

the *Nature* of things

AT THE GEORGIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY



Museum Expands Arthropod Collection



From *the* Director

I can finally report that the “big dig” in front of the Museum is finished: the ravine and creek bed have been re-entombed in concrete and gravel and sealed over with new asphalt. Construction proceeded up to the edge of the building, and we now have a new sidewalk and great storm drainage, and hopefully no more unwanted water!

The completion of the construction in late July, meant that we finally had access to the ground floor. Since then, we have been busy moving collections in and out of the building, swapping offices and getting ready for classes in the newly renovated classroom and preparing to open the new gallery space to the public.

We have acquired a new enclosure for our corn snakes and this is installed at a height that is perfect for our smaller visitors.

Along with the snakes, we have relocated the amphibian tank to the gallery. Both will be permanent exhibits. We are on track to be open in early September with an exhibit of landscape art paired with objects from the collections.

Friends are invited to the premier opening on Tuesday, September 13 at 6 pm. The Museum will have an open house to the general public on Thursday, September 15 at 6 pm.

For a sneak preview visit the [Artist's website](#) announcing the opening reception.

- Bud Freeman



This scarab beetle display box is one of more than 200 boxes acquired for the new collection..

The UGA Collection of Arthropods has been buzzing with activity throughout the summer

Joe McHugh and Cecil Smith

Retired associate curator Cecil Smith, and curator Joe McHugh traveled to Logan, Utah in May to exchange arthropod specimens with the Utah State University.

Initiated by Dr. James Pitts, curator of the Utah State University's Insect Collection, the Georgia Museum of Natural History's Collection of Arthropods (UGCA) delivered five museum drawers of Hymenoptera and Diptera that were picked from a series in that collection. In exchange, the UGCA received materials that occupied 220 drawers, filling the GMNH van from floor to ceiling.



McHugh (l) and Pitts (r) after loading van with collection

Complementing current holdings, the collection includes approximately 100,000 specimens of Coleoptera (beetles) and Heteroptera (true bugs). Since a large percentage of the collection is from the western United States and exotic locations, they will further increase the taxonomic strengths of the UGCA and provide additional subjects for ongoing research at The University of Georgia.

This exciting addition to the Museum was made possible by generous donations from Friends of the Georgia Museum of Natural History and Orkin, Inc., who provided funds to cover the cost of new specimen drawers and travel expenses.

Assistant Curator and Collections Manager of Arthropods Cecil Smith Retires from GMNH

Joe McHugh

In February, Dr. Cecil L. Smith retired after 38 years of outstanding service in the University of Georgia Collection of Arthropods (UGCA). Cecil first came to Athens in 1971 to study for his Ph.D. after earning a B.S. and M.S. from Pennsylvania State University. In 1973, Cecil's long relationship with the UGCA started when he accepted a museum assistantship from the entomology department for his graduate student support. When Cecil earned his doctoral degree in 1981, he was immediately hired as the associate curator of the collection.



Cecil leads a tour of the Museum for a group of youngsters.

Later his title expanded to "associate curator and collections manager" to better reflect his broad duties .

During his tenure in the UGCA, Dr. Smith has balanced many responsibilities. During a typical year, he answered hundreds of requests

for information about insects, led 30-40 tours of the facilities, hosted more than a dozen visiting scientists, and processed 20-30 loans of specimens that were requested by researchers around the world. On average, he made nearly 400 formal identifications of insects annually for various individuals and organizations including UGA personnel (faculty, students, and staff), Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, Georgia Department of Health, U.S. Army, law firms, television programs, newspapers, pest control companies, environmental organizations, hospitals, schools, and the general public.

Every year, Cecil volunteered his time and expertise to provide informal outreach education at various nature centers, schools and zoos across the state. Many of these events occurred during evenings and weekends, so Cecil often volunteered his help on his own time. Over the years, Cecil developed a spectacular set of insect displays that demonstrate the amazing diversity of insects and teach various important biological concepts. During a typical year, 7-10,000 people viewed these displays.

Cecil also played an important role in formal education at UGA. Several classes visited the collection each year to get tours from Cecil or to borrow material to use for student projects. He assisted teaching entomology classes and served as the seminar coordinator for the entomology department. He regularly directed museum interns in the insect



collection. He was the major advisor to one graduate student and served on the advisory committees of a few others. He also served as the advisor for the H.O. Lund Club, the graduate entomological club at UGA.

