

the SAM NOBLE OKLAHOMA MUSEUM of NATURAL HISTORY



Tracks

Fall 2009 Newsletter, Volume 21, Number 2

GIFT TO THE MUSEUM

Sam Noble Museum receives gift of paintings by renowned ornithologist George Miksch Sutton

EXPLOROLOGY

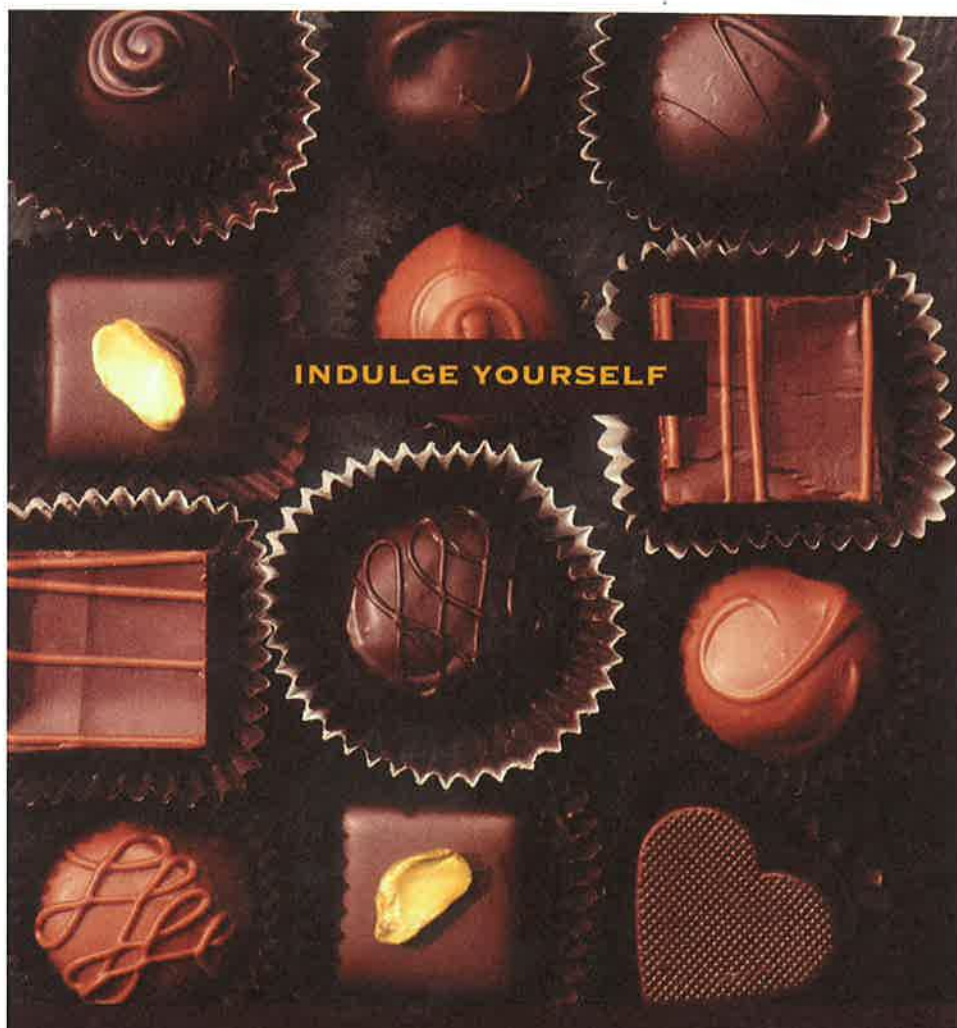
New programs feature targeted learning experiences for teachers

NAVAJO MUSIC

Ethnology curator Dan Swan discusses the commercial popularity of peyote music



INFORMATION




INDULGE YOURSELF

MAY 15 THROUGH SEPT. 6, 2010

Chocolate
THE EXHIBITION

SAM NOBLE MUSEUM, NORMAN, OK
WWW.SNOMNH.OU.EDU | 405.325.4712

Chocolate and its national tour were developed by The Field Museum, Chicago. This project was supported, in part, by the National Science Foundation. The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution. For accommodations on the basis of disability, call (405) 325-4712.



MUSEUM INFORMATION

Address: 2401 Chautauqua Ave.
Norman, OK 73072-7029
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Web site: www.snomnh.ou.edu

OUR MISSION

The Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History at the University of Oklahoma inspires minds to understand the natural and cultural world through collection-based discovery, interpretation and education.

We do this by:

- Collecting and maintaining specimens, cultural objects and associated data, including linguistic and ethnographic, for current and future research
- Conducting and disseminating research to increase knowledge
- Teaching university students to develop critical-thinking skills
- Educating the public through programs and exhibitions to increase scientific literacy
- Conducting K-12 school programs to enrich classroom experiences.

