

The JURICA NATURE MUSEUM Newsletter

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Summer 2007

CURATOR'S CORNER

I have been told by my "boss" (education coordinator, Mary Mickus) to get busy and prepare another CORNER for this issue of the Newsletter. So here goes - I will use a Q & A format, to answer some of the many questions that we have received about the Pancotto Trophy Animal Collection.

What is the Pancotto Trophy Animal collection?

You may have read in the *Daily Herald* and other Chicago papers about the 57 trophy animals that recently increased the animal inventory of the Museum. Some are from Africa, but many are deer from America.

Those of you who have seen the trophies at the museum have expressed a sense of "wonderment" at how well preserved they are and the fine taxidermy displayed by the collection. They really are beautiful and well done. It is a magnificent addition to the museum's collection.

Why are they called trophy animals?

To paraphrase Webster's dictionary definition: trophy is "something gained or given in conquest of victory, esp. when preserved or mounted as a memorial." These animals have been determined by the Safari Club International (SCI) to reflect the World Record Class standing of a specimen. The animals in this collection demonstrate both an artistic and aesthetic value in the method used for their display; their standing in world record books; uniqueness of the specimen and importance to a museum for educational purposes.

For example, one of the deer in the collection is rated by a museum professional as: "Exceeds the number one in the SCI Record Book of Trophy Animals...no other like it known in the world at this time..." This rating gives the deer an exceptional value. The total value of the Pancotto collection is more than \$2 million.

How did we get them?

A good friend of the museum, Paul Miessler, made a contact with the donor, Sam Pancotto, at a meeting. Sam made the comment that he would like to see his collection go to a place where it would be cared for and appreciated. Paul

suggested that the Jurica Museum might be an appropriate place. Paul contacted me, we went to Mr. Pancotto's house to see what he had, and the deal was made.

Where in Sam's house was the collection kept?

When I entered Sam and Rosemary's home, I was greeted in the entrance hall by several trophy heads nicely placed on the walls. As I walked into Sam's den, more animals greeted me, both full mounts of the sheep and several leopards, with more shoulder mounts on the wall. Sam took me into the dining room and I found about seven full mounted deer along the walls—each had a nice red ribbon and a little silver bell around their neck—a Christmas touch. And then in the living room, were more trophies, including a large brown bear and a black marlin on the wall.

Sam and his wife, Rosemary, are really fine people. They are true examples of hospitality which is very important in the Rule of St. Benedict. They made us feel at home and shared with us many anecdotes of the world travels that enabled them to add to their collection. I need to add my profound thanks to Tom McAtee, a senior alumnus of Benedictine University, who handled the transfer of the collection to the University. Without his assistance and working with the professional movers, I might still be on the road trying to get the collection to the University.

Do you have a favorite?

My favorite is the Leopard (*Panthera pardus pardus*) mounted on a simulated stone base. From pictures I have seen of leopards photographed in trees in Africa, this mount looks so natural; it is relaxed, perhaps enjoying a bit of leisure after a successful hunt, surveying its kingdom. It is at the right height so that visitors to

CURATOR'S CORNER CONTINUED

the museum can look it right in the eye, and say "hello."

What are you going to do with these specimens?

Notice that I began this column with "57 trophy animals that recently increased the animal inventory..." I have not said "received a gift" nor used the word "donation" as these words "gift" and "donation" often refer to money that was received. While I have a beautiful collection of trophy animals, there is very little funding available to incorporate them into the Museum's dioramas. The College of Science has been able to help finance a restructure of the front exhibit, placing two beautiful white tail deer into the Northern Illinois Diorama. Funds are still needed to place the five lions into the African Diorama, the Marco Polo and Alti Sheep into the Rocky Cliff Diorama and the mule deer into a new Desert Mountain Diorama.

Alumni and friends have been generous in the past helping me with the cost of new cabinets when we moved from Scholl into Birck Hall. There is a Memorial Plaque in the museum naming all those who have contributed. Dr. & Mrs. Paul Springer provided the renovation of the Wet Land diorama this past summer. But now the museum is in great need of financial assistance to renovate and remodel exhibits, to upgrade them and to add the new trophy animals. I would be overjoyed to dedicate any of the lions and bears (sorry no tigers—yet) to anyone who can assist us. Thank you.

Fr. Theodore Suchy, O.S.B.
Curator, Jurica Nature Museum

Visit us on the Web at www.ben.edu/museum

Other News

A young man named Erick Hillebrand, 15, visited the museum last summer with his family and was quite impressed with our displays. He felt we needed more descriptions and labels about the animals and volunteered to write some labels for us. He worked with us to determine which displays he would like to write about and then put the signs up in December. The result is a look at the animals and displays through his eyes.

For more information or to schedule a tour, please call (630) 829-6546 or e-mail mmickus@ben.edu.

We hope you will visit soon!

Collection Spotlight

The Marco Polo Sheep donated by Mr. Pancotto is probably the most spectacular of the newest animals in terms of size and rarity. This is a sheep that is found high up in the Pamir Mountains of Russia. It has huge horns – some can be 6 feet in length. This is the largest wild sheep in the world and is named after the famed explorer, Marco Polo. It is going to be a challenge to fit the Marco Polo and the High Alti Algari sheep into the museum but it is a nice challenge to have!



