



Sam Noble Museum

Tracks

Spring 2013 Newsletter Vol. 25, No. 1



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TRACKS, SPRING 2013: VOLUME 25 NO. 1

MUSEUM INFORMATION

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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

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Bugs...Outside the Box exhibit images
PHOTO Outhouse Productions

Thanks to our 2013 Corporate Benefactors:



From the Director



Dear Friends,

As we begin 2013, we look back on an eventful 2012 and ahead to an exciting year. The museum played a vital role in the educational and cultural life of Oklahoma in 2012, hosting 155,348 visitors and welcoming our 2-millionth visitor since moving into the new building. 18,531 students came to the museum on field trips, one-third made possible by the Fossil Fuel Fund. Public opening receptions for Chinasaurus and A Centennial Celebration of Dr. Charles Marius Barbeau in Oklahoma, and special community programs like Science In Action, Eggstravaganza and Holiday Happening attracted thousands of visitors.

Dr. Gary Schnell retired as curator of Ornithology and professor of Biology after a 42-year career. The museum's Ornithology Library was named in his honor. Dr. Katrina Menard became our first full-time curator of Recent Invertebrates and Dr. Marc Levine recently arrived to lead archeological research as the curator of our largest collection. We are interviewing for a herpetology curator and will search for an ornithology curator next fall. These and other appointments of new staff will assure a dynamic future for the museum and its programs.

In addition to curators, long-time staff members retired—Peter Tirrell, Chris McKee, Joe Baalke, Ann Dourm, Carolyn Gilbreth, Daniel Salinas, John Cove, Mary Ann Roe, and Jane Johnson. The dedication over so many decades of all curators and staff to the betterment of the museum, its exhibits and programs, fellow staff, and the public was instrumental in our success and our stellar reputation among museum professionals.

2012 saw the expansion of our temporary exhibit space with the opening of the Dorothy C. Higginbotham Gallery, doubling our exhibit schedule. 2013 will feature two very special exhibitions that you can read more about in this issue – Bugs Outside the Box and Beautiful Beasts: The Unseen Life of Oklahoma's Spiders and Insects. We enjoy making the museum available to you and your family and we love presenting interesting, diverse, and entertaining programs. We are dedicated to discovering new knowledge, educating students at all levels, and providing an attractive venue to learn about science, nature, and Oklahoma. Visit your museum and spend quality time with your family and friends in one of the finest museums in the nation!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Mares".

Michael A. Mares, Ph.D.
Director

Thank You!

Each year the museum is grateful for the generous support for the numerous programs, exhibits and events held here. Thank you to donors, members and sponsors for an outstanding commitment to the museum.

Sam Noble Circle

\$25,000 and up

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Corporate Benefactors 2012



Corporate Sponsors 2012



Museum Welcomes Board Members



Above, First row: Noah Roberts, Lars Noble, former House Representative, Carolyn Taylor, PhD, former State Senator, Cal Hobson, and Dr. Michael Mares. Second row: Eric Sherburn, M.D., Taylor Hanson, Reggie Whitten, and Xavier Neira.

The Sam Noble Museum welcomed new Board of Visitors in 2012.

Joining the museum's Board are 2011 Oklahoman of the Year, Mary Beth Babcock, owner of Dwelling Spaces in downtown Oklahoma City and Tulsa; former state legislator Kevin Easley, CEO of New Dominion; Taylor Hanson, musician for the pop rock band The Hanson Brothers (now known as Hanson) and co-founder and co-CEO of 3CG Records; Xavier Neira, director of business development for Manhattan Construction Group in Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma director for Manhattan Construction Co.; and Laura Ogle, vice president of The Kerr Foundation in Oklahoma City.

Board members bring a variety of skills and experience representing different constituencies and communities. They serve as ambassadors and may represent the museum at social functions. As sponsors, they work

with the museum director to ensure the financial health of the museum. While the director oversees the day-to-day activities of the museum, Board members can provide advice to museum staff and advise the director on ideas, programs and activities that keep the museum relevant to their communities.