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

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NEW PROGRAMS, EXHIBITS IN COMING YEAR



Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of 2009, we are moving into challenging times. Across the country, museums are dealing with the significant economic downturn that has swept the nation. Fortunately, the University of Oklahoma and the Sam Noble Museum have managed their resources conservatively and strategically. We are as well positioned as any museum to weather the financially troubled waters that lie ahead. We will continue to fulfill our mission and serve the public, carrying out research, service and teaching at the highest levels. The Sam Noble Museum continues to be a pacesetter among university museums worldwide.

Many exciting new exhibits and programs have been part of the museum's activities this year, and 2010 promises to be equally stimulating. This was the year of Charles Darwin—the 200th anniversary of his birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, a book that changed the world. The museum hosted lectures by leading Darwin scholars, authors of children's books about Darwin, and a special exhibition featuring a complete set of first editions of Darwin's works. Our curators presented lectures on modern evolutionary studies. Paul Sereno, a National Geographic Society Explorer-in-Residence and Research Associate of the museum, brought his newest and most important discovery—a miniature ancestor of *Tyrannosaurus rex*—to the Sam Noble Museum for a press conference. It was fitting that one of the first announcements of this amazing dinosaur was made at one of the great dinosaur museums in the country.

The museum's educational programs continue to be extremely successful. This year, more than 25,000 schoolchildren participated in museum programs. The museum's unique ExplorOlogy program was remarkably effective, with more than 1,850 students and 41 teachers participating in in-depth science programs related to museum research. ExplorOlogy, funded by the Whitten-Newman Foundation, is designed to offer young people a life-changing experience in science by providing programs in which they work closely with museum staff and curators and actually do science in the field, uncovering nature's secrets. As one high school student put it: "ExplorOlogy has definitely, without a doubt, changed my feelings about science. I know this experience is not ending... it is the beginning of something big!" We are proud to offer this program again in 2010.

Many new programs and exhibits also are planned for 2010. One of my favorites is the new Science Film Series on Sunday afternoons. The films are free with museum admission and will strengthen the understanding and appreciation of science and scientists. These are spectacularly good films, with some winning Oscars for best performance or best picture. It will be a great way to spend a winter or early spring afternoon.

Upcoming exhibits will include *Stories in Fiber and Clay: Baskets and Ceramics of the Southwest*, which opens in February. In May, we open the blockbuster exhibit, *Chocolate*, developed by The Field Museum to tell the amazing history of chocolate and the influence of its discovery and development on societies around the world. *Mediterranean Treasures: Selections from the Classics Collection*, opens in September and promises to be a beautiful display of the museum's important classic materials.

These are exciting times and now, more than ever, I look forward to your continued support of the museum, as well as your continued enjoyment of the programs and exhibits planned for 2010. On behalf of everyone at the museum, I wish you and your family the season's best wishes of good health, peace and prosperity.

Michael A. Mares, Ph.D.
Director

M. Mares



MUSEUM RECEIVES GIFT OF SUTTON PAINTINGS

The museum recently received a gift of 14 original paintings by renowned ornithologist and artist George Miksch Sutton. The paintings were in the private collection of James and Nancy DeVore, of Norman, who were personal friends of Sutton. The works were donated to the museum by the DeVores' children.

Sutton was curator of birds at the Stovall Museum from 1952 to 1980. During his lifetime, he produced hundreds of watercolors of birds from around the world. These were used to illustrate his books and scholarly papers.

The museum has an extensive collection of Sutton materials, now numbering more than 530. This includes not only paintings, but also hand-colored cut-outs of hawks demonstrating the variations of color, study sketches and more.

The 14 watercolors in the DeVore donation will be familiar to Sutton fans. They are original paintings that were used in Sutton's book, *Fifty Common Birds of Oklahoma and the Southern Great Plains*, published in 1977.

The DeVore donation also included some significant contributions to the museum's

Native American Art collection, including two paintings by William Rabbit (Cherokee) and Ruthe Blalock Jones (Delaware/Shawnee/Peoria), plus several bronze sculptures by Willard Stone (Cherokee) and Harvey Pratt (Cheyenne/Arapaho/Sioux).

Because watercolors on paper are easily damaged by prolonged exposure to light, the Sutton works are not put on exhibit frequently or for extended time periods. Selections from the collection do, however, make periodic appearances in special exhibitions at the museum. Selected works were last on display in 2004.





A LITTLE MINNOW RAISES BIG QUESTIONS

Every research project begins with a question... a mystery of sorts. They don't have to be big mysteries. Most researchers are micro-focused, seeking the answers to questions most of us wouldn't even think to ask. But sometimes small questions can have larger implications.