Marco Polo Sheep

Exhibit News

A former student worker and Benedictine alumnus, David Hanke, (C'96) is back with the museum as our exhibit designer and installer. David worked for several years at The Field Museum in Chicago in their exhibit department and is currently at the Chicago Botanic Garden. We took a chance and contacted him and he was willing to work for the museum to incorporate the new animals. He has started with the Northern Illinois Woodlands section of the Museum and the transformation has been wonderful. We removed the musk ox and turned around the elk and added two white-tailed deer to the exhibit. David has painted a mural and is constructing a stream that will tie in the mural and the exhibit. We are thrilled with his work and his suggestions for the lions and the sheep are excellent. Work will progress as we raise the funds. David lives in Wheaton with his wife, Pam and their children, Amber and Max.



David Hanke at work

Discovery Box News

The third grade classes of St. Joseph School in Downers Grove have used several discovery boxes from the Jurica Nature Museum over the past year. Parent Margie Anderson has picked up the boxes and led a group of parents in enrichment activities for the students. The students finished their year with boxes about renewable energy and magnetism. You can see from the faces that the activities were a big hit! Teachers, parents and students enjoyed discovering Bernoulli's Principle and the power of magnets.



St. Joseph School students learning about energy

Education News

The Pancotto collection has been wonderful to receive, especially with the addition of lions. Students visiting have been quite impressed with their size and beauty. Benedictine University students have been seen taking pictures of them with their cell phones to show their size. Just the other day, I was asked to let someone stand next to the female lion so she could have her picture taken to show her son. It has been interesting to see all of the students from field trips maneuver around the animals as they do their activity sheets. To fit all the students in the museum we have had to block off sections. The groups have been very understanding and have asked a lot of questions as they have watched the front window display be transformed.

Most of the students want to come back and see how we fit the Marco Polo sheep into the exhibit! A summer program run by the Graduate Education Alternate Certification program will focus on the problem of incorporating the new animals into our exhibits. In the Summer Sleuths camp the students will be challenged to design displays for the six mule deer, the lions and other cats, or the musk ox and other tundra animals. They will consider size, habitat, physical barriers needed, lighting, construction and all of the problems museum staff must consider when designing and installing an exhibit. They will present their ideas to Fr. Theodore on the last day of the camp.

Leave No Child Inside

The Jurica Nature Museum is joining with over 200 other members of the Chicago Wilderness (CW) consortium in a campaign designed to emphasize the importance of connecting children and adults with nature. Look for the logo displayed at participating institutions for activity suggestions.

In his groundbreaking 2006 book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, journalist Richard Louv cited kids' lack of direct experience with nature as largely to blame for alarming increases in obesity, attention deficit disorder and poor social skills. As an example, since the 1960s, when the amount of time children spent outdoors began to decrease, the percentage of obese youths has tripled. Louv's book has sparked a national movement to inspire parents to lead their children back into nature.

The regional initiative called Leave No Child Inside has the goal of improving children's health and

fostering generations of children who care enough for nature to protect it. The Museum will work to encourage the connection with nature for our visitors with suggestions of local places to visit. We also will link to the CW website, www.KidsOutside.info, and provide parents and visitors with tip sheets for encouraging interactions with nature in their own neighborhoods.

Here is a starter activity: Hold a scavenger hunt in your backyard. Ask kids to check off items on a list that could include flowers, bird nests, squirrels, something that makes noise, colors in nature, worms and insects in the soil. Younger children might need pictures to help them. Don't forget that you don't have to know everything about plants and animals to help your children enjoy them. Half the fun of this activity is asking questions and building a sense of curiosity and wonder.

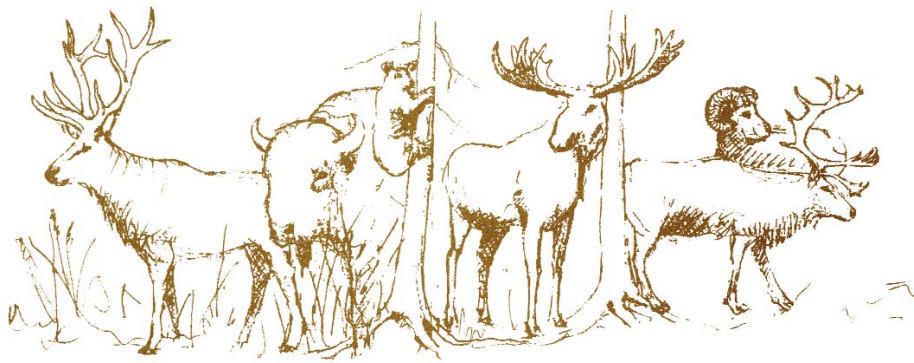
Enjoy!



Jurica Tallgrass Prairie News from Larry Kamin Ph.D.

Very, very wet – “actually flooded” would be the way to describe the Jurica Tallgrass Prairie (JTP) now in late April/early May. With one of the wettest Aprils on record, there is a lot of standing water – not just in the SE wet quadrant but throughout the whole project. I am glad I did not burn this year and I’m hoping some of the organic debris will help keep out weeds and add to the soil forming process. Several wetland/wet prairie species are doing great. The Vanilla Grass is in bloom, the slough grass is up and growing, the Blue Joint Grass is also growing nicely. The Blue Flag Iris is a foot high and I am sure that other species like Marsh Marigold, Swamp Milkweed, Seedbox, Marsh Phlox, Sneezeweed and Marsh Primrose are going to do quite nicely. Some of the other wetland species are Queen of the Prairie, Blue Vervain, Sweetflag and two species of Ironweed. The NW quadrant is not flooded very much and will probably do just fine. We plant them and nature sorts it all out.

Best regards,
Larry Kamin,
Director, Jurica Tallgrass Prairie



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JURICA
NATURE MUSEUM



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