The 15-member BOV also includes Bill Cameron; Cal Hobson; Charles Hollingsworth; Mary Marks Jenkins; Lars Noble; Noah Roberts; Eric Sherburn, M.D.; Carolyn Thompson Taylor, Ph.D.; Roy Williams; and Reggie Whitten. Board meetings are held three times each year with each member appointed to a two-year term by OU President David L. Boren. Past Board members include Craig Abbott, MD; Teresa Burkett; Chet Bynum, MD; Rod Davis; John Hargrave; Kelly Haney; Kim Henry; Lou Kerr; Sandy Kinney; Sue Lunsford; Jim McAuley; Jessie Nance; Barbara Paul; Les Risser; Lucy Smith, PhD; Chuck Thompson and Steve Wright.

SAM NOBLE MUSEUM

SUMMER EXPLORERS

2013



REGISTRATION OPEN!

WWW.SNOMNH.OU.EDU/SUMMER-EXPLORERS

Fossil Fuel Funds Received

A gift from the Walton Family Foundation Inc. of \$5,000 to the Sam Noble Museum in support of the Fossil Fuel Fund was received this past October.

The Fossil Fuel Fund is designed to provide financial support for field trip expenses and can include fuel, bus drivers, admission and program fees. In 2012, 403 school age groups made field trips to the museum and brought 18,531. Of those groups, 33 percent were funded through the Fossil Fuel Fund.

Implemented in 2007 by OU President David L. Boren, the Fossil Fuel Fund has received support from the Whitten-Newman Foundation, H.A. and Mary K. Chapman Charitable Trust, the Puterbaugh Foundation, the Walton Family Foundation, Inc., the Grand River Dam Authority and the Sam Noble Museum Board of Visitors.



Above: Fossil Fuel Fund brings students to the museum

Beautiful Beasts: The Unseen Life of Oklahoma Spiders and Insects



Bottom Left: Artist
Thomas Shahan photo-
graphing insects

Bottom Right: Phidipus

Imagine traveling on a safari through a land of bizarre and alien beasts, a world of predators and prey. Who would think that this place exists right outside your back door?

Oklahoma photographer Thomas Shahan takes you there with *Beautiful Beasts: The Unseen Life of Oklahoma Spiders and Insects*, on display in the Higginbotham Gallery from Feb. 2 through Sept. 8, 2013.

Beautiful Beasts presents a series of Shahan's immense color macrophotographs alongside descriptions of where and how the photographs were made. The exhibit chronicles the photographer's tireless search for arthropods, a venture that has made him into an outspoken advocate for education about the role they play in our lives.

Macrophotography consists of large scale images of small subjects. Macro refers to larger than life-size.

Macro lenses, such as the Pentax K-x that Shahan uses, are specifically designed for close-up work and are one of the most common tools for macro photography.

Using homemade equipment and inexpensive lenses, he captures a remarkable world of extraordinary beauty and hidden presence. His fantastical, large-scale images of mid-western spiders and insects have been featured in *Weekly Reader*, *National Geographic*, *Wired Magazine*, and *Popular Photography*.

Shahan's up-close views of Oklahoma spiders and insects promise to forever change how visitors think and feel about these creatures. For more information about the exhibit, visit www.snomnh.ou.edu. Sponsored by a grant from the Norman Arts Council.





Above: Insects on display through Bugs... Outside the Box. Photo courtesy of Outhouse Exhibit Services.

Bugs... Outside the Box *Discover the Elegance* *Within the Science*

The world of insects is all around us. Cleverly camouflaged or flamboyant in their displays, their diminutive size frequently keeps them from attracting our attention. Important to science and necessary in the natural world, the unexpected artistry and beauty of insects can usually only be fully appreciated under a magnifying glass.

Bugs: Outside the Box, on display Feb. 2 through May 12, presents a selection of greatly enlarged insect sculptures, each showcasing the beauty hidden within the (mini) beasts of the natural world. Butterflies with 5-foot wingspans and beetles, 4 feet long, which can stare you square in the eye, are only two examples of the unique sculptures on display in this unique exhibition. Using powerful magnification and actual specimens of each animal, artist Lorenzo Possenti painstakingly created each sculpture with remarkable accuracy.

