
The JURICA NATURE MUSEUM Newsletter

Fall 2003

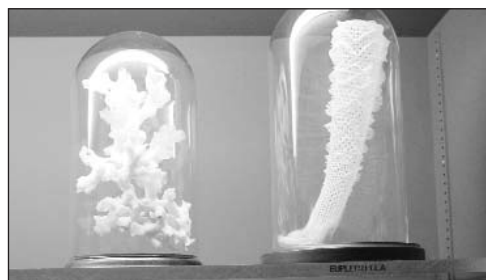
Curator's Corner

As we prepare for the holiday season, I would like to thank you for your interest and support of the museum. We have been able to start some new projects this year because of your generosity. As you know, any improvements, new additions and upgrades to the Museum depend mostly on our readers, friends and alumni. For example, we were recently able to frame some of the original biological drawings that Fr. Hilary had made. About 10 drawing from the zoology collection are on the north corridor wall in the Birck Hall of Science near the Museum and three plant drawings are on the south wall. Each drawing cost about \$100 to clean and mount. There are about 300 more of these charts to examine from which we will select the best ones for mounting. There are also all of the the anatomy and embryology charts that Fr. Hilary and Fr. Edmund did. Donations are needed in order to continue this creative work of the Jurica Brothers.

With the recent donation of specimens from the Robert Cooper Marine Invertebrate Collection, I would like to purchase cabinets to place in the corridor outside the Museum for visitors to see the great variety and beauty of sea creatures such as sea stars, urchins and venomous snails. These cabinets are commonly called "jewelers cabinets" because they are only waist high and people can look down at the objects (but children can look directly at them). Each cabinet costs \$1,200.

Donations can be made payable to the "Jurica Museum: Benedictine University." That way your money is designated for the Museum and your tax record will indicate a not-for-profit organization. Thank you for your support. We wish you a blessed and happy Christmas season.

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



Cooper's glass sponges

Collection Spotlight: The Cooper Collection of Marine Invertebrates

This summer was notable for the Museum because we received a remarkable collection of marine invertebrates from Robert Cooper of Peoria, Illinois. Mr. Cooper donated part of his personal collection of individual specimens that number in the thousands. We have just started to inventory this wonderful collection and it will take quite a while to truly appreciate their value.

Mr. Cooper collected his specimens during his 50 years of deep sea diving. He learned to dive during World War II and continued for more than 50 years. He taught himself about these marine invertebrates and learned about and collected fossils, rocks and minerals. He also donated his collection of marine invertebrate books that will help the museum with identification.

We met Mr. Cooper through a teacher from Princeville, Illinois at the June workshop about renewable energy resources. As part of the workshop, the teachers toured the museum. She told Mary Mickus, education coordinator, that she thought we should have the Cooper Collection in our museum. She proceeded to say that Mr. Cooper had a museum in his home and was looking for a place for his collection.

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She had seen some of his specimens and knew that they were excellent. When she went back to Princeville, she called Mike Rule, who is a friend and colleague of Mr. Cooper. Mr. Rule asked many questions about the museum and commented that as a high school biology teacher, he had used a series of flip charts that were called the Jurica charts and was delighted to discover that the charts were developed at Benedictine University. We sent him additional information to share with Mr. Cooper and they were impressed with our museum, collections and mission.

A few of us drove to Peoria to see the Cooper Museum and collection and brought back one car full of specimens! Fr. Ted and Brother Guy made a second trip and returned with a second packed car. Mr. Cooper was kind enough to give us a personal tour and we were very impressed with his work and his knowledge of each specimen. His diving helmet was displayed on the wall along with a four-foot long saw from a sawfish and several shark jaws. There were shells, crabs, octopi, sea stars, sponges and coral. His series of sea urchins was beautiful. The glass sponges were also beautiful and remarkable. Glass sponges have been in the science news lately because of the strength of the fibers and a possible connection to fiber optic work.



Cooper's conches

When Mr. Cooper was diving, he often had a camera with him. He took a picture of four or five male conches fertilizing a large female conch then collected the animals and the egg case. We have these shells in a cabinet with the picture so visitors can appreciate that there were animals inside the shells!

