

# the *Nature* of things

AT THE GEORGIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY



## MISSISSIPPIAN MOUNDS Now UNDER MUSEUM STEWARDSHIP

WHEN THE GEORGIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY was given the 44-acre Singer-Moye Mounds in Stewart County in November 2008, it became the steward of one of only a few intact Mississippian sites in the country. With eight temple mounds ranging in size from three to 42 feet in height, the American Indian site encompasses the ceremonial center of a much larger area of occupation that occurred from roughly 1100 to 1450 AD. It promises to provide a unique teaching and research experience for students of archaeology, natural history, and ecology.

The only such area in Georgia that is not controlled by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources or the National Park Service, Singer-Moye rivals, and perhaps exceeds others in opportunity and potential learning about pre-contact civilization. It is

not located on a major river, as are similar Georgia sites, many of which have been lost to inundation after Chattahoochee River dam construction. And the large mounds likely were not plowed, offering possible information regarding seed banks, soil fauna, and other features that may be buried.

This past summer, an archaeological field school led by Dr. Jared Wood of The University of Georgia Department of Anthropology visited the site, which will also be the principal focus of research by a UGA doctoral student in anthropology. Dr. Mark Williams, Wood, and students from the UGA Laboratory of Archaeology conducted an initial topographic survey, just the beginning of the search for answers hidden within the boundaries of this significant area in Georgia.

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## CELEBRATION 2010



FALL MEANS FOOTBALL to many in Athens, but on one night every October the Friends of the Georgia Museum of

Natural History hosts a contest of a different sort. The atmosphere is civil—no offense and defense crashing into each other—but the competition can be just as fierce as any seen on the gridiron. It's the Celebration silent auction, a fundraising event where contestants bid aggressively for paintings, glasswork, aboriginal items, exotic minerals, fossils and gems, and other must-haves. Some win their treasures, some go home empty-handed, but all leave with the satisfaction of knowing that the money they contribute goes to support the museum's research and educational outreach programs.

The Friends are hard at work planning this year's Celebration, to be held on October 23, 2010, at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia in Athens. The **silent auction and cocktails** at 6:00 will be followed by a sumptuous **dinner** catered by Trumps at 7:30, and Jim Costa, Director of Highlands Biological Station and author of *The Annotated Origin: A Facsimile of the First Edition of On the Origin of Species*, will offer an after-dinner **presentation**. Tickets must be reserved before October 16, 2010. Watch your mail for an invitation, or for

## ON THE MOVE . . . AGAIN

COLLECTIONS NEED ROOM; the Georgia Museum of Natural History is no exception. So at the end of 2009, a group of dedicated, captive volunteers, handled jars, toted whale skulls and skeletons, corals, freezers, fossils, shelving, and all manner of assorted odds and ends on a hurry-up basis—all for the sake of space. They finished the last loads a couple of days before Christmas with only sore backs and a few smashed toes.

Why the fuss? The museum had to vacate the old Butler Buildings located across from Rivers Crossing on College Station Road, which formerly had housed the facilities for University of Georgia primatology research in the 1960s and '70s, and which were to be demolished in January, 2010. For the past 10 or so years, these buildings served the museum by lending much needed space for its growing collections. But they were decrepit and deemed unworthy of additional investment.

a reservation form go to <http://naturalhistory.uga.edu>, then to Events, Friends Events.

Please join the Friends at the conservatory and bring your checkbook. There will be plenty to tempt you! Everyone, whether Friend or not, is invited.

To donate items for the silent auction, please contact Liz McGhee at 706-542-3940.

The new home for the collections is the Museum Annex on the Atlanta Highway, a portion of the UGA administrative services warehouse that was formerly a furniture warehouse. The space houses the mycology herbarium, curated by Dr. Richard Hanlin, as well as herpetology, ichthyology, marine mammals, freshwater and marine invertebrates, and additional archaeological collections.

