
The JURICA NATURE MUSEUM Newsletter

Spring 2003

Welcome to the Jurica Nature Museum's newsletter!

After a busy 18 months of packing, moving and unpacking, we are now feeling quite settled in our new location. So settled, in fact, that we have started moving some things around! We have also been busy with behind the scenes work. One major project this winter was writing a grant to the Institute of Museum and Library Services for a project to increase the public accessibility to our collections records. As part of this grant application, we reviewed our long-range plan. One result of this review is to institute a regular newsletter to those of you who have been so supportive of the museum's work. We have worked with the Public Relations department to develop this new format and our goal is to send out newsletters four times a year. We hope you enjoy keeping up-to-date with our work in the museum and we thank you for your continued interest and support.

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

Mary C. Mickus
Education Coordinator

Jurica Nature Museum Note

The Museum participated in a workshop this fall for kindergarten through eighth grade teachers along with Benedictine University faculty from physics, chemistry, mathematics and education. The topic was renewable energy resources. The 17 teachers who attended the workshop developed plans for a renewable energy resources exhibit and two new discovery boxes to add to our list. We are currently looking for support for the exhibit and hope to have something up in the next few months.

Collection Spotlight: Tyrannosaurus Rex

Our newest museum display features Stan, an adult, male T-Rex skull, acquired from the Black Hills Institute in January. The Museum has a mold of half of Stan's head that is cast in a special resin to show all of the unique features of this skull. Stan lived in South Dakota over 65 million years ago. In those years, Dakota resembled the Mississippi delta, with richly diverse subtropical plants and animals. Today this area is scorched during hot, dry summers and lies frozen during below zero winters. Crocodiles, turtles, snakes, flying reptiles and small mammals lived here, along with dinosaurs such as Triceratops, Edmontosaurus and others.

Stan would have hatched from an egg (like a modern bird) and was minimally cared for by his mother who taught him how to hunt for food. Eventually Stan would have found a mate, who would have been about 30 percent larger than Stan. Together, they would have fought for the territory to build their nest.

In the spring of 1987, amateur paleontologist Stan Sacrison was exploring outcrops of the Hell Creek Formation near the town of Buffalo, South Dakota. He came upon a large pelvis, weathering out of a sandy cliff

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face 100 feet above the prairie. During the rest of that summer, Sacrison spent his free time attempting to uncover what seemed to be the skeleton of a large dinosaur.

Later, in the spring of 1992, workers from the Black Hills Institute began in earnest to excavate the skeleton. The skeleton was named Stan after its discoverer. After more than 30,000 hours of preparation, the skeleton was finally ready for exhibition. Stan was proclaimed the largest and most complete (65 percent real bone) male T-Rex available to science. The full skeleton is currently on display in Hill City and will be moved to its permanent home in the Black Hills Museum of Natural History.

In the excavation of Stan's skeleton, the skull was almost entirely disarticulated but nearly every bone was found and restored. Forty-seven separate bones and 35 loose teeth were reassembled. Only two small bones from the lower jaw are missing. The study and reassembly of these skull bones seem to provide evidence that T-Rex had the largest brain, keenest eyesight and sense of smell, the strongest teeth and the most powerful jaws of any dinosaur now known.



Fr. Theodore Suchy, O.S.B. with Stan

Stan is exhibited in the museum in an open cabinet so that our visitors can get up close and personal with this “King of the Tyrant Lizards.” Fr. Theodore Suchy, O.S.B. is already planning to add a front leg of Stan to go next to the cabinet. This will truly give our visitors an appreciation of the size of these animals. We are able to keep growing with the generous support of donors. If you would like to contribute to Fr. Theodore's T-Rex leg fund, we are always happy to accept donations!

Student Worker News

We have several student workers who have been busy with projects this year. Sari Husseini, who graduated in December 2002 and went home to Jerusalem, worked on the fossil collection doing inventory and checking

identifications. Husseini recently wrote that he was elected to go with a group of Palestinians and Jews called Moderate Voices for Peace, to Kenetiket, Washington and New York to talk about the Palestinian and Israeli conflict.

and are an excellent team for doing detail work on many of the displays. Did you know that the edges of the exhibits with sand are actually glued so they don't spread all over the floor? Gomez and Grano sure know! Grano is working this semester to develop a nutrition discovery box to add to our discovery box program. Many of the students also work as guides for our Brownie and Cub Scout visitors. We have been fortunate through the years to have reliable and enthusiastic student workers.



Teresa Grano painting

Alexandra Rose, a freshman, worked with tiny rodent skulls. She corrected identifications, made inventory cards and then put the skulls into magnifying boxes that enable us to see the details of the skulls.

Gustavo Gomez and Teresa Grano work at the same time

Education Highlights:

More than 5,500 people visited the Museum in our new location in the Birck Hall of Science in the calendar year 2002. We hosted many school groups, Cub Scouts and Brownies. The Lisle Heritage Society held it's October meeting in the Museum with more than 25 members attending to see our new museum. The Museum is becoming popular with local artists who come to draw and also borrow specimens to do more extended work at home.



