

# T Sam Noble Museum Tracks

Spring 2014 Newsletter Vol. 26, No. 1



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Part 2

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Exploring Art & Science

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Skateboard Culture in Native America



## TRACKS, SPRING 2014: VOLUME 26 NO. 1

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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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Thanks to our 2014 Corporate Sponsors:



# From the Director



We recently received good news. The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) has approved our reaccreditation. We were initially accredited by AAM when they began the accreditation process in 1970 and have been reaccredited three times since then. This time we were able to highlight our outstanding programs, staff, exhibits, building, and community support to make our strongest case yet. As the museum field's mark of distinction, accreditation offers high profile, peer-based validation of a museum's operations and impact. It increases the museum's credibility and value to funders, policy makers, community members, and peers. Accreditation is a powerful tool to leverage change and helps facilitate loans between institutions, whether of exhibits, specimens, or collaborative efforts to serve the public. We received a glowing report from the reviewers. I want to thank the Board members and staff for all they did to assist with gathering the very large amount of material that was required and for taking the time to meet with the reviewers. The next time we will undergo reaccreditation is 2023.

Spring is our busiest time of year. Spring Break Escape, the annual Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair, Eggstravaganza, Volunteer Appreciation Week and numerous classes and field trips fill our calendar. Our Board of Visitors holds its annual meeting each April and we will welcome new members as others end their term. Our current chair and longstanding Board member, Reggie Whitten, cycles off next month after six years of service. Charles Hollingsworth, another longtime Board member, also leaves. Both of these gentlemen have provided outstanding service and advocacy to the Sam Noble Museum. They have been exceptional ambassadors and supporters.

I am grateful to all of our Board members from our newest – Elaine Hobson and Jonathan Fowler – to others across the state - Mary Beth Babcock, Bill Cameron, Kevin Easley, Taylor Hanson, Xavier Neira, Lars Noble, Laura Ogle, Dr. Eric Sherburn, Carolyn Taylor and Roy Williams. Their support of the museum and our programs is instrumental to our continued success.

On the research front, I have worked to establish a genomics core facility to move our research into the 21st century using genetic data to answer fundamental questions about relationships of fauna, their origins, and history. The first step in this process was to develop a genomic resources collection, which is a collection of living frozen tissues of a wide variety of organisms. Established in 2007, it is now the largest collection of tissues in Oklahoma and one of our fastest growing collections. Dr. Janet Braun, who founded it, is the curator. We hired Dr. Katrina Menard, a molecular entomologist and Dr. Tamaki Yuri, collection manager in birds with a strong background in bird genetics. In 2013, we hired Dr. Cameron Siler, who is trained in the genomics of reptiles and amphibians. We will center the lab around his research program. Recently, Dr. Brandi Coyner, a native Oklahoman who began her undergraduate career at OU, received her PhD from OSU, and completed a two-year postdoctoral program at the University of Nevada at Reno training in the latest methodologies of genomic research, joined our team. I expect great things from these young scientists and expect that their expertise will have impact throughout the museum's collections and programs for years to come.

Museum work is always exciting. I am very proud of this museum, its people, and its programs. I hope you will visit us to be entertained and informed about the natural and cultural world we share.

  
Michael A. Mares, Ph.D.  
Director

# Around the World in 8 Images

BY LAURA WILCOX, PUBLIC RELATIONS

**J**ules Verne captured adventurous readers through his novel *Around the World in 80 Days*. Well, today we're circumnavigating the globe in just eight pictures! So pack your bags because for the next few minutes, we're going off the grid.

As the warrior scholars of Feudal Japan, samurai had quite extensive weaponry: elaborate armor, menacing masks and fanciful swords, such as the one shown (*right*) from 1800 CE.



This ceramic drinking vessel (*left*) hails from the Nazca culture of coastal Peru and dates from around AD 200-800. The artwork depicts a sacrificial scene, indicating that the item may have been used for sacrificial rites.

Kundu drums (*right*) are a staple of the Sepik region in New Guinea and are used at ceremonies, feasts, rituals and community events. Drum makers whittle hollow tree trunks to achieve the hourglass shape, then stretch lizard or snakeskin across the top opening.



