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# MUSEU.M. NEWS

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE PHILIP L. WRIGHT ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM – UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Spring 2006

No. 27

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## Recent Acquisitions

A **Brown Creeper** (*Certhia americana*) was found dead at Ft. Missoula by Brandon Jackson. It was prepared as a skin for our permanent collection, and is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> record of this species in the museum.

Kristina and Ty Smucker recovered several birds for our permanent and teaching collections: a **Western Meadowlark** (*Sturnella neglecta*) from Madison Co., an **American Redstart** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) from Missoula Co., and an **American Robin** (*Turdus migratorius*) from Gallatin Co.

Two **Gray Jays** (*Perisoreus canadensis*) were brought to the museum recently. One from Lincoln Co. was prepared as a study skin and the other as a full skeleton.

Brett Walker recovered a **Greater Sage Grouse** (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) from Crow Reservoir, Bighorn Co. This is the first skeleton of this species in the skeletal collection, and has already been valuable in a university thesis project.

A **Northern Waterthrush** (*Seiurus noveboracensis*) hit a window at Southgate Mall, Missoula, and was recovered for the museum by Ruby Fulton.

Species recently added to our bird skeletal collection include a **Violet-green Swallow** (*Tachycineta thalassina*) from Montana and a **Mourning Dove** (*Zenaida macroura*) from Idaho. Both of these are new species in the skeletal collection.



## Bird Nest, Egg, and Skeletal Collections Rehoused

The museum's "other" bird collections, the nest, egg and skeletal collections were completely rehoused this year. These collections are often considered ancillary to the standard bird skin collections however they are just as important. For example, our avian skeletal collection is used by DBS researchers, and is used extensively by zooarchaeologists identifying bird remains from archaeological sites. There are over 420 specimens in the avian skeletal collection. The historic nest and egg collections are irreplaceable due to modern collecting ethics and restrictions against collecting such specimens. We have many specimens from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century when egg collecting was in it's heyday. These eggs can be valuable for a number of research topics, including being a potential source for DNA samples.

Jon Harde, of the Zoological Museum, spent several months rehousing the specimens according to professional museum standards. Instead of the specimens laying on yellowed cotton in old cardboard trays and boxes, the eggs were placed in vials and small plastic boxes padded with Ethfoam, an archival museum foam. The nests and skeletal specimens were placed in clear plastic containers and archival cardboard boxes, and padded with Ethafoam. Jon also painted all the shelves holding the skeletal specimens and created new shelf labels.

These collections are now safely stored, away from the degrading effects of time and handling. However they are now more useful than ever for research purposes. See the reverse of this newsletter for before and after photos of the specimens!



Before: goose skeleton in old cardboard box.



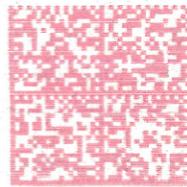
After: refurbished bird skeleton collection.

Meet the Staff! David Dyer - Curator; Jon Hardes - Assistant Curator & Museum Collections Intern; Charles Miller - Museum Preparation Lab & Head Volunteer; Becky Bigley, Shannon Gilbert - Research Associates. Phone - 243-4743.

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