

# Research & Collections News

The Occasional Newsletter of the Research and Collections Staff  
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

**re•search** (rī-sûrch', rē'sûrch) *n.* **1.** Scholarly or scientific investigation or inquiry. See synonyms at **inquiry**. **2.** Close, careful study. **3.** When performed on collections, the *raison d'être* of all great natural history museums.

November, 2008

(covering the months of September and October, 2008)



## Collection News

### **Vertebrate Paleontology**

You might ask “Where have the mammals gone?” When the previous Cenozoic Hall closed recently, we moved the fossil mammal skeletons into the previous Dinosaur Gallery (MD-6), where they are now lined up, awaiting their new accommodations in the north wing of the remodeled 1913 Building. Some of these classic skeletons are in very nice dynamic postures, and others that are not so dynamic will be re-mounted in new poses. This assortment of extinct mammals is a valuable Museum resource and the envy of many other natural history museums.



## Page Museum

With the help of pneumatic tools the Page team has now been able to expedite the excavation in sterile and less fossiliferous grids of Box 1. They are coming across a lot of plant material as well as invertebrates such as millipedes. Preliminary identifications show that juniper and oak are dominating the flora of this deposit. Concentrations of bone seem to be in the south section of the box in the upper levels preserving several dire wolf skulls, an American lion skull, a juvenile sabertoothed cat partial skull with canine, two Harlan's ground sloth scapulae and a humerus, and juvenile horse and teratorn material, to name but a few.

Excavator Andie Thomer has set up a blog to document weekly finds and news from the new project. To see our weekly progress with lots of photos, visit Andie's blog at <http://excavatrix.blogspot.com>



In the fishbowl lab they have been focusing on preparing the mammoth, including sorting the matrix for microfossils. The articulated thoracic vertebrae shown below in this jacket will go on display as a semi-prepared specimen as part of our rotating exhibits for the new project. Also discovered in the matrix of this jacket were juniper seeds, ostracods, a variety of freshwater mollusks including the mussel *Anodonta*, vole and gopher teeth, and a quail tarsometatarsus.



Above right: Articulated thoracic vertebrae of the mammoth.

Left: Selection of microfossils from the mammoth jacket.

## Malacology

Lindsey Groves and Kathy Omura (MBPC) examined the shell collection of the late Frederick R. Aldrich (Newport Beach), currently in storage in Irvine, for the possibility of acquisition by NHMLAC. This extensive worldwide collection was acquired by the Bowers Museum in 1962 and divested to the Irvine Ranch & Land Trust in 2007.

## Field Work

### Vertebrate Paleontology: Tibetan Plateau

The joint expedition of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and Chinese Academy of Sciences paleontologists to the Tibetan Plateau concluded in late September

with another season of spectacular finds. The focus of this year's fieldwork was in the central Qaidam Basin, in the Olongbuluk area, which was discovered in the 1930's by Swedish paleontologist Birger Bohlin. The team (including Xiaoming Wang and Jack Tseng of our Museum) prospected the immediate area surrounding Bohlin's original localities and discovered nearly all of the originally described taxa from Bohlin's 1937 publication (see below). Furthermore, several taxa new to the area were collected, including a partial lower jaw of *Lycyaena*, a rare fossil hyena previously known in Asia only from localities in eastern China and northern India. In addition, a week-long excursion to the highly inaccessible Erboliang area recovered two new mammal taxa, a chalicothere and an unknown murid rodent, the latter representing a new genus and species. Heavy snow and treacherous conditions on Kunlun Mountain pass prevented the crew from collecting fossils this season at the highest known late Cenozoic vertebrate fossil site in the world, but the weather presented photographic opportunities nonetheless.



The peculiar erosional structures in the Erboliang exposures (above) are typical of central Qaidam, where strong northwesterly winds during the winter carve into the sediment to create this eerie landscape that the locals call "Ghost Town."

This year, we were happy to collect many bovid (family including sheep, goat, and cattle) specimens from a rich locality called Quanshuiliang, a long strip of exposures along the trans-Tibetan railroad. This nice partial skull (genus *Qurlignoria*) with both left and right horncores (bony inner cores of the horns) is one of many we have collected.



