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MUSE U.M. NEWS

OCTOBER 1995

No. 3

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM
THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM

RECENT ACCESSIONS BY THE MUSEUM

In an agreement between the National Wildlife Federation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Zoological Museum, we have received 17 carcasses of the endangered **Black-footed Ferret** (*Mustela nigripes*). The National Wildlife Federation will retain the hides for their educational trunks and the Museum will prepare the skeletons. This is a significant addition to the research collection of the Museum.

Del Kilgore and Dona Boggs have donated a number of **Armadillos** (*Dasypus novemcinctus*) from their research. These will provide skins, skulls, and skeletons for the teaching and research collections.

A **Tundra Swan** (*Cygnus columbianus*) was brought in by Kate Davis. This specimen will be added to the skeletal collection.

Craig Marr recovered an **Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*) that was hit by a car on Rt. 200 in Missoula County. Craig has mounted this specimen in a life-like flying pose.

John Mitchell found two **Vesper Sparrows** (*Pooecetes gramineus*) that were hit by cars in Cascade and Lewis & Clark Counties.

A **Northern Flying Squirrel** (*Glaucomys sabrinus*) from the Rattlesnake Valley was donated by Robert Lee. It will be added to the skeletal collection.

A **House Wren** (*Troglodytes aedon*) that hit a window in Missoula was brought in by Bridget Lee.

NEW MUSEUM STAFF

We say good-bye to two long-term employees in the Museum and Lab. John Mitchell worked for 2 ½ years in the museum collections, with tenures in the Herbarium, Museum, and Greenhouse. John's initiative and attention to detail were valuable skills in the collections. Craig Marr spent two years in the Museum Lab, preparing taxidermy mounts, study skins, and skeletal specimens. He produced many fine specimens and became especially adept in preparing large bird skins. Their skills, dedication to their work, and sense of humor will be missed as they move on in their careers.

As John and Craig depart, we welcome the newest additions to the staff. Mark Clifford brings strong organizational and interpersonal skills to his position in the Museum. Also, his experience as an inspector for the California Dept. of Agriculture will be valuable as we continue to implement the museum's pest management policy. Heather Pier will be managing the Museum's preparation lab, and producing taxidermy and skeletal specimens. Heather brings a breadth of experience from



Flathead Valley Community College and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

Also, the museum tour program that was so capably developed by Rachel Wolstenholme will be continued this year by our new student intern, Bill Strickler. Bill is a senior in Zoology and has the ability and enthusiasm to insure another successful year. The tour program is a joint venture between the Montana Natural History Center and the Museum.

ETHAFOAM

Many people have asked about the white foam that is appearing everywhere in the Museum, in cabinet drawers, under specimens in exhibit cases, and even between the teeth of mammal skulls. Ethafoam, produced by Dow Chemical Co., is an archival, acid-free, inert, non-abrasive closed cell polyethylene foam. Its primary use is to protect museum specimens, both by providing padding to prevent mechanical damage and to shield specimens from acidic surfaces.

Many of the mammal specimens are stored on bare wood or in cardboard boxes. Wood products are inherently acidic (unless specially treated during the manufacturing process to be acid-free) and will cause damage to museum specimens over time. Thus we are in the process of lining all the cabinet drawers with 1/16" ethafoam to protect specimens from acids and to provide cushioning. Also, ethafoam is being placed between the upper and lower jaws of mammal skulls to protect the teeth. Handling skulls often causes the teeth to occlude, causing minute fractures in the enamel which can enlarge and result in broken teeth.

Another benefit to having items on light colored ethafoam is that it allows the easy identification of insect pests. A key element of our pest control plan is the regular inspection of each drawer for the presence of insects. Specimens stored on dark surfaces, as most of the bird collection is, make it difficult to spot the pests and the characteristic frass resulting from their activity. Ethafoam is used by all types of museums and is making a significant contribution to the preservation of our collection.

HERBARIUM NOTICE

A new organization, "The Friends of the University of Montana Herbarium," is off to a strong beginning. Thus far, the Friends have 67 members representing 15 states. Currently an election is taking place to form the first board of directors of the organization. For membership information, contact David Dyer, 243-4743.