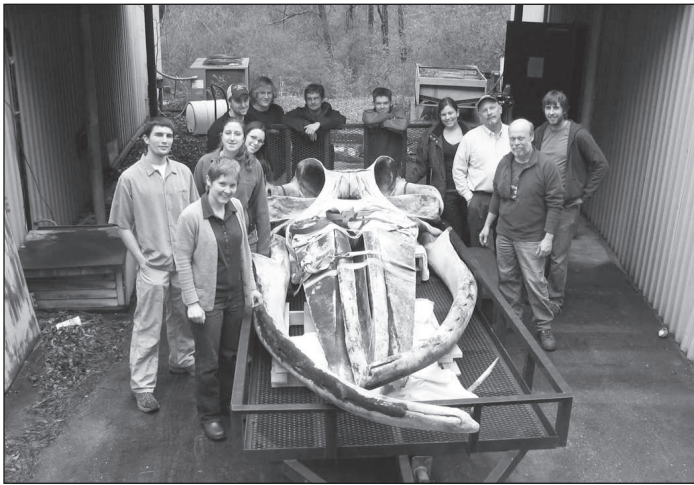
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***If man is to remain on earth he must transform the five-millennia-long urbanizing civilization tradition into a new ecologically sensitive harmony-oriented wild-minded scientific-spiritual culture. "Wildness is the state of complete awareness. That's why we need it."***

Gary Snyder  
Turtle Island

## Moving continued from page 1

A major reshuffling of all museum collections is slated for completion this fall of 2010. Fish space will move to the annex. Birds and mammals, and



Bud Freeman, museum director (right front), and colleagues move a humpback whale skull and mandibles from the "monkey barns" to the new annex.

Liz McGhee, assistant curator for zoological collections, will occupy the former fish space. Cases and drawers of insects that were acquired several years ago from a university in Tennessee that no longer had use for them and that have resided in the annex will join the other arthropods in the natural history building on campus. The arthropod collection alone has over 1.3 million pinned insects and is a favorite museum stop for its growing tours.

The current campus museum is located in part of the statistics and computer services building and fronts the parking lot of the old physical plant. The area formerly served as the automotive center and was renovated 24 years ago to become the museum, prompting a move out of the biological sciences building where the vertebrate, invertebrate, and arthropod collections resided. They had been transferred there from Baldwin Hall in the early 1960s.

So moving is an old experience for many of the museum specimens, and a true labor of love and dedication by the curators over the years. But moving is costly, disruptive, and risky business for the specimens. This last shuffle renews the vision of museum personnel and Friends that some day, hopefully in the near future, a stand-alone building with capacity for existing and growing collections, as well as research areas, classrooms and spaces for educational activities for kindergarten kids through seniors, offices, display areas, and curated and interpreted exhibits for the general public—all that a museum should be—will come to fruition. The grand-scale move that such a home would require will be welcomed by all.

## Thoughts

*THE SIGNIFICANCE—AND ULTIMATELY THE*

*QUALITY—of the work we do is determined by our understanding of the story in which we are taking part.*

If we think of ourselves as merely biological creatures, whose story is determined by genetics or environment or history or economics or technology, then, however pleasant or painful the part we play, it cannot matter much. Its significance is that of mere self-concern. . . .

If . . . we believe that we are living souls . . . and if we understand that we are free, within the obvious limits of mortal human life, to do evil or good to ourselves and to the other creatures—then all our acts have a supreme significance.

WENDELL BERRY

FROM *SEX, FREEDOM, AND COMMUNITY*

The museum has received a gift of **soil mites** from Brazil. Dr. Elisabeth Franklin, Scientist with Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazônia of Manaus, donated a collection of 75 identified Brazilian oribatid mites. Oribatids are abundant in soils throughout the world but remain poorly known. Franklin, together with Dr. Dac Crossley of the Georgia Museum of Natural History and Dr. Roy Norton of SUNY Syracuse, New York, recently identified as new two species of oribatids from the Rocks and Shoals Natural Area in Clarke County, Georgia. Crossley and Franklin plan more cooperative research in the coming months.

*In 1978, the University of Georgia formally recognized the Museum of Natural History, and in 1999, the Georgia General Assembly recognized it as the official state museum of natural history.*

### The Nature of Things

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## Upcoming Events

Visit the Friends Events page of the museum website for more details and a reservation form.

### Highlands-Cashiers Plateau, plus May 20–22, 2011

Scenery and the wonders of nature await the Friends as Dr. Robert Wyatt, Friends president and Director Emeritus of the Highlands Biological Station in North Carolina leads a trip to the Blue Ridge Mountains where flora and fauna are extremely diverse. Participants will also hike to the top of Whiteside Mountain, the highest point in the Chattooga River basin, where salamanders, ravens, and peregrine falcons live. This easy to moderate excursion will be followed by a visit to Gorges State Park to hike (rated moderate) along the Horsepasture River and view a spectacular series of waterfalls: Drift, Turtleback, Rainbow, and Stairstep. The group will stay at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center on Little Scaly Mountain. You don't want to miss this adventure!

