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UM professor studies one-celled animal after arctic research

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UM PROFESSOR STUDIES
ONE-CELLED ANIMAL
AFTER ARCTIC RESEARCH

MISSOULA--

A University of Montana faculty member has returned to the Missoula campus from the Arctic ice pack, where he gathered data for the study of a one-celled animal.

Dr. John F. Tibbs, an assistant professor of zoology at UM, recently completed a one month stay in the Arctic region, about 200 miles south of the north pole. Winter temperatures in that area range from +10° to -50° Fahrenheit.

The 31-year old scientist is now analyzing data on the one-celled organism, known scientifically as *Cannosphaera antarctica* (pronounced cano spaera ant arc tic a). The organism has been known to science since 1887, when it was discovered in the Antarctic Ocean by Ernst Haeckel, an important biologist of the 19th Century.

"Since 1887 we have known what the adult one-celled animal looked like, but no one had ever seen the juveniles," said Dr. Tibbs. "Now I have been fortunate to find the juvenile of *Cannosphaera antarctica*."

The primary goal of this research is to provide information on the life cycle of this one-celled organism.

"So far, a kind of ugly-duckling story has emerged: the animal grows from a small dumpy-looking juvenile to become an exceedingly elegant adult," said Dr. Tibbs.

Information on the life cycle of the *Cannosphaera antarctica* and similar organisms is of use to geologists in determining the ages of earth layers in which related fossils are found, according to Dr. Tibbs.

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The Cannosphaera antartica were collected from the Arctic Ocean by means of nets lowered through holes drilled in the ice.

This was Dr. Tibbs second trip to the Arctic region; his first was in 1960-61. He also has made three trips to the Antarctic Ocean.

While in the Antarctic under the auspices of the U.S. Antarctic Research Program, he studied a number of species of the same type of one-celled organisms.

During his recent work in the Arctic, Dr. Tibbs stayed on drifting ice station T-3, in a trailer-shaped aluminum hut. He kept warm with the aid of a diesel-fuel heater in the sub-zero climate.

The Arctic work was supported by the Arctic Institute of North America.

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