The Acheulean hand ax (*left*) was in use for over 1 million years and is considered by some to be the "Swiss army knife" of the Stone Age. This hand tool from Troche, Dordogne in France could date back to the lower Paleolithic period 1.8 million years ago.



This white painted ware jug (*left*) is of Cypro-Archiac origins and was likely produced around 600 BCE. Although little information is available about the jug's use, ethnologists use physical features to speculate about its history.

During the Classic Period, AD 200-800, this incense burner (*right*) from Guatemala would have likely been used by the Maya to send prayers and offerings to the deities. The burner features an individual wearing a helmet or headdress possibly an ancestor or deity.



Made entirely of lion's hair and hide, this Ethiopian headdress (*left*) is likely from the early to mid-1900s. Because ethnologists are uncertain about the artifact's tribal origins, very little is known about this piece.

Discovered in the famous Altamira Cave in Spain, this bone awl (*right*) would have been used to puncture holes in animal hide for tailoring and manufacturing, enabling those living 50,000 to 10,000 years ago to battle the brutal climate of glacial Europe.



That completes our trip around the world, highlighting artifacts from the ethnology and archaeology departments at the Sam Noble Museum. These departments house extraordinary collections, especially from Native North and Central America. The Sam Noble Museum hopes to incorporate a permanent display for artifacts such as these in the coming years.

# Step Outside the Ordinary

BY LAURA WILCOX, PUBLIC RELATIONS



*Above: Fossil findings during OSA dig*

**S**ummertime: lazy days by the pool, sleeping until noon and all the video games your controller can handle. It's the overworked student's paradise. In the summer of 2013, however, 14 Oklahoma middle school students left ordinary behind to take part in a most amazing adventure.

The Oklahoma Science Adventure (OSA) camp, a week long educational endeavor operated by the Sam Noble Museum's ExplorOlogy® program, allows students to discover right alongside professional scientists, without paying a cent.

That's right, without paying a cent. Thanks to partial funding by the Whitten-Newman Foundation, the program is free for participants. During OSA, students have the opportunity to conduct field research, conquer the University of Oklahoma's ropes course, canoe down the Illinois River and sleep beneath the world's largest Apatosaurus in the museum's Hall of Ancient Life. What more could you ask for?

Last summer, students also investigated a unique Oklahoma fossil site known as White Mound, an ancient shallow ocean where, more than 400 million years ago, an assortment of animals, including trilobites, crinoids, brachiopods and corals, lived. Nick Czaplowski, the staff curator of vertebrate paleontology, assisted students in collecting a variety of fossils. Based on their understanding of modern animals and fossil evidence, they constructed an example of what an ancient ecosystem might have looked like.

Although OSA promises new friends and fun-filled memories, it's about much more than that. The program affords budding scientists a chance to gain hands-on experience while working with top-notch scientists, awarding them both awareness and confidence in their own abilities. For many, this revelation generates the initial spark of a lifelong passion.

"It really surprised me how hands-on it was. It was a good surprise," recalled Abby Holden, of Claremore, Okla. Holden went on to explain that science used to be a sore subject for her in the classroom, but now she feels capable and enthusiastic when it comes to making hypotheses and drawing conclusions.

According to Holden and several other students, field experience ranks high above classroom learning when it comes to both education and enthusiasm. According to Clay Dominy of Shawnee, Okla., OSA gives students a real taste of science in action. For him, there is no comparison.

"If you want to be in paleontology, learning in a classroom does not prepare you. They don't teach you about geographical maps. Out in the field, though, you can see everything you need to know," Dominy said.

Another camper, Ella Moxley, a seventh-grader from Norman, Oklahoma, said she never realized how hands-on science could be until spending a few days in the field, where she learned to overcome her squeamishness towards insects. Moxley learned first-hand that to be a scientist, you've got to be willing to get down in the trenches of nature.

“I would recommend OSA to any science enthusiasts who are definitely afraid to get dirty,” Moxley said.

Of course, OSA isn't all work. Moxley and Holden both described their canoe trip down the Illinois River as the pinnacle of their journey. Neither Moxley nor Holden had ever canoed prior to OSA and found the experience challenging, yet exhilarating. According to Dominy, however, jumping into the ponds and scooping up tadpoles proved to be the most fun.