Take the case of the humble red shiner. The red shiner is a little fish in the minnow family, common to streams and rivers all over Oklahoma and the southern Great Plains. In its native territory it seems to live in relative peace with others in its community. But in areas outside its native range where the shiner has been introduced (mainly as a bait fish), it has a bad reputation. It is considered an "invader," even a pest. Once introduced into a new territory, the red shiner has a history of population explosion, multiplying exponentially and eating other species out of house and home.

Edie Marsh-Matthews, curator of fishes at the museum, along with William Matthews, chair of the Department of Zoology at the University of Oklahoma, has been studying the red

their banks in spring storms. Historically, the shiner has been the most common fish in these waterways. Then, in the mid 1980s, the numbers declined. Since that time, the red shiner has disappeared from many



Pictured are red shiner fish captured from Brier Creek. Photo by William Matthews

shiner for many years, particularly in the streams and rivers feeding into Lake Texoma. The shiner is a resilient little fish, able to withstand dramatic extremes of habitat. This is a terrific survival technique in Oklahoma's mercurial waterways, some of which dry up to a trickle in the summer and flood

of the streams that flow into Lake Texoma, but has remained abundant in other streams that flow directly into the Red and Washita rivers. The loss of red shiners from lake tributaries, but not from river tributaries, was puzzling. Marsh-Matthews and Matthews, who make regular collections from

the area, suspected habitat alterations in areas between the creeks and the reservoir were contributing to the disappearance of red shiners from the lake tributaries. They noted that stream banks in these creeks had eroded, leaving sandy berms and isolated pools where streams once made clear cuts into the lake. They thought it likely that these changes in habitat accessibility were preventing the shiners from migrating back into the streams from the reservoir following annual periods of low water and occasional drought in the creeks.

In July of 2007, Lake Texoma flooded to its highest level since 1946. The floodwaters backed up into feeder streams, washing out the sand berms and re-opening the channels between lake and stream. Marsh-Matthews and Matthews expected that the tough little shiner would soon be back, and sure enough, in late spring of 2008, they found breeding shiners in two creeks.

Later in the summer, the shiners were still present.

Marsh-Matthews remembers her feeling of satisfaction on seeing the shiners in her nets again after so many years. "That's it, I thought," she said. "They're back!" But when she returned in October of '08, the shiners were nowhere to be found.

The pattern repeated itself over the next year. In June of 2009, the red shiners were once again living and breeding in Brier Creek. By October, they were gone. But why? This is a species that is widely perceived to be one of the worst "invaders" of streams outside their native habitat. Why do they seem to be incapable of "re-invading" their own territory?

To answer the question, Marsh-Matthews and Matthews have embarked upon a research investigation that combines field studies, genetic research and laboratory experimentation to begin to put together pieces of the puzzle. They

constructed a set of 12 artificial streams in an offsite laboratory south of the museum. Each stream unit has been populated with the same numbers of five fishes common to Brier Creek and other waterways around Texoma. Once these communities were well-established and stable, Marsh-Matthews and Matthews introduced

studies on shiners that re-appear in the Texoma streams, looking for clues about their populations of origin.

"This is a story that has no ending right now," Marsh-Matthews said. "We will have to wait and see what the research tells us. But it is a good example of why the historical data are so critical. In

"This is a story that has no ending right now. We will have to wait and see what the research tells us. But it is a good example of why the historical data are so critical."

varying numbers of red shiners into each group and are currently monitoring their success.

In addition to the experiment, Marsh-Matthews and Matthews will continue to monitor the natural streams, watching for shiners and keeping track of relative numbers of other common fishes. At the same time, one of Marsh-Matthews' graduate students, Nate Franssen, will be doing genetic

stream communities the same common fishes are always there, but not always in the same abundance. This variability makes it hard to detect changes over time. It's hard to get a signal of change against that noisy background of variability. That's why it's important to have a long history of data."

Marsh-Matthews thinks that one possible outcome of the current research could be the

vindication of the red shiner's reputation as an invader. Perhaps rather than causing the decline of other species, the red shiner is simply making the most of a natural decline caused by harsh conditions – conditions that others cannot withstand, but for which the shiner has spent hundreds of generations adapting. Maybe when introduced in small numbers into strong established communities, the red shiners are not able to hold their own, or at least not until their numbers reach a certain "threshold" of density that allows them to withstand the pressures of predators and environment to maintain their number.

For now, Marsh-Matthews just doesn't know, but stay tuned. After many years of studying the red shiners, they just might still surprise her. "There's always something to learn," she says. "Even in systems we've been studying for decades."



