

SOCIETY OF VERTEBRATE PALEONTOLOGY NEWS BULLETIN

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— OFFICIAL BUSINESS —

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings and salutations to all! I hope that your summer has been long and productive. We have several reasons to be pleased with activities underway in 2007 thus far. The Austin meeting is shaping up to be the largest annual meeting yet. The Host Committee has been especially creative in its plans. One consequence is that SVP has received two major donations from the University of Texas, as described below.

At the level of U.S. federal policy, the Government Affairs Committee reminded us earlier this year to write our senators and representatives in support of legislation that would better protect fossils on public lands as resources permanently in the public trust. Further information is below.

If you have logged onto the SVP Web site since mid June, you know that we have a reorganized, aesthetic, and informative new site. We owe the Web redesigners a huge debt of gratitude for all the work that they done to remodel our face to the world. Kudos to all involved!

Donations from The Jackson School of Geosciences at the University of Texas, Austin

The Jackson School of Geosciences at the University of Texas has provided an unprecedented level of support for the annual meeting in the form of two substantial donations. One donation of \$15,000 provides student-member travel funds for travel to the Austin meeting. SVP members have matched this \$15,000 as a contribution to the student travel fund for travel to future meetings. A second donation greatly enlarges the base from which student-member travel funds will be drawn, thereby ensuring the availability of student travel awards well into the future. We heartily thank Dean Barron and the Austin Host Committee for this level of support. Their generosity and commitment set a new precedent for support of SVP.

Support the PRPA

Thank you to those of you who have already contacted your senator and representative in support of the Paleontological Resources Protection Act. [Read the informative report](#) from Ted Vlamis (Chair, SVP Government Affairs Committee) on the SVP Web site about the status of the legislation. [Model letters](#) are included for you to tailor and send to your Senators and Representative, if you have not already done so.

New Web Site

The new Society of Vertebrate Paleontology Web site went live on Monday, 18 June. The address for the main page remains the same as before, <http://www.vertpaleo.org>. The Web site features user-friendly navigation and a clean, eye-catching design. Explore some of the new features, including:

- The SVP News Archives area (found under the Society tab)
- Government Affairs (found under the Education and Resources tab)
- New Annual Meeting Section (Annual Meeting tab)

We are grateful to the many SVP volunteers who helped to put this site together, especially David Smith, Jessica Theodor, John Alroy, Jason Anderson, our Web Editor—Greg Buckley, the individual editors and reviewers—Darin Croft, Andy Farke, Akiko Shinya, Brooke Wilborn, and the SVP Business Office team of Michael Patti and Meagan Comerford. A sincere and enthusiastic thanks to all of you for your creativity and teamwork!

I look forward to seeing many of you in Austin and wish you well.

Sincerely, Catherine Badgley

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— NEWS FROM MEMBERS —

CANADA (Kevin Seymour, Canada Editor, kevins@rom.on.ca)

Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Ontario

Our Earth Sciences team welcomes new research assistant, Marisa Gilbert, who replaces Alison Murray (now at the University of Alberta). Marisa will have a number of responsibilities within our paleo unit, but will spend most of her time facilitating the research of Xiao-chun Wu and Natalia Rybczynski. Marisa is a recent graduate of the Integrated Sciences program at Carleton University. Kathy Stewart will be on sabbatical at the University of Victoria, in Victoria, British Columbia, from September 2007 through August 2008. Xiao-chun Wu will also be on sabbatical, from September 2007 through March 2008 at the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Taiwan. We extend hearty congratulations to our colleague Tamaki Sato, who completed a postdoctoral fellowship at CMN and has now accepted a position in Japan at the University of Tokyo. She will continue her collaborative work with CMN colleagues on marine reptiles, especially plesiosaurs.

Xiao-chun Wu is doing field and laboratory research with colleagues in China until mid August, then is back briefly before beginning his sabbatical. Natalia Rybczynski, accompanied by recent Carleton Paleo grad Liz Ross, is off in July on two Arctic fieldwork trips, investigating Tertiary deposits at the Houghton Astrobleme on Devon Island with Mary Dawson (Carnegie Museum of Natural History) and Cretaceous deposits on Bylot Island with Hans Larsson (McGill University). Steve Cumbaa and Richard Day plan to do fieldwork in Cretaceous marine deposits in the Manitoba Escarpment in September. Carleton University students Aaron Phillips (Cenomanian marine bonebeds) and Dimitri Ponomarenko (burrow morphology, taphonomy, and burrowing behavior in rodents) are completing their MSc theses this summer, working with Steve and Natalia, respectively. (Steve Cumbaa)

Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Ontario

David Evans started on 1 May as Associate Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology. He has been setting up his new workspace and preparing for fieldwork along the Milk River in southern Alberta throughout July. This fall, David will have his hands full submitting his thesis chapters for publication.

