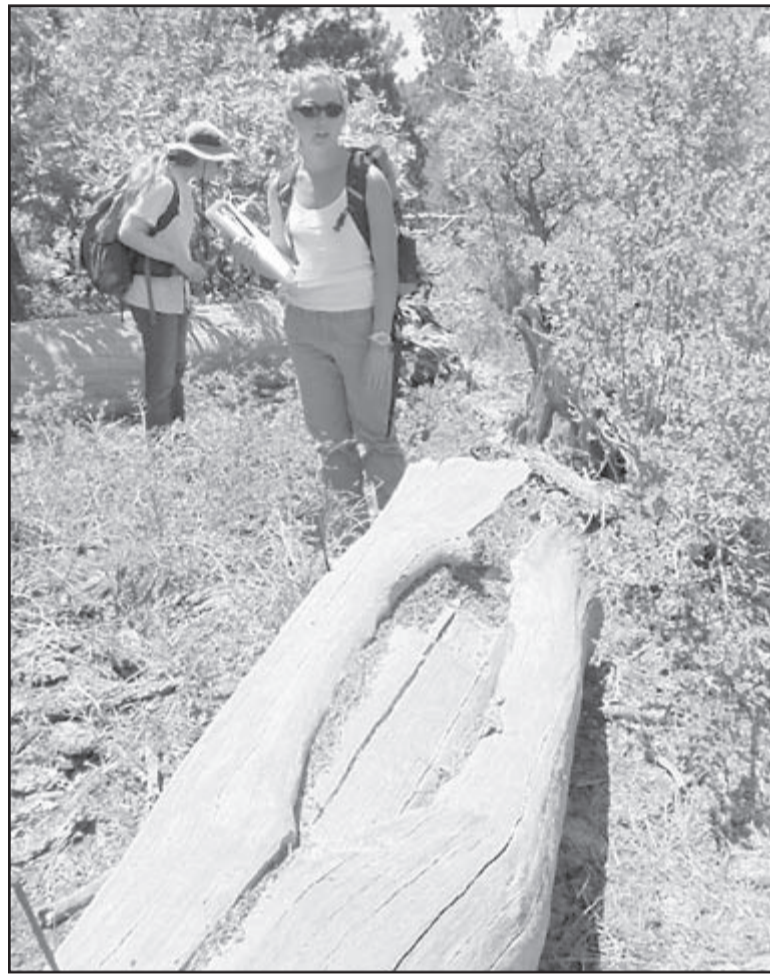
Moreover, both Kaelin and Mitchell noted that, although many peeled-bark trees have been discovered, they are too few and too widely spaced to have served as a major food source for any substantial population of people.

There are other forms of what are believed to be culturally modified trees, including bent trees and prayer trees, although there is more dispute among the archaeological community about their origins and purposes, Mitchell said.

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BOB SILBERNAGEL



Alissa Leavitt Reynolds, from left, a Bureau of Land Management archaeologist and Rachel Schlein, an archaeology technician, study a downed culturally modified tree in the Grand Junction region several years ago.

SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

# Sage grouse comment sought

## BLM schedules four meetings to catalog regional conservation efforts

By DENNIS WEBB  
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The Bureau of Land Management is beginning a public comment period as it updates its local resource management plans in an effort to better protect the Gunnison sage-grouse.

The agency also has scheduled four public meetings on the matter.

The agency agreed to update the plans under an Interior Department court case agreement with WildEarth Guardians that extended, until Nov. 12, the time the Fish and Wildlife Service has to determine if the bird should be listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The BLM is asking for comments by Aug. 22 regarding how to conserve the bird. Writ-

ten comments may be mailed to BLM Colorado, Attn: Gunnison Sage-Grouse EIS, 2850 Youngfield St., Lakewood, CO 80215-7093; e-mailed to [gusg\\_amend@blm.gov](mailto:gusg_amend@blm.gov); or faxed to 303-239-3699.

Meetings are scheduled for:

- Aug. 4 at the Denver Marriott West, 1717 Denver West Blvd., Golden;

- Aug 5 at Fred R. Field Western Heritage Center, Fairgrounds and Multi-Purpose Building, 275 Spruce St., Gunnison;

- Aug. 6 at the Holiday Inn Express Montrose, 1391 S. Townsend Ave., Montrose;

- Aug. 7, Dove Creek Community Center, 403 W. 7th St., Dove Creek.

All meetings are at 6 p.m. More information is available at [www.blm.gov/co/st/en/](http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/)

BLM\_Programs/wildlife/sage-grouse.html.

The Gunnison sage-grouse lives in southwest Colorado and southeast Utah. Most of the estimated 5,000 breeding birds live in the Gunnison Basin, with small populations also found in Mesa and other counties.

