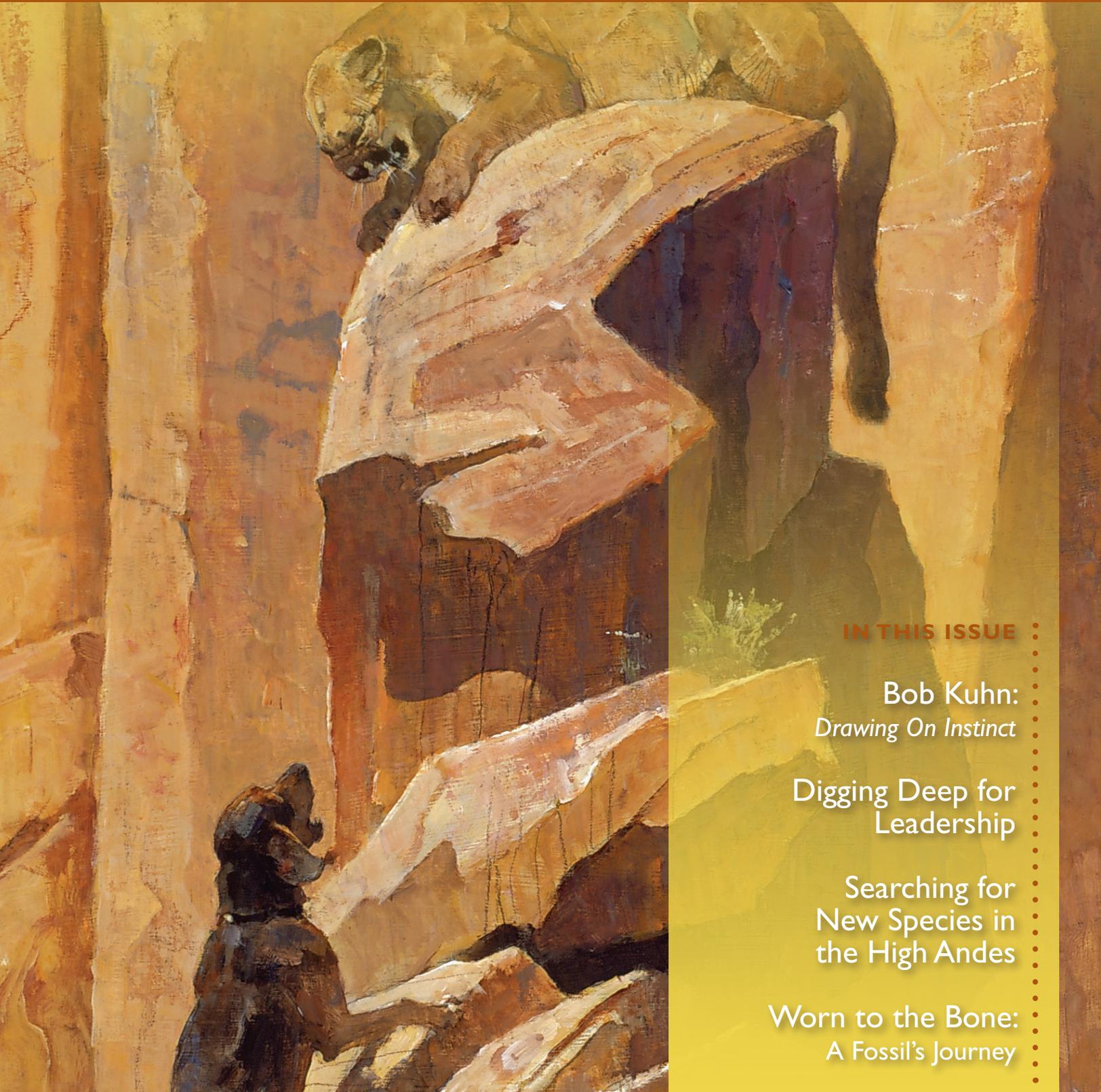


T Sam Noble Museum Tracks

Summer 2013 Newsletter Vol. 25, No. 2



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the High Andes

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A Fossil's Journey



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MUSEUM INFORMATION

Address

Sam Noble Museum
The University of Oklahoma
2401 Chautauqua Avenue
Norman, Oklahoma 73072-7029

