

SOCIETY OF VERTEBRATE PALEONTOLOGY NEWS BULLETIN

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

My first seven months as President have not been dull, largely because of the global economic crisis, but also because of two exciting and challenging events, our first meeting across the pond and the move from self-publishing to a full service publisher for the *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology* (*JVP*). Because some of you may be wondering how SVP has fared in the economic downturn and what the Executive Committee response has been, I will summarize some of our efforts and reasoning.

Since the beginning of 2008 the value of SVP investments is down by \$890,000, a drop of about 1/3 of its value. This is not good news but the Society remains on solid financial ground. In the last few months, Treasurer Ted Vlamis, members of the Financial Oversight Committee, and Administrative Director Kate VanZanten evaluated our investment portfolio and management and made changes that should limit future losses and ensure steady growth. After the economic difficulties of late 2008, the Executive Committee reviewed our 2009 budget and found that with the decline in the value of the portfolio our projected net operating loss amounted to over \$300,000—approximately 17% of the value of the portfolio. This is opposed to our goal, based on market history and sound business practices, of drawing not more than 4% of the value of the portfolio for operating needs. Clearly, we needed to take a hard look at the 2009 budget. In doing so, the Business Office and Executive Committee identified three primary areas where we need to seek reductions: the journal, the annual meeting, and the business office.

We have made great progress on the first item, the *JVP*. I am pleased to report that we have nearly completed a successful contract with Taylor & Francis, Ltd. for publication of the *JVP* and *Memoirs*. The advantages of a publishing house are several and include 1) a quicker turn-around/to press time; 2) expansion to six issues a year; 3) an annual *Memoir* issue included in member subscriptions; 4) 24 color pages per volume; 5) greater exposure for the *JVP* due to T&F's marketing abilities which should raise the impact factor of the *JVP*; and 6) a significant improvement in the *JVP* budget.

The annual meeting is a tougher nut to crack. It is one of our most important programs and SVP has, historically, heavily subsidized the cost of the meeting in order to keep registration rates low and ensure meeting access to as many as possible. When SVP investments were growing at a healthy clip, we could afford this substantial withdrawal, but times have changed. The Executive Committee believes that we need to manage SVP's budget in such a manner that the value of its investments continues to grow which means lowering the cost of the annual meeting while maintaining its quality. This year, given the added expenses associated with having the meeting overseas, we were forced to make some tough decisions. These included the replacement of the printed abstract volume with a downloadable and searchable PDF, reductions in the snacks and drinks provided with registration (there will still be a coffee hour), and replacement of the awards banquet with an awards ceremony. These actions saved the Society between 20 and 30 thousand dollars.

We are in the process of evaluating expenses at the business office and devising ways to reduce them. The shift to Taylor & Francis is likely to relieve some of the burden, but other activities, such as committee support, abstract and awards management, more complex annual meetings, and the maintenance of the Web site, continue to grow and demand more hours. We plan to continue monitoring this and will try to shift some of the tasks accomplished by the business office to willing members and committees whenever possible. If you are interested in volunteering and, most importantly, are able to make a consistent time commitment to SVP (even if it's seasonal), contact the business office! [And see following seeking regional editors for the *News Bulletin*.]

Please feel free to write me with your concerns, or even better, suggestions on how to make SVP even better than it already is. (Blair Van Valkenburgh)

REGIONAL EDITORS SOUGHT

The *News Bulletin* is looking for a few good people to serve as regional editors for several regions. If you are interested in serving our Society, this may be just the ticket. Basically, twice annually, you would be responsible for gathering and reviewing items submitted for a given geographical region and then forwarding them on to the managing editor for inclusion in the *News Bulletin*. If you are interested in the positions or require further information, please contact Mary Ann Schmidt (maryanns@andrew.cmu.edu).