Intricate details not visible to the naked eye are showcased alongside educational topics, including an

exciting look at museum collections and taxonomy, and an exploration of the power of magnification.

Like many creatures, insects and arthropods adapt and evolve over time to further the survival of their species. Can you guess what those unbelievably long antennae possessed by the longhorn beetle are good for? Or what about the “arms” on the long arm beetle? How could they help that species survive?

The sculptures within this exhibit are equipped with impressive exoskeletons. Massive jaws and other embellishments are striking at life size and even more so at great size. But what purpose do they serve? Are these remarkable features merely ornamentation, or are they useful to the animal that carries them?

The primary focus of this exhibition is the beauty in the details that exist beyond our everyday powers of observation. Visit the Sam Noble Museum for *Bugs... Outside the Box*, and discover the elegance within the science!

Grant Funds Major Inventory in Archaeology



The Sam Noble Museum's archaeology collection is the museum's largest collection. It includes more than 5 million objects, encompasses an entire level of the museum, and represents more than 11,000 years of history in Oklahoma.

The collection contains unique archaeological objects, such as the oldest painted artifact in North America and fragments of ancient preserved textiles, but also many more ordinary objects, such as the chipped stone tool and pottery fragments that accumulated over thousands of years of everyday life.

Updating the catalog records and repackaging older collections is an ongoing process for such a large set of materials. The archaeology staff works diligently to prioritize collection care, based first on preservation needs and second on the research interests of individuals working with the collections.

Collections excavated by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s and 1940s and by the Oklahoma River Basin Survey Project in the 1960s and 1970s are most urgent. The sheer quantity of material from these periods and the poor quality of the original storage materials make these collections a high priority.

Thanks to a \$149,956 grant received by the Archaeology department from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) the museum was able to hire full-time collection assistant, Emily Turriff.

Over the next three years, the department will inventory, catalog, rehouse and database more than 1,300 boxes of artifacts from 237 archaeological sites. An inventory also will be made of the associated archives, including the original field records, excavation photographs and maps. This award provides the department with a wonderful opportunity to enhance the condition of the museum's historically significant collections and to improve research accessibility.

Ongoing interest in the Spiro Mound site, a prominent political-religious center in eastern Oklahoma occupied from around A.D. 1,000-1,400, dovetails particularly well with the IMLS project. Already this fall, researchers from the Oklahoma Archeological Survey, the University of Arkansas and the Oklahoma Native American Basketweavers Association have visited the Sam Noble Museum to study the archives, basketry and textiles, and pottery from this renowned archaeological site.

Above: Images of the collection cataloging system before and after inventory system was implemented.



Above : Marc Levine.

Museum Welcomes Curator

Do you know a student or teacher who is wild about science?

Join museum scientists in the field and explore amazing sites across Oklahoma. Discover what it means to be a scientist and become part of the team!

Whitten-Newman ExplorOlogy® Programs are offered at no cost to participants. Oklahoma resident students (grades 6-12) and teachers (K-12) are eligible to apply.

For summer program information and application materials, please visit us online:

explorology.snomnh.ou.edu

WHITTEN-NEWMAN EXPLOROLOGY® PROGRAM
EXPLOROLOGY®
 ADVENTURES IN SCIENCE DISCOVERY

The Whitten-Newman ExplorOlogy® Program is generously funded by the Whitten-Newman Foundation.

The Sam Noble Museum and the Department of Anthropology at the University of Oklahoma welcomed Marc Levine, PhD, Curator of Archaeology, in January 2013.

Levine fills the position formerly held by Don Wyckoff, PhD, curator emeritus, who retired from the Sam Noble Museum and the Department of Anthropology a little over a year ago.

Levine transferred from the Department of Anthropology at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science where he was Assistant Curator of Mesoamerican Archaeology.

He received his master of arts and doctoral degree from the University of Colorado at Boulder. His bachelor's degree is from the University of Michigan. His research interests focus on Mesoamerican and Southwest archaeology, political economy, urbanism, household and community archaeology, and museum anthropology. Much of his research focuses on the Mixtec people of Oaxaca, Mexico.