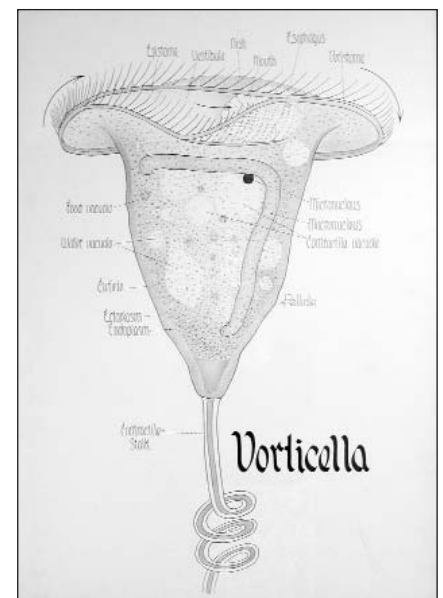
Some of the Cooper Collection has been put into two cabinets on the outside east wall of the Museum. We are hoping to add cabinets for our visitors to be able to see the best specimens more closely. We now have the huge task of completing an inventory of these new specimens.

Jurica Charts Framed



As a result of a gift from Benedictine alumnus Steve Grobl, we were able to frame 13 of the original charts created by students under the guidance of Fr. Hilary and Fr. Edmund. The charts are displayed along the north corridor wall near the museum. We started with early animals and parasites and have also framed a few of the plant charts. As we receive more

donations, we hope to frame more of the charts. There is an explanation written by Fr. Hilary of how the charts were drawn and colored that is posted alongside the charts. The charts are framed so that the name of the student who did the art work is visible if it is on the chart. There are more than 300 charts in the original collection and choosing which ones to frame first was a challenge. But with Fr. Ted teaching about parasites, you can imagine how that went! We hope you will come to see these charts as they combine science and art with our Benedictine history.



Faculty News

Dr. Wayne Wesolowski and his wife Mary Cay moved to Arizona this August. Wayne was offered his dream job at the University of Arizona teaching chemistry. He produced a history of the sciences at Benedictine titled "The Tradition of Science." The Title III grant has used it as a good example of PowerPoint with narration and Impatica compressed the 38MB PowerPoint file to 8.7MB. You can view the full sound version at <http://owl.ben.edu/titleIII/impaticasamples/science-condensed-full-sound.html>. The presentation will play automatically. With sound compression, for delivery over dial-up lines, the file size reduces to 3.1 MB.

The Wesolowski's have always been strong supporters of the museum and our endeavors and we will miss them. We wish them the best of luck and thank him for this outstanding history project that we can share with others interested in Benedictine University.

Tallgrass Prairie Update

The rainy spring set back planting of the prairie. The lawn had to be removed in the area that is to be the prairie and the wet days prevented the herbicide from working. However, all of the stonework is complete and the ground is prepared so that planting can begin in early Spring 2004.

Meanwhile, in the Museum our Tallgrass Prairie Display is now complete. Our designer, Ernst Gramtzki, worked with pictures and prairie specimens to create a scene of the prairie that calls on the visitor to imagine a vast sea of grasses. Hidden in the grasses are arrowheads for students to find and discuss why they are in the display. The cabinet has been placed across from our Northern Illinois diorama and is quite eye-catching from the bridge joining Birck and Kindlon Halls.



Museum Staff News

Mary Mickus was one of six presenters at a two-day workshop in September at The Field Museum to teach the Illinois Biodiversity Basics curriculum to educators from different Chicago Wilderness organizations. This Illinois-specific curriculum was adapted from the World Wildlife Fund curriculum, "Windows on the Wild." Illinois is the first state to adapt this curriculum for its own region.

We received word in September that we had not been selected to receive a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services for our technology project. The grant was for \$24,000 for a computer and the work necessary for our digitization project. Without this grant, our work will be greatly hindered. However, we have already submitted a similar proposal to the Rohlen Foundation and are preparing a request to the Illinois Association of Museums. Any financial help toward this project would be greatly appreciated.