Cecil's research focused primarily on semiaquatic Heteroptera. He coauthored a taxonomic revision of the *Veliidae* of North America, and wrote four chapters for the *Catalog of the Heteroptera, or True Bugs, of Canada and the Continental United States*. Cecil described about a half dozen new insect species and has had an equal number named in honor of him by other entomologists, including *Ceratocapsus Cecilsmithi*, a plant bug from the eastern U.S. Currently, he is collaborating on an annotated checklist of the beetles of Georgia.

Although he conducted a wide range of highly visible activities as associate curator and collections manager, Cecil's dedication to the collection may best be reflected by

Cecil retirement, continued on page 3

Cecil retirement, continued



his tireless curatorial work behind the scenes. Anyone who has worked with Cecil knows that he is extraordinarily meticulous about the preparation, organization, and care specimens. Many first-time visitors to the UGCA are surprised by the high level of curation of our collection.

Growth of the collection was another priority that Cecil quietly promoted. Early in his career, he decided to make a concerted effort to build the collection into a major resource for researchers in the southeastern U.S. He personally collected and prepared an enormous number of specimens for the UGCA. He collected locally and in various exotic locales (e.g., Taiwan, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Honduras), often at his own expense, in order to get new material. He also worked with entomologists around the world to obtain donations of valuable specimens to enhance the holdings. The impacts of Cecil's efforts are obvious. During his career the number of prepared insect specimens in the collection exploded from 300,000 to 1.4 million.

Although officially retired, we are not saying goodbye to Cecil just yet. He has been hired back at one third time for the current fiscal year. During this time he will continue working on various projects in the UGCA and will facilitate the transition of the next associate curator and collections manager.

Despite these transitions in official status and work classification categories, it is clear that Cecil will never truly leave the University of Georgia Collection of Arthropods. He has built an outstanding insect collection that will remain a lasting legacy of his efforts and spirit.

From *the* President

The annual meeting of the Friends of the GMNH was held on 21 May 2011 in the Ecology Building on the UGA campus. Following an opportunity for members to socialize and enjoy a catered meal, we all moved to the auditorium for a short business session.

I began the President's annual report by noting that, although it's a cliché, it is nevertheless true that "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Since 1 July 2010, I argued that we have taken many steps: we have grown and diversified our membership, as well as our Board; continued to improve Celebration, our major fundraiser; donated \$10,000 to the Museum in unrestricted funds; resurrected the newsletter, with issues appearing in fall 2010 and spring 2011; planned field trips to Little St. Simon's Island in June of 2011, Highlands in August (26-28) of 2011, and Sapelo Island in May (11-13) of 2012; and kept our options open while talking with various other partners about a museum building with lots of public display space. None of these things would have been possible without the help of members of the Friends. Thanks to all of you.

At the meeting we also introduced the new officers-- all the same as the old officers! I remain President; Dave Coleman, Vice President; Amy Edwards, Secretary; and Dac Crossley, Treasurer. We also elected six new members of the Board of Directors: Terry Camp, Betty Jean Craigie, Paige Cummings, Kay Giese,

Cecil Hudson, and Ed Nichols. We look forward to their joining us and working on committees to help us aid the Museum. We also thank two stalwart members of the Board who rotated off: Liz McGhee and Gisela Gresham. They have agreed to continue to help with Celebration.

The meeting concluded with the official presentation of the check from the Friends for support of the Museum to Director Bud Freeman.



Friends President Robert Wyatt presents a check for \$10,000 to Museum Director Bud Freeman

There are ways in which all of us can become "better" Friends of the Georgia Museum of Natural History. Please join in with renewed energy in the coming year. There are lots of opportunities to volunteer. Just contact me or another member of the Board of Directors.

-- Robert Wyatt

Friends Annual Celebration October 15, 2011 State Botanical Gardens



Join the Friends of the Georgia Museum of Natural History for our annual Celebration. This event starts at 6 pm for cocktails, with dinner to follow.

For complete details, please visit our website at <http://museum.nhm.uga.edu/index.php?page=content/events/friends>

Friends Trip to Little St. Simons Island



Fourteen Friends of the GMNH made our way from Athens to Little St. Simons Island for a wonderful weekend on a virtually unspoiled barrier island.