The Tibetan Plateau Expedition was, for the first time, accompanied by regular updates directly from the field via a blog webpage hosted by Jack Tseng at: <http://lacmvp.blogspot.com>.



## **Vertebrate Paleontology: Central California Coast**

Ed Holt, the manager of the Rancho Sisquoc Winery, near Santa Maria in Santa Barbara County, reported an articulated fossil whale skeleton that his daughter Sara Holt had found weathering out in a stream valley on the ranch. Howell Thomas of Vertebrate Paleontology led a group from the Museum to collect it on 8-9 October 2008. Assisting Howell were Rick Feeny of Ichthyology, Phil Bouchard of Education, and Vertebrate Paleontology Department Volunteer Keith Krzywiec. Many thanks to Mammals for allowing us to use their “whale truck” to bring the large fossil back to the Museum.



## **Entomology**

Another species of insect new to science has shown up in a Los Angeles backyard. Entomology Curator Brian Brown operates a Malaise trap, a tent-like structure with an alcohol-filled collecting bottle on top, in his backyard frequently throughout the year. He has collected some remarkably rare and interesting species in his otherwise relatively typical suburban yard, but recently he collected one of the most splendid yet. When he came across a specimen of this small (6 mm long) robber fly he thought little of it, other than to give it to a colleague who works on these rapacious little predators. The colleague (Dr. Torsten Dikow of the Field Museum in Chicago) was astounded, in his own words:



“Well, to my surprise it is a new species of the genus *Leptopteromyia*. This genus is mostly Neotropical with 9 species overall and has a single species in the US in southern Texas and southern Florida (*L. americana* Hardy, 1947). What is interesting about this genus is that the larvae are known to develop in webs of Embioptera [an enigmatic group known as web-spinners] species and Ross from the California Academy has reared quite a few species. Do you have Embioptera in your backyard? Is there any chance you got more of these?”

It turns out that Brown indeed does have the strange web-spinners in his backyard, probably living under the house (they come indoors sometimes), and even better, he found five more specimens of the new species in the next trap sample. Probably they are not rare, just unnoticed and previously unexpected.

It is truly amazing how poorly known the fauna of the Los Angeles backyard can be.

## ***Crustacea and Polychaetes***

Jody Martin (Division of Invertebrate Studies / Crustacea) and Leslie Harris (Polychaetes) spent most of October collecting and photographing marine invertebrates (mostly crabs and polychaete worms) off the coast of the small island of Saipan, part of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in the western Pacific. Their work in Saipan was supported and funded by the Coastal Resource Management department of the



CNMI, courtesy of John Starmer of CRM. Jody was also supported by his National Science Foundation grant to study the relationships of all decapod crustaceans.

Following the Saipan field work, Jody continued on to Singapore to work with researchers and students at the Raffles Museum of

Biodiversity Research on the campus of the National University of Singapore. Shown here are Leslie Harris (top right) and the crabs *Atergatis floridus* and *Daira perlata* from Saipan.



## **Meetings, Workshops, and Presentations**

### ***Vertebrate Paleontology***

At the 68th Annual Meeting of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology held in Cleveland, Ohio, from 15-18 October 2008, Xiaoming Wang, Jack Tseng (Student in Residence), Meredith Staley (VP Preparator), Ken Campbell (Ornithology), and Jingmai O'Connor (Dinosaur Institute) all gave platform presentations on their research. Xiaoming spoke on the discovery of a new crown-antlered deer from the late middle Miocene Lower Youshashan Formation of the Tibetan Plateau; Jack gave a talk on biomechanical modeling of the fossil hyena *Dinocrocuta* as compared to the living spotted hyena; Meredith presented a talk, co-authored with Lawrence Barnes, about new tooth-bearing mysticete whale fossils from the early Miocene Vaqueros Formation in Orange County; Ken gave a talk on the geologic transformation of the Amazon Basin during the past 10 million years (see below), and Jingmai O'Connor presented her dissertation research on the morphological diversity of the extinct group of Mesozoic birds known as enantiornithines. In addition, graduate student Alyssa Bell (Dinosaur Institute) presented a poster on the hindlimb biomechanics of the extinct diving birds known as hesperornithiforms. The museum had a strong presence at the meetings, with additional

representation by Maureen Walsh, Michael Williams, Samuel McLeod, and Vanessa Rhue (all from Vertebrate Paleontology), and from the Page Museum (see below).

