

MUSE U.M. NEWS

JUNE 1995

No. 2

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM
THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM

RECENT ACCESSIONS BY THE MUSEUM

Three muskox (*Ovibos moschatus*) skulls were donated by Gene Miller of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska. They were collected on Nunivak Island, where they are an introduced species.

Dan Pletscher, of the Wildlife Biology Program, donated eight skulls of the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) collected in Alberta and British Columbia. One individual was killed in an avalanche, only the second record of an avalanche-caused wolf mortality. This incidence was published in *The Canadian Field Naturalist* (106:526) by D. Boyd, et al.

Virginia Vincent witnessed a Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) fly into telephone wires at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge. It did not survive and was donated to the museum.

The 1994 Aldo Leopold Wilderness Collection of small mammals was donated by Bob Lee. This collection from Ravalli and Deer Lodge counties, consists of numerous specimens of *Sorex*, *Peromyscus*, *Clethrionomys*, *Microtus*, *Arvicola*, and *Tamias*. Many complete skeletons are included.

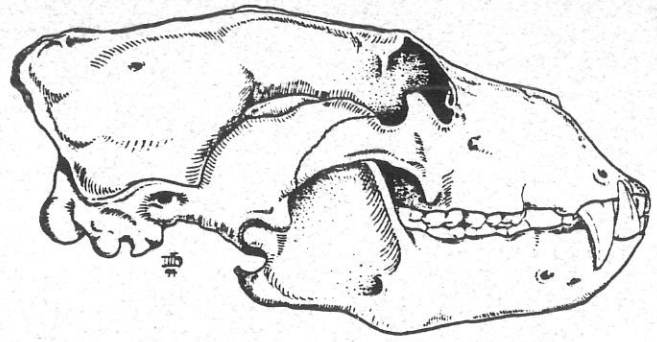
Shawn Goodchild, a volunteer in the Museum Preparation Lab, recovered several birds, including an acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) and Allen's hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*).

An elk (*Cervus elaphus*) skeleton with severe trauma to the humerus was donated by Craig Marr. A bullet had shattered the humerus and the bone had fully healed. Though only two-thirds of its original length, use of the limb was regained. Lead fragments recovered from the bone verified that a bullet had caused the trauma.

MUSEUM TOUR PROGRAM

A "Thank you" goes out to the following volunteers who gave of their time and talents to provide tours and educational programs to visiting museum groups during Spring semester:

Jim Berkey
Christian Klein
Wendy Moore
Bob Petty
Joe Scoranienci
Rachel Wolstenholme



This first collaborative venture with the Montana Natural History Center was very successful thanks in large part to the efforts of Rachel Wolstenholme, Program Coordinator, and Wendy Moore of the MNHC.

COMPARATIVE SKELETAL COLLECTION

The Museum maintains a vertebrate skeletal collection which is available for a variety of research and teaching purposes. One of the frequent uses of the collection is to identify bones discovered by anthropologists, paleontologists, law enforcement, the medical community, and the general public. Books are of limited value in identifying a bone, especially if only a small fragment is present. Often direct comparison to actual specimens is the only way to verify an identification.

The skeletal collection at The University of Montana is unparalleled in the state and a significant regional collection. Historically, museums often saved only the skulls and not the rest of the skeleton. However, the Zoological Museum has been collecting the entire skeleton when possible. Often when a specimen is not suitable for a study skin or a mount, it is prepared as a skeleton. The collection is particularly strong in the Carnivora, Artiodactyla, and bird collections.

The Museum offers this identification service to the University and to the community. Many bones brought to the Museum turn out to be a large domestic animal, such as a cow or horse. Occasionally, however, important finds have been brought to light. Many important fossil sites have been discovered by someone curious about that bone that they've found. Recent identifications at the Museum have included horse, deer, bison, bobcat, and even human. Any human remains are referred to the Anthropology Department. One set of bones was brought to Anthropology by the police that were found in association with a pair of shoes, believed to be the remains of a missing person. Recognized as non-human by the anthropologists, they were brought to the Museum and identified as cow, pig, and sheep bones!

HERBARIUM NOTICE

We have recently organized "The Friends of the University of Montana Herbarium" to secure support for and enrichment of the collections and operations of the Herbarium. For information on becoming a founding member, please contact David Dyer, 243-4743.