

MISSISSIPPI  
Museum of  
Natural  
Science

NATURE NEWS

VOL. 26 • NO. 1 • SPRING 2008



# NatureFEST!

Saturday, April 12, 2008

It's a family festival, a nature outing, and a fascinating trip to the Museum, all wrapped into one exciting day!

Now in its eighth year, NatureFEST! will get you in the swing of spring Saturday, April 12, from 10AM to 4PM. Celebrate and appreciate the natural world around you – inside and outside the Museum.

Come meet the "Snake Man," Terry Vandeventer, and his slithery friends. Get to know birds of prey with Raptor Rehabilitator, Pat Lorraine, and Master Falconer, David Hall. Watch divers feed



the fish in the giant Museum aquarium, and experience other live animal presentations by the Museum education staff.

Go behind the scenes to learn about our scientists' unique research tools. Discover how valuable specimens in the Museum Collections are acquired and maintained.

Catch a show with Flumpa and Friends LIVE! The nationally acclaimed, award-winning duo stars Flumpa, an adventurous blue-eyed, red-footed tree frog, and Wendy Whitten, "The Singing Scientist." Flumpa and Friends LIVE! amuses, enthralls, and inspires children and adults alike. You'll laugh. You'll learn. You'll leave wanting to know more about science. Don't miss this high-energy, interactive musical adventure.

Inhale spring's sweet aromas on our nature trails. Botanists and volunteers will guide tours, and The Native Plant Garden will be in full bloom. Take home something green from our plant sale.

Check out the latest outdoor equipment, demonstrated by Buffalo Peak Outfitters, and try your hand paddling around Mayes Lake. Canoe on the Pearl River with John Rusky of the Quapaw Canoe Company.

Awaken your senses and awareness of life at NatureFEST! Come celebrate with us!

## DON'T MISS

### Bone Up On Bones

Now - May 11, 2008



Discover for yourself: beauty's more than skin deep. Uncover the marvels of the human skeletal system through hands-on activities and multimedia presentations.

### Birds of Mississippi

Now - December 31, 2008

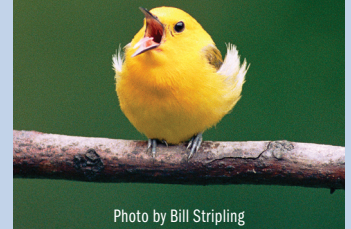


Photo by Bill Stripling

View twenty photos by Bill Stripling, whose passion for nature photography takes him everywhere. To schedule a weekday viewing, call Mary Stevens, Librarian, at 601-354-7303.

### DINOSAURS!

May 24, 2008 - January 4, 2009



Roam among robotic dinosaurs, from a *Protoceratops* with hatchlings to a *Tyrannosaurus rex*. Hear them roar, and watch them feed, fight, and care for their young.

THE NATURAL NEWSLINE IS SPONSORED IN PART BY THE JACKSON CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU.



MISSISSIPPI  
Museum of  
Natural  
Science

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LaToya Turner LABORATORY ASSISTANT  
Nicholas Winstead ORNITHOLOGIST



We invite you to celebrate spring with us at the eighth annual NatureFEST! April 12. Experience the dynamic duo of Wendy Whitten, The Singing Scientist, and Flumpa the Tree Frog. NatureFEST! is just one of the many fun events going on at the Museum, so make sure you read this issue's calendar.

The Museum's first human health-related exhibit, *Bone Up On Bones*, is a hit. We are so pleased with the support this exhibit has received from our local medical community. The exhibit closes May 11. Don't miss it!

More than 61,000 people enjoyed *Hunters of the Sky* in the last half of 2007. We thank the donors and volunteers who made this incredible exhibit possible.

Make plans right now to travel back in time as you head into summer. *DINOSAURS!* opens May 24. Roam with robotic dinosaurs as they walk, roar, feed, fight, and care for young.

The Museum staff has embarked on an in-depth self-study as part of the American Association of Museums' re-accreditation process. The AAM Accreditation Program is our single sharpest tool for developing national standards and best practices in museum operations and for staying up-to-date with the growing expectations of the public we serve.

See you at the Museum soon!

*Libby Hartfield*  
Libby Hartfield  
MUSEUM DIRECTOR

**BONE UP ON BONES**

NOW - MAY 11

Get an inside look at what makes up bone. You'll understand the vital connection between bone health and overall wellbeing and learn how to improve bone strength throughout life, particularly during childhood and adolescence.

BLUE CROSS & BLUE SHIELD OF MISSISSIPPI

AWARDS

The Museum has been recognized as an "AAA Southern Travel Treasure" by the American Automobile Association and, for the eighth consecutive year, has been voted "Best Museum" by the *Jackson Free Press*



"Best of Jackson" readers' poll. Promotional and informational materials for the Museum were honored in this year's ADDY® Awards of the American Advertising Federation, Jackson. The campaign for *Hunters of the Sky*, the Museum's 2005-2006 Annual Report, and our fence-line signage received silver awards for excellence.