Ryan Schott has started a summer undergraduate research placement with David Evans. Ryan is working on pachycephalosaurids from the Foremost Formation of Alberta. Ryan, along with University of Toronto at Mississauga graduate student Nicolas Campione, will be joining David in southern Alberta for fieldwork in the latter half of July.

The installation of the new Age of Mammals gallery has begun and should be completed by late summer. The installation of the Age of Dinosaurs gallery is next, with a planned official opening date of mid December for both galleries. We look forward to having these galleries installed, so we can get back to our “normal” jobs! (David Evans and Kevin Seymour)

University of Alberta, Laboratory for Vertebrate Palaeontology, Edmonton, Alberta

Interest and investment in paleontology generally, and vertebrate paleo specifically, has never been higher at the U of A. We now have seven vertebrate paleontologists in residence in the Department of Biological Sciences: Professor Mark Wilson, Professor Phil Currie, Associate Professor Michael Caldwell, Assistant Professor Alison Murray, Professor Emeritus Richard Fox, Research Associate Dr. Eva Koppelhus, and Research Associate Dr. Robert Holmes. Using significant grants from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation to Caldwell and Currie, we have completely renovated the vertebrate paleontology wing of the Biological Sciences Building, overwhelmed the remaining offices in that wing so that the whole empire is vert paleo, and expanded to the basement of the building with a state-of-the-art compacted collections room (110 double-wide cabinets) and a brand new dinosaur preparation lab (1200 sq. ft.). We now have two fully equipped preparation labs (fishes and lizards upstairs, dinosaurs downstairs), a massive office space for 12 graduate students, a new digital imaging and functional morphology laboratory (700 sq. ft.), renovated postdoctoral spaces, and a new lab space on the floor for Mark Wilson to move into! In the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, which jointly administers the U of A's undergraduate paleontology degree program with Biological Sciences, a recent hire includes a new appointment in micropaleontology, bringing the total number of paleontologists in our working group to 13: seven vert paleo, two paleobotanists (R. Stockey, A. Wolfe), two ichnologists (M. Gingras and G. Pemberton), and two invertebrate paleontologists (B. Chatterton and J. Herrle). Including anthropology (P. Willoughby) and medicine (P. Lemelin), we add two more trained paleontologists to our crew for a total of 15 academics. Without question, the University of Alberta has one of the largest concentrations of academic paleontologists in all of North America.

Allan Lindoe is still our full-time prep technician but we are indeed looking for a future appointment to fill Allan's shoes as he seems to be seeing the sunrise of retirement not too far ahead. The graduate student crew has risen remarkably, due mostly to Phil Currie's research program. We have 16 students at the moment: Takuya Konishi, PhD (Caldwell); Braden Barr, PhD (Caldwell); Todd Cook, PhD (Wilson, Murray); Lindsey MacKenzie, MSc (Wilson); Jessica Hawthorne, MSc (Wilson); Brian Rankin, MSc (Wilson, Fox); Phil Bell, MSc (Currie); Victoria Arbour, MSc (Currie); Miriam Riechel,

MSc (Currie); Lisa Buckley, MSc (Currie); Michael James, MSc (Currie); Robin Sissons, MSc (Currie); Michael Burns, MSc (Currie); Derek Larson, MSc (Currie); Lara Shychoski, PhD (Currie); and Craig Scott, PhD (Stockey, Fox). Two postdoctoral fellows are currently in the lab as well: Eric Snively (Currie) and Michael Newbrey (Wilson, Murray, and Royal Tyrrell Museum). With any luck, a third fellow will join the lab in the fall, Dr. Alessandro Palci (Caldwell), pending notification of his application to the Marie Curie Fellowship program.