Although the program ends after just seven days, the experience resonates long-term with many students. Ernesto Vargas of Oklahoma City, an OSA and Paleo Expedition veteran, recently was named a Gates Millennium Scholar and will receive a full scholarship to attend the University of Chicago. Vargas intends to pursue a degree in geology with postgraduate work in invertebrate paleontology.

“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

## Apply for OSA today!

**Deadline: March 28**

**To explore your opportunities and begin your science adventure, visit:  
[explorology.snomnh.ou.edu](http://explorology.snomnh.ou.edu)**

others, just like this program has done for me,” Vargas said. “[It] has influenced my next steps more than anything else.”

So whether you're hoping to have the time of your life, explore an interest or escape the mundane routine of long summer days, OSA is for you. Don't let this summer be just another series of wasted days by the television. Apply for OSA, and step outside the ordinary.



*Above: OSA students participate in a low-ropes team building course*

# FOSSIL FUEL FUND DRIVES OKLAHOMA STUDENTS

BY LAURA WILCOX, PUBLIC RELATIONS

Think back to your days in elementary school. Can you recall all the stages of the water cycle? Which book your teacher read to you in the fourth grade? What about the sixth president of the United States? According to *Scientific American*, the human brain can hold a million gigabytes of memory. So why are our classroom days so foggy?

Oddly enough, you can perfectly remember seeing the giraffes on your second grade field trip to zoo. You can vividly recall zipping down the fireman's pole during a class trip to your local fire department. Why? Chances are, some of your most memorable experiences happened outside out of the classroom – and that's why experiential learning programs are so important.

In recent years, Oklahoma schools have faced increasing difficulties obtaining funds for supplemental learning experiences, like field trips. Higher operating costs related to energy, transportation, insurance and other factors are forcing many schools to eliminate field trips and other experiential learning programs. As a result, Oklahoma students are missing out an integral piece of education.

To demonstrate his commitment to the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, and its educational programs, University of Oklahoma President David L. Boren committed \$10,000 to the museum in 2007. These funds established the Fossil Fuel Fund (FFF),

which provides scholarships to low-income, high-poverty area schools in Oklahoma.

Today, the FFF continues to provide scholarships to Oklahoma schools. Last year alone, 55 schools applied and \$12,204.86 in reimbursements was distributed. That's 2,949 students!

Each scholarship awarded provides an average of \$400 in transportation reimbursement to the school and allows approximately 40 students to experience the top-notch galleries, exhibitions and artifacts available only at the Sam Noble Museum.

"To see the wonder, the awe, the interest in my students as they viewed the exhibits, to watch them interact and answer the educator, and to experience their growth in social/community skills was so satisfying for me," said one ninth-grade teacher from Ada Junior High.

Schools who visit the museum on a scholarship need only to provide the discounted student admission fee (\$1.75 per student) for their entire field trip experience. In situations where the need is dire, the per student admission fee can be reduced or waived. Funds are disbursed on a first come, first served basis.

The FFF also provides a classroom-based educational program that students can enjoy at no charge during the visit. These specialized classroom programs are designed



*Above: Student explores ancient history during a classroom program for a Fossil Fuel Fund school group*

*Below: A thank-you note from a Fossil Fuel Fund recipient*



“The only source  
of knowledge  
is experience.”  
– Albert Einstein

to complement classroom curricula, are correlated to current Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) learning objectives for the state of Oklahoma and enhance the overall educational impact of the museum.

“As a science museum, we understand that exploration, discovery and direct experience are powerful learning opportunities,” said Jes Cole, head of museum education. “We strive to make the museum accessible to all Oklahomans, and the Fossil Fuel Fund is one important way we can accomplish this goal.”

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, life, physical, and social science occupations are projected to add 190,800 new jobs between 2010 and 2020 as they grow by 15.5 percent.

With science occupations constituting such a major portion of America’s future job market, it is imperative that we invest in today’s students. If you would like to make a contribution, either on behalf of an organization or individually, please contact Pam McIntosh, communications and development director for the museum, at (405) 325-5020. Help us make science unforgettable. Contribute to the Fossil Fuel Fund.