THE EVOLUTION OF EXPLOROLOGY

ExplorOlogy is a series of educational programs designed to engage Oklahomans of all ages in science exploration. The program provides hands-on field learning in the natural sciences for elementary, middle and high school students from across the state.

ExplorOlogy was founded two years ago through a gift from the Whitten-Newman Foundation. It began with two programs for middle and high school students: Oklahoma Science Adventure and Paleo Expedition.

Oklahoma Science Adventure takes middle school students to field locations over the course of a week to learn about biology and paleontology with museum scientists.

Paleo Expedition is a two-week program for high school students in which they go to remote field sites to search for and excavate dinosaur fossils under the tutelage of museum paleontologists. Thanks to the generosity of the Whitten-Newman Foundation, these programs are provided at no cost to the participants. All expenses, including travel, room and board, are paid for by the program.

This year, ExplorOlogy will expand its horizons to begin offering additional educational experiences to the classmates and teachers of the students who are chosen to participate in the field programs. An outreach program



Vertebrate paleontology curator Richard Cifelli, left, and Lorene McGhee of Buffalo, Okla., prepare to extract a fossil during Paleo Expedition 2009. Ten high school students from around the state traveled to Utah to study paleontology in this two-week residential program. Photo by Holli Langlieb.

to the schools is getting under way this fall, and two new programs for students and teachers will take place in the spring and fall of 2010.

Outreach to Schools

ExplorOlogy in Motion is the school outreach counterpart to the Oklahoma Science Adventure and Paleo Expedition. Over the next

several months, the ExplorOlogy team of museum educators will travel to the schools of each of the students from the summer programs to conduct an on-site science experience with the student's entire grade level. Each student of the summer programs also will give a brief presentation about his or her experiences in ExplorOlogy.

Science Institute for Teachers

This July, 16 teachers will be chosen by competitive application from across the state to take part in ExplorOlogy's Science Institute: five days of intensive, hands-on science experiences. The teachers will team up with scientists in a variety of different

fields from the museum and other departments on the University of Oklahoma campus. Each day the teachers will spend several hours taking part in real, ongoing scientific research projects, gathering and analyzing data under the guidance of OU scientists. The rest of the day will feature workshops in pedagogy led by museum educators, helping the

teachers find ways to translate their research experiences into engaging, educational classroom curriculum for their students. The teachers will be from communities large and small across the state, and from elementary, middle and high schools.

"We will be focusing on science for all ages and encouraging conversations across grade levels," explained Holli Langlieb, ExplorOlogy coordinator. "The idea is to help teachers prepare students for the next levels."

ScienceEscape

In March, a new ExplorOlogy program, ScienceEscape, will be offered to students and teachers together for the first time. Scheduled for the week of Spring Break, ScienceEscape will feature four full-day programs. Teachers will apply to take part in the program with their students. Four school groups will be chosen to participate.

The students and their teacher will be picked up from their school in museum vans and brought to a Norman field location for the day. There they will work with Jessa Watters, the manager of the museum's herpetology (reptiles and amphibians) collection. Watters will lead the group in the

their parents will return to the museum on Saturday to give short presentations about their findings. Teachers participating in ScienceEscape also will return to the museum in the summer to take part in the Science Institute.

"This program focuses on the processes that scientists go through," explains

"We will be focusing on science for all ages and encouraging conversations across grade levels. The idea is to help teachers prepare students for the next levels."

basics of herpetology and together they will form a scientific question. They will spend the morning making observations and collecting data to use in developing possible answers. In the afternoon, the students and their teacher will return together to their school to analyze their data and make conclusions.

Finally, all the groups of teachers, students and

Langlieb. "The students and their teachers will see how different groups of researchers can look at the same site and come up with different ideas: different observations, different questions and different hypotheses."

The new programs help to fill out the educational circle of students to teachers to students that is central to the main goal of ExplorOlogy: creating

multiple and repeated educational programming to cross-train the students and their teachers with the aim of developing an educational network.

"We are looking for new ways to reach students," Langlieb said. "We are finding ways to expand the impact of ExplorOlogy into classrooms across the state, all year long."

For more information on ExplorOlogy, or to apply for one of the ExplorOlogy programs, visit the program Web site: <http://explorology.snomnh.ou.edu>, or call the museum education department at (405) 325-4712.

Applications are being accepted for the Oklahoma Science Adventure through Feb. 26. Applications for Paleo Expedition are being accepted through March 26 and applications for Science Institute through April 23.



NAVAJO MUSIC GAINS COMMERCIAL APPEAL

Native Americans are anything but a homogenous community. There are wide differences in cultural identity from tribe to tribe, including differences in religion, language and history. A major distinction from this trend is the Native American Church, an inter-tribal religion that is practiced in Native communities in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Though recent in origin – it developed in Indian Territory in the 19th century – it spread quickly among tribes. Today the Church is found in rural communities and urban centers throughout North America.