His publications include articles in the journals *Ancient Mesoamerica* and *American Anthropologist*. He also has chapters in the book *Polity and Ecology in Formative Period Coastal Oaxaca* and is coeditor of a book on obsidian currently under review.

Family Fossil Field Trip

Friday, April 5, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 6, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Curator Steve Westrop and participants identify fossils

Invertebrate paleontology curator Steve Westrop and museum staff will lead an exciting journey into Oklahoma's Paleozoic past. Explore life in Oklahoma's ancient oceans through an informative talk on Friday evening with a close-up look at some of the museum's finest invertebrate specimens. At 9 a.m. Saturday, we will travel in university vans to the dig site. Advanced registration is required and space is limited. To enroll, please call (405) 325-1008.

Cost: Members \$90, non-members \$110.

Price includes one adult and one youth, age 8 or older. Each additional participant: Members \$45, non-members, \$55.

Photo Safaris!



**Family Insect Safari and
Macrophotography Workshop**
Saturday, May 4, 9 a.m. to noon

Join photographer Thomas Shahan, artist of *Beautiful Beasts: The Unseen Life of Oklahoma Spiders and Insects*, for a workshop all about macrophotography! Learn how to handle arthropods and how to get close to your subject through lenses and camera settings, making your subjects truly stand out against their surroundings. Bring whatever equipment you have (camera, phone, SLR) – we'll teach you how to use it to your best advantage! Photo Safaris are sponsored by a grant from the Norman Arts Council.

Cost: members: \$20, non-members \$30

Price includes one adult and one child; each additional participant is \$10 for members, \$15 non-members.

**Advanced Adult Insect Safari and
Macrophotography Workshop**
Saturday, May 4, 1 to 4 p.m.

Join photographer Thomas Shahan, artist of *Beautiful Beasts: The Unseen Life of Oklahoma Spiders and Insects*, as he discusses what equipment to consider for photographing arthropods, the use of extension tubes and how to build and use your own flash diffusers. We will be basing the class on the types of equipment brought by participants. Photo Safaris are sponsored by a grant from the Norman Arts Council.

Cost: members: \$15, non-members \$25

Space is limited and pre-registration is required. You can register online at www.snomnh.ou.edu or by calling the Education Department at (405) 325-1008.

Superstars in the Field: Dream Course Lecture Series

BY ELIZABETH ARMSTRONG, PUBLIC RELATIONS

From lions in Africa to honeybee's working together in colonies, this year's Presidential Dream Course Lecture series is truly original and mesmerizing. The series hosts five speakers from around the country educating attendees about evolution and animal behavior.

When Ingo Schlupp, PhD, and Ola Finke, PhD, both professors in the biology department, started planning this year's Dream Course Lecture series in Fall 2011, they aimed high. Instead of using their funding separately, Finke and Schlupp combined their resources in hopes of having a lecture series that would greatly benefit their students.

"In the past, most lecture series have had four speakers," Schlupp said. "This year we are having five speakers and are very excited about it."

Presidential Dream Courses are lectures that would normally be taught in the classroom, but are made available to the public through the lecture series. They are supported through funding from the president's office, which allows for speakers from different fields of study to participate.

This year's panel of speakers are, according to Schlupp, "superstars in their field." All come from renowned universities and are well respected in the scientific community. Their work is relevant and easy to understand.

"Anyone who has a love of nature and animals would really enjoy the lectures," Dr. Schlupp said

In addition to attracting nature and animal enthusiasts, both Schlupp and Finke think OU undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and the public would enjoy and benefit from the lectures.

"In addition to learning about the specific areas of research each speaker represents, we hope students, faculty, and the public will be able to interact with the speakers one-on-one during a number of different social venues we are planning," Finke said. "...We hope to foster an appreciation of the scientists who, by their painstaking field and lab studies, uncover this knowledge. Knowledge of the natural world comes only through a lot of hard, often physically challenging work, as well as the public's investment in basic research."