Two students during a field trip

A typical field trip for students includes an introduction to the Museum in our circle under the whale skeleton, a tour with their chaperones, time in the circle for touching various specimens and working with a partner on an activity sheet selected by

their teacher. The students really enjoy being museum detectives. Groups finish in the circle again to ask questions about the museum and how displays are constructed or what animals eat.

Many of the classes that visit send thank you notes to the Museum. They are almost always covered with pictures of the animals the children saw. The children are so very appreciative of the many animals and the way they are displayed. They also like the different activity sheets they work on during their visit. Following are some of their letters:

Dear Mrs. Mickus, The museum was great! I loved the snake, defense, frog and bird exhibits. I loved the whale skeleton. I liked the activity sheet. I was amazed by the earthworm that was 20 inches long! From Dominic DeAngelis (St. Michael's School, fourth grade).

Dear Mrs. Mickus, Thank you so much! I loved the polar bear. And the ice block was neat. I loved the blue butterfly! The bird you pas[sed]t around was neat! I

would love to work there. The giant earth worm was huge! I hope I go visit the Jurica Nature Museum again. From Kristin Valenta (St. Michael's School).



Bromberek class field trip

Dear Mrs. Mickus, Thank you for letting us come to the Jurica Museum. I liked the nine feet tall polar bear. The zebra skin was smooth. I liked the display of bugs. I hope I can come back. Your friend, Anthony Morelli. (Bromberek School in Lemont, third grade).

Dear Mrs. Mickus, Thank you for helping me answer the questions and showing us all of the cool things about nature! I hope you have a great time showing other classes the great museum! Your friend, Saeda. (Bromberek School).

Curator's Corner

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Fr. Theodore's tenure as curator/director of the Jurica Nature Museum. Many of you might remember the collection when it

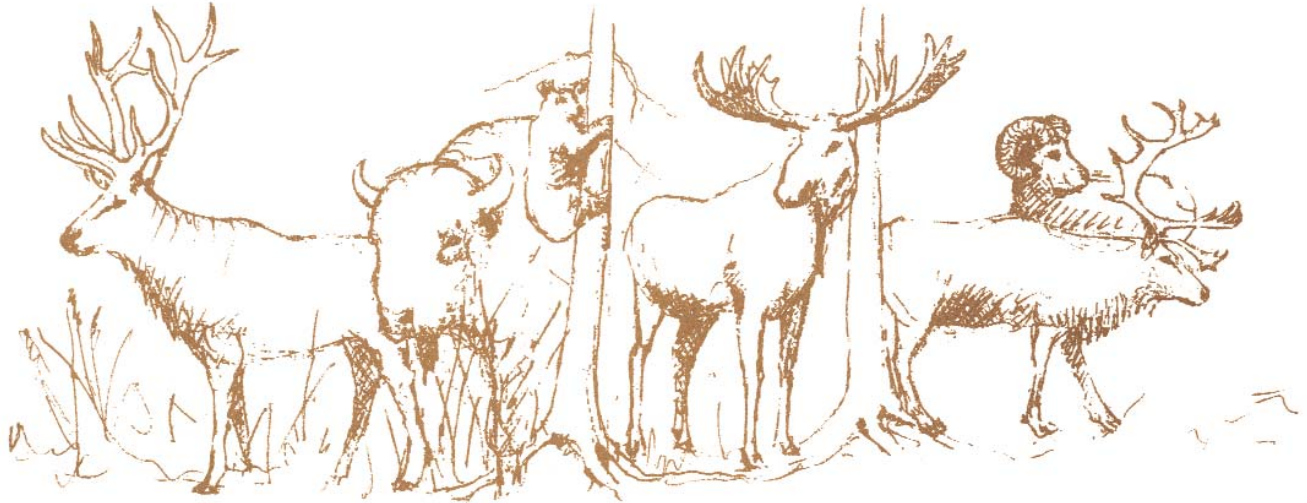


Fr. Theodore and Ernst

was all over the classrooms of Fr. Hilary and Fr. Edmund in Benedictine Hall. Some of you might recall the early days in Scholl when the Museum was an educational collection with few displays. Fr. Theodore has been instrumental in writing grants and finding our exhibit designer, Ernst Albrecht Gramatzki. The vision of these two men has resulted in a bright engaging space that our visitors really enjoy. Congratulations to Fr. Theodore!

Have you checked out our Web page lately?

We can be found at www.ben.edu/museum. The Museum recently submitted a grant to the Institute of Museum and Library Services to improve and further develop our online catalog and to purchase a computer for our visitors to use in accessing information about our specimens. We also hope to make available to researchers the collection information about each specimen. Our egg collection has particularly detailed information that may be valuable to researchers.



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