### Little St. Simons Island June 10–12, 2011

Baby armadillos and rabbits, snowy and great egret chicks, shorebird chicks, and turtles nesting at night on the beach all await you on this privately owned, pristine island off the coast of Georgia. In June, birding is good, with willet, osprey, wood stork, white and glossy ibis, painted bunting, bald eagle, black skimmer, and many more for your viewing.

Beach shuttles, bicycles, kayaks, and canoes are available for exploring. And cottages, gourmet low-country meals, and a charming 1917 hunting lodge provide comfort for the trip, which is limited to 32 people. Reservations are being taken now on a first-come, first-served basis and are limited to members in good standing. Don't delay since spaces will surely fill quickly!



## FROM THE DIRECTOR

AS WE ENTER THE FALL SEASON seeking fresh approaches to old issues, I am excited that the Friends continue their interest in and support of this museum. We face the same problems of funding, space, and disjointedness among the various facilities, but the confidence and continuing energies expressed will surely result in continuing improvement.

My thanks to the outgoing Board of Directors led by Steve Hilliard and a big welcome to the new board led by Robert Wyatt. Thanks also to Liz McGhee for her extraordinary efforts as secretary/treasurer of the Friends for so many years.

It seems we spend a lot of time moving collections to better locales, which improves our ability to curate these resources. The trend will continue this Fall and will result in more and better access for our visitors at the Natural History Building on campus. Liz McGhee, leaving her office of 24 years, will move downstairs to a combined bird and mammal range, a benefit to our visitors. We are also working on a new exhibit that we plan to share with the Friends this Fall, and ultimately the public. Volunteers interested in seeing some behind-the-scenes "moves" associated with curation are welcome to contact us for that purpose.

I look forward to the continuing partnership between the museum and its Friends and to seeing all of you at Celebration on October 23. -- *Bud Freeman*

## *A Day with the Museum*

THE MUSEUM, ALONG WITH the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Geology, the Odum School of Ecology, and the Lamar Dodd School of Art, sponsored a visit by **Ray Troll** during Darwin Week at the University of Georgia in February, 2010. Ray is internationally known as an evolutionary artist and expert on fishes, especially fossil sharks. He presented public lectures, workshops, and class lectures on topics ranging from art and scientific illustration and mural painting to the mechanics of fossil shark jaws and the diversity of Amazon fishes. Drawing from his work with other national museums, Ray also shared some great ideas and suggestions about the museum's mural and future exhibits and outreach. The Friends offered copies of two of Ray's popular books to new members for a donation that included membership. There are some copies remaining of *Cruisin' the Fossil Freeway*, and purchasing information is on the museum website.

## SHOW AND TELL

THE GEORGIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY has partnered with the University of Georgia Science Library on a series of exhibits, and the most recent one this summer revolved around a donation from the estate of the late Ed Cooper. Cooper was a forester near Fargo, Georgia, and the area loggers brought him rattles from snakes they encountered while cutting timber. He collected and tied them one after another for 10 years or so. All 1,100+ of them came from Echols and Clinch Counties in south Georgia along the Florida border.

Rattlesnakes have conservation value, and the rattles may contain useful information about food webs and genetic relatedness. Recognizing their importance, the museum collaborated with the science library, where an exhibit of the rattles, along with specimens of rattlesnakes and other venomous and non-venomous snakes from the museum collections, was presented. Cooper once appeared on the television show *Call My Bluff*, where the contestants had to guess what he had in a bag. Yep, you guessed it!

**Do you know how many different sea shells can be found in Georgia?**



Over 500 species of mollusks alone have been collected from the waters off the Georgia coast. There are also species of mollusks that live in freshwater and on land.

## 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 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.

The Friends of the GMNH was also founded in 1999 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to raise funds to help support all of the activities of the museum. As the newly elected president of the Friends, I am excited about the renewed interest in promoting the museum, particularly during these difficult economic times. At a recent meeting, the Board of Directors identified the need for new committees to focus on membership, field trips, and the annual Celebration fundraiser.

The board also voted to resurrect the newsletter, discussed an exhibit to be placed in the Georgia Center to raise public awareness of its collections and programs, and decided to revive field trips for members to various natural areas and archaeological sites. The membership committee has already brainstormed ways to increase our membership substantially, broaden our support, and become more diverse in composition by soliciting and embracing members, volunteers, and donors from all disciplines, backgrounds, and interests.

Please join me in thanking the museum staff for all of their hard work. More importantly, to see that their work is properly supported for greatest benefit to the public, I ask you to join me in spreading the word about the museum and its research efforts, educational programs, and public outreach. Let's work diligently to enhance the membership of the Friends, to increase financial support for museum activities and space, and to foster appreciation for the importance of the GMNH to the University of Georgia and, more broadly, to the state of Georgia.

