

August Fendler Memorial Project
Grant Report to Native Plant Society of New Mexico
December 2014

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In 1847 August Fendler collected >17,000 plant specimens in and around Santa Fe. This was the first comprehensive botanical collection in the American Southwest. Fendler gathered many specimens along the Santa Fe River, including in the vicinity of the Center, which at that time was a U.S. Army sawmill and a likely base camp for the exploring botanist. When prominent botanists Asa Gray and George Engelmann described scores of new species from Fendler's material, many of Fendler's specimens became "types." For those plants, many of them well-known western species, the Santa Fe River valley above town is their type locality and thus sacred ground for American botanists.

To honor Fendler's accomplishment, Audubon is creating an August Fendler Memorial garden by planting some of Fendler's plants, identifying those plants with signs, and erecting an interpretive sign describing Fendler's accomplishments. The Native Plant Society of New Mexico generously provided a grant of \$800 to fund design and fabrication of a suitable interpretive sign.

Stimulated by that award, Audubon staff spread the word about the project during the summer of 2014. Plants were donated by generous growers and purchased from local nurseries. Audubon staff and volunteers completed all of the necessary research for the interpretive sign and labor to plant the plants. By the end of summer we had planted examples of Fendler's Buckbrush (*Ceanothus fendleri*), Fendler's Sundrops (*Calylophus hartwegii fendleri*), Fendler's Barberry (*Berberis fendleri*) and Fendler's Hedgehog Cactus (*Echinocereus fendleri*)

Meanwhile, Audubon contracted with Discovery Exhibits, a local firm specializing in interpretive signs. NPSNM funds were used to create a beautiful, weatherproof, color, sign measuring 36" x 24" (see below). The sign is currently being fabricated and will arrive onsite before year's end. Installation will have to wait until the ground thaws in spring 2015.

By completing this project Audubon is hoping to achieve:

- A more attractive and informative site for visitors;
- better appreciation for native plants and their vital roles in our native ecosystems;
- heightened understanding of our rich botanical legacy, locally and statewide;
- increased awareness of the Santa Fe River valley as the type locality for many familiar western plants; and

- enhanced recognition of Fendler's ground-breaking role in the scientific discovery of the American Southwest.


Audubon Fendler panel

Botanical Ground Zero


When the U. S. seized New Mexico in 1846, prominent Harvard botanist Asa Gray wanted to send a competent person to collect plants "in a region which had scarcely been visited by a naturalist."

The challenge was accepted by August Fendler, who had studied plant collecting under noted St. Louis physician, botanist and fellow German émigré George Engelmann. Starting in spring of 1847, often based right here at General Kearny's sawmill along Santa Fe Creek, or Río Chiquito as it was called then, Fendler assembled more than 15,000 specimens – the first comprehensive plant collection in the American Southwest.

From Fendler's herbarium, Prof. Gray and Dr. Engelmann described scores of plant species new to science. Fendler's specimens became the "types" against which future collections would be compared and the Santa Fe River valley became the "type locality" for many familiar western plants.




August Fendler
1813 - 1883




Fendler's Buckbrush


How many of these Fendler discoveries can you find here at the Center?




Fendler's Hedgehog Cactus




Fendler's Evening Primrose



Fendler's Barberry



Fendler's Gnatcatcher



Fendler's Verbena

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Panel size: 20" x 28" (printed on 1/4" Alupanel) Version: 12/9/14

Discovery Exhibits

The Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary is home for Audubon New Mexico, which is the New Mexico office of the National Audubon Society. Audubon is a non-profit organization focused on conservation of native birds, native wildlife and native ecosystems. The Center is open Monday through Saturday from 8 AM to 4 PM. Visitors are welcome! Please visit our website at <http://nm.audubon.org/>.