Telephone: (405) 325-4712

Email: snomnh@ou.edu

Web: www.snomnh.ou.edu

OUR MISSION

The Sam Noble Museum at the University of Oklahoma inspires minds to understand the world through collection-based research, interpretation, and education.

OUR VISION

As one of the finest museums, we are at the heart of our community, collectively working to inspire understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of the earth and its peoples.

TRACKS

Editor-in-Chief: Michael A. Mares

Managing Editor: Jen Tregarthen

Design: Hadley Jerman

Layout: John Nowakowski



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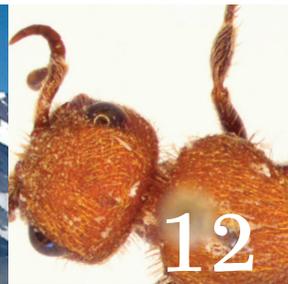
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Above the Battle by Bob Kuhn (1991)

©Estate of Robert Kuhn

Thanks to our 2013 Corporate Benefactors:



From the Director



Since Jan. 1, we have welcomed 107,030 visitors to the Sam Noble Museum. It has been one of the busiest years since opening our doors in 2000. We had our highest attendance for the month of February that we have ever had. Our first “bugs” exhibits opened Feb. 1. Five thousand visitors walked through our doors in the first four days and hundreds stopped to take photos with the giant inflatable Oklahoma spider. This very popular arachnid will continue to grace our entrance until the closing of the *Beautiful Beasts* exhibit in September.

Following the tornado disasters on May 19 and 20, the museum began offering free admission on May 22. Then, central Oklahoma was hit again by “the widest tornado in history” at the end of May. Oklahoma certainly had more than its share of heartache and clean-up this year. Hundreds of first responders, volunteers and families found some respite from the terrible destruction, the heat and clean-up by visiting the museum for a few hours. We remained free through June. Attendance last month was 22,254 – approximately 5,000 more than June 2012.

On June 1, we opened a beautiful exhibit, *Bob Kuhn: Drawing on Instinct*. I urge you to take time to see this special retrospective exhibit of Kuhn, one of the masters of wildlife art. Summer is always full of educational programs, from Summer Explorers to ExplorOlogy®, and family workshops like “A Night with Bats” and the upcoming family workshop – “Art on the Wild Side.” A quick and easy way to keep up with what’s happening is via social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and our museum blog – and you can always visit our website. We are a very active museum with a wide range of programs for children and adults. We hope to be a major contributor to lifelong learning, nature appreciation and an understanding of science.

This spring the museum said goodbye to a very dedicated board member – former Sen. Cal Hobson. Cal served three two-year terms, the maximum allowed by museum by-laws. He was one of the major players in the drive to build the Sam Noble Museum. We are forever grateful. We will welcome two new board members this fall – Jonathan Fowler and Elaine Hobson. You will be able to read more about them in the fall *Tracks*.

As a part of the University of Oklahoma, we began a new fiscal year on July 1. Unlike so many museums across the country that are suffering financially, the Sam Noble Museum is strong fiscally, programmatically and intellectually. We are actively filling the curatorial positions of our retired curators with dynamic, young scientists. Our building is among the finest in the world. My goal is to keep this museum among the finest university museums in the world. I believe that Oklahoma deserves no less.


Michael A. Mares, Ph.D.
Director



Above: *Jaguar and Cattle Egrets* (1980)

Bob Kuhn: Drawing On Instinct

Some of the world's most magnificent creatures are on display this summer in the museum exhibit *Bob Kuhn: Drawing on Instinct*. A selection of stunning masterpieces and sketches by the late great wildlife artist Bob Kuhn is on view in the Brown Gallery through Sept. 8.

