
The JURICA NATURE MUSEUM Newsletter

Fall 2004

Curator's Corner

Last May the Museum ended a long and successful professional relationship with our exhibit designer Ernst Albrecht Gramatzki. Ernst has retired and moved back to his native Germany. Ernst was able to bring my vision for the Jurica Collection to life. Between them, the Museum changed from an open, poorly lit storage space to a series of exhibits and cabinets that show the diversity of animal life on earth.

Ernst started in 1987 in Scholl Hall with the African Savanna Diorama, a result of both a grant from the Helen V. Brach Foundation and the generous gift of trophy African animals from the personal collection of Dr. Branco Dragasic. Ernst thought this was to be a one time job. Little did he know that as I was able to secure more grants from the Brach Foundation, the entire museum would eventually be created. Ernst often said that had he known it would be such a huge job, he might have changed his mind!

Our small museum is truly a work of art. Ernst personally painted each background scene, taxidermied many of our animals and offered his ideas, such as bright attractive colors and lots of good lighting, as the museum evolved. When we moved to the Birck Hall of Science, Ernst worked alongside all of the movers to take apart and save as much of the old exhibits as possible. He spent part of the winter before we moved to Birck Hall painting the huge mural in his studio for the new African exhibit so we could get that exhibit in first and quickly. Hanging two, 20-foot tall and 40-foot long pieces of canvas was no easy trick!

Although Ernst has moved back to Hamburg, he plans to continue his painting, bronze and sculpture work as well as writing and illustrating children's books. Before he can begin his art work, he plans to remodel the house, which his parents left him, to suit his artistic needs. By the time it is completed, we have no doubt that Ernst will have created a unique art studio, display room, miniature museum and personal living quarters. We wish him the very best.

Fr. Theodore Suchy, O.S.B.
Curator

Collection Spotlight

The Museum recently received a generous gift from the Elisa and David Piazza family that allowed us to purchase a dinosaur bone for our visitors to touch. It is the femur of an *Edmontosaurus annectens*, a duck-billed dinosaur that lived in the Hell Creek Formation of Ziebach County in South Dakota more than 65 million years ago in the Late Cretaceous time of history. The Museum had previously purchased a cast of the skull that is also on display. Hundreds of these dinosaurs of various sizes seemed to have died all at once and their disarticulated bones were preserved in a mass grave near the Ruth Maxon Dinosaur Quarry near Faith, South Dakota.

The front part of the hadrosaurid mouth was wide, flattened and covered by a horny, toothless beak that looked like the bill of a monstrous duck.

Continued on page 2



*Visitors view the new touch bone,
Edmontosaurus (annectens)*

Jurica Tallgrass Prairie Update

The Jurica Tallgrass Prairie (JTP) has finally been planted. The first plants went in May 11 and the last 42 plants were planted during the first week of August. Roughly 521 graminoids (grasses and sedges) were planted representing 21 different species. One thousand eight hundred and fifty-five forbs (showy flowers) were planted representing 114 species, for a total of 2,376 plants put into the ground all one at a time by hand. The JTP is located near Lake St. Benedict and is 69 feet by 43 feet (the golden rectangle of art). There are two six-foot benches along the red brick path facing the lake, two three-foot wide red brick walkways through the project and a 10-foot diameter Jens Jensen Council Ring for sitting with a group. In August a red brick perimeter around the entire project was professionally installed. This will help keep out creeping weeds and allow a well defined edge for lawn mowers to go over without harming prairie plants.

The goldenrods, lobelias, most of the ironweeds, milkweeds and most others species are now finished blooming. However four types of violet/blue asters are in bloom (sky blue, smooth blue, New England and aromatic) and two types of white asters are in bloom (heath and willow). The grasses — Canada Rye, Switch Grass, Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem and especially Indian Grass are all in glorious fall color. Come February/March the prairie will either be mowed (4-6 inches off the ground), burned or a combination of both.

Collection Spotlight:

Continued from page 1

This beak was used to bite off plant matter which was then chewed with many tightly packed, leaf-shaped teeth — up to a thousand of them — that lined both of the jaws. As the teeth wore out, they were replaced with new ones.

Edmontosaurus, one of the largest of the hadrosaurids, was also one of the last. It lived with Tyrannosaurus and Triceratops right up to the end of the Cretaceous. *Edmontosaurus* could weigh up to five tons and had strong front legs and hooves

Next year we plan to install a large sign out by the JTP project, place signage and pictures on the JTP cabinet in our museum, purchase a digital camera, and create pamphlets, brochures and guides explaining and identifying the plants of the project. This month we plan to hang the JTP Founders' Plaque by the Botany Lab. During the next year, I will possibly give presentations about the JTP.

