From The Director
by Dr. Kenneth Carpenter

A lot has happened since my last report. The most exciting is that the alligator, turtle and lizards have moved into their new exhibit, which was made possible through the generous donation of Mr. David Jones. To mark the occasion, we had a ribbon cutting ceremony, which drew an estimated 96 visitors. For details, see the report by Christine Trease. The old alligator tank was dismantled and moved out of the lab a few days later, and construction has already begun on the paleontology and archeology viewing labs. When completed, the Museum’s visitors will be able to watch technicians cleaning and repairing fossils and archeological material. This rare “behind the scene” exhibit is also made possible by David Jones.

Another important event for the Museum is the upgrade of the collections software. This software keeps the records for each specimen in the Museum’s collections. Without that information, the scientific value of the specimens would be considerably less. These records need to be kept in perpetuity so that future generations can benefit from the specimens.

In my role as Curator of Paleontology, I have given public lectures to the Utah Friends of Paleontology in Price and in Saint George, as well as another at the Red River Museum in Idabel, Oklahoma. I have also managed to squeeze in some research time on the sauropod Diplodocus. This is a project involving Dr. Jack McIntosh, considered the world’s expert on sauropod dinosaurs, and Virginia Tidwell, who is fast becoming another leading expert.

An exhibits planning committee for the new museum, comprised of the Curator of Archaeology (Renee Barlow), fossil preparator (John Bird), Director of Education and Exhibits (Lloyd Logan), and the Curator of Paleontology (me), have completed an overview of the history of life (including humans). Tentatively, we have decided not to separate humans from the history of life. That means no separate archaeology and paleontology galleries, but rather the visitor will move seamlessly from one area to the other. We are now conceptualizing walk-through dioramas that will present ‘snap-shots’ in time. One obvious diorama life-sized reconstruction of a coal...
In my last update we had just closed down our quarry for the winter and begun various lab projects. The big jacket from the Gooseneck Quarry site that contained the 26 articulated allosaur vertebrae was just finished up and we started the big project of stripping the 1960’s paint from the four dinosaur mounts in the sandpit. As we pushed deeper into the winter season, we completed the preparation of all the fossil bone material collected at Gooseneck. This included five of the six pubic bones of this Allosaur, about a dozen ribs and six vertebrae centra, originally thought to belong to the Allosaur, but, when prepped out, proved to be more of the stegosaur. All in all, a nice little collection.

We moved on to finishing up the last of the fossil material collected out at the EO2 Quarry down south in the Mussentuchit area. This is one of the sites that gave us many fine Eolambia bones. And just these last few days we are rounding out the final 20 bones from Cleveland Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry. Finishing up a lot of loose ends. Nice to have closure on some of these things. We still have 400-500 bones yet to prep out from the Suarez Sisters Site, so there is plenty to do that will keep us off the streets. And, as I mentioned before, there is lots of paint to come off lots of bone in the sandpit. Don’t want to forget that.

Can’t say enough in the way of thanks to the volunteer help we have had this winter. Jim Huffaker has racked up more hours than I believe I have squeezed in. I was beginning to think that he had a cot hidden somewhere in the lab. We are just going to have to give him the air scribe he has been working with come the end of the prep season. With all the hours he has put on that little tool, there won’t be enough left of it to be of much use. Sue Campbell, a Utah Friends of Paleontology member from years back, has also been putting in many helpful hours these past few weeks. This on top of making the long drive through wind, rain, snow and herds of deer from the Provo area. And, recently, Yvonne Wilson has found the way to the Bone Lab, bringing with her some considerable experience and an indomitably cheerful demeanor. It’s great to have all these hard working, spirited folks clamoring about the lab. Your help is most appreciated and has made it possible to achieve a considerable amount of work this winter. Thank you, all.

Work continues on making the prep lab at the museum operational again. Those of you who have been “Friends of the Museum” for many years may well remember back in the early days when all fossil preparation was done at the museum instead of our current lab which is a few blocks away on the USU-CEU campus. The goal now, as was the case back those many years, is to have the lab in the museum with a nice big window so that museum visitors can watch the process and talk with the preparator if questions arise. Like a game of Pickup Sticks, progress on this renovation was dependent on progress on other fronts, but things are moving forward and we are getting dangerously close to getting a new lab up and running.