Sometimes referred to as “Peyotism,” in most settings the Church is highly Christian in its orientation and theology, but includes as one of its central elements the ritual use of peyote as a holy sacrament during religious ceremonies. Also central to the religion are the vibrant and symbolic art forms associated with its diffusion and development. Dan Swan, curator of ethnology at the museum, has spent more than 20 years studying the visual arts of this fascinating religion. In recent years, he has focused his research on the musical repertoires of the church.

The Native American Church coalesced in Oklahoma in the 1880s, during a time of extreme turmoil and chaos in the lives of Native American peoples. Their resource base had been destroyed, their communities had been decimated by disease, and their cultures were being systematically undermined by

a government policy of suppression and forced assimilation. The advent of the Peyote religion provided a new religious form that was grounded in the traditional Native values of right living, peaceful relations, and service to family and community. Peyotism provided a source of hope and reinvigoration among its adherents and spread a doctrine of faith, love, hope and charity. By the time Oklahoma achieved statehood, the Native American Church had become the dominant religion among Native people. Today it continues

“For many Navajo people, to create beauty where none existed before is part of your purpose as a human being. It is your responsibility to be creative in order to be a good Navajo citizen.”

to be an important Native American faith, claiming more than 250,000 members.

The Church’s success stems from its ability to adapt to diverse local contexts and agendas while maintaining its general ceremonial structure and core theology. Although there are local, tribal, state, national and even international organizations associated with the Native American Church, there is no overarching bureaucracy and authority, particularly as it relates to religious practice and interpretation. Certain constants remain, but the details of each Church’s ceremony will reflect aspects of the culture of which it is a part.

Music is one such constant – a vital part of the Church’s ceremonies. It is also one of the key ways the Native American Church is able to incorporate community traditions and contemporary trends. The all-night ceremony is largely composed of rounds of individual singing in which each participant sings four songs in succession as the ritual staff circulates around the ceremonial circle. In many of the songs there are no words, only sounds, or vocables, sung in a familiar style, accompanied by rattle and drum. The songs are traditional peyote songs – easy-to-learn variations on a theme. And there are hundreds of these variations. Church members may have certain songs of their own, or songs associated with their particular family or community. A range of protocols exist to govern the polite behavior of Peyotists

during religious services. Among these: it is considered ill-mannered to sing someone else’s song, or to sing the same song someone else sang before you in the ceremony. It is therefore important for each member to have a wide repertoire of songs to choose from.

Swan is particularly interested in Peyote music in the Navajo community, where the genre has achieved a whole new level of expression and interpretation. Among Navajo Peyotists, there is a growing philosophy that one should never sing the same song twice at all. “It’s like peyote jazz,” Swan says. This relates to a virtue from traditional

Navajo religion in which the status of a healer is largely measured by the number of songs he commands. “For many Navajo people, to create beauty where none existed before is part of your purpose as a human being. It is your responsibility to be creative in order to be a good Navajo citizen. So virtually every Navajo is, by definition, an artist on some level.”

This cultural dictate to create, combined with the tremendous growth of the Native American Church among the Navajo over the past two decades creates a situation in which a market of consumers has developed for the music associated with the religion. This is perhaps best evidenced in the explosion of the quantity and diversity of Navajo Peyote music available commercially. Over the past two decades the Navajo have expanded the genre to include an increasing trend toward an emphasis on lyrical compositions in the Navajo language.

Rather than focusing on compositions of abstract vocables, some Navajo artists have begun telling stories through the songs, adding a lyrical element to an art form that had previously been largely melodic in nature.

There is another factor that adds to the recent explosion of Peyote songs. The digital age has made recordings of these songs much easier to produce, package and distribute. Suddenly songs that previously had to be “caught” by ear during a Peyote ceremony can now be compiled, mass-produced and marketed to an

ever-growing consumer audience of Native American Church members. There are both professional studios that are making the most of this niche market, and home-based artists making their own CDs at their desktops and distributing them themselves.

Not everyone is happy with the direction in which the Navajo Peyote music scene is moving. “With each



CD Cover. Courtesy of J&C Music, Gallup, NM, copyright 2008.

new technological innovation, we find a new set of cultural dilemmas,” Swan explains. “Some members of the Church believe that the songs should not be commercialized – they are prayers. In Peyotism, brotherly love is an important tenet. Some older members feel that you should not be in competition over the music. You’re not supposed to be a rock star.” Yet among the Navajo, Peyote music CDs are proliferating at an exponential

rate, more so than in any other region of the country.