Thanks again for all your support.

Larry Kamin
Director, JTP



on its “hands.” It probably spent most of its time on all four legs, rising up on its back legs only when it needed to run from predators.

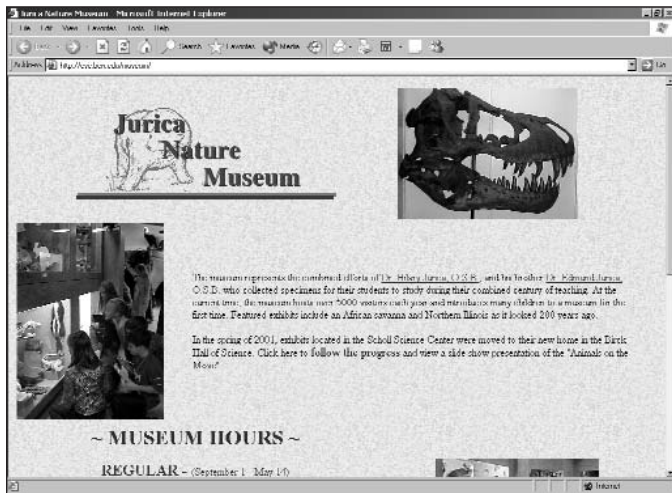
The femur exhibit was put together for us by the Black Hills Institute of Geological Research. We invite you to come see the skull of *Edmontosaurus* and then touch this unique specimen. It is already a big hit with our visitors.



Kennedy Junior High School students visit the Museum

Continuing Education

Both Fr. Ted and Mary Mickus are busy learning how to update the Museum Web page. We attended a workshop to learn the basics of the software used by Benedictine University and have set times during the week to work together on this project. We will attend additional workshops as needed. Our goal is to put more specimen/animal information on the Web site (<http://cse.ben.edu/museum>) so visitors can, for example, find out how big a polar bear gets, how long a red tail hawk lives and similar things. Our student workers will be involved in some of the animal research using books in our museum library.



Museum Web page

Educator's Corner

Summer was busier than anticipated with a successful passport program. The Museum participates in the Kane DuPage Regional Museum Association, with more than 50 other organizations, in this summer program designed to bring visitors into our museums. Each participant has her/his own passport that is stamped after the child finishes an activity sheet. We also gave each child a Jurica Museum pencil for his/her participation. The museum also worked with the Benedictine University Day Camp this summer. The campers visited weekly and studied a different organism. Both the camp staff and museum staff felt this was a good program and we hope to do it again.

Several teachers from summer workshops who visited the museum suggested adding a Discovery Box honoring the Lewis and Clark Expedition. We were able to put together information about the plants and animals they encountered along with new fur and skull specimens. The box is already scheduled for much of the fall semester. This box joins more than 30 other boxes that teachers and scout leaders can check out from the museum. A list of the boxes can be sent upon request. Please contact Mary Mickus at mmickus@ben.edu or call (630) 829-6546 for more information.

Endowment News

The Museum is in the process of setting up an endowment fund. We have determined that we will put aside 10 percent of each donation (with the donor's permission) in the endowment fund. Although it will be a small start, we believe that it is an important part of our long-term planning. We will eventually be able to use the interest for special taxidermy projects, diorama renewal and perhaps developing an area in the museum for a microscope that children can use to view different skin structures and other objects of interest.

If you would like to make a contribution for a particular part of the Museum that you like, we need the following:

- Six cabinets for the hallway for the Mazon Creek fossils and the Cooper Marine Invertebrate Collection at \$1,200 each
- Continued framing of at least seven additional original Jurica charts at \$125 each
- New fur and skull collection for children to touch at a total of \$400



Donated by Geri and Ed McKeown

Fr. Ted was honored on Friday, September 24 at the Second Annual Science and Mathematics Alumni Reunion dinner for his work in the biology department as well as his exceptional work in the museum. Dean John Mickus, Ph.D., faculty member Larry Kamin, Ph.D. and alumna **Mary Hantsch Mikhailov, Ph.D.** shared their thoughts about Fr. Ted and his work.



Benedictine
University

5700 College Road
Lisle, IL 60532

JURICA
NATURE MUSEUM



CHICAGO WILDERNESS™
A Regional Nature Reserve