This retrospective exhibit, organized by the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson Hole, Wyo., and curated by Adam Harris, focuses on a selection of masterpieces from Kuhn's work, displaying the relationship between predator and prey. The exhibit includes drawings from Kuhn's childhood sketches of animals at the Buffalo Zoo in New York as well as sketches and paintings of wildlife in North America and Africa from later in his artistic career.

The museum displays 155 sketches and paintings, selected from more than 5,000 studies, and exhibits a compilation of Kuhn's artwork until his death in 2007. While most of the finished works are canvas paintings, some are interesting magazine covers that reached the homes of millions of Americans through everyday circulations. The sketches reveal Kuhn's mastery of his life's work.

Some of the sketches tie directly to finished works of art in the exhibit, but many are included to be appreciated on their own merits. Seeing this material together gives visitors a sense of the artistic process behind Kuhn's masterpieces.

In addition to sharing rarely seen artwork by Bob Kuhn, this exhibit hopes to inspire young artists to sketch with the same enthusiasm and vigor as Kuhn did. Visitors of any age will be encouraged to take up pencil and paper and experience the rewarding practice of sketching the world around them – indoors and outdoors.

Kuhn's work reflects a majesty and beauty of the natural world that is not often duplicated in the modern era. His artistic subjects are often large game animals like moose, elk and bears, as well as more exotic creatures not found in Western American landscapes, such as elephants and cheetahs. Other subjects to contrast the grandeur of uncommon game are domestic animals, such as dogs, and smaller animals, such as rabbits.

The broad stroke of a career canvassing such distinct details and mastery of natural animal motion undeniably places Kuhn in an elite class of American painters. His legacy lives on in the exhibit, *Bob Kuhn: Drawing on Instinct*.



Above: *Bob Kuhn: Drawing on Instinct* on display at the Sam Noble Museum



Above: the 2013 Paleo Expedition group

Digging Deep for Leadership

BY LAURA WILCOX, PUBLIC RELATIONS

Beneath the sun's penetrating rays on a typical June day in Oklahoma, 12 high school students and a handful of scientists huddle beneath the shade of a pitched canopy. Neon string divides the rocky ledge of Black Mesa into perfect, little squares for the crew to work in next to heaping piles of discarded rock. With paintbrush and chisel in hand, each team member meticulously sifts through the ground until, at last, a gray, rigid structure emerges: dinosaur bone.

Each summer, the ExplorOlogy® Paleo Expedition program affords 12 Oklahoma high school students in ninth through 11th grade the opportunity to gain hands-on paleontology and fieldwork experience by working on-site with professionals unearthing fossils and collecting data. Students have the option of participating in the program for a second year as a Peer Mentor. Peer Mentors return not only to lend their experience and assist a new team of students, but also to develop leadership experience.

The 2013 site, located in Black Mesa, Oklahoma, operates as the first professional, paleontological quarry in that area since World War II and provides educational

opportunities to students via the ExplorOlogy® program, which has served more than 53,000 students since 2007. Thanks to supplemental funding by the Whitten-Newman Foundation, the 15-day adventure is conducted at no cost to the students. Though many of the teens entering the program have a long-standing love for science, Paleo Expedition offers them the first realistic glimpse of science in action that can help make or break any future pursuit of a scientific career.

Lifelong paleontology-lover Gray McCutchen, a second-year participant and peer mentor from Edmond, Okla., said the program confirmed for him a future in paleontology. During his two years with Paleo Expedition, McCutchen has uncovered some astonishing finds.

"This year, just now actually, I found this rib from an Apatosaurus. That was really cool, and then last year I found some teeth from a rhino up near Ashfall, Neb.," recalled McCutchen.