*Below: Students tour museum during field trip*



# Project Passenger Pigeon

BY LAURA WILCOX, PUBLIC RELATIONS

*Below: Southeast Oklahoma includes pigeon namesake landmarks*



The first stone of the Lincoln Memorial is placed in Washington D.C. Charlie Chaplain stars in his second film, “The Tramp”. Doctors complete the first successful blood transfusion in Brussels, and World War I begins. The year? 1914. When looking back on this most historic year, one critical event is often overlooked— the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon.

With a population between 3 and 5 billion birds, the Passenger Pigeon was once the most abundant bird in North America, and possibly even the world. Written accounts describe how flocks would darken the sky for hours and days, and how the beating wings sent a chilling draft down from the sky. However, in just a few decades, the species became extinct.

Human exploitation, namely hunting and commerce, destroyed nearly every major nesting area over the course of 40 years. Observations made during this period suggest that there was no successful mass nesting during this time, which in the past had contributed greatly to the survival of the species. This bird occurred only in North America and was no stranger to the Sooner State.

Prior to the twentieth century, the Passenger Pigeon often frequented eastern Oklahoma during winter. It is even possible that a handful of lesser-known Oklahoma

landmarks were named after this species: Pigeon School (Cherokee County), Pigeon Roost Church (Choctaw and Seminole counties), Pigeon Creek (Latimer and Le Flore counties) and Pigeon Mountain (Le Flore County).

Unfortunately, the story of the Passenger Pigeon is not the only tale of exploitation and extinction. Now, The Chicago Academy of Sciences and its Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum are using this tragedy as a cautionary tale through a notable conservation initiative, Project Passenger Pigeon.

According to the project website, the international campaign seeks to promote awareness about the Passenger Pigeon and other endangered species while encouraging people to take action against human-caused extinction. Ultimately, the project is about fostering biodiversity by prompting people to question their role in the larger ecological community.

As an advocate of wildlife conversation, the Sam Noble Museum commends the work being done by Project Passenger Pigeon and other similar efforts. We welcome you to visit the museum from Sept. 13 to Jan. 18, 2015 when the museum will showcase photographs of endangered and extinct species, as part of the exhibit “Rare: Portraits of Endangered Species.”

# Museum Welcomes New Staff

If Project Passenger Pigeon has inspired you to get involved in wildlife conservation issues, there are several environmental advocacy groups to join: The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Sierra Club, Conservation International and Wildlife Conservation Society, to name a few. Of course, joining an organization isn't the only way to support conservation efforts.

“You could become informed about conservation issues, volunteer in community environmental projects or become a citizen scientist,” suggests Janet Braun, staff curator. “You could also join or donate to a museum or conservation organization while living and promoting a conservation lifestyle.”

Scientists estimate that there are over 8.7 million species of living organisms on Earth at this time. Biodiversity is a precious thing that must be protected, as the tale of the Passenger Pigeon reminds us. They say that history always repeats itself - but by promoting the conservation of species and habitat, perhaps we can build a better tomorrow from yesterday's mistakes.



*Above: Passenger Pigeon*



*Above: Alyssa Giles, Emily York, Susie Fishman-Armstrong, Sarah Novak, Carrie Miller-DeBoer and Leah Vanderburg*

The Sam Noble Museum is happy to announce the addition of staff members to several departments at the museum.

Archaeology welcomed Susie Fishman-Armstrong as collection manager and Alyssa Giles as collection assistant. Susie holds a Bachelor of Arts in Geology from Fort Hays State University and her Master of Arts in Museum Science from Texas Tech University. Alyssa holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Oklahoma and a Master of Arts in museum Studies from Marist College and the Lorenzo de' Medici Institute in Florence, Italy.

The museum welcomed Emily York as the Integrated Pest Management program and collection technician. Emily holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Master of Science in Forensic Science.

Education welcomes Carrie Miller-DeBoer as ExplorOlogy® coordinator and Sarah Novak as public programs coordinator. Carrie holds a Bachelor of Science in Biological Oceanography from Millersville University and Master of Science in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from Texas A&M University. Sarah holds a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and Geography through the University of Wisconsin: Oshkosh.