## ***Ornithology***

Dr. Ken Campbell attended the annual Society of Vertebrate Paleontology meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, where he gave a presentation entitled: “Neogene Amazonia: The physical and biological transformation of the world’s largest terrestrial ecosystem.” The paper discussed how and why a major extinction event occurred in the Amazon Basin about ten million years ago.

## ***Conservation***

Tania Collas (Head of Conservation), Claire Dean (Senior Consulting Conservator), and Liz Homberger (Assistant Conservator) attended the annual Western Association for Art Conservation (WAAC) conference held at the Getty Villa from October 24-26. Tania was also able to attend a two-day workshop on digital photography for conservation documentation, held in conjunction with the conference on October 22-23. At the WAAC meeting, Tania presented a talk about the recent fumigation of the History Department’s Automotive Collection, which had become infested with webbing clothes moths. Claire presented a talk on removing hand soiling from stone surfaces using an approach she developed while treating stone artifacts recently de-installed from the Ancient Latin America Hall.

## ***Entomology***

Brian Brown, Curator of Entomology, traveled to the Field Museum in Chicago in early October to participate on a panel of experts (right) advising the Encyclopedia of Life (EoL) project about Diptera (true flies). With flies making up about 10% of the world’s biological diversity, they obviously will make up a large part of the EoL, and there was lots to talk about. Over three days they discussed



nomenclature, alpha taxonomy, EoL species pages, databases, education, bioinventory, and many other topics. The big problem, of course, is how to get information from 157,000 described species onto EoL pages. No easy answers were found, but avenues of possibility included direct funneling of information from Zootaxa and other systematic journals into EoL and name registration (via Zoobank).

## ***Page Museum***

Collections manager Chris Shaw and curatorial assistant Aisling Farrell attended a full week of presentations and symposia at the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology’s 68<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in Cleveland, Ohio.

## **History**

History Curator William Estrada delivered presentations on and signed copies of his book *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* at The City Club on Bunker Hill on October 23 and at *Archives Live! The Third Annual Los Angeles Archives Bazaar* at the University of Southern California on October 25.

At right: William Estrada at his City Club presentation with Hiroshi “Bill” Shishima (Mercado Plaza) and Cruz Moreno and Beatrice Moreno de Guzman (La Esperanza Bakery). Their families owned neighboring small businesses in the Plaza area in the 1920s and 1930s.



At left: William Estrada signing books after his City Club presentation.

History Collections Manager Beth Werling delivered the first presentation of the 2008-09 R&C seminar series. Titled “On the Road Again: The Automotive Collection of the Los Angeles County Museum,” her talk described the history of the museum’s collection and highlighted how its holdings reflect the important role of Southern California in auto design and manufacture.

History Curator Sojin Kim participated in a roundtable session at the annual meeting of the California Chapter of the American Planning Association in Hollywood on September 23. The session addressed different strategies for engaging communities in urban planning issues.

## **External Funding**

### ***Malacology***

Emeritus curator Jim McLean raised an additional \$4,000 in private donations in order to continue the part time support for his imaging assistant, Brian Koehler, who is now completing the illustrations for his books on the shelled gastropods of the northeast Pacific Ocean and worldwide liotiid gastropods.



## Public Outreach

### ***Vertebrate Paleontology: Red Rock Canyon***

From 23-26 October, we had another successful family field trip to Red Rock Canyon State Park in the Mojave Desert for fossil prospecting. More than 60 eager participants gathered in the scenic desert exposures to try their hand in the art of collecting vertebrate fossils. A large museum staff, led by Drs. David Whistler and Xiaoming Wang, greeted the enthusiastic crowd, and a combination of Vertebrate Paleontology and Education programs was packed into the weekend trip. Collin and Jason (Education) presented a star show complete with international mythologies, and Dave (Curator Emeritus, Vertebrate Paleontology) gave a campfire presentation on the geology of Red Rock Canyon. Among the most significant fossil finds, Michael Williams (Vertebrate Paleontology Preparator) found a complete lower jaw of the extinct kangaroo rat *Cupidinimus*, the most complete specimen yet found of this genus in the area. Other worthy specimens include a camel palate, camel foot bones, a carnivore jaw fragment, and well as several horse teeth.