Another peer mentor, Laura Gray from Tulsa, Okla., said that her favorite aspect of the Paleo Expedition was the feeling of unity that accompanied the fieldwork: the "inclusiveness of learning together with others who are also enthused to learn." Gray also said that being a peer mentor has helped her to



Above: A field jacket of a small section of excavated fossil from the quarry

become a more relatable leader, as it is her job to see that no team member gets left behind or excluded from the group.

However, it's not all fun and games on the site. First-year participant Morgan Miller of Buffalo, Okla. claimed she never realized how tedious and difficult paleontology and field work could be until gaining first-hand experience. Miller said she has always had a passion for science, but Paleo Expedition has given her a realistic job description not found in the movies.

“[Being in the field] is a new perspective because you're doing it hands-on and not just reading about it in a book or sitting in a classroom learning about it,” said Miller.

For Miller, however, the excitement that accompanies fieldwork unquestionably outweighs the intensive nature of the job and has instilled in her a desire to further pursue science in her future educational endeavors. Miller also attended the Sam Noble Museum's Oklahoma Science Adventure program in middle school, which she claimed sparked her initial interest in scientific studies.

“I know it's cliché, but there is nothing like actually doing something to get the best feeling for what it is like,” said Kyle Davies, museum preparator for the vertebrate paleontology department and Paleo Expedition participant since 2009. “It is one thing to be told about something or to read about it and another to do it.”



Above: Koltan Kitterman working at the dig site

Although the program ends after 15 days, the experience resonates long-term with many students. Ernesto Vargas of Oklahoma City, Okla., a past participant of Oklahoma Science Adventure and Paleo Expedition, recently was named a Gates Millennium Scholar and will receive a full scholarship, funded by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to attend the University of Chicago. Vargas intends to pursue a degree in geology with postgraduate work in invertebrate paleontology. Vargas is the second ExplorOlogy® student to receive this prestigious award in the past two years, the other being Nancy Ha of Muskogee, Okla.

“I have known Ernesto for five years, and he is really one of the most exceptional students,” said Jes Cole, the Sam Noble's museum head of education. “He has worked very hard to make his dreams a reality.”

Vargas claims that without the experiences and knowledge gained from participating in the ExplorOlogy® program, he may not be where he is today.

“Because of ExplorOlogy®, I have a foundation for what I want to do and where I want to go. As a future scientist, I really look forward to one day sharing my knowledge and experience with others, just like this program has done for me,” said Vargas. “[It] has influenced my next steps more than anything else.”

“Clearly, the future holds immense promise for Explorology® students, those who just returned from the field and those already moving on to bigger dreams. While all of the ExplorOlogy® participants may not pursue a career in science, the skills acquired through the Paleo Expedition program, such as leadership, responsibility, ability to ask questions and find an answers through science, as well as teamwork and self confidence, will undoubtedly benefit students in whatever discipline they pursue,” said museum director Michael Mares. “As proven by ExplorOlogy® veterans like Vargas and Ha, today's ExplorOlogy® students will be the leaders of tomorrow.”

The ExplorOlogy® program would like to thank the University of Oklahoma, the Sam Noble Museum's Vertebrate Paleontology department and the Collection of Recent Invertebrates, Oklahoma State University Native Explorers and the Whitten-Newman Foundation for making Paleo Expedition possible.

Fall 2013



Spike's Club: Game On!
Registration Deadline: September 3

Worn to the Bone: A Fossils Journey

BY LAURA WILCOX, PUBLIC RELATIONS

Thanks to many Hollywood blockbusters, we have grown familiar with the image of paleontologists digging in the field in pursuit of the “big find.” But what happens after the big discovery when the end credits roll? What occurs between the field and museum in the life of a prehistoric bone?

According to Kyle Davies, museum preparator for the vertebrate paleontology department, once a fossil is discovered in the field, paleontologists dig a trench around it and the surrounding rock. They then cover the piece with thin tissue paper, which serves as a protective barrier, before coating the specimen in a mixture of plaster and burlap. Once the plaster has set up, they undermine the specimen, cautiously remove it from the ground and wrap the exposed side in plaster and burlap. Paleontologists refer to this completed object as a field jacket.

