

the *Nature* of things

AT THE GEORGIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY



From the Director

Spring brings to mind flowers, new growth and, of course, to some of us lots of pollen. The Staff in the Museum have been dealing lately with "white pollen", the fallout from construction activities in the building. The dust has mostly settled now, and we look forward to the completion of a much enlarged exhibition space and refurbished classroom sometime this spring. We have outgrown the old Discovery Room and will inaugurate a new Gallery in the fall.

Major construction is ongoing to address long-term drainage issues in the space in front of the Museum, with a projected completion date of mid-August, just before the Fall term begins at UGA. This 'big dig' revamping of the underground and surface drainage will eliminate drainage issues we have had in the museum, and in the short term all of the staff are getting a bit more exercise as our parking lot is closed until construction is completed. Unfortunately, we will not be open to the public until sometime in early fall.

This construction places some demands on our ability to function, but we will still be actively consolidating the bird and mammal collections into their new range downstairs and also bringing the insect collections housed at the Annex back on campus. We will also acquire several hundred thousand specimens of beetles and other arthropods from Utah State in early summer, after a road trip by Drs. Cecil Smith and Joe McHugh.

I look forward to seeing and thanking the Museum Friends in person at the upcoming annual meeting on May 21.

- Bud Freeman

Discovery Room Renovation

When completed in May, renovation of the Discovery Room will more than triple our exhibit space.

Renovation of the Discovery Room, the major public display space for the GMNH, began in the fall of 2010. After evaluating damage caused by flooding of the front of the Museum, Director Bud Freeman and representatives of the UGA Physical Plant decided to take advantage of the opportunity to totally revamp the existing space and essentially "turn lemons into lemonade."

The Physical Plant identified MRR (Major Repair and Renovation) funds in the amount of \$55,000 that could be used for the project, which is on schedule for completion in May of 2011. When finished, the Discovery Room exhibit space will be more than tripled. Importantly, there will be much more headspace for tall exhibits and more than seven times the wall space.

Gallery track-lighting is being installed, which will enable collaboration with local schools on art related to natural history, as well as murals and special exhibits. In addition, a large plasma monitor will be mounted on the wall for displays.

The classroom at the Museum has also been upgraded, with new lighting, a state-of-the-art audio-visual system, and power screen. Along with the Gallery, it has new, more efficient heating and cooling systems, and both spaces will be able to accommodate larger groups.

The Museum's live snake and amphibian display will be re-mounted, along with the discovery drawers. For the first time, there will be space for additional Museum collections to be represented in the Discovery Room. Funds provided by the Friends of the GMNH will be used to acquire new display cases and to prepare and mount new exhibit materials.

We extend sincere thanks to the UGA Physical Plant and to the Friends. Once we reopen this spring, please come by and see our progress!



Pardon our progress!
In this photo taken in early April, electrical wiring is being finished.
When completed in May, renovation of the Discovery Room will more than triple our exhibit space.

Upcoming Events & Field Trips

Georgia Museum of Natural History "Friendraiser"

May 12, 5:30 - 7:00 pm
Little Kings - downtown Athens
Free event!

Anyone interested in the Museum or economic development in Athens should attend.



Music provided by Curley Maple.

Friends of the Georgia Museum of Natural History 2011 Annual Meeting

May 21, 4:00 - 6:00 pm
Drinks, hors d'oeuvres and music
Odum School of Ecology

Please join us on May 21st for some fun and fellowship (free admission).

We'll vote on 6 nominees for the Board [nominees from the floor welcome], meet our new officers [President Robert Wyatt, VP Dave Coleman, Secretary Amy Edwards and Treasurer Dac Crossley] and share financial news and plans for the future.

Please RSVP to Liz McGhee at emcghee@uga.edu or 706-542-3940 if you plan to attend.



GMNH Friends Field Trip Highlands-Cashiers Plateau August 26 - August 28, 2011

Our fall field trip to the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau will be led by Dr. Robert Wyatt, President of the Friends of the GMNH and Director Emeritus of the Highlands Biological Station. It will focus on

the scenery and natural history of one of the biologically richest areas of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Highlands Plateau is the wettest area in eastern North America, with a long-term average rainfall of 88 inches. It is a world center of diversity for many organisms such as salamanders, fungi, spiders, trees, and land snails.

Our group will stay at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center, a Unitarian-Universalist facility on Little Scaly Mountain, a location with fabulous vistas of Blue Valley and Rabun Bald, the second highest peak in Georgia. We will also visit the Highlands Biological Station, which was founded in 1927 as the Highlands Museum of Natural History and began as an annex to the Hudson Library, the oldest public library in North Carolina. The Station today is an interinstitutional center of the University of North Carolina and also includes a Nature Center and Botanical Garden.