Registrar Michele Halt attended a Fundamentals of Digitization Workshop in September to learn more about organizing our project. She is also taking an online course to further prepare. We want to take high quality digital images of our specimens and link the pictures to our inventory information. Eventually this will all be added to our Web page and made readily accessible to our visitors, both virtual and those who visit the Museum. We hope to have a computer in the museum so that students can get answers to questions about the specimens, their habitats and general information as well as collection data.

The Museum staff has been busy making the museum more visible to the local community. On October 23, Mary Mickus represented the museum at the Lisle Convention & Visitors bureau "Great Things Showcase." There were workshops for participants describing the area attractions and a luncheon with a speaker from the Chicago Museum Partners.

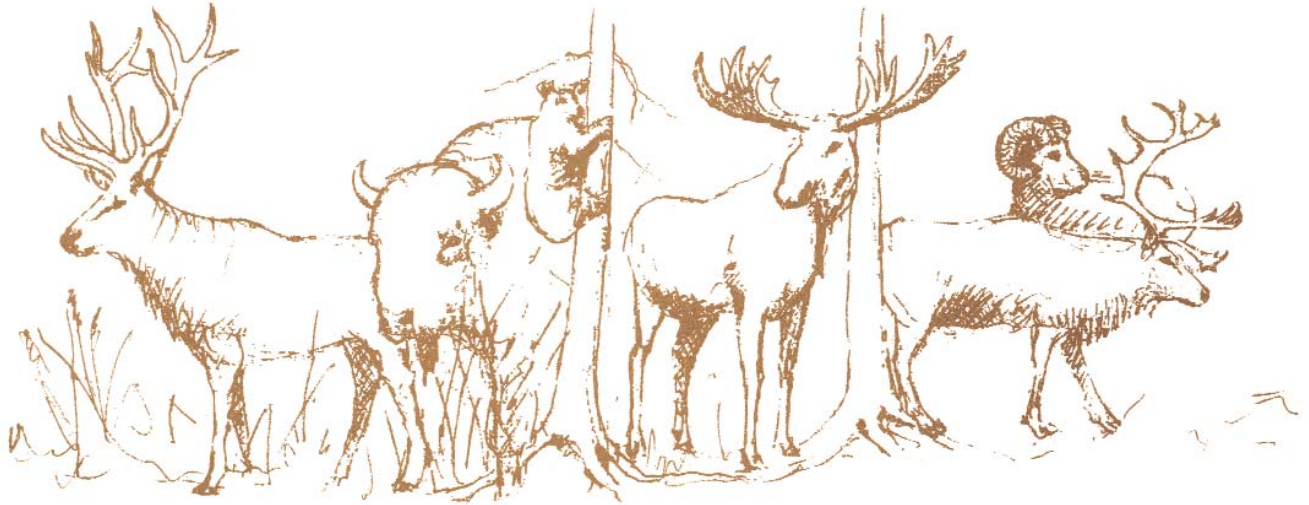
Fr. Ted was interviewed on "Spotlight on Naperville" and our student worker Gus Gomez gave the host, Candace, a tour of the museum. The show aired on November 12 and will be repeated during the month. Fr. Ted was interviewed by Joan Broz of the *Daily Herald* for a short article about celebrating his 30 years of museum curatorship.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

An article in the *Chicago Sun Times* in early October noted that one of Chicago's major museums had in its archives a piece of the snake skin of the snake that tempted Eve, according to the Book of Genesis. Naturally there is a lot of question about whether this can be true.

A lot of museums have items in their collections that are unusual. We, too, have some unusual items. For example, in our fish collection, we recently acquired from a small private museum that is de-accessioning its collection, a sword from a swordfish killed off Boston in 1931. The data on this sword reads as follows, "Taken from swordfish July 20, 1931, 90 miles off coast of Boston. The fish was 14 feet long and it killed one man by jabbing the sword through the bottom of a dory before it was finally captured." Brings back memories of the movie "The Perfect Storm."

As for snake skins, well, do be careful because we do have some pretty big ones hanging around the ceiling!



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JURICA
NATURE MUSEUM



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A Regional Nature Reserve