Mike Caldwell is pleased to announce that his cosupervised Italian student (University of Modena) Alessandro Palci successfully defended his PhD thesis this spring. Part of Alessandro's thesis research graced the cover of the first issue of the newly minted *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology*. Takuya Konishi (Alberta Ingenuity Fund Scholar) is feverishly working on the varied chapters of his thesis, one of which was published in the same volume of *JVP* as that of Palci. Palci and Konishi, together with Caldwell, visited collections in Paris and Brussels this past spring in order to study the mosasaur faunas. Braden Barr won a U of A Graduate Studies Travel Grant and is currently in Warsaw, Poland, working with Dr. Magalena Borsuk-Bialynicka and studying the Gobi squamate fauna at the Institute in Warsaw. Braden's thesis project is an analysis of anguimorph phylogeny using data from a new and semi-articulated specimen of a Maastrichtian necrosaur from Saskatchewan, Canada, and data obtained by hands-on study of the specimens in Warsaw. Caldwell continues to work on snake and mosasaur projects and will be visiting sites and collections in Australia and New Zealand this summer. Together with longtime collaborator Gordon Bell, Jr., he is writing the "Sauria Maritima," the next installment in the Handbook of Paleoherpertology. Caldwell is nearly finished with his gigantic, co-authored (Adriana Albino) monograph on *Dinilysia patagonica* and will shortly be hunting for a publishing venue.

Alison Murray is slowly getting her lab up and running. She is still working on Tertiary ichthyofaunas from Asia/Africa and has expanded into Cretaceous faunas of North America. Alison is currently accepting new graduate students interested in working on fossil or Recent fishes.

Mark Wilson continues his studies of early vertebrates, including collaboration with Tiiu Märss of Estonia and Mark's former PhD student Gavin Hanke of the Royal British Columbia Museum, and on osteoglossomorphs and other fishes with Alison and Zhang Jiang-Yong of IVPP, Beijing. Both Mark and Alison are looking forward to Mike Newbrey's arrival and to working on systematics of Paleocene teleosts and growth of Cretaceous and Tertiary teleosts with Mike.

Rob Holmes is busily completing projects on ceratopsians (with Michael Ryan, Cleveland Museum) and pachypleurosaurs (with Xiao-chun Wu, Canadian Museum of Nature and Y-n Cheng, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Taiwan).

Phil Currie and Eva Koppelhus's first cohort of graduate students progress mightily, collecting specimens with incoming student Michael James to fill the new collections space, and drawing down research grants and results. Alberta Ingenuity and NSERC student Victoria Arbour is working on ankylosaur tail club biomechanics and a description of rediscovered U of A cervical half rings of *Euoplocephalus*. Miriam Reichel won a Dinosaur Research Institute grant to collect tyrannosaur and hadrosaur teeth in Mongolia, for isotopic comparisons of these teeth with those of North American counterparts. Phil Bell's crews have opened three quarries in a local *Edmontosaurus*

bone bed, and Phil B. is sorting the taphonomy of the bone bed when he can tear himself from describing pathologies in a *Gorgosaurus* skeleton. Post-doc Eric Snively will soon set up a miniature supercomputer cluster for functional morphology and phylogenetics, and is collaborating multinationally on tyrannosaurs, pachycephalosaurs, *Dunkleosteus*, geckos, and the rhizodont *Sauripterus*. Currie will imminently publish a giant monograph on the Pipestone Creek *Pachyrhinosaurus* (with Wann Langston and Darren Tanke), amidst innumerable other projects. This summer, field projects include Dinosaur Park, Edmonton, Dry Island *Albertosaurus* bonebed, a *Pachyrhinosaurus* bonebed in Grande Prairie and Mongolia as part of the Korean International Dinosaur Project.

Dick Fox has spent the last three months in China, working with Gao Keqin on various projects. His senior graduate student, Craig Scott, will defend his PhD thesis late this summer, but has already left the U of A to take up a position as Curator of Fossil Mammals at the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology. Dick and Mark cosupervise MSc student Brian Rankin, who is following in the footsteps of Dave Krause in studying Paleocene mammals of Saskatchewan. (Michael Caldwell)

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The growing vertebrate paleontology group at MWU continues to push forward with its many facets of evolutionary and paleobiological research. This past year we were very excited to welcome Chris Heesy and Meg Hall to our faculty. Both have hit the ground running with their respective studies of the evolution of vertebrate visual systems. Chris has been collecting data at various institutions (Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Texas Memorial Museum, Florida Museum of Natural History, Duke University) and had four publications. Meg quickly established research collaboration with the local game and fish office resulting in a plethora of new specimens to analyze, as well as getting some major papers published—all this on top of developing a new course and setting up

a research lab! Myriam Zylstra continues her work on functional morphology of primates and presented results of her *Eulemur* study (a collaborative effort with Tricia Nielsen, an MWU medical student) at the Anatomy Association meeting in Washington, D.C., and she has continued her collaboration with Richard Ketcham (microcomputed tomography laboratory at the University of Texas–Austin) on the study of the three-dimensional analysis of trabecular architecture in hand elements of anthropoid primates. She has recently concluded a comparative analysis of *Dryopithecus brancoi*, a late Miocene hominoid from Rudabanya, Hungary, (manuscript in preparation) and submitted an abstract to present this study at the upcoming SVP meetings in Austin. Myriam is also in the process of scanning additional specimens of living primates, as well as an additional element of *Dryopithecus*.