The BLM says it will incorporate additional conservation measures in up to 11 resource management plans through an environmental impact statement and associated amendment. It expects the EIS to be done by July 2016.

In a news release Friday, WildEarth Guardians said that due to the years the BLM plans update will take to complete, it probably won't have any effect on the Endangered Species Act decision due in November. Erik Molvar, a wildlife biologist

for the organization, predicted that a lack of adequate existing regulatory mechanisms make a listing under that act "unavoidable."

"However, strong, science-based protections in the federal plans would enable threats to be addressed and put the Gunnison sage-grouse on the path to recovery on those public lands, and the recovery of the bird is what will be necessary to lift Endangered Species Act protections," he said.

Last month, the BLM issued an internal instructional memo guiding management of the bird while the plans update occurs. It includes extension of an existing Colorado moratorium on oil and gas leasing in proposed occupied critical habitat, and expansion of that moratorium into southeast Utah.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## MUD VOLLEYBALL

Michelle Shaffer reaches for the incoming volleyball during the LaSalle Days Mud Volleyball tournament on Saturday in LaSalle. Shaffer and her team were also playing in honor of her parents who died last year. Mud Volleyball was one of her parents' favorite events at LaSalle Days.

## REGION SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

### Palin pumps up crowd at Denver summit

DENVER — Former Alaskan governor and vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin energized the crowd at a conservative summit with talk of impeaching President Barack Obama.

The Denver Post reported Palin spoke for 35 minutes Saturday at the 2014 Western Conservative Summit. Palin also bashed Obama on a variety of topics that included immigration and veterans' services. The 5-year-old summit is hosted by Colorado Christian University and the Centennial Institute.

Others in attendance include: Texas Sen. Ted Cruz; Jim DeMint, president of the Heritage Foundation; and Rep. Michele Bachmann of Minnesota.

### U.S. Highway 24 reopened after flooding

MANITOU SPRINGS — U.S. Highway 24 west of Colorado Springs has reopened after mud and water from mountainsides left bare by the Waldo Canyon fire flowed over the road.

The Denver Post reported that more than three-fourths of an inch of rain fell in the area Saturday afternoon.

Colorado State Patrol officials said the highway was closed for

about three hours.

Colorado Department of Transportation officials confirmed a debris flow across the highway about two miles southeast of the town of Cascade.

### Body of teen found in Utah reservoir

OGDEN, Utah — Authorities have recovered the body of a teenage girl at Pineview Reservoir in the mountains east of Ogden.

Weber County sheriff's deputies responded to the Anderson Cove area Saturday afternoon after a fisherman reported hooking a body with his line. Divers recovered the body under about 15 feet of water later in the day. Deputies say the body is believed to be that of a 16-year-old runaway who was known to be suicidal. Her name was not released.

### Cyclist dies on Independence Pass summit

ASPEN — Authorities were trying to determine why a 51-year-old cyclist collapsed and died on Highway 82 a short distance from the summit of Independence Pass.

The cyclist was near the top of the 12,095-foot pass east of Aspen on Saturday when he collapsed.

## BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

### Arrest in hit-and-run

Kevin Bond, 23, of Grand Junction, was arrested Saturday night on suspicion of causing a hit-and-run crash, careless driving, possession of a firearm by a previous offender, possession of prescription pills that were not prescribed to him, and driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, according to the Grand Junction Police Department.

According to the Police Department, Bond was driving a blue Honda Accord south on North Seventh Street at about 8:50 p.m. Saturday when he ran a red light and hit a Toyota Prius headed east on North Av-

enue.

The 78-year-old driver of the Prius was taken to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Bond drove away from the scene headed east on North Avenue, failed to make a right turn off of North Avenue onto N. Ninth Street, and drove his car onto a sidewalk. Bond brandished a gun when a person stopped to see if anyone in the car was injured, according to the Police Department.

Bond drove away from the scene but was later arrested at Ninth Street and Belford Avenue after he called 911 to report he had been menaced during the second incident, according to police.

His passenger, 23-year-old Vanessa Lo-

pez, was arrested on a warrant.

### According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

- Unknown people assaulted a person with a deadly weapon Friday outside Quincy Bar, 609 Main St.

- Emily Lundy, 39, was arrested Friday on suspicion of illegally entering a residence and causing less than \$1,000 worth of damage in the northeast part of the city.

- Lawrence Coca, 54, was arrested Friday at 241 North Ave. on suspicion of assault.

The Mesa County Sheriff's Office did not release activity reports Sunday.

Cash 5 Sunday: 4, 6, 19, 21, and 30

Pick 3 Sunday: 8, 9, 4

For information, go to [www.coloradolottery.com](http://www.coloradolottery.com).

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