

“25 Years of Devonian Fossil Gorge”

Dr. Ray Anderson

Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

The University of Iowa

Iowa City

The Coralville Dam was completed in 1958 to create Coralville Lake. Excessive late spring rainfall in 1993 raised the water level behind the dam rose to over 4.5 feet above the crest of its emergency spillway, and it poured over the paved spillway apron in a torrent, tearing away vegetation, pavement, topsoil, sediment, and loosely cemented bedrock below and creating the Devonian Fossil Gorge. Fifteen years later, in 2008, an even larger flood drove waters almost 5 feet over the spillway, tearing away another layer of bedrock and significantly widening the gorge. Hundreds of thousands of amateur geologists have visited the Gorge in the 24 years since it was first created, walking on the 375 million year old ocean floor and getting on hands and knees to examine the wide variety of fossils and structures to be seen. In this presentation I will recount some of the geologic stories these rocks tell, as well as some of my personal experiences with gorge visitors.



A view down Devonian Fossil Gorge shortly after 2008 flooding.