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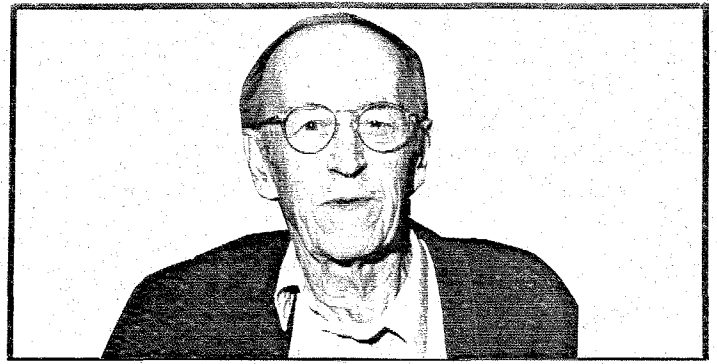
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MUSE U.M. NEWS

JULY 1997

No. 9

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE PHILIP L. WRIGHT
ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM - THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA



DEDICATION OF THE MUSEUM TO PHILIP WRIGHT

Phil Wright's legacy will live on, not only in the large number of zoology and wildlife biology students that he influenced over the years, but also by the museum that now bears his name. The Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum was officially dedicated to Phil on May 5th of this year in a ceremony on the U.M. campus. President George Dennison presented Phil with a plaque honoring his lifelong commitment to the museum. Phil was instrumental in getting the collection started, and was active in contributing to and maintaining the museum during his entire career at The University of Montana. The majority of the 18,000 bird and mammal specimens in the museum were collected by Phil or under his direction. The renaming of the museum is a fitting and deserving tribute to Phil's career. His advice, knowledge, and presence in the museum will be missed. We are proud to work in an institution that bears his name.

RECENT ACCESSIONS BY THE MUSEUM

Bart O'Gara donated a collection of 29 mounted bird heads. This series contains birds from Montana and from around the world. Examples include a **Roller** (*Coracias garrulus*), a brightly colored crow-like bird collected in Morocco, and a **Tibetan Snowcock** (*Tetraogallus tibetanus*), a member of the pheasant family from China. These are both new species for the museum.

Jeff Marks collected two specimens of the **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** (*Polioptila caerulea*). These are the first records from Montana of this species. He also collected a **Sage Thrasher** (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) and a **Yellow-breasted Chat** (*Icteria virens*). All are from Carbon Co., Montana.

A female **White-winged Scoter** (*Melanitta fusca*) was collected in Sanders Co., MT by Jim Brown and deposited in the research collection.

Two specimens of the **Rough-legged Hawk** (*Buteo lagopus*) were recently donated. An illegally killed bird was salvaged by Chad Olson (the shooter was prosecuted) and a complete skeleton was brought in by Gene Miller.

Richard Sherry found a dead **Northern Pygmy Owl** (*Glaucidium gnoma*) in his driveway in the Rattlesnake valley and recovered it for the museum.

John Mitchell collected a partial skeleton of a **Horse** (*Equus caballus*) for the comparative skeletal collection. This is an important identification aid since many elements of the horse skeleton are brought to the museum for identification.

MAMMAL COLLECTION RANKS IN TOP 15% IN U.S.

The American Society of Mammalogists recently published a comprehensive survey of all mammal collections in the Western Hemisphere. Of the 306 collections listed for the United States, the mammal collection of the P.L. Wright Zoological Museum ranked 45th in the total number of specimens held. Containing over 12,000 specimens, this places the Museum in the top 15% in the U.S. Also, our mammal collection is the largest representing a huge geographic region. From Pullman, Washington to St. Paul, Minnesota to Salt Lake City there is no larger mammal collection.

This ranking is even more impressive when you consider that the collection never had a full-time curator with responsibility only for the collections. This is indeed a further tribute to the efforts of Phil Wright and Bob Hoffmann, who had teaching and other departmental responsibilities in addition to the museum, and to all the others who have had a hand in contributing to and maintaining the collections over the years.

The collection is not only large in numbers, but is strong in breadth. According to the current classification system, the museum has specimens from every order of mammals except four. The four "missing" orders are obscure groups of marsupials that were recently split out from the old Order Marsupialia. The specialty of the museum's collection is mammals from the Northern Rockies, however the collection is world-wide in scope. This expands the teaching and research use of the Museum. Of particular interest to mammalogists across the country is our outstanding and unusual collection of mammals from Russia and China. Also, the Museum's comparative skeletal collection is an often used and unique collection for this region.