One of the speakers Finke is describing is Tom Seeley, PhD, from Cornell University. Seeley is a leader in research on the social intelligence of honeybees. In the introduction of his most recent book, *Honey Bee Democracy*, Seeley examined how these helpful creatures succeed in working together to achieve shared goals. "We will see that these little six-legged beauties have something to teach us about building smoothly functioning groups, especially ones capable of exploiting fully the power of democratic decision making," Seeley writes.

The lectures will be free, open to the public and hosted in the Kerr auditorium at the Sam Noble Museum throughout the spring semester. For more information, www.snomnh.ou.edu.

University of Oklahoma Department of Biology Presidential Dream Course Lecture Series:

7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26

Dr. Ellen Ketterson

"Junco Journeys: Can a Backyard Bird Be an Evolutionary Rock Star?"

7 p.m. Tuesday, April 2

Dr. Jonathan Losos

"Lizards in an Evolutionary Tree: Studying Biodiversity in the Field and in the Lab"

7 p.m. Tuesday, April 23

Dr. Tom Seeley

"Honeybee Democracy"

Science in Action & Object I.D. Day



Artifact being identified by museum staff

1 to 5 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 24

Many people find and collect objects that they can't identify. Could it be a rock or a fossil? An arrow point or a chunk of flint? These questions and more can be answered during Science in Action & Object I.D. Day at the Sam Noble Museum.

Bring in your natural history objects to be identified, or just come in to enjoy scientific discovery and fun. Science in Action and Object I.D. Day is a free, family-friendly, science-packed day featuring demonstrations and hands-on activities.

In addition to object identification and collection "show-and-tell," Science In Action & Object I.D. Day will feature a variety of fun family activities and demonstrations.

Spring Break Escape!

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Monday through Friday
March 18 through 22

Engage your senses as you spring into the natural history and culture of Oklahoma! Daily activities include crafts, auditorium shows, storytelling, scavenger hunts and more!

All programs are free with museum admission; however, space is limited for some activities. Check the museum website, www.snomnh.ou.edu, for a full schedule of activities.

Most programs are geared for families with children ages 4 and up, unless otherwise noted. Though all programs are free with museum admission, space is limited in some programs. Passes for these programs may be picked up at the museum information desk the day of the event. All programs will be filled on a first-come basis.



*Visitor enjoys face painting during
Spring Break Escape*

Eggstravaganza!



Children collecting eggs during Eggstravaganza

4 to 7 p.m.

Egg hunt: 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 27

This year's spring fling will include free museum admission, games, crafts, face painting, "discovery tables" with museum specimens to explore, photos with the bunny and, of course, an egg hunt of Jurassic proportions on the museum grounds. Bring family and friends and enjoy a dinosaur prize walk, the Pentaceratops ring toss, Saurophaganax bean bag toss and dig-a-dino stations. Eggstravaganza is produced in partnership with the J.C. Penney Leadership Program in the University of Oklahoma's Michael F. Price College of Business.

Beautiful Beasts Gallery Talk

7 p.m.

Friday, May 3

Free admission. Thomas Shahan will discuss his photographs displayed in the gallery. Sponsored in part by a grant from the Norman Arts Council.

For more information, visit www.snomnh.ou.edu.

Native American Language Fair

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday, April 1 and Tuesday, April 2

Join the museum for the Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair, an annual celebration of Native American youth learning their Native languages.

Students of Native American languages from preschool to high school age are welcome to register for the Fair beginning Jan. 7. Participants in grades pre-K through 12 will demonstrate their language skills as groups or individuals in the spoken language and language in song categories.

The fair brings together 600-800 students who are learning their Native languages and celebrates language diversity in Oklahoma and the United States. Nowhere else can more Native languages be heard.

The Fair is free and open to the public. Sponsored in part by the Cyril Fund. For more information, visit www.snomnh.ou.edu.



Children dancing during Language Fair



Sam Noble Museum

The University of Oklahoma
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..... ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Coming Soon!

*Bob Kuhn:
Drawing on Instinct
on exhibit June 1 through Sept. 8*