Randy Nydam has been busy with his Mesozoic–Early Tertiary lizard research. His work on the lizards from the Cretaceous of southern Utah continues with ongoing collection and study of specimens from the Kaiparowits Plateau region. He has wrapped up the work on the polyglyphanodontines and most of the borioteiioideans (at least until the next specimen shows up). His favorite aspect of this project has been the opportunity to include MWU medical students in his research. A recent publication in the *Journal of Herpetology* was co-authored by Gina Voci, DO (class of 2006) and a current study on xantusiidlike lizards was co-authored by Brandon Fitzpatrick (now at the University of Colorado, Boulder). In addition to the Utah work, Randy recently spent some quality time at the University of Alberta in the Laboratory of Vertebrate Paleontology as the guest of Mike Caldwell (a phenomenal cook as well as accomplished scientist!). This trip marked the initiation of a collaborative study of a variety of Mesozoic squamates.

The future at MWU is looking even brighter. As enrollment continues to grow new faculty positions are being created in anatomy, providing further opportunities to add to the paleontology group. The university is also doubling the size of the research facility, which means Chris and Meg will soon be moving into new labs and the potential for future faculty growth is greatly increased. (Randy Nydam)

University of Texas at Austin

Chris Bell, Krister Smith, and Anjan Bhullar spent the early part of the field season roaming across portions of the western United States. Nina Triche successfully defended her dissertation in the spring. Chris Jass is currently writing the final two chapters of his dissertation and plans to defend in the fall. Jon Wagner is writing his dissertation on caiman systematics, with an eye toward finishing in 2008.

Preparations for the SVP annual meeting continue in fine fashion. We anticipate a well-attended and productive meeting! (Chris Jass)

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION (Brent Breithaupt, Regional Editor, uwqeoms@uwyo.edu)
No news submitted.

PACIFIC COAST REGION (John M. Harris, Regional Editor, jharris@nhm.org)

Colorado Desert District Stout Research Center

Paleontology field surveys continued in the southern and eastern Borrego Badlands. The work is focused on the interface between the lacustrine Borrego Formation and the overlying fluvial Ocotillo Formation, spanning the mid Pleistocene from about 1.1 to 1.0 Ma.

The upper Borrego Formation produced a complete *Hemiauchenia* metatarsal and *Equus* dentary with dentition, but more importantly, the partially articulated front end of a *Camelops* was located in the basal Ocotillo Formation. So far, the limited excavation has exposed a string of at least three cervical vertebrae, humerus, radius/ulna, and several ribs. Weathered out on site was a complete mandible with full adult dentition. The unfused vertebral epiphyses, partially erupted canine teeth and only slightly worn hypoconulids on the M/3s suggest an age of about 4 years at the time of death. Although the post-cranial elements are comparable in size to *Camelops hesternus*, the dentition is noticeably larger than *C. hesternus* from Rancho la Brea.

Scott Musick, Senior Park Aide with paleontology, reports that all of Harley Garbani's vertebrate sites in the Fish Creek/Vallecito Creek area that had not been geocoded are now in the GIS locality data layer.

Jessie Atterholt, a University of Pennsylvania undergraduate, is now on staff for a couple of months as a Senior Park Aide. She will be working on the stratigraphic and geographic distribution of marine vertebrate remains from the Yuha member of the Deguynos Formation, Imperial Group. Plans are to better understand depositional environments and refine our field survey patterns within this early Pliocene marine deltaic deposit of the Fish Creek Badlands. She and Tom Demere, San Diego Natural History Museum, spent a day in the field and in the collections going over the specimens. The marine mammal fossils are dominated by isolated vertebrae of small odontocetes. Although the pinniped material is not as abundant, it is more diagnostic and includes a complete humerus and partial femur and tibia of the tropical walrus *Valenictus imperialensis*.

After some delay, construction of the new 1400 sq. ft. addition to the paleontology collections hall is back on track. A private grant for the purchase of specimen cabinets, oversized shelves, and furniture was in part matched with state funds.