Finally, exhibits welcomed Leah Vanderburg as the museum's graphic designer. Leah holds a Bachelor of Arts in Visual Communication from the University of Oklahoma.

# Desert and Human History, Part 2

BY MICHAEL MARES, DIRECTOR

In the last edition of *TRACKS*, we discussed the possible causes of civilizations migrating to arid and semiarid areas throughout the world rather than remaining in tropical forests. While temperature stability and sufficient water for drinking make forests appealing, the high humidity, heat, and constant moisture of the rainforest prepare a person to become food for the bacteria, flies, mosquitoes, roundworms, hookworms, amoebas, and the other parasitic invertebrates, fungi, and viruses that seek a warm-blooded host in which to reproduce or feed.

By leaving the forest, humans broke the ties to the past and leapt into the future. It was a much bigger step than Neil Armstrong's "giant leap for Mankind" and could only be compared to colonizing another planet. People would never return to the forest, and all of human history changed as our species confronted the uncertainties of life in an unpredictable, and often dry, environment. As we adapted to the dry savannas, we became more adept at traversing large expanses of territory and, just as forests grade to savannas, savannas grade to deserts. Soon, humans encountered the desert, and the results of that encounter are with us still today. They are with us in our cities, in our laws, in our dreams for the future, in our optimism, and in our need to explore new worlds.

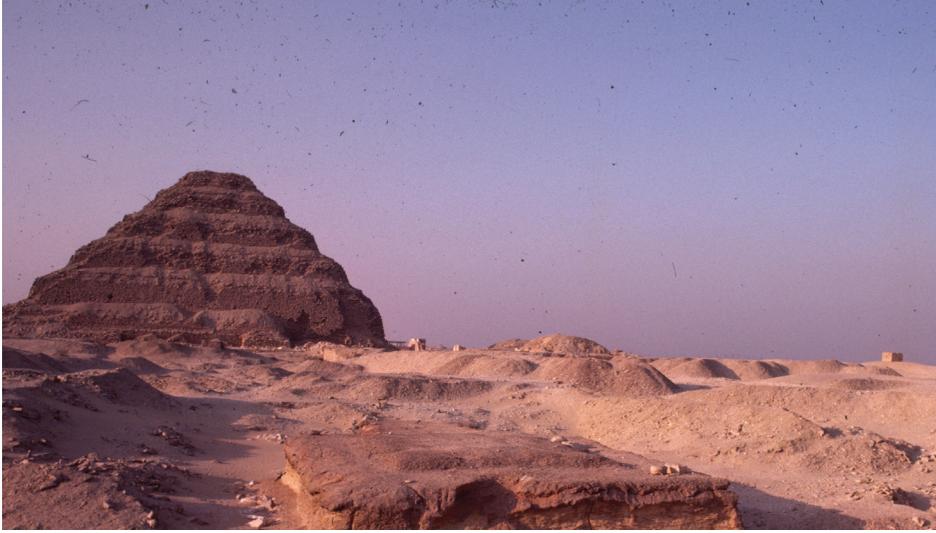
Deserts, with their clear air and limitless vistas, taught people to organize, for desert survival requires organization. Indeed, humanity's first system of codified laws began in the Cradle of Civilization—the Valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers—where the first agricultural development occurred in a semiarid habitat.

Water, the sine qua non for life in deserts, was in short supply in this region, and people struggled to devise a fair mechanism for using this life-giving liquid. Crops, lives—civilization itself—depended on agriculture, which depended on water, and in a desert, water, by definition, is scarce.

It was not until the great Babylonian ruler King Hammurabi developed a written system of laws pertaining to water usage that civilization progressed. This permitted society to coalesce around agriculture. In effect, civilization became "civil." People no longer had to wander after game animals or travel great distances scratching out an existence rooting like wild hogs for grubs, roots, and other sparse foods. Humans could expand the size of their social groups, no longer being limited by the sparse resources that could be obtained through hunting or gathering. Crops were planted and wild plants and animals domesticated. Cities developed and human populations increased in size and complexity. The rest is, literally, history, as well



*Above: Fortunately, the only cobras I encountered doing fieldwork in India were in a snake handler's basket*



*Above: The Step Pyramid of Saqqara built 2600 years before Christ attests to the long association of people with deserts*



*Above: Bedouin girl on the shores of the Mediterranean in Egypt near El Alamein*

as art, music, laws, and literature. All became possible. With cities came libraries, temples, and armies. Societies flourished. The lives of humans were changed forever. Great pyramids were built, and great civilizations were founded. Deserts did that for humanity.

