
MUSEU.M. NEWS

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE PHILIP L. WRIGHT ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM – UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Summer 2012

No. 34

Recent Acquisitions

In an unusual occurrence for us, a new species of mammal was donated to the museum! Dr. Chris Comer, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, gave the museum several **Naked Mole Rats** (*Heterocephalus glaber*). Native to Africa, these were mortalities from the captive-raised research colony at U.M. They were preserved both as complete individuals in alcohol and as skins and skeletons.

Several other unusual animals were donated recently, an **Eastern Glass Lizard** (*Ophisaurus ventralis*), a skin and skeleton of a **Patagonian Mara** (*Dolichotus patagonum*), and the skull and partial skeleton of a **Llama** (*Lama glama*). The Llama is especially interesting; it was killed by mountain lions and has documented puncture wounds from felid teeth. It also exhibits extreme bone loss and abscesses from periodontal disease. These were all live animals that were used by our friends at Animal Wonders, Inc. in many educational programs in Montana. After the animals died, they were donated to the museum where they can continue to be useful in education and research.

Kerry Foresman arranged for the donation of three **Bighorn Sheep** (*Ovis canadensis*) skulls, 2 adults and 1 sub-adult, from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. These will add to the Museum's outstanding collection of Bighorn Sheep.

Roberta Newbury, a graduate student studying **bobcats** (*Lynx rufus*), donated the skull of one of her study animals that was killed by coyotes. Her research is conducted in the Tally Lake Ranger District of Flathead National Forest.

Continued on page 3

Museum Art Show

The UMZM is having an art show! This November, various artists from around campus will be featured in the UC Gallery show *An Aesthetic Taxonomy*, a group art display showcasing the interdisciplinary capabilities of the UM Zoological Museum. Sculpture, specimens and bones, paintings, encaustic work, drawings, photographs of the collection, and other works inspired by the museum will be on display from October 29th through November 30th. The artists include Sam Case, Hannah Spry, David Dyer, Louis Habeck, Emily Graslie, Eric Carlson, Kadie Zimmerman, and Leslie Millar; all participants are current or former students and staff of the University, and all have been strongly influenced by the museum and its extensive collections. Proceeds from any sold artwork will be donated for the benefit of the zoological museum.

The opening reception will be in the UC Gallery from 4-6pm on November 1st, and we will have a short artist's talk to further discuss the importance of the UMZM and its role on our campus. Stop by for some great company and beautiful artwork! The UC Gallery is open Monday-Friday from 10am-4pm during the academic year.



"Flammable" by Hannah Spry, illustration (ink on paper), 2012.

Follow the Museum's Blog!

By Emily Graslie

Last October, in an attempt to raise awareness about the UMZM on campus and within the community Missoula I began authoring a weblog ("blog") through the photo-sharing website tumblr.com. Tumblr averages about 13 billion unique page views on their 67 million blogs per month, and it is the site which every celebrity from President Barack Obama to Lady Gaga uses for social media outreach. I did not have exceedingly high expectations of interest or readership – I merely wanted to share the hard work, trials, and tribulations of running a natural history facility with whomever would stumble across it. I wrote about preparation lab processes, highlights from the collection, and the impending catastrophes caused by frequent overcrowding, lack of climate control, and our extremely limited budget. After a very short four months, my blog was recognized by some of the tumblr.com staff and they decided to feature it in a "Spotlight" category about Museums on one of the front pages. Soon, my blog was linked alongside those from the San Francisco and American Museums of Modern Art, the Getty Museum, the American Natural History Museum, the Smithsonian, and many other museums, archives, and galleries which all have grossly larger budgets, and their blogs run by paid public relations staff. My readership skyrocketed, and now, 10 months into authoring our museum blog 5 days a week I have over 6,000 online subscribers and an estimated 500 unsubscribed readers. I am averaging a gain of around 1,000 new subscribers every 3 weeks since early April. It has 39,000 page views from every state in the US and has been viewed in 101 different countries worldwide, including Nigeria, Belarus, Oman, Kuwait, Kenya, Lithuania, and everywhere between Norway and South Korea.

Along with this endeavor being a fantastic learning experience about our collection and its infinite possibilities, it has also made me aware of the universal interest that people have for natural history collections. I often receive emails and messages from my subscribed followers lamenting the fact that their towns or universities lack a facility as extensive and impressive as our own here on campus. As disappointing for those people as it may be to not experience these objects and specimens in life, I am more than happy to share them online through pictures and descriptions in order to advertise our collection to a worldwide audience, and ultimately raise awareness about these important collections.