Steve Hilliard

Ten of us drove down on Thursday to spend the night in the area so that we'd be able to catch the 10:30 boat on Friday morning. Amy and I met Liz McGhee and Kathy Wright at the Best Western in St. Simons, and the four of us had a delicious dinner at the Blackwater Grill in Redfern Village.

Friday morning we arrived at the Hampton River Marina about 9:45, where we met Dave and Fran Coleman, Ann Stoneburner and Robert Wyatt, and Lee and Judy Hubrich, and waited a few minutes for the boat to the island.

The staff of the Lodge are great. The guys took our luggage to our lodging (River and Cedar cabins) while we were given an orientation by Emily, who told us the history of the island, purchased initially for cedar, but converted to a fishing and hunting retreat.

One of our goals for the weekend was to see painted buntings, and we spotted some at the feeder next to our cabin within 15 minutes.

Before long we heard the ringing of the lunch bell and walked back over to the lodge for a lunch of lemon chicken soup and fragrant rice, followed by thai beef salad.

One of the naturalists, Abby came in after lunch with plans for the afternoon. She was taking the other group down to the beach, and Kathy and Liz opted to ride with them. The rest of us met Kerry, who walked up to the trucks handling a placid coachwhip snake that they'd caught a week or so before. We climbed into the back of the pickup, equipped with padded boards to form benches. There was a small cooler full of ice water, and a bin full of sunscreen and bug repellent.

We drove the "north loop", up the north end road and out around the East Myrtle pond, where we spotted Black-necked Stilts, Roseate Spoonbills, Tricolored Herons,



An elegant painted bunting visits the feeder outside Cedar Cottage.

Wood Storks, Great Egrets, Common Moorhens and Alligators. Then we drove out across the dunes to Sancho Panza beach, where we set up spotting scopes and watched oystercatchers, pelicans, royal terns, and small sandpipers. We could see the tree lines of Wolf and Sapelo Island in the distance and could barely make out the Sapelo light.



Kerry talked about the features of the maritime forest, and particularly about the death of the red bay (beetle-borne fungus has spread rapidly and is killing the tree), and the brown foliage was all around us. The understory was basically saw and cabbage palmetto, with some 10-20' red mulberry trees.

Everyone was hot and sticky after the north end ride, so without formal planning we all ended up in the salt water pool by 4:30. Liz and Kathy got back from the beach after walking the 2 miles back in the hot and steamy climate. It took very little taunting to tempt them into the pool. And then, 15 minutes later, Emily led the



Friends enjoying roasted oysters in front of lodge.

Freemans and Ruppensburgs through on their orientation.

Dinner started with an appetizer course of roasted oysters in the yard in front of the lodge. A number indulged, while others gathered in the lodge enjoying the air conditioning and the Sweetwater 420 on tap. At 7:30 we assembled in the dining room for salad with blue cheese and nuts, followed by mixed vegetables, lemon risotto and seared scallops.

After dinner several of us rode down with Abby to walk the beach at night. It was too cloudy to enjoy the stars. The moon was half bright, casting occasional shadows on the sand. We enjoyed walking the beach in the breeze, spotlighting ghost crabs, and examining other treasures brought in with the tide.

Saturday morning we started with a delicious breakfast of French toast, bacon, eggs and fruit, and then met at the trucks at 10:15 for a drive out to the Rookery and Goose pond, both off the beach road.

Ann, Robert and the Hubrichs took the skiff training and took boats out in the creek, and the others went off

exploring on their own. Amy and I went with Kerry and the Ruppensburgs out to the ponds and watched wading birds. We saw White Ibis, one Glossy Ibis, other egrets and herons, lesser yellowlegs, black and white stilts,



A yellow-bellied pompano is removed from the seine.

killdeer, a juvenile plover of some type and two baby green herons.

The goosepond was drying up, shallow enough to make it easy for the wading birds to feed. The rookery was a deeper pond with nests on an island in the center, protected from raccoons by the alligators.

Friends trip, continued on next page



Friends trip, continued

Back for a rinse before lunch, and then back out to the beach pavillion for a low country boil. After stuffing ourselves, we followed Ben and Kerry down to the beach, where we helped them pull a 90' seine along the beach a few times. We caught a few spot, and a nice yellow-bellied pompano.

