

WHERE THE
WILD THINGS
ARE

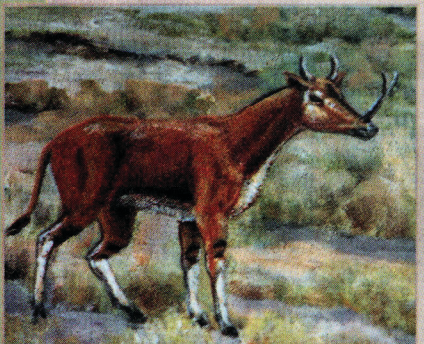
A few of the animals
featured in "Nebraska
Miocene"



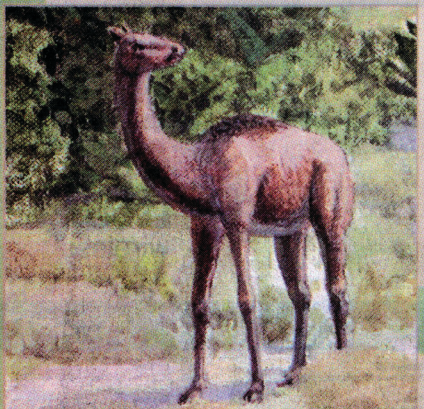
Zodiolestes: Large weasel



Moropus: Extinct horse-like mammal



Prosynthetoceras: Slingshot horn



Oxydactylus: Large camel

FIND ADVENTURE ON THE FOSSIL FREEWAY



A life-size replica of a sabertooth tiger created by artist Ron Kephart is taking shape and will become part of the display.

Story and photos by Rick Myers



Jan Vriesen's "Nebraska Miocene" mural will become part of the permanent Fossil Freeway display at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center.

Gateway to the past becomes important link for future

A gateway to the past becomes a link to the future for area tourism on June 25 as a portion of the Heartland Expressway becomes the "Gateway to the Fossil Freeway."

On Wednesday at 6:30 p.m., the public is invited to participate in a celebration that will include the unveiling of Jan Vriesen's "Nebraska Miocene" mural that will take the viewer back in time millions of years when some of the most unique creatures roamed what is now western Nebraska.

The mural becomes part of a permanent display at the nature center that also includes an exact replica of the "Innocent Assassins," a fossil unearthed in the 1930s near Chimney Rock by Loren Eisle. The fossil is of a sabertooth tiger's skull with a fang embedded in the leg of another sabertooth.

A life-size replica of a sabertooth that was commissioned by the Oregon Trail Foundation and creat-

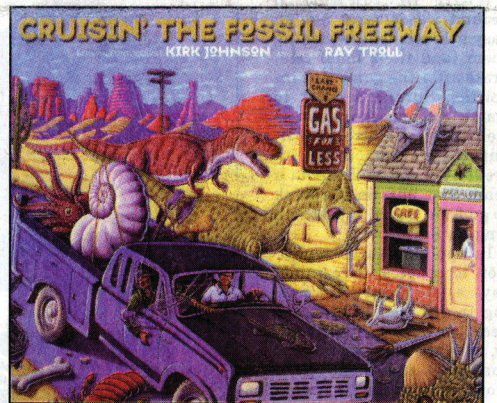
ed by artist Ron Kephart also joins the display. Dignitaries at Wednesday's event include Vriesen, who will complete adding animals to the mural before the unveiling, Dr. Kirk Johnson, vice president of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science and author of a new book "Crusin' the Fossil Freeway," and Dr. Bing Chen, chairman of the Friends of Loren Eisle.

Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy and Christian Hornbaker, director of Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism will also be on hand.

Marty Sterkel, assistant regional director for partnership for the National Parks Service, was in town last week attending a Fossil Freeway kickoff event at Fort Robinson.

Sterkel said he spent most of a day looking at the local tourism-related resources in Gering and Scottsbluff and discussing how the park service could help by sharing resources.

"I'm trying to let people know that we really do care and we want to engage partners," Sterkel said. "Tourism is going to be implemented rather than just



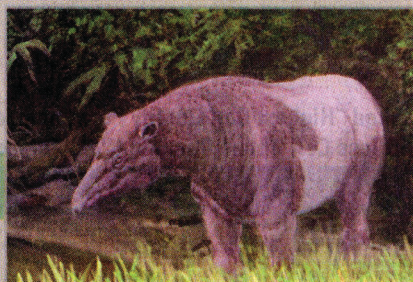
Dr. Kirk Johnson, author of "Crusin' the Fossil Freeway," will have copies of his book to sell and autograph as part of Wednesday's dedication ceremony.

talked about." Sterkel said he foresees many more joint activities involving the National Park Service and it's gateway programs that are part of the focus of NPS National Tourism Council's desire to partner with "gateway" communities.

Scotts Bluff National Monument is designated as one of those "gateway" communities.

Sterkel is also co-chairman of the tourism arm of the National Park Service and recognizes the rich resources of the area and the economic viability of related programming.

The Gateway to the Fossil Freeway designation is not part of the NPS gateway program but Sterkel said he clearly understands the benefits for all parties involved.



Miotapirus: Tapir



Cephalogle: Small bear