Field jackets, like the one at the bottom of the next page, are then sent to museums for further preparation. The field jacket contains Tenontosaurus bone from a dig at the McLeod Correctional Facility near Atoka, Okla. on May 2, 2002. The Tenontosaurus, a fairly common herbivore from the Cretaceous Period, roamed much of North America approximately 110 million years ago. This particular field jacket remains unopened, but was examined by the 2013 Paleo Expedition ExplorOlogy team this summer.

When ready for preparation, the field jacket is opened using a cast-cutter, the same tool used by medical doctors. Then, paleontologists begin

the tedious process of slowly chipping away at unwanted rock to expose the bone. This task requires a diverse tool kit, containing common items like paintbrushes and pencils in addition to specialized tools such as pin vises and dental instruments.

Due to the extreme level of caution required, removing bone from a field jacket may take several thousand hours. In the case of the Sam Noble Museum’s Pentaceratops skull, the largest found in the world, the removal process required roughly 3,000 hours. For this reason, the vertebrate paleontology department utilizes a large number of trained volunteers.

Of course, volunteers must undergo a rigorous training process as common practices of specimen removal have evolved over many years. According to Davies, many of today’s practices derive from a long history of trial and error within the field of vertebrate paleontology.

“Everything we do is done under the lessons from the past about what does and doesn’t work,” explained Davies.

Once enough bone becomes visible, paleontologists seek to identify the species. How can anyone identify an entire species of dinosaur from just a handful of partially-buried bone fragments, you may ask?

“How do you know what model car you have?” Davies replied. “You know by looking at it. An expert could tell you a model and make just by looking at a tail light.” He explained that in this way, identification

“Everything we do is done under the lessons from the past about what does and doesn’t work”

of species relies heavily on specialized knowledge and previous training in comparative anatomy.

Occasionally, bone fragments require repair, calling for specialized forms of adhesive glues. Once the pieces are glued together, paleontologists employ a sandbox and gravity to hold the bone together as it dries over a period of several minutes to hours.

From here, paleontologists prepare the bone for study, display or storage. For display, bones are reconstructed before use. Sometimes, but not always, they are replaced with precision castings made by molding and casting the actual bones or reconstructions in the lab. Staff members in either vertebrate paleontology or exhibit departments then paint the castings to resemble the actual bone.

Finally, staff workers assemble the bones to form full skeletons inside one of the museum’s exhibit dioramas. Museums are most likely to showcase dinosaurs for which they possess many of the actual skeletal pieces, such as the Sam Noble Museum’s *Tenontosaurus*.

The original bones rest inside the highly organized walls of a massive collection facility. Here they are protected and available for scientific study, or further replication.

Below: Field jacket from Atoka, Okla.



Above: Gomphothere tooth from the Dyack site in far southern Arizona

Below: A volunteer uses a pin vise to chip away at unwanted rock



The Mysterious “Tail” of the Red Shiners

BY LAURA WILCOX, PUBLIC RELATIONS



Above: Red Shiner

Now you see them; now you don't. After years of being the most common fish in the creek, the red shiner disappeared from several streams in southern Oklahoma. Edie Marsh-Matthews, curator of ichthyology at the Sam Noble Museum, has been studying the peculiar case of the red shiners for years and has recently begun to unravel the mystery that has left scientists puzzled.

In 1994, Marsh-Matthews began studying a community of fish in Brier Creek, Marshall County, in southern Oklahoma. She and her colleagues were carefully monitoring fish populations in the area, when they noticed that red shiner minnows had disappeared from many creeks where they had once been very common, including Brier Creek. All of the creeks from which red shiners disappeared are direct tributaries of Lake Texoma, a man made impoundment of the Red River and Washita River in southern Oklahoma.