After playing in the surf for a while, we rode back (3:30) and jumped in the pool again. We splashed until a group wine and cheese party at Cedar Cabin

with Bud and Mary playing the guitar and fiddle.

Dinner was awesome--steamed mussels, followed by salad with sun dried tomatoes, roasted fingerling potatoes, asparagus in cream sauce, and tenderloin in a red wine reduction with shitake and portobello mushrooms.

Sunday morning was checkout day for most, going on the 10 o'clock boat

right after breakfast. Robert, Ann, Amy and I were staying the rest of the day, so we did some fishing, catching small grunts, a bonnethead shark and a redfish that the kitchen staff prepared for our lunch. After lunch we did some kayaking with Ben in Mosquito Creek, took quick showers in the barn, and were soon headed back on the 4 o'clock boat to the mainland.



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Reserve the Date

Georgia Museum of
Natural History
Spring Field Trip
Sapelo Island
May 11 - May 13, 2012

Robert Wyatt, President
Dave Coleman, Vice President
Amy Edwards, Secretary
Dac Crossley, Treasurer

Bud Freeman, Director
University of Georgia
Natural History Building
Athens, GA 30602-7882

<http://naturalhistory.uga.edu>
friends@uga.edu
706-542-1663

Welcome New Board Members

- **Terry Camp** is co-owner of The Globe tavern in downtown Athens. She is also the librarian at the UGA Odum School of Ecology Library.
- **Betty Jean Craige** is a recently retired University Professor of Comparative Literature and Director of the Willson Center for Humanities and Arts at UGA. She has written several books, including a biography of Professor Eugene P. Odum. More recently, she has written a book about her African grey parrot, Cosmo, who is one of the smartest birds on earth.
- **Paige Cummings** is Executive Director of the Athens Nurses Clinic, serving homeless and uninsured. She is also a local writer and organizer of Southern Scribes, a Southern writers group.
- **Kay Giese** is a practicing local attorney and active member of several local civic groups. She and her husband, David Sweat, have served as judges in Georgia courts.
- **Cecil Hudson** is an M.D. with a specialization in psychiatry.
- **Edward Nichols** is president of Nichols Land & Investment Company and Southeastern Agri-Business Management.



Bird and Mammal Collections Moved

Moving collections is one of the most onerous tasks taken on by museum personnel.

Liz McGhee

Herpetology, ichthyology, marine mammals, mycology, some archaeological material and the invertebrate collections have all been moved out to the Museum annex over the past few years.

This summer, it was time to deal with the bird and mammal collections previously housed upstairs in the main museum. They have now been successfully relocated to the old fish range area downstairs. Museum staff and interns, Freeman lab personnel, and volunteers pitched in to aid in this massive undertaking. Sarah Simons, bird and mammal intern for the 2011 spring semester, assisted with preliminary preparation for the move.

This involved placing a tracking number on each tray to expedite replacing the trays in the correct positions in the cases.



The 69 cases weigh several hundred pounds each. The 35,000 specimens they hold are extremely fragile. Therefore it was necessary to remove each tray of specimens, lift the case onto a dolly, replace the trays, wheel the case downstairs, remove the trays, move the case into place and replace the trays once more. All of our workers were relatively unscathed, although bumps, bruises and a few mashed fingers or toes were the order of the day.

This difficult task was accomplished in less than a week. Liz McGhee, assistant curator of the bird and mammal collections would like to thank all of those who helped her, with special thanks to Megan Hagler for organizing the effort. Nikki Adams, Jen Hurn,

Carrie Straight, Bud Freeman, Mary Freeman and Sean Meadows worked almost every day on the move. Others who lent a hand were Mindy Edelson, Jessica Sterling, Thomas Barnum, Marcia Snyder, Josh Lobe, Audrey Stewart, Philip Juras, Chris Wages, Sean Sterrett, Tommy McElrath, David Mack and Josh Nelson.

Join the Friends and support the Museum

Membership includes: a subscription to *The Nature of Things* newsletter, invitations to museum events, Friends programs, and field trips, and a 10% discount on GMNH merchandise. Membership and donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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