A glance at Swan’s extensive archive of Peyote music speaks for itself. There are CDs of Christmas music presented in a Peyote style with Navajo lyrics, educational CDs for children, birthday songs, and highly-produced compilations featuring background sounds of birds, wind and waves in addition to the traditional drum, voice and rattle. Peyote music may not be ready for the Top 40, but it is growing and changing to adapt to a diverse set of audience expectations.

Swan has been collecting, cataloging and studying commercial recordings of Peyote music since 1994, and each year the number of available titles increases. In the past, he has met with the artists in ceremonial settings and in their homes. As his research moves forward, he will begin to look at the *business* of Peyote music. Over the next year he plans to work with music producers and artists in the studio setting to better understand the

commercial marketing of the music of the Native American Church.

Swan believes that one thing is certain – Peyote music is a vibrant art form that will increase in prominence over the coming years. Swan plans to continue his efforts to document its development.





UPCOMING EVENTS

COMING SOON:

Darwin Remembers: Recollections of a Life's Journey Friday, Jan. 22, 7 p.m.

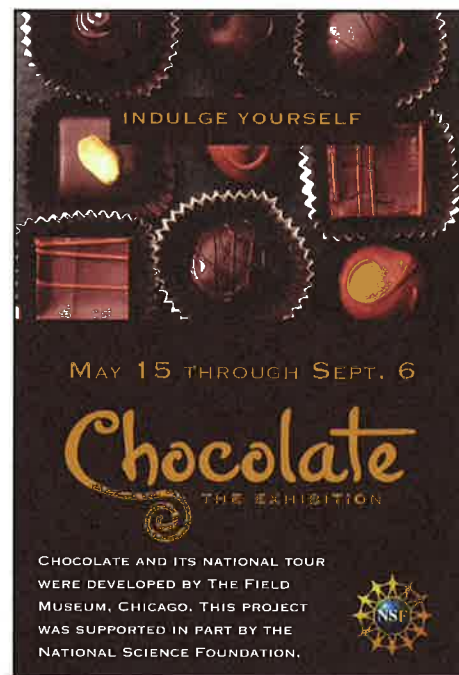
Darwin Remembers is a historic play written and performed by Floyd Sandford. Much of the information was derived from Darwin's autobiography, edited and published shortly after Darwin's death by his son Francis. In the play, Darwin "remembers" his life, including the historic confrontation at Oxford in 1860, between Samuel Wilberforce, the bishop of Oxford, and the biologist Thomas H. Huxley, Darwin's most loyal and vociferous defender in public forum and debates.

Admission is free.

"Stories in Fiber and Clay: Baskets and Ceramics of the Southwest"

Feb. 6 through May 2

This exhibit presents a wonderful selection of baskets and ceramics produced by Native Americans from the Southwest region. The exhibit provides an important opportunity to view historic pieces from the Ethnology collections of the Sam Noble Museum and contemporary works from the collections of the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art in a single venue. These objects are used to present stories of maintenance and revival, of tradition and innovation. The art forms continue to provide an important element of individual and community identity and a major arena for Native and non-Native interaction.



Sunday Science Film Series

This film series is open to the public free with museum admission.

"Madame Curie"

Sunday, Jan. 24, 2 p.m.
(1943) The film traces the struggle Madame Curie and her husband and colleague, Pierre Curie, undergo to isolate the new element, radium. Unrated.

"Chain Reaction"

Sunday, Jan. 31, 2 p.m.
(1996) Starring Keanu Reeves as Eddie Kasalovich, who works for a scientific team that discovers a low-cost, pollution-free fuel source. One of the chief scientists is murdered and Eddie has to run for his life. Rated PG-13.

"The Story of Louis Pasteur"

Sunday, Feb. 7, 2 p.m.
(1935) The film traces Pasteur's career, beginning in 1860 when his germ theory and recommendation that doctors

wash their hands and sterilize their instruments meets with derision in the academy. Unrated.

"28 Days Later"

Sunday, Feb. 14, 2 p.m.
(2002) A virus escapes from a British research facility and locks those infected into a permanent state of murderous rage. Rated R.

"Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet"

Sunday, Feb. 21, 2 p.m.
(1940) Max Erlich made valuable contributions to medicine including the development of a serum to fight diseases such as typhoid. Unrated.

"Pi"

Sunday, Feb. 28, 2 p.m.
(1998) Max, played by Sean Gullette, is a genius mathematician who's convinced that numbers can be used as a key for understanding all existence. Rated R.

"Elk Doctor Ki Maut (Death of a Doctor)"

Sunday, March 7, 2 p.m.
(1990) After years of painstaking research, Dipankar Roy discovers a vaccine for leprosy. Overnight, an insignificant doctor receives international recognition. Unrated.