An excursion will be made to Whiteside Mountain, a granite dome with many endemic and disjunct species of plants. It is also home to many species of salamanders and to ravens and peregrine falcons. The summit, at 4,930 feet, is the highest point in the Chattooga River watershed, and from it one can see the entire upper basin of the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River. Its south face comprises the sheerest cliffs in the Southern Appalachians, dropping more than 2,000 feet to the valley floor of Whiteside Cove.

After lunch the trip will continue on to Jocassee Gorges State Park, which is very near the North Carolina-South Carolina state line. We will hike along the Horsepasture River, another National Wild and Scenic River, to view a spectacular series of waterfalls: Drift, Turtleback, Rainbow, and Stairstep. Time permitting, we will also visit Whitewater Falls, the highest falls in eastern North America.

The cost for food and lodging from dinner on Friday, 26 August 2011, through breakfast on Sunday, 28 August, is \$390 per person. For more information, contact Robert Wyatt (rewyatt@uga.edu).

Reserve the Date

GMNH Spring Field Trip
Sapelo Island
May 11 - May 13, 2012



From the President

The Georgia Museum of Natural History is among the largest and most diverse in the Southeast, with more than 5 million items in its many collections. It was officially designated *the* state museum in 1999, with a mission to preserve the cultural and natural heritage of Georgia, to provide instruction and foster stewardship among its people, and to encourage scholarship and service related to the collections.

Also founded in 1999, The Friends of the GMNH is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to help support, financially and otherwise, all of the activities of the Museum. As President of the Friends, I am excited to share with you news about opportunities to become more involved in the organization.

Last year we decided to offer two field trips each year, one in the spring and one in the fall, to various natural areas and archaeological sites in Georgia and surrounding states. These trips represent excellent opportunities to get to know each other better and to learn from each other about the natural history of groups of organisms apart from our own individual areas of interest. In 2011 the fall trip is to Highlands, North Carolina. We have tentatively made plans for a spring trip to Sapelo Island in 2012.

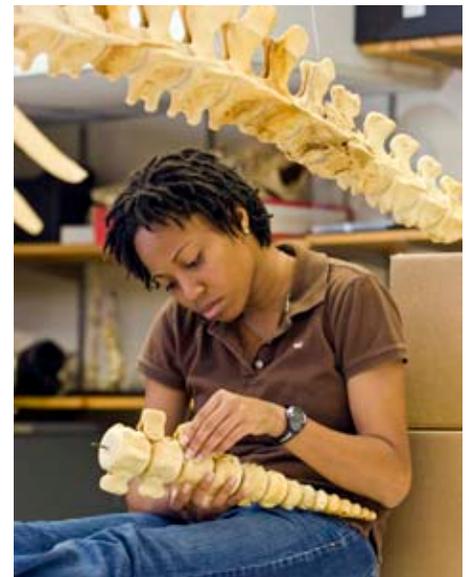
We continue to dream about a building, or buildings, that would enable the Museum to carry out its threefold mission more effectively. We are currently exploring a number of potential opportunities, but at this time we need to keep all of our options open. We need everyone to help to increase membership, financial support for museum activities and space, and appreciation for the importance of the GMNH to the University of Georgia and, more broadly, to the state of Georgia.

Please share your ideas with me, and let me know if you wish to become more involved with the Friends.

- Robert Wyatt



Georgia Marine Mammals Exhibit



Keturah Spence assembles vertebrae of pygmy sperm whale.

Students from the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, Pat Dunleavy, Sarah Hall and Matt Baker, worked with Museum staff to develop an exhibit on Georgia marine mammals as part of a class project. This exhibit is currently available for viewing in the UGA Science library on the main floor. The exhibit includes interpretive displays as well as collection material from many species of marine mammals, including baleen from a humpback whale. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a skeletal reconstruction of a pygmy sperm whale from the Museum's marine mammal collection. The whale specimen was assembled by Museum interns two years ago. A new set of interns was able to participate in the delicate transport of the articulated skeleton from the the old Discovery Room to the library. We anticipate moving it back after completion of the new Gallery.

photo by Peter Frey



Dr. Breana Simmons, East Georgia College at Swainsboro, recently visited the Georgia Museum of Natural History to study collections of mites from granitic outcrop systems. Our collection of ticks and mites holds representatives of Georgia's free-living and parasitic ticks and mites.

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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 the law.

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