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— NEWS FROM MEMBERS —

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

Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

David Evans has field work planned for three locations this summer: the Yukon, where he has already found the first dinosaur bone to come out of the Yukon in 40 years; in the Milk River area of Alberta; and also some time in Mongolia. PhD student Nic Campione is getting married this summer, so he has managed to avoid field work this year, but David's other PhD student, Ryan Schott, will be participating. Once again David has two University of Toronto students as summer interns to assist with the Alberta field work, along with Michael Ryan (Cincinnati) and some personnel from the Royal Tyrrell Museum.

With our new gallery open we are managing to get caught up on a lot of the basic museum work which got shoved aside for some years (e.g., data entry, labeling of drawers). As usual we are hosting a number of visitors to our collections this summer as well. We have three students this summer to help out with skeleton preparation one day per week. The push this summer will be to get a lot of frozen reptiles out of the freezer and into the bug room. We now have over 8,200 Recent comparative skeletons in the paleontology collections.

Kevin Seymour hopes to submit a couple of papers from his thesis to journals this summer (finally). The work on the Fernbank interglacial site near Ithaca, New York, is finally out in *Quaternary Research* (Kevin did the vertebrates, all fragmentary fish remains). (Kevin Seymour)

INTERNATIONAL ([position open], International Editor [temp]maryanns@andrew.cmu.edu)

Bulgaria

National Museum of Natural History

During the last 25 years, a private collector, P. Popdimitrov, retrieved from the quarry of Azmaka near the city of Chirpan in southern Bulgaria a collection of fossil mammals that Denis Geraads from Paris and myself examined in 2007. Much to our surprise, we recognized in this collection the upper premolar (P4) of a hominoid found a year ago and resembling the Greek *Ouranopithecus*, but with somewhat shorter roots.

The quarry has subsequently been filled in, but, with the financial support of the Development of Bulgarian Science Foundation of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Leakey Foundation, we started, in June–July 2008, to open up trenches in the areas that had previously yielded most of the fossils. At the same time, we discovered a new fossiliferous spot (Azmaka-6), 150 m from the quarry, and started excavations there. Our team included Denis Geraads (CNRS-Paris), Latinka Hristova and Georgi Markov (NMNH-Sofia), Gildas Merceron (CNRS-Lyon) and myself. At least 15 late Miocene species (mostly perissodactyls, artiodactyls, and carnivores) were recognized, including the primate *Mesopithecus*. According to our geologists Tzanko Tzankov and Krassi Stoyanov, two genetic lithocomplexes could be differentiated in the terrigenous late Miocene deposits of the quarry—a lower one, consisting of clays of different colors; and an upper one, consisting of a number of alternated layers of sands and clays of alluvial origin. It seems that all the fauna (including the one from Azmaka-6) originates from the upper lithocomplex. From the reddish clay sands of the same lithocomplex also comes, after the explications of P. Popdimitrov, the hominoid premolar, found in proximity of a large *Deinotherium gigantissimum* mandible. Our examination of the fauna recovered from various spots in the quarry, which includes proboscideans, hipparions, chalicotheres, rhinos, bovids, giraffids, cervids, suids, and carnivores, indicates a Turolian age (second part of the Late Miocene). The new hominoid would probably be even later than the classic locality of Pikermi, as suggested by the presence of an archaic *Anancus*, thus definitely younger than the Greek and Turkish *Ouranopithecus*. This would make it the latest known hominoid in continental Europe, as was discussed at the RHOI meeting in April 2008. Hopefully, further excavations planned for the spring of 2009 will yield more remains of this unexpected primate. (Nikolai Spassov)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Northeast Region (Margaret Lewis, Regional Editor, lewism@stockton.edu)

No news submitted.

Southeast Region ([position open], Regional Editor, [temp]maryanns@andrew.cmu.edu)

No news submitted.

Midwest Region ([position open], Regional Editor, [temp]maryanns@andrew.cmu.edu)

No news submitted.

Southwest Region ([position open], Regional Editor, [temp]maryanns@andrew.cmu.edu)

No news submitted.

Rocky Mountain Region (Brent Breithaupt, Regional Editor, uwgeoms@uwyo.edu)

No news submitted.

