Jim I. Mead

M.S. and Ph.D in Geosciences at the University of Arizona, Tucson (1979, 1983). I was at the Department of Geology and the Quaternary Sciences Program at Northern Arizona University from 1985 to 2008. In 2008 I was asked to pull together the new the Department of Geosciences at ETSU, create a M.S. degree program, root the unit in paleontology, and collaborate with and act as a sister unit to the Gray Fossil Site, ETSU Museum of Natural History. Currently I am completely revising the undergraduate B.S. program.
My first river trip down the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon in 1969 cinched paleontology to be my life. The Grand Canyon has been an active part of my research since 1974. I have a number of projects outside of the Miocene-age Gray Fossil Site here at ETSU, including the study of Neogene-Quaternary reptiles and amphibians of Arizona, Sonora (Mexico), southern China, Western Australia, and of course still within the Grand Canyon. Most of my work now centers on the skeletal morphology and evolution of snakes and lizards. I have been chair for over 45 graduate student thesis committees here at ETSU and previously at NAU. Research has always been my passion so it has allowed me to publish about 150 peer-review articles and 4 books.

Presentation Title

Ice Age Colorado Plateau: Been There Dung That

Abstract

The Colorado Plateau covers about 337,000 km2 of land covering much of eastern Utah, western Colorado, northeastern Arizona, and northwestern New Mexico. Elevations range from 360 m along the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon to 3850 m at the top of San Francisco Peak near Flagstaff, AZ. Paleozoic and Mesozoic rocks dominate the bedrock. Limestone caves are abundant within the Grand Canyon while sandstone rock shelters are commonplace over the rest of the Colorado Plateau. Because of the arid environment and climate, dry-desiccation has permitted the preservation of a unique sample of the floral and faunal biotic communities that once occurred on the Colorado Plateau over the past 100,000 years. Skeletal remains, tissue samples, hide, hair, keratin horn sheaths, and copious amounts of herbivore dung are so common in the caves that to not find these fossil remains is unusual. In the presentation we will visit remote caves in the Grand Canyon inhabited by the extinct Harrington's mountain goat and a rock shelter in Utah that contains over 300 m3 of mammoth dung.