"Gattaca"

Sunday, March 14, 2 p.m.
(1997) In the not-too-distant future, a less-than-perfect man wants to travel to the stars, but society has categorized Vincent Freeman (Ethan Hawke) as genetically inferior. Rated PG-13.

"Simmelweis"

Sunday, March 21, 2 p.m.
(2001) The tragic true story of Ignaz Semmelweis, the Hungarian doctor who discovered a method for preventing the lethal disease of childbed fever. Unrated.

THANK YOU!

Each fall, we thank donors and members for their outstanding commitment to the museum. We also want to give special recognition to our 2009 Annual Corporate and Foundation Sponsors. Thank you for your support.

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A SPECIAL OFFER FOR MUSEUM MEMBERS



FREE DINO BANK!

Bring this coupon in to the museum and receive a FREE DinoBank! This cute baby *Acrocanthosaurus* was designed especially for the museum by United Design. They make great gifts for children or grandchildren.

Valid through Feb. 28, 2010.

Must present coupon and show membership ID at the museum to receive free gift. One coupon per membership only. Must present original coupon in person. DinoBanks cannot be shipped or mailed.



PAUL SERENO VISITS WITH RAPTOREX

National Geographic Explorer in Residence Paul Sereno has long had a friendly relationship with the museum. Sereno was present at the opening of the museum in 2000, and again to help kick off the ExplorOlogy program two years ago. Recently, Sereno made another visit to the museum, and brought along a friend.

Raptorex is a type of small tyrannosaur that was only

recently revealed to scientists. Discovered in China and sold to a private collector, the small, well-preserved skeleton of this Jurassic predator was described as a new species of tyrannosaur – an early relative of the mighty *T. rex* – by Sereno in September. Only days after its splashy scientific debut, Sereno packed the small jaw bone and hand claw, plus a cast replica of a *Raptorex* skull, into his luggage when he

traveled to Norman for an OU football game. The morning before the game, Sereno unveiled the bones and the cast for members of the media, and a few lucky museum visitors, in the Hall of Ancient Life.

You can hear an interview with Sereno on the KGOU Web site in the 2009 archives for “Oklahoma Indepts” under “news” at www.kgou.org.



National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Paul Sereno shows the skull of *Raptorex* to reporters and museum visitors. Photo by Krysten Marshall.

CURATOR NAMED TO OKLAHOMA HIGHER EDUCATION HALL OF FAME

Gary Schnell, professor of zoology at the University of Oklahoma and curator of birds at the museum, was inducted this fall into the Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame. He is the second of the museum curators to be so honored: Michael Mares, museum director and curator of mammals, was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2002.

The Hall of Fame is sponsored by the Oklahoma Higher Education Heritage Society as a means of recognizing outstanding men and women who have excelled in higher education, and who have encouraged others to contribute to the economic development and quality of life in Oklahoma.

Schnell’s work has been fundamental in preserving the biological heritage of Oklahoma. He has been curator of birds at the Sam Noble Museum (then called the Stovall Museum) since 1970. He has twice served as the museum’s interim director, and was named associate director for collections and

research in 1999. Schnell was director of the OU Biological Survey from 1978 to 1999, during which time the Survey grew from a three-person operation to one that now includes several dozen researchers.

Schnell teaches courses in systematics, numerical systematics, evolutionary biology and ornithology in the University of Oklahoma Department of Zoology, College of Arts and Sciences. He has mentored over 40 graduate students, and the Zoological Association of Graduate Students recognized his contributions to students with an award for Excellence in Graduate Education. Garnering almost \$11 million in external funds, Schnell has provided important support for research and especially for students. In 1982, he was awarded an OU Regents’ Award for Superior Accomplishment in Professional and University Service.

MUSEUM WELCOMES NEW DESIGNER

Hadley Jerman joined the museum’s exhibits team in August as the new graphic designer. Visitors have already viewed Jerman’s design work in the exhibition “Darwin at the Museum,” which opened in October.

Jerman came to the museum from the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, where she served as print designer. She holds a bachelor’s of fine arts in visual communication and completed a master’s of art history from the University of

Oklahoma this fall.

Jerman will be working on multiple projects in the year ahead, including a re-design of museum brochures and publicity materials, a bus wrap and two in-house special exhibitions.

GOMPHOTHERE TO GO ON THE ROAD

A tusk and jawbone of a pre-Ice Age gomphothere from the museum’s vertebrate paleontology collection were packed for shipment to Chicago in November. The fossils will be part of a national traveling exhibition developed by the Field Museum titled “Mammoths and Mastodons: Titans of the Ice Age.” The exhibition will open at The Field Museum on March 5, 2010, and travel to cities across the United States through 2014, ending at the National History Museum of London in the United Kingdom.