Thank you for your help. -- *Robert Wyatt*

## The Discovery Room

**THE DISCOVERY ROOM HOUSES EXHIBITS AND DISPLAYS FROM THE MUSEUM COLLECTIONS. IT ALSO HAS MATERIALS FOR HANDS-ON EXPLORATION, GAMES, AND STUNNING, HIGH DEFINITION VIDEO SCIENCE BULLETINS FROM THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.**

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISCOVERY ROOM HAS BEEN SPONSORED BY THE FRIENDS.**

**HOURS: MON-FRI 10-4; SAT 12-3  
GUIDED TOURS SAT 1:00**

**INQUIRE ABOUT SPECIALLY ARRANGED TOURS AND PROGRAMS.**

Due to construction, the Discovery Room is closed for a portion of Fall 2010. Please check the website for details and reopening date.

**If you are already a Friend, please help us keep you better informed of happenings at the museum and Friends activities. Send your email address to [Friends@uga.edu](mailto:Friends@uga.edu) with the subject "add to email list."**

**Singer-Moye** *continued from page 1*

In an article that is posted on the New Georgia Encyclopedia (<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-3692>) Wood says:

*The Singer-Moye site doubtless served a significant sociopolitical role in the prehistory of the Chattahoochee River basin and perhaps of the surrounding areas. The fact that the site was occupied, whether continuously or at different times, for a span of more than 300 years attests to its prominence. Singer-Moye's numerous and complex arrangement of mounds, several of which are large and show evidence of later additions, further support the notion that this site was a special place in the local Mississippian settlement system. Exactly what functions and services this site and its inhabitants provided to the peoples of the lower Chattahoochee basin are unknown, but it likely was a place for social governance and periodic meetings and rituals, as well as the year-round home of a sizeable community.*

*Professional archaeologists first visited the site in the late 1950s, when Joseph Mahan of the Columbus Museum of Arts and Crafts (which became known later as the Columbus Museum) and Harold A. Huscher of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., collected a small number of surface artifacts. From that time until 2007, teams from the University of Georgia and the Columbus Museum intermittently conducted a variety of tests and excavations in Mounds A, C, D, E, and H. Also discovered were extensive cultural remains and middens, or trash heaps, that indicate the presence of a sizeable village associated with the mounds. As of 2008 Mounds B, F, and G had not been excavated. [Reprinted with permission of the New Georgia Encyclopedia ([www.georgiaencyclopedia.org](http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org)).]*

Singer-Moye is named for two families whose properties abutted the plaza between the mounds and who, in 1968, donated the property to The Columbus Museum located in Columbus, Georgia. That organization managed the site for over 40 years prior to the acquisition by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and stewardship by The Georgia Museum of Natural History.

**It's a Natural Fact**

Georgia's barrier islands are the result of the raising and lowering of sea levels due to the freezing and thawing of the polar ice caps.

A series of shorelines, which became sand ridges as the ocean receded, was created. When the oceans rose again, the waters wrapped around the sand ridges and created islands. The older, Pleistocene inner islands were shoreline about 35,000-40,000 years ago before the last ice push. The outer islands are Holocene

islands and were formed about 4,500 years ago when the sea level rose after the last ice age. The gradual slope of Georgia's continental shelf and its high tides contribute to the movement of the ocean water around the islands. Salt marshes formed to the west of the islands as the rivers from the west fed the area with sediment that became trapped between the mainland and the islands and between the inner and outer islands.

*The flathead catfish is piscivorous (eats other fish), lives in all of the physiographic regions of Georgia, is invasive, and is the object of a sport called noodling.*



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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 museum merchandise.

\$5,000 Life	_____	\$100 Donor	_____
\$2,500 Benefactor	_____	\$50 Family	_____
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*Membership and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

**The Georgia Museum of Natural History**

is a consortium comprised of 11 important natural history collections. These collections are supported by five departments at the University of Georgia: Anthropology, Plant Biology, Entomology, Geology, and Plant Pathology. Each collection is the largest of its kind in Georgia. The collections are primarily administered and supported by their academic departments and colleges. While public service, outreach, and some administrative programs fall under the Office of Director of the Museum, 10 collections are supported by the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences.

The mission of the museum is to preserve the cultural and natural heritage of Georgia, to provide instruction and foster stewardship among its people, and to encourage scholarship and service relating to the collections.