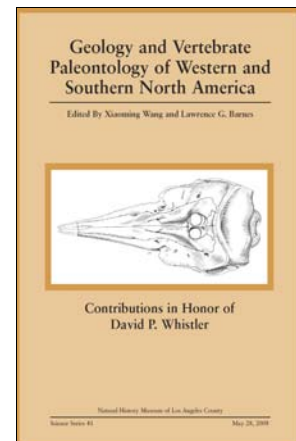


Above: Red Rock Canyon field trip staff from Education, Vertebrate Paleontology, and LAPD. Front row from left to right: Matt Morris (volunteer), Gary Takeuchi (VP), Jack Tseng (VP), David Whistler (VP), and Kamaron Sardar (LAPD); back row from left to right: Collin Omara-Green (Education), Jason Hammond (Education), Christy Evans (Education), Michael Williams (VP), Robin Savoian (Education), Xiaoming Wang (VP), and Vanessa Rhue (VP). Also attending the event was Ryan Long of the Page Museum.



During an evening presentation at the State Park headquarters about the natural history of Red Rock Canyon, Lawrence Barnes, VP Curator, presented to David Whistler an autographed hardbound copy of the “Whistler Volume,” a book in honor of Dave’s 30-plus year career as Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology at the

Museum. This book (image to the right) was published in the LACM Science Series (Volume 41) and edited by Xiaoming Wang and Lawrence Barnes (see September issue of this Newsletter for a list of titles within the volume).





## History

History Curator William Estrada, along with other members of the design selection committee for the future Los Angeles State Historic Park, was presented with a 2008 Golden Poppy Award by the California State Parks Foundation. The award recognizes his advocacy work on behalf of the project.



Staff and volunteers from the Seaver Center for Western History Research participated in *Archives Live! The Third Annual Archives Bazaar* at the University of Southern California on October 25. Over 1500 L.A.-history scholars, students, researchers, and enthusiasts attended this event, which featured displays by 65 local collections and archives.

At left: Collection Managers John Cahoon and Betty Uyeda at *Archives Live!*



At right: Project Database Manager Brent Riggs at *Archives Live!*

## Malacology



On Saturday, October 18th, Lindsey Groves (Malacology) and LouElla Saul (IP Research Associate) once again co-lead *Fossil Hunting in Silverado Canyon* along with field assistance courtesy of Cathy Groves (Echinoderms), Richard Squires (Calif. St. Univ., Geological Sciences), Mary Stecheson (*ex* Invertebrate Paleontology [but will be returning to LACMIP on Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>]), and Christyann Evans and Jason Hammond (Education).

Forty-two attendees, including Dr.

Jane Pisano and her grandson Mark, collected Late Cretaceous, Turonian aged (~90 ma) mollusks and crustaceans. A single shark tooth was collected by invited staff member Kirk Fitzhugh (Polychaetes). Other invited staff and *ex*-staff included Regina Wetzer, Dean Pencheff, Kris Netchy (MBPC/Crustacea), and Brenda Rushforth (*ex* HR).



LACM staff (and former staff) at Silverado Canyon collecting site (L to R previous page): LouElla Saul (IP), Lindsey Groves (Malacology), Mary Stecheson (IP), Cathy Groves (Echinoderms), Richard Squires (CSU Northridge, Geological Sciences), Jason Hammond (Education), Brenda Rushforth (*ex* LACM HR), Christyann Evans (Education), and Gary Rushforth (spouse of Brenda).

Above: NHMLAC President/Director Dr. Jane Pisano (at left) and grandson Mark at Silverado Canyon examining their finds.

## ***R & C and the Haunted Museum***

Again this year, R & C was highly involved with the Haunted Museum weekend activities. Selected examples are given below.