A gomphothere is a mammal related to mammoths that is sometimes called a “prod-tusker,” or “four-tusker” for its long lower jaw with flat protruding tusks. The museum features a fully articulated specimen of a *Gomphotherium* – one species of gomphothere – in the Hall of Ancient Life.

ONLINE EXHIBIT SHOWCASES POTTERY OF THE CADDO PEOPLE

A virtual exhibit of a collection of Caddoan pottery is now available on the museum’s archaeology collection’s Web page. The exhibition was prepared by Stance Hurst, a former graduate student working with Don Wyckoff, curator of archaeology. Hurst is now engaged in post-doctoral research at the Museum of Texas Tech University.

The pieces in the online gallery are part of what is considered the George T. Wright collection. Wright was a lumberman in southeastern Oklahoma who compiled this collection through the purchase of ceramic vessels that had been recovered from a number of unknown sites principally from McCurtain County, Okla. and Red River County, Texas. J. Willis Stovall, the museum’s first director, negotiated the acquisition of the collection for the museum during World War II.

Wyckoff has worked with the Caddo Nation, which agreed to allow the museum to hold these beautiful objects in its collections for the purposes of research.

The total number of ceramic pieces from the Wright collection is 685. Most were fully restored by Robert Bell, then curator of archaeology, in the 1950s and ‘60s. This has allowed for a full study of the different manufacture and design techniques used by Caddoan potters.

The exhibition includes an introduction to the history of the Caddoan people, and a series of short videos of modern Caddo potter Jeraldine Redcorn as she demonstrates the ancient technique of crafting Caddoan pottery. The museum is pleased to be able to offer this virtual exhibit to recognize and honor the Caddo Nation, whose proud heritage goes back thousands of years.

The exhibition can be found on the museum’s Web site under “Collections and Research,” then “Archaeology.” The complete URL is: <http://www.snomnh.ou.edu/collections-research/cr-sub/archaeology/caddopottery/index.htm>

MUSEUM BOASTS SEVERAL BLOGS

Museum members may already be familiar with the museum blog, maintained by public relations officer Linda Coldwell. Accessible from the museum’s main Web page, this informal blog provides tidbits about what goes on behind the scenes at the museum in a range of areas, from education to exhibits to curator research.

This is not the only blog associated with the museum, however. Those with an interest in learning more about the work of museum curators may want to tune in to two additional blogs currently maintained by museum curators. Dan Swan, curator of ethnology, has long maintained a blog that tells the stories of many of the thousands of objects housed in the museum’s ethnology collection. Located at <http://ethnology.wordpress.com>, the blog serves as a sort of micro-exhibition. Entries are prepared and posted by department staff, visiting scholars, graduate and undergraduate students working in the collections, and so serve as an educational tool for Swan’s students in addition to being a public resource.

“The blog, ‘Ethnology at SNOMNH’ is currently receiving almost 2,500 visits per month and thus provides an important, global portal to the Ethnology collections of SNOMNH,” said Swan. “The full potential of the blog to facilitate scholarly and community discourse is only now emerging and we look forward to innovative partnerships to put the blog to work in new and interesting manners.”

A blog of a different kind is maintained by Laurie Vitt and Janalee Caldwell, curators of herpetology. Accessible from the museum collections and research page on herpetology, this blog provides informational tidbits about reptiles and amphibians in Oklahoma, insights into the work of field biologists, and more.

“Because of the large number of people interested in reptiles and amphibians, we decided to provide up-to-date factual information in a format making it available to everyone,” explained Vitt.

Enhanced by the beautiful field photographs by the curators, this new blog promises to be an engaging read on all things herpetological. Find it at <http://www.snomnh.ou.edu/collections-research/cr-sub/herpetology/blog/>.

BUTTERFLY GARDEN TO DEBUT THIS SPRING

Visitors may have noticed a sign announcing the construction of a new butterfly garden on the museum’s northwest grounds. Over the next several months, groundskeepers will be planting a number of plants that will attract a wide variety of native butterflies, including species of swallowtails, monarchs, skippers and fritillaries. The garden also will include plants to attract moths and other insects such as bees, and additional plants to serve as food for butterfly caterpillars.

“We wanted to add a special outdoor educational area for our visitors and participants in our educational programs,” explained Peter Tirrell, the museum’s associate director. “We also wanted to assist butterflies and moths with plants for food, and the garden will make a colorful addition to the museum’s grounds.”

The garden will be useful for many educational programs for children and adults, and there are plans to develop a means of identifying the plants for museum visitors. Many, but not all of the plants included in the plans are Oklahoma natives. Others have been chosen for their particular attraction to butterflies. The garden was funded by a private grant and through in-house funding. The initial planting of the garden should be completed by spring 2010, though it will take a year or more for some of the plants to reach full maturity.



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