Deserts forced us to look to the sky to predict the weather, to put aside food for the droughts that were sure to come, to develop agricultural and engineering techniques to use and store water when the unpredictable rains fell, to predict the changing seasons, to know when to plant and when to sow, and to deduce the hidden rhythm of the dance of the stars in the sky. Whether Egyptian or Incan, Anasazi or Babylonian—each a desert people—these acts permitted our species to organize a strategy for life in a challenging land. Deserts lifted our gaze to the farthest horizon to seek the limits of the land—to seek the limits of our souls.

In deserts we developed some of our major religions. When Moses spoke directly to God, he did so in the desert, and when God handed down his Commandments, He did that in the desert, too. The Bible is the first desert book. Muhammad's vision to become the first Arab prophet took place in the desert. When Christ meditated and met the Devil, their meeting was in the desert. Jesus suffered in the desert, where he was hot and thirsty. Imagine the Devil tempting him in the rainforest! Where were the vistas of civilizations that could be shown Him from a mountain buried in a dense, green forest? Lost would be the feeling that by setting one's gaze across a desert landscape, one is looking across both time and distance,

seeing one's place in the world, and feeling the vastness of the Earth. The desert not only freed our civilizations, it freed our unifying myths as well.

The soul of the desert is set deep within the fiber of our being as a species. We are of the desert. Yet, although deserts made us what we are today, we have escaped those early connections to our xeric primordial selves. We worry less about the unpredictable ways of nature than we did when we were peoples of the parched land. We no longer understand the stark, spare landscape of the desert. Our desert souls, which were rich in the lore of aridity, now have become more barren, starker, more deserts than the lands where our first cities arose, as we have lost our connections to our arid past. Deserare—the root for the word desert—means abandoned; we have abandoned our past.

Despite the popular view of the desert as a lifeless wilderness, and despite our own fragile ability to exist in an arid climate, life in the desert is, in fact, rich and mysterious, varied and complex. The desert calls to the darkest, most forgotten corners of our genetic past, where our primitive brains first heard distant thunder rumble across an arid plain, to that place where fear resides, and to that most hidden part of our reptilian brain where prayers and songs began, separating us forever from our primordial past. The life-filled desert sings the songs of our beginnings. It is the animating principle buried deep within that place wherein our humanity resides, the hidden richness of the desert and its mysterious core that lies within the human species.

# George M. Sutton: Exploring Art & Science

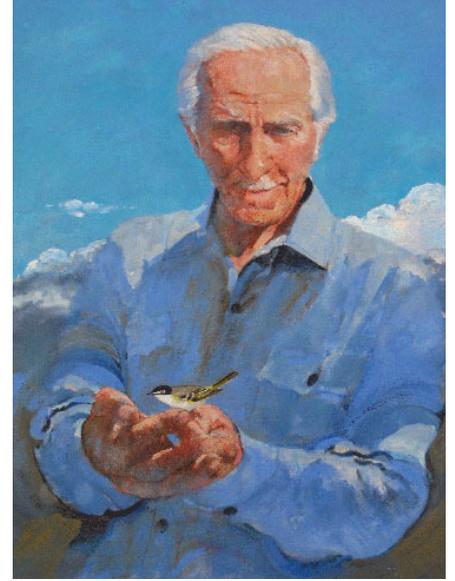
BY DOUG HILL, NORMAN TRANSCRIPT

Today's animal biologists live in an age almost totally dependent on digital imagery to record and store their observations. University of Oklahoma Professor Emeritus George M. Sutton (1898-1982) was an ornithologist decidedly of an era past. He was a lifelong observer of birds who hand-painted his subjects in watercolor and drew their likenesses with pen and ink.