Check out the blog at <http://umzoology.tumblr.com> You can subscribe by signing up for the website, or bookmark it and view it as a non-subscriber. Updated Monday-Friday.



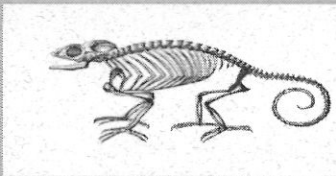
The Museum in the News

The Museum has certainly received its fair share of publicity lately! Keep your eyes out for the September issue of U.M.'s "Montanan" magazine. The museum is featured in a key article to raise awareness about the importance of our collection for a wide audience of faculty, staff, and alumni who may not be aware of our facility on campus. Also, the national Internet celebrity Hank Green filmed a segment of his popular series "**CrashCourse**" in our museum! The episode is titled "**Your Skeleton: It's ALIVE!**" and features Hank in the museum and preparation lab, using museum specimens to explain the skeletal system. You can watch the video by searching "CrashCourse Biology#30 The Skeleton" at youtube.com. If that wasn't enough for one summer, we also had artist Theron Humphrey of the photo project "**This Wild Idea**" visit our museum and interview Dave and Emily. He and his coonhound Maddie have spent the last year traveling the United States and interviewing a different American every day in order to research what it is that makes us unique as a country. You can learn more about Theron and his projects at thiswildidea.com, and to see his hilarious side-project "**Maddie the Coonhound: A super serious project about dogs and physics**" at maddieonthings.com.

Friends of Museum Dues are DUE!

Please note that 2012-2014 membership renewals for the Friends of the Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum are now due. Use the membership form on page 4 and send it in today! Dues are \$25 for **two** years, and only \$15 for students. All contributions to the Friends of the Museum are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

We need your continued support! We still need each and every member to help support this fledgling Friends group. Also encourage your colleagues, students, and friends to join. Let's continue to support the active acquisitions, exhibit, and research programs of the museum.



Meet the Staff:

David Dyer – Curator

Emily Graslie – Graduate Student,
Curatorial Assistant

Charles Miller – Preparation Lab

Sam Case – Preparation Lab

Emily Kerr – Museum & Lab

Alexis Berger, Duggan Backhouse-Prentiss
- Interns

www.zoologicalmuseum.dbs.umt.edu

<http://umzoology.tumblr.com>

Recent Accessions...continued from Page 1

Emily Graslie collected and donated the skull of a female **Whitetail Deer** (*Odocoileus virginianus*). While not a rare species, this skull is interesting because the animal has greatly worn teeth, indicating that it lived until old age, and shows bony changes consistent with periodontal disease.

A **Sandhill Crane** (*Grus canadensis*) was found in Ravalli Co. which had unfortunately flown into a power line and died. The bird was salvaged for the museum, and our newest bird-skinner Sam Case did an excellent job preserving the skin for the collections.

When talking about the museum's oldest specimen, we have always point to the European Polecat (*Mustela putorius*) in our collection, which was collected in Russia in 1851. Now we have a new "oldest specimen". Daniel Comer, an archaeologist from Lincoln, MT donated extra faunal remains of **Bison** (*Bos bison*) from an archaeological site that he had excavated. Archaeologists often generate huge numbers of faunal elements from excavations, usually more than they have room to store. Once these remains were analyzed and reported on, Mr. Comer donated complete skeletal elements representing many individuals of bison. Since the museum has only one bison skeleton, and we are called on to identify bison remains on a regular basis, this donation is very important and useful. His site was carbon-dated at 1490 – 1650 A.D., making these our oldest specimens by far!

Remember, you can see some of the specimens mentioned in this article in our "Recent Accessions" exhibit case in the first floor hallway! There's always something new and interesting in this display case. The next time you pass that case stop and have a closer look: is that really a snake in the jar!?

YES, I want to become a member of the Friends of the P.L. Wright Zoological Museum!

| | | | |
|--|-------|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Member | \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Organization | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Member | \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member | \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member | \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Honorarium Fund | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Member | \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Gift | \$ _____ |

Name _____

Address _____

Note that dues are for a period of **two** years! Checks should be made payable to: *U.M. Foundation/Friends of the Museum*. All contributions to the *Friends* are tax deductible to the full extent provided by law.

Send membership forms to: P.L. Wright Museum – Division of Biological Sciences – The University of Montana – Missoula, Montana - 59812

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(MBII01)