And finally, a press release from Sunbelt Publications, Fossil Treasures of the Anza-Borrogo Desert, edited by George T. Jefferson and Lowell Lindsay, took first place, a gold medal, in the science/environment category of the Independent Book Publishers Association's Ben Franklin Awards on Thursday, 31 May, at a reception in New York City. (G. T. Jefferson)

Harry Jerison, University of California–Los Angeles

Harry Jerison reports that he has a new Web site: <http://hjerison.bol.ucla.edu>. It links to an online CV that lists downloadable pdf publications on brain evolution.

Occidental College, Los Angeles

Two new books went to the printers this summer, and will be out in time for SVP in Austin. One is the trade book, *Evolution: What the Fossils Say and Why It Matters* (Columbia University Press), which will help answer the creationist lies and distortions about the fossil record. The other is the edited volume *The Evolution of Artiodactyls* (co-edited by Scott Foss; Johns Hopkins University Press), which compiles all the latest information on the evolutionary history of the even-toed hoofed mammals (including whales).

Don Prothero taught at CalTech again this spring to a really large, outstanding class of students who want him to teach again at CalTech this fall. Don is officially on sabbatical from Occidental until January, and hoping to catch up on a lot of neglected research projects now that all these book deadlines are past. He will be making several museum trips this fall to the AMNH, USNM, YPM, and UCMP to look at peccaries and camels. During the summer, Don and Occidental senior Geoff Cromwell began paleomagnetic sampling on the lower–middle Miocene Troublesome Formation in the Middle Park Basin of Colorado, and the samples should be analyzed this fall. In June, Don ran a four-day trip for the Skeptics Society to the Grand Canyon, Zion, and Las Vegas, and it was a big success. It looks like we will be running more of these noncollegiate field trips in the near future.

Since last January, Don and a gang of Occidental and CalTech students have been working on projects on late Pleistocene animals, examining whether there are size or shape changes in response to climatic changes of the past 40,000 years using the amazing collections at the Page Museum. Kristina Raymond (Occidental senior) has already finished the sloths. She is now doing a senior comps project comparing the variability of sesamoid bones (such as the patella) with endochondral bones (such as the astragalus) on many different taxa of mammals in the huge collections at the Page Museum. Anastasiya Sutayagina (Occidental senior) is working size changes over time in the La Brea felids for her senior comps project. Gina Gage (CalTech junior) has measured the camels. Valerie Syverson (CalTech senior) is working on the condors and trying to determine if the Rancholabrean species *Gymnogyps amplus* can really be distinguished from the living California condor. Sarah Molina (Occidental senior) is doing a senior comps project on the Rancholabrean golden eagles (the most common bird in the tar pits) to see if they show size or shape change through the last 40,000 years and whether there are measurable differences from the living species. Once all the data are collected and analyzed, we plan to collaborate with Sherri Gust, who has already worked on the bison and horses, to see what general pattern emerges.

Don gave talks on his recent research at WAVP in San Diego in February, and the Southern California Academy of Sciences in Fullerton in June. Kristina Raymond also gave papers at both of those meetings, talking about her work on extreme sexual size dimorphism (or lack thereof) in Pleistocene ground sloths. Don was also asked to serve on the “outside experts” panel that will be reviewing the plans for the renovation of the new Cenozoic Hall at the LACM. (Don Prothero)

University of Bridgeport at Rio Vista

Peter Galton is the junior author for a couple of papers resulting from the 2005 SVP meeting symposium on Basal Sauropodomorph Dinosaurs that was published earlier this year as *Special Papers in Palaeontology* 77 edited by Paul Barrett. One is a

phylogenetic analysis of basal sauropodomorphs with Paul Upchurch and Paul Barrett of London; the other is on the braincase and skull of two specimens of *Anchisaurus polyzelus* from Manchester, Connecticut, with Tim Fedak (Canada). Peter's report on *Thecodontosaurus* from the Upper Triassic that was given at the same symposium has resulted in the erection of *Pantyraco* for the Welsh *Thecodontosaurus caducus* Yates, 2003 in a short paper with Adam Yates (South Africa) and Diane Kermack (England) in *N. Jb. Geol. Palaont. Abh.* 243: 119–125 (2007). The full description of the 1834 Bristol material, most of which used to be referred to *T. antiquus*, will be going to *Revue de Paleobiologie*, Geneva, and a detailed description of *Pantyraco* is being prepared with Diane Kermack. (Peter M. Galton)

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