An exhibition of Sutton's extraordinary pictures of birds and other wildlife is now on display at the Sam Noble Museum, including 73 watercolor paintings and several of Sutton's personal items. Among those artifacts from Sutton's life is a paint box given to him in 1916 by his mentor and famed bird artist Louis Agassiz Fuertes. The container for paints and brushes was used throughout his entire lifetime of expeditions across North America and into the Arctic wilderness.

Professor Sutton befriended the young Michael McCarty, now the Sam Noble Museum's media specialist, in the late 1970s and their relationship continued until his death in 1982. Norman's Urban Wilderness Park bears the Sutton moniker along with an OU School of Music

*Below: George Miksch Sutton, White Gyrfalcon*



*Above: Portrait, George M. Sutton*

concert series. The ungroomed park isn't just named after Sutton; it's a wooded respite from the city that the ornithologist actually frequented himself. In addition to the frozen north and tropical south, Sutton also watched birds in the wilds of Norman.

"That was one of his favorite places to go, get away from the town and walk around looking at birds," McCarty said. "He loved that place and went there a lot. There's a pond at the park so birds are always around."

OU undoubtedly possesses the bulk of the artwork that Sutton produced in a career that started when he was a teenager. For a time in the 1920s he was Pennsylvania's state ornithologist. Some of his work resides in Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum.

In one watercolor, a snowy white gyrfalcon with elegant gray feather highlights is perched vigilantly on a boulder by the sea. They are all incredibly detailed portraits depicted as Sutton saw them in their natural habitat.

"Sutton was a master with pen and ink and with watercolor," Jerome Jackson, Sutton's biographer, wrote. "He knew birds; he knew his medium; he understood light."

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# Ramp It Up! Skateboard Culture in Native America

BY DOUG HILL, NORMAN TRANSCRIPT

In Oklahoma, it's not a news flash that skateboarding is popular with Native American youth. From city to small towns across the state, you'll find kids of all descriptions in skate parks, on sidewalks and around school yards riding and performing tricks.

It's also no surprise that Oklahomans figure prominently into a national exhibition featuring artists, skaters, photographers and filmmakers from coast to coast. "Ramp It Up: Skateboard Culture in Native America" opened Feb. 8 at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History and runs through June 15.

Betsy Gordon, of the National Museum of the American Indian, curated the show. Her goal was to highlight the quality attributes of skateboard culture — instead of the stereotypes like skateboarders being disrespectful and destructive. Gordon faced opposition from colleagues who didn't see the value of preserving and documenting skateboard culture.

"Indian Country is basically taking something and making it their own," Gordon said. "It's a unique culture and such a nurturer of creativity. It does attract a kind of non-conformist kid, and the association with photography, filmmaking and graphics makes them very visually sophisticated...They're smart and creative and the kind of kids you want in your museum, even if they are a little anti-establishment."

Much of the pushback was from Native Americans who wanted to know what skateboarding had to do with their culture. Deep-seated reservations about skaters and the skateboard community led to the belief that it would link Native American youth and criminality in viewers' minds.



Lee Nash (*White Mountain Apache*), *4-Wheel Warpony* skate crew, 2008

"Some were asking why would I be glorifying and documenting the worst people of a community," Gordon said. "It took around three years of consistent lobbying and advocating by me that there was something there to tell."

She convinced detractors that no whitewashing was involved and that the skaters themselves were telling their experiences.

An adorned skateboard from Rabbit Studios in Pryor, Okla., is among the 20 skateboards in the show. The father and daughter, members of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, have collaborated on paintings and other art together. Bunky Echo-Hawk, of the Yakama Nation who resides in Pawnee, also has a painted board in the exhibit. He's an internationally celebrated graphic designer, poet and photographer who designed Nike's N7 line. Decks with Native American imagery are just one part of the exhibit. Photographs and film are also among the entertainment.

"There are some spectacular photographs in the show, mostly provided by Dustinn Craig (*White Mountain Apache/Navaho*)," Gordon said. In addition, graffiti art panels provide a background for much of the exhibit. Expect a vivacious and colorful experience that reflects the fast-paced excitement of skating.

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## Sam Noble Museum

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# Coming Soon!

*Hungry Planet: What The World Eats*  
on exhibit May 3 through Aug. 31, 2014