Pacific Coast Region (John M. Harris, Regional Editor, jharris@nhm.org)

Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture

The Burke Museum at the University of Washington will be undertaking a major renovation of its paleontological collections. This work will involve packing most of the collections and moving them to temporary storage. For this reason, access to the collections will be limited for the duration of the renovation: 15 August 2009 to 1 September 2011.

Although we anticipate that most fossils should be accessible, we ask that research visits or loan requests be postponed. If you have questions, please contact Ron Eng, Collections Manager, telephone: (206) 543-6776 or e-mail rceng@u.washington.edu. We appreciate the community's patience while we improve our facility. (Ron Eng)

Colorado Desert District Stout Research Center

Senior Park Aide Jeannie Johnstone continues to uncover the ca. 0.9 Ma-old partially articulated *Camelops* skeleton previously reported from the Ocotillo Formation. It was necessary to obtain an amendment to the California Environmental Quality Act permit in order to expand the quarry. It is expected that an additional 35 m³ of overburden may need to be removed from the ca. 15 × 20 m excavation. Surface, floor, and transmitted track horizons occur immediately above the bones and within the bone layer. Their exposure and documentation has slowed excavation of the skeleton. Tentative trackmakers include *Mammuthus*, *Equus*, and *Camelops*.

Assisted by Paleontology Society volunteers, Senior Park Aide Arnie Mroz continues geological/stratigraphic mapping and intensive survey work across several km² of badlands in the Truckhaven Rocks area on southern flank of the Santa Rosa Mountains. Abundant fossil remains recovered this season include the humerus and radius-ulna of a large camel, tentatively identified as *Blancocamelus*. Arnie was joined by our newest team member, Environmental Services Intern Ron Shugan. Other than assisting Arnie in the field, Ron has been verifying and recording the Truckhaven Rocks location and specimen data and organizing the collections.

Senior Park Aide Scott Musick has been surveying for fossil woods in the Freeman Properties, newly acquired parklands northeast of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The ca. 20 mi² area, which has been highly impacted by off-highway vehicles, includes mainly exposures of the ca. 2.5–4.0 Ma-old lacustrine Borrego and Colorado River deltaic Arroyo Diablo Formations. As a result of Scott's work, an area with large amounts of fossil woods, a virtual petrified forest, was re-discovered after nearly 50 years of going unreported.

Although George has set his retirement date for the end of September 2009, given the present state budget crisis, plans may have to change. A hiring freeze may be imposed; or, even worse, vacating the position may result in its loss. Because keeping the paleontology program viable and affecting a smooth "change of guard" are of primary concern, George has agreed to delay retirement if necessary. We will keep all potential candidates posted (see announcement in Positions Available later in this *News Bulletin*) as this process unfolds. On the brighter side, Todd Wheeler and George have finished proof review of their paper on "*Panthera atrox*: Body proportions, size, sexual dimorphism and behavior of the cursorial lion of the North American plains."

Seven new students graduated in the latest Paleontology Certification Training Program for our volunteers. For a look at our program and activities, visit the Paleontology Society's new Web site at <http://www.anzaborregopaleo.org/>. (G. T. Jefferson)

Occidental College, Los Angeles

Don Prothero's trade book "Greenhouse of the Dinosaurs" has been out since June and has already garnered numerous good reviews. The eighth edition of "Evolution of the Earth" is also out, with a cool cover designed by Carl Buell. Don spent the summer working on a new book for Johns Hopkins University Press on geological catastrophes, which should be out next year.

In May, Don and a four-student crew completed NSF-sponsored field work on the Eocene-Oligocene plant-bearing sequence in the Warner Range of northeastern California, and also on the late Eocene LaPorte flora of the northern Sierras. During the summer, those samples were analyzed and the results were fabulous. Don's summer student Victoria Rutledge spent several months on the magnetometer and not only analyzed the Warner Range samples, but also her own PRF-sponsored project on the Mio-Pliocene Etchegoin Group near Coalinga, California, which will be presented this fall at GSA. Don guest-edited a special volume about transitional fossils for the on-line journal *Evolution: Education and Outreach* (on the Springer Web site). It includes numerous important new papers free for downloading, including an analysis of chordate-deuterostome relationships, Jenny Clack's latest synthesis of tetrapod origins, papers by Jim Clark and Luis Chiappe on transitional dinosaurs and birds, and by Ryosuke Motani on marine reptiles. There are also papers by Ken Angielczyk on synapsids, Hans Thewissen on whale origins, and one by Don on transitional fossils in ungulates.