### **Page Museum**

Page Museum staff Aisling Farrell, Andie Thomer, Laura Tewksbury, Michelle Tabencki and Ryan Long participated in this year's Haunted Museum, where they talked about dire wolves at Rancho La Brea (in photograph at right) and discussed excavation techniques and the new discoveries from Project 23.



### **Mammals**

Jim Dines (Mammalogy) displayed two tables crammed with articulated mammal skeletons in the Haunted Museum's "Boneyard" including those of several dogs, primates and a particularly dramatic mount of a flying fox (fruit bat) skeleton.



### **Echinoderms**

This year, "Starfish Mucus" was the Echinoderms theme at the Haunted Museum. Dr. Gordon Hendler (below right) wore a lab coat for the rare occasion, and was assisted on the graveyard shift by Aaron Lau (at left). They exhibited a hefty vat of fluorescent green mucus (synthesized by Jamie Angus) that, judging from many questions fielded, looked absolutely authentic. Also on display were starfish exhumed from the collection, which can get a grip on the seabed using multitudes of mucus-oozing tube feet. Microscopes were provided to focus on tube feet and on tiny poisonous pincers, another echinoderm specialty.

## Ornithology

An array of bones from different species of birds were placed on display by Ken Campbell and Kimball Garrett, suitably dressed in skeleton costumes, the better to relate human bones to comparable bird bones. They also illustrated how a bird's skeleton is prepared for the avian osteology collection, from its original flesh-covered state to cleaning by "bugging" or bacterial maceration. Being located near a food station, they refrained from allowing visitors to sample the sparkling aroma resulting from the latter cleaning process.

## Crustacea

On October 26, 2008, the Crustacea Department was represented by the Collection Manager (George Davis) who set up shop at the Tombstone Boot Hill Cemetery. There sprightly spooks and their parents could stop and stamp their favorite Halloween fright into a leather concho. They had their choice of such creepy things as scorpions, rattlesnakes, and skull and crossbones, not to mention a couple of extinct dinosaurs. Or they could opt for their personal initial as an attempt to ward off banshees and wraiths.

Business was brisk the entire evening. The collection manager felt the whole thing to be a great success. However, he will be much happier when he has regained his hearing!



## Polychaetes

As seen in the photo montage at left, the "world of worms" was also well represented at the Haunted Museum. Kirk Fitzhugh and Kris Netchy were downstairs in New Orleans Cemetery with the leeches while Leslie Harris presided over a table dedicated to "Bone-Eating Zombie Worms" upstairs in Davy Jones' Locker.

## Hart Museum

William S. Hart Museum staff Ayesha Saletore and Krystin Van Wy organized a display of historical artifacts, hands-on activities, and a re-enactment of the gunfight at the O.K. Corral for Haunted Halloween 2008. The displayed materials, from the Hart Museum and Seaver Center collections, included letters from Wyatt Earp to William S. Hart, riding gear, and an autographed photo of Earp.



## Student Mentoring and Research

### *Vertebrate Paleontology*

Jack Tseng (Graduate Student in Residence, Vertebrate Paleontology) began his year-long stay as a Fulbright Fellow in Beijing on 28 October. He has settled down in the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, where he will study Chinese fossil hyenas and the mammal fauna of the Tsaidam Basin from the Tibetan Plateau. He will continue to update his blog to inform us of any new findings during his time in Beijing.



Meredith Staley (at left, who is also a Museum Paleontological Preparator), having recently begun her Masters Thesis research about Early Miocene fossil whales of southern California at Cal State Fullerton, is here discussing details of cetacean osteology with her committee member, Lawrence Barnes, and Robert Reynolds.

### *Crustacea*

Todd Haney, a UCLA doctoral student who conducted his research working with Jody Martin in the Museum's Crustacea Lab, successfully completed his dissertation and will graduate from UCLA in December. Congratulations, Dr. Haney!

## Volunteers and Research Associates

### *Vertebrate Paleontology*

Our newest Vertebrate Paleontology Volunteer Keith Krzywiec (above, at left) assists Vertebrate Paleontology Preparator Howell Thomas during collection of a fossil whale skeleton at Rancho Sisquoc Winery in Santa Barbara County, 8 October 2008.