With these current warmer days, bright sunshine and daffodils starting to come up, other stirrings can be detected at the bone lab. Talk is starting to center around getting out in the field, geology formation maps are being perused and calendar dates are being circled for days spent in site surveys looking for new fossil quarry locals. Even more tangible evidence to our desire to be outside are the new tires on the museums field vehicles. We are ready! If you too are feeling the excitement in the air, get your boots cleaned up, fill your water bottle, grab a compass and come on out with us. Just call the bone lab (435)-613-5645 and ask to talk with John or Bill. The more, the merrier.

And finally, for those who like to be kept up to date on paleo in Utah, here is some information. The 2011 Utah Friends of Paleontology State Meeting and Symposium is scheduled to occur here in Price, April 14, 15 and 16. Here you can socialize with real paleontologist, attend a dinner and presentation with Don Burge, the founder and first director of the Prehistoric Museum and, maybe fit in a tour or two of eastern Utah paleo sites. Call the museum (613-5060) for details and registration forms. This is a great opportunity, so give it some thought.

Hope to see you at any of the above events or, maybe, just poking around the museum. Bill
swamp 82 million years ago (when the coal in the surrounding Book Cliffs was formed).

The staff, volunteers and I are also working on renovating the exhibit for the Holiday Inn. For years, the Museum has had casts of the Huntington mammoth in the lobby. Unfortunately, any information on the specimens, if any, has been lost. We are currently preparing small exhibits on archeology and paleontology instead.

These and other projects mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter are made possible through the generous time donation of volunteers and through financial contributions, as well. All of us in the Museum thank these individuals.

Living Fossils Exhibit Opens
By Christine K. Trease-Director of Public Relations

Museum Critters Have a New Home!—On Friday, February 18, at 3:30 p.m., the reception for the ribbon cutting of the new exhibit took place in the gallery of the museum. Jenna Stephens’ name was selected from the 47 children who entered their name in the drawing to cut the ribbon, and the first live feeding of the museum critters took place in their new home. The event was free to the public and there were 96 in attendance. This exhibit continues to be a public favorite.

NEW ITEMS—Shown are two of our new excavation kits!

NEW ARRIVALS—Our spring stock of t-shirt has arrived. Many new styles to choose from. Also, we have 3 display cases of closeout items at huge discounts. Plus a nice selection of older style t-shirts for you to save big on! Stop by and check out our sales.
What’s new in archaeology

By Yvonne Wilson

It’s a very busy time for Archaeology. Our curator Renee Barlow has recently updated our report to the federal database of NAGPRA items in our collection. (NAGPRA stands for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.) She is in consultation with 39 different Native American tribes regarding their possible connection to or knowledge of these artifacts and other items. Happily, the long hours Dr. Barlow spent on this project have now brought the Prehistoric Museum into compliance with NAGPRA statutes. We have pulled some artifacts off exhibit in accordance with NAGPRA, so you may notice a few changes in the exhibit hall.

To replace those items taken off exhibit, we are creating a small display about dogbane cordage making. I got to learn the process myself…it’s rough on the hands but a lot of fun! We are also putting on exhibit a beautiful meadowlark feather head-dress, and a pair of Archaic split-twig figurines.

Over in Price’s Holiday Inn, you may have noticed a display from the Prehistoric Museum. We are trying to improve that exhibit, choosing a new set of artifacts (and fossils), and making new information labels that hopefully pique the curiosity of hotel visitors. We’re trying to spread the word on how much the museum has to offer.

Back in the lab, Dr. Barlow has started teaching a few volunteers about the conservation of ceramics. A number of ceramic items in the museum collection need a bit of TLC. Some suffer from the weathering that occurred before they were collected. Other pieces were repaired in the past with glues that have degraded over time. In the lab we dissolve the old, failing glues and use stable, reversible, conservation-grade adhesives to repair and protect the ceramics. Such conservation ensures that these artifacts will remain intact for future generations to both study and enjoy.