In addition, the following papers have also appeared:

- Prothero, D. R. 2008. National Lampoon meets creationism. Review of "Flock of Dodos: Behind Modern Creationism, Intelligent Design, and the Easter Bunny" by B. Brown and J. Alston. *Skeptic*, 14(3): 14–16.
- Prothero, D. R. 2008. Missing links found: Transitional forms in the fossil mammal record. *In* Schneidermann, J., and Allmon, W., eds., *For the Record: Geologists on Intelligent Design*. University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 39–59.
- Prothero, D. R. 2008. Paleogene climates. *In* Gornitz, V., ed., *Encyclopedia of Paleoclimatology and Ancient Environments*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, pp. 728–733.
- Prothero, D. R. 2008. Review of J. Anderson and H. D. Sues, "Major Transitions in Vertebrate Evolution." *BioScience*, 59:12–13.
- Prothero, D. R. 2008. Do impacts really cause most mass extinctions? *In* Seckbach, J., ed., *From Fossils to Astrobiology*. Springer, New York, pp. 411–423.
- Prothero, D. R., E. Draus, E. A. Nesbitt, T. M. Smiley, and C. Burns. 2009. Paleomagnetism and tectonic rotation of the Eocene-Oligocene rocks of the Quimper Peninsula, northeastern Olympic Peninsula, Washington. *Newsletters on Stratigraphy* 43(2):127–138.
- Prothero, D. R., E. Draus, and C. Burns. 2009. Magnetic stratigraphy and tectonic rotation of the Eocene-Oligocene Makah and Hoko River formations, northwestern Washington, USA. *International Geophysical Journal* (online), <http://www.hindawi.com/journals/ijgp/2009/930612.html>.

All except the last are available as PDFs and should be linked to Don's Web site this autumn. (Donald Prothero)

— POSITIONS AVAILABLE —

COLORADO DESERT DISTRICT (CDD) PALEONTOLOGIST, California

Department of Parks and Recreation

The Paleontology Society of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is assisting in the recruitment of the District Paleontologist (DP). We anticipate that this position, currently held by George Jefferson, will be filled in late 2009. The DP leads a well-established, ongoing program charged with protecting and preserving CDD's paleontology resources. The program includes field surveying, fossil recovery, preparation, and curation, as well as maintaining the CDD's existing fossil collection of ca. 30,000 specimens. The DP conducts research and supports research at the CDD by outside scientists. The DP currently supervises four part-time, paid field-staff, and over 40 active volunteers (hourly input equivalent to ca. four full-time employees). The DP oversees CDD's highly respected program for training paleontology volunteers, and supports educational and interpretive programs for the CDD.

Candidates should have a degree in geology, and have an established research history with a focus on the Neogene of North American vertebrate paleontology. An advanced degree is desirable. Candidates should be collaborative, accustomed to working both as a leader and in supporting roles. Experience within a government system is desirable.

The CDD includes six state parks in southeastern California. Anza-Borrego Desert State Park alone has over 100,000 acres of sedimentary deposits, both marine and terrestrial, spanning a period from 10 million to less than 10,000 years ago. The most significant and abundant fossil remains are from the late Miocene through mid Pleistocene. The paleontology resources are located on the margins of the Salton Trough, an active plate boundary.

The job is based at the CDD Stout Research Center, which houses the conservation laboratory and collections facilities. It is located in the desert community of Borrego Springs, a town of ca. 3,000 (with an additional 4,000 winter residents).

Potential applicants should contact ingwallr@mac.com for more information.

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<http://www.vertpaleo.org/society/memberethics.cfm>

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