## Distinguished Visitors



Robert Reynolds (left), of LSA Associates in Riverside spent the better part of the day on 11 September 2008 working in the collections on Miocene vertebrates, here with Lawrence Barnes. Bob is the organizer of the Desert Symposium, which is held annually at the California State University research facility at Zzyzx, California.

Chris Kirk (at right) from the University of Texas at Austin visited Vertebrate Paleontology on 25 September 2008 to study our significant collection of fossil Eocene primates from the Sespe Formation in Ventura County.



Dr. Jere H. Lipps (photo at left, on right, with L. Barnes), Professor of Paleontology in the University of California Berkeley Department of Integrative Biology, visited on 31 October to collaborate on research projects dealing with the Sharktooth Hill Bonebed in California's San Joaquin Valley.

### **Malacology**

Tracey White (UC Merced) spent two days in the Malacology Collection examining the holdings of the marine pulmonate genus *Siphonaria* for research purposes. Richard Squires (CSU Northridge, Geological Sciences) spent a day comparing fossil *Glycymeris* bivalves to Recent species in the Malacology Collection.

## **Recent Publications**

(Names in bold are Museum Staff, Research Associates, and Students)

**Bell, A., Z. J. Tseng, and L. Chiappe.** 2008. Diving mechanics of the extinct Hesperornithiformes: comparison to modern diving birds. *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology*, 28(supplement to 3):50A.

Bruce, N. L. and **R. Wetzer.** 2008. New Zealand exports: *Pseudosphaeroma* Chilton, 1909 (Isopoda: Sphaeromatidae), a Southern Hemisphere genus introduced to the Pacific coast of North America. *Zootaxa* 1908: 51-56.

**Campbell, K.E.** 2008. The manus of archaeopterygians: implications for avian ancestry. *Oryctos*, 7:13-26.

*This paper discussed the morphology of the wrist bones in Archaeopteryx, the oldest known bird, comparing them with those of modern birds and contrasting them with those of contemporaneous theropod dinosaurs. The distinctive avian morphology of the wrist of Archaeopteryx is yet another argument, among many, against an evolutionary link between birds and dinosaurs.*

Chang, M., **X. Wang,** H. Liu, D. Miao, Q. Zhao, G. Wu, J. Liu, **Q. Li,** Z. Sun, and N. Wang. 2008. Extraordinarily thick-boned fish linked to the aridification of the Qaidam Basin (northern Tibetan Plateau). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 105:13246-13251.

- Chang, M., D. Miao, **X. Wang**, and H. Liu. 2008. Discovery of an extraordinary Pliocene schizothoracin (Cyprinidae) fish from northern Tibetan Plateau and its paleoecological implications. *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology*, 28(supplement to 3):62A.
- O'Connor, J.**, D. R. Prothero, **X. Wang**, L. Qiang, and Q. Zhuding. 2008. Magnetic stratigraphy of the Lower Pliocene Gaotege beds, Inner Mongolia. . In S. G. Lucas, G. S. Morgan, J. A. Spielman, and **D. R. Prothero**, eds. *Bulletin of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History*, vol. 44.
- Prothero, D.R.**, M. R. Liter, **L. G. Barnes**, **X. Wang**, **E. D. Mitchell**, **S. A. McLeod**, **D. P. Whistler**, R. H. Tedford, and **C. E. Ray**. 2008. Land mammals from the Middle Miocene Sharktooth Hill Bonebed, Kern County, California. In S. G. Lucas, G. S. Morgan, J. A. Spielman, and **D. R. Prothero**, eds. *Bulletin of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History*, vol. 44.
- Staley, M. A.** and **L. G. Barnes**. 2008. Early Miocene toothed cetaceans from the Vaqueros Formation, Orange County, California. *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology*, 28(supplement to 3):147A.
- Tseng, Z. J.** 2008. Bone-cracking capability in the skull of *Dinocrocota gigantea* (Carnivora, Mammalia) reveals biomechanical convergence between hyaenids and percrocotids. *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology*, 28(supplement to 3):153A.
- Wang, X.**, and **O. Carranza-Castañeda**. 2008. Earliest hog-nosed skunk, *Conepatus* (Mephitidae, Carnivora), from early Pliocene of Guanajuato, Mexico and origin of South American skunks. *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society*, 154:386-407.
- Wang, X.**, and R. H. Tedford. 2008. How dogs came to run the world. *Natural History*, 117:18-23.
- Wang, X.**, G. Xie, and W. Dong. 2008. A new crown-antlered deer, *Stephanocemas*, from northern Tibetan Plateau, China, and the relationship of Eurasian forms. *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology*, 28(supplement to 3):157A.
- Wang, Y., **X. Wang**, Y. Xu, C. Zhang, **Q. Li**, **Z. J. Tseng**, **G. T. Takeuchi**, and T. Deng. 2008. Stable isotopes in fossil mammals, fish and shells from Kunlun Pass Basin, Tibetan Plateau: Paleo-climatic and paleo-elevation implications. *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*, 270:73-85.