And though it may not be thrilling news to our visitors, I am quite excited that our new collection management database is up and running. This improved system will allow us to better track and search our collections, make data input simpler for our large repository collections, and generally improve the lives of those of us working in the dim back rooms of the collection. Bits of data may not be as dramatic as the artifacts themselves, but the information gathered is equally important to the science of archaeology.

We continue working on the inventory. When you consider that the Archaeology collection alone contains roughly 750,000 artifacts, it takes quite a bit of time! I have reorganized and inventoried our collections that need special storage. Volunteers Dave Cassidy, Robin Hedegaard and Jim Huffaker deserve credit for patiently checking and labeling seemingly endless sherds and lithics.

Twenty four prehistoric wooden foreshafts sharpened and bound with sinew, that would have fit into phragmites arrow shafts. Probably used for hunting and practice.
After a winter that seemed to drag on forever, it looks as though spring may be just around the corner. Even though my birthday is groundhog day, I put little faith in an eastern groundhog forecasting spring in Utah. I am going by local signs such as geese flying north, the first sandhill cranes arriving, and the bighorn sheep coming down out of the mountains to Sunnyside for the first spring grasses. But the real indicator of spring is the telephone at the museum ringing several times a day from teachers trying to get class field trips lined up before their preferred date is taken by another school. Reservations are being added at a rate of several per day.

In addition to the usual school tours here at the museum, we have provided a new outreach program, “Eastern Utah Dinosaurs”, to the students at Ferron Junior High. The program was well received, with three programs run back-to-back, for the seventh, eighth and ninth grade students. The only casualty was my voice giving out after talking for three hours straight. I’ve been invited back next year to provide the same program for the incoming seventh grade.

We also had the first visit by Roosevelt Grade School (180 fourth graders) since I have been at the museum. The children were really excited about what they saw and learned and the teachers all said that they plan to return next year if at all possible.

The television program, ”Dinosaur Train” is apparently responsible for the recent influx of birthday party reservations. If you would like to have your birthday party here at the museum, visit our web site for the details.

The photography exhibit “Exposures” will run through April 23, 2011. If you haven’t seen it, you should drop by the museum and see 95 plus photographs by 37 talented local photographers – wildlife, botanicals, scenery, old cars, fireworks and even a photo of the Provo Tabernacle burning. The reason I say 95+ is that the number is dwindling as we sell photographs out of the exhibit. Don’t miss this exhibit – it will make you even prouder to live in this beautiful state.

The Living Fossil Exhibit, a.k.a. live animals, has been moved to a new home in the museum near the children’s area. The animals are settling in nicely. Their new homes are bigger and more scenic than their old abode. Stop in and watch the “Friday Feeding at 4:00” and see the new homes for the animals. Nearly 100 people attended the formal opening of this new exhibit.

The old Mesozoic Garden area is a thing of the past, the tank has been removed and the renovation is well under way to add windows into what will be a working preparation lab shared by archaeology and paleontology. This will allow the visitors to watch and interact with the staff and volunteers working in the lab. Ever wonder what goes on behind the scenes at the museum? Visit us soon and often to see for yourself.

Museum volunteer Ralph Escamilla was a tremendous help in completing the two projects mentioned above. We can always use volunteers here at the museum, especially docents to help conduct school tours and answer visitor questions. Don’t worry about not knowing enough, we will provide training for you. We can also use assistance working on exhibits and preparing fossils.

Don’t forget to renew your family memberships, only $39 provides a year of education and a fun destination for children and adults alike. Better yet, also buy a gift membership for a friend’s family and introduce them to the best deal in town!

Have a great spring and visit YOUR museum often to see (and hopefully be a part of) the changes that have taken place, and are taking place, to make the Prehistoric Museum an even more exciting destination than it already was!

To volunteer, please contact Lloyd Logan at (435) 613-5760 or lloyd.logan@ceu.edu

For memberships, contact Christine K. Trease at (435) 613-5757 or christine.trease@ceu.edu or stop by the museum and fill out your application.
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