The loss of this minnow was very puzzling because it is very common and tolerant of extreme conditions, such as high temperature and low oxygen in the water. To explain

the loss of this hardy fish, Marsh-Matthews and her colleagues suggested that the creeks might have been altered over time due to the reservoir in a way that increased habitats for predators on red shiners. Then, in 2007, there was a major flood, during which lake waters backed up many miles into the creeks, and red shiners reappeared in some of the creeks. The scientists expected that the red shiners would once more become common in Brier Creek, but surprisingly, they were not.

To try and understand why the red shiners could not become re-established, Marsh-Matthews and her colleagues designed a series of experiments using the artificial streams located at the University of Oklahoma's Aquatic Research Facility. Artificial streams consist of a series of fiberglass pools connected by riffles. The water is pumped from one end of the stream into the other, to replicate the current of a natural waterway. Each pool contains a small window for observation, so that ichthyologists can observe their experiments in action. Marsh-Matthews, her colleagues and students have been using the streams in their research since 2009.

By producing artificial ecosystems similar to those of Brier Creek, Marsh-Matthews and her colleagues created an environment in which they could control the variables while closely monitoring changes in the red shiner population. After conducting several rounds of experiments they found a promising but unexpected correlation: sunfish, which are potential predators of red shiners, can lower survival and reproduction of red shiners. This finding supported their earlier suggestion that predators could have been responsible for the initial disappearance of red shiners from the creeks. However, the experiments also yielded some surprises. First, some of the sunfish species used in the experiment were found to be more important predators than ichthyologists had previously thought. Secondly, the predators seemed to prefer to eat red shiners over another minnow, the bigeye shiner.

According to Marsh-Matthews, both minnows should be equally easy for sunfish to eat, judging by the sunfish's gape, or size of the mouth. Marsh-Matthews theorizes that the issue lies in anatomical variation. The red shiner minnows are deeper-bodied than the bigeye shiners, resulting in a larger structure connecting the body and tail. This limits them from moving as quickly by significantly lowering burst speed, the initial surge of motion when a fish darts from a predator by quickly swishing their tail. The bigeye shiner, in contrast,

possesses a narrower body better suited to quick bursts of motion. This difference should make red shiners easier for the predators to catch.

“So, we think that these predators were not only involved in the initial loss of red shiners from the creeks, but maybe they're not letting them come back, because the number of sunfish in Brier Creek has increased over time,” Marsh-Matthews said.

Marsh-Matthews is still in the process of discovering hard data to back her results. She said that there is solid circumstantial evidence to support her hypotheses on the curious disappearance of the red shiner population and that her evidence will contribute to invasion biology. By shedding light on this bizarre phenomenon, Marsh-Matthews has begun to unravel the truth behind the vanishing red shiners.



Above: Marsh-Matthews introducing red shiners to the artificial stream.



Above: Artificial streams used to replicate natural environments.

Searching for New Species in the High Andes

BY MICHAEL MARES, DIRECTOR

You are sitting on a jet-black promontory in the high Andes of Argentina, where you have been conducting a survey of the mammals of a place that has never before been studied. The day has been long, beginning well before sunrise when the traps were checked, the animals prepared, the tissues preserved for genetic or viral analyses, and the camp broken and moved to a new study site. By late afternoon, after traveling for more than five hours over breathtaking mountain roads, the new camp has been established and the traps have been baited and set in the new and biologically unexplored habitat.

The howling Andean wind has finally died down after a day spent eating dust as you climbed higher and higher in the mountains to the new campsite. The morning's camp was at an elevation of only 1,200 feet, but the narrow, winding road with sheer drops of thousands of feet has ended at an elevation of 15,000 feet — most of the world now lies below the camp. The rarefied air has announced its scarcity of oxygen with a headache and shortness of breath. Walking a few steps makes you feel as if you had climbed a flight of stairs. Now, as the hours pass, your body begins to adjust to the high valley nestled between towering mountain massifs.