## Staff Departures and New Staff

### Conservation

The Conservation Section is pleased to welcome Assistant Conservator Elizabeth Homberger, who began work at the Museum in late September. Liz received her M.A. and Certificate of Advanced Study in Art Conservation from Buffalo State College in Buffalo, NY earlier this year. In addition to assisting with important collections care projects, Liz is treating objects to prepare them for *Under*





*the Sun* and other upcoming New Museum exhibits. Some may recognize Liz from 2007 when she completed a summer internship in Conservation with funding from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. Here, Liz is shown testing cleaning techniques on the articulated skeleton of a *Gallus gallus* specimen, a domesticated chicken, prepared in 1919.

### ***Don McNamee (Chief Librarian)***

Former Natural History Museum Chief Librarian Donald W. McNamee passed away on Sunday, November 2. Don joined our staff in March 1988 and retired just short of his 20th anniversary with the Museum. In the words of acting R & C Deputy Director Margaret Hardin, Don “provided leadership for that valuable collections center, helped found the Friends of the Library, and added valuable collections to the library’s holdings. We will remember Don for the care he devoted to the books and journals essential to our research. He is missed by colleagues, friends, and a cadre of long-time volunteers.”

## **Miscellaneous**

### ***Page Museum***

Two important and successful evening events were held at the Page Museum in September, the Annual Trustees meeting and the Museum’s Fellows dinner. Presentations and tours were given by R&C staff John Harris, Shelley Cox and Chris Shaw and education manager Margi Bertram. A camera was positioned up in box 1 where the excavators were working for the event. A large screen was set up at the base of the boxes for guests to view real-time excavation during the presentations. Some of the prepared mammoth bones were also on display near Pit 91.



Above Trustees witnessed real-time excavation via a large monitor



Left: Shelley Cox engaged guests at the Fellows dinner

The Discovery Channel's popular show 'Dirty jobs' filmed at the Page in September. The crew got down and dirty in Pit 91 where the show's host Mike Rowe helped the excavators shore the walls of the pit, as well as glop out the seeping fresh asphalt. In the lab he helped lab staff to open a plaster jacket. The show should air sometime in December.



At right, L-R: Kristen Brown, Andie Thomer, Michelle Tabencki, Mike Rowe, Laura Tewksbury

## ***History***

SAVE THE DATE: On November 13, History Curator Dr. William Estrada will deliver the 2008 Valley Pioneer Lecture at California State University at Northridge. The lecture, based on his book, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space*, is sponsored by the History Department and the W.P. Whitsett Foundation California Lecture Series. Now in its 21<sup>st</sup> year, the lecture series focuses on interdisciplinary topics related to the history, the development, and the future prospects of California.

**And finally....**

***Happy Holidays!***

*Because this is the last R & C Newsletter for calendar year 2008, the R & C staff takes this opportunity to wish all of you a happy and safe holiday season and a bright and productive New Year.*



The R & C Newsletter is issued 5 times per year, in January, March, May, September, and November, by the Research and Collections staff of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. Currently the Newsletter is compiled and edited by Dr. Joel W. Martin, Curator of Crustacea and Chief of the Division of Invertebrate Studies. All issues of the Newsletter can be found on the web at: <http://collections.nhm.org/newsletters>