It has now been 16 hours since the day began. Darkness is covering the surrounding peaks and valleys like a cold quilt mottled with stars. Nearby, the ancient track

that was worn by the feet of thousands of Incas as they crossed this valley five centuries earlier is no longer discernible in the gloaming. Finally, the night is still. The stars are so large and bright they seem to be lanterns hanging just out of reach. Flamingoes croak softly in a nearby salt lake, and in the distance an armadillo screams as it is pursued by a red Andean fox. Guanacos, the long-necked camels of South America, have bedded down, their specialized corpuscles and thick fur making them immune to the dizzying height or the rapidly plunging temperature. Even the chinchillas, those pulchritudinous rodents whose exquisite pelts almost led to the extinction of the species when hunters pursued them practically to the last animal, are hidden in their rocky redoubts.

The clouds, unable to persist in the cold, arid air, have retreated to lower elevations. An occasional



Above: Andes of Argentina by Juan Carlos Morales



Above: Andes Mountains by Michael Mares

lightning flash in the distance illuminates the cloud mass, huddled at a lower altitude along the wet slopes of the pre-Andean mountains. For more than a hundred square miles, the campfire is the only light burning on this desert island in the sky that comprises the roof of the South American continent. The fire is burning low and there is little firewood remaining, for the nearest trees are more than a three-hour drive away. This is a land with no trees.

The warm day has become a cold night — at 15,000 feet the nights are always cold. Suddenly, a metal door snaps shut on a live trap set along the small stream that flows in the distance, its metallic sound starkly artificial compared to the soft hum of nature that surrounds the camp. The trap is like an alarm sounding in the cold, peaceful night. Our efforts of the day, the week, the month, our willingness to persevere, may have borne fruit. Something has entered the trap. Most likely it is a species with which we are already familiar. But it may be a new species, an unnamed mammal that is new not just to us, but new to science, as well — a species never before seen by another human being. It might harbor an undescribed virus or a parasite that has never before been observed. Perhaps it is a mammal that will clarify a major question of evolution, ecology or biogeography.

If it is new, it almost certainly will have surprising adaptations to life in these high, arid mountains. We are the first mammalogists to ever visit and collect in this spot in the long history of scientific exploration on the continent. What has entered our trap, set with such hope after a difficult trip and a long day? The protracted night that lies before us is cold and black. The wind will commence soon, perhaps a harbinger of a sudden change in the weather. The danger of a snowfall in the high mountains is ever present, and the dirt tracks quickly become impassable. Fatigue envelopes us like a vise, holding us fast in the high desert.

Silence returns to the barren plateau, but the sound of the snapping trap door, long dispersed on the mountain air, still resounds in our minds. Sit by the fire for a while and we will talk of field trips past, and the unusual things we have seen as field biologists working in the uncommon regions of the world. We will talk of lonely places, and habitats where people seem hardly to fit into the web of life that supports a rich array of animals and plants. We will talk of armadillos, rodents, bats, marsupials and other poorly known animals whose fascinating lives transcend their hidden existence.

We will talk...as soon as I get back from checking that trap.

Art on the Wild Side

Family Art Workshop

Saturday, Aug. 17 // 1 to 3 p.m.

\$20 members // \$30 non-members

Call (405) 325-1008 to register

Science Wants YOU!

BY LAURA WILCOX, PUBLIC RELATIONS



When you hear the phrase “scientific research,” you may think of scientists in lab coats or animal dissections, but have you ever pictured yourself as a research tool? Now you can, thanks to the merging of technology and science.

Katrina Menard, curator of recent Invertebrates at the Sam Noble Museum, has been tracking the location of Velvet Ants in Oklahoma with student Jacob Mitchell as part of a research project with the University of Oklahoma Honors Research Assistantship Program. The program allows aspiring scientists to gain hands-on experience while working with a professional in the field.

“Because of my excellent mentor, Dr. Katrina Menard, I now have a much clearer view of the realities of research and the processes that scientists must go through to collect data and publish material,” Mitchell said. “I have

even gotten to appreciate a field of science, entomology, that I had fairly little interest in at the beginning.”

The Velvet Ants that Menard and Mitchell are studying are actually not ants but wasps. The common name comes from the wingless females, which are covered with dense, brightly colored red or orange hairs, which makes them look like large furry ants. Menard and Mitchell have been working together to track where these insects have been in the past and whether they are still present in those areas of Oklahoma today.

Menard has combined innovative technology and citizen science, a method of research that allowed everyday residents to be scientific contributors.

Although not everyone is familiar with the term citizen science, the concept has been around for quite some time. For instance, NASA has been using citizen science since 2000 for various projects. According to Menard, citizen science serves as a highly beneficial tool for obtaining a wide variety of data.

“Citizen science allows us to integrate everyone’s natural ability to observe, make hypotheses and contribute information about their experiences of the world around us,” said Menard. “This allows us to gather more information and observations than we can do alone as dedicated professional scientists.”

Below: A Pseudomethica as a scientific specimen



The 2013 Volunteer of the Year



continued

So, how does Menard's project work? After identifying a Velvet Ant in nature, Oklahomans snap a picture of the insect using a cell phone. Then, using an app called iNaturalist, participants upload their photos from virtually any location to a common database monitored by Menard and Mitchell. Along with the photo, iNaturalist also submits the user's location, which both scientists can then record as part of their research on why these wasps are found in particular areas.

Menard said they chose to conduct their research through iNaturalist because of its large existing audience. Menard's project, called "Mutillidae of Oklahoma," has only been active on iNaturalist for about two weeks and is still considered to be in a trial stage. If successful, Menard said that citizen science tools like iNaturalist could be used in a greater educational context in the future.

"Citizen science is a growing area in education," said Jes Cole, head of the museum's education department. "With the capabilities of technology and the Internet, it is now possible to reach out to people across the world and involve them in learning about what goes into research."

iNaturalist is available for iPhone and Android users and is free to download. Contributors also have the chance to be credited for their photos in scientific publications.

In addition to her work with iNaturalist, Menard also participated in Entoblitz this past April, another citizen science project, hosted by the Texas A&M Entomology Graduate Student Association. Entoblitz allows anyone interested in entomology the opportunity to hunt for bugs in the name of science. For more information on this project, visit the Texas A&M website.

So whether you're an amateur entomologist, a stay-at-home mom or a middle school student, now you can become part of the scientific process. Researchers such as Menard need your contributions, and with just the click of a button you can lend a helping hand to the scientific community. So what are you waiting for? Science wants you!

If you are interested in supporting this and other research and collection activities in entomology and recent invertebrates, contact Pam McIntosh at (405) 325-5020.

It takes many helping hands from generous volunteers to run the Sam Noble Museum, and in April, the museum celebrated national Volunteer Appreciation Week. During this time, the museum honors volunteers for their invaluable contributions. Mary LeBlanc was selected to receive the 2013 Tom Siegenthaler Volunteer of the Year Award. Mary has been a volunteer at the museum for 18 years and is the longest-serving active volunteer in the Vertebrate Paleontology Department.

In 1994, LeBlanc saw a newspaper article describing a fossil preparation class at the museum. Since she volunteered before the museum moved into its present facility, LeBlanc actually had a hand in preparing some of the displays in the Hall of Ancient Life.

"It's very exciting to be able to walk around the Hall of Ancient Life and see the various specimens we worked on," says LeBlanc. "When I take relatives to the museum, I can show them the different specimens I helped create."

She has been an asset with administrative and computer projects in several offices, tirelessly worked almost every special event, and takes advantage of a wide variety of professional development opportunities. Congratulations, Mary, we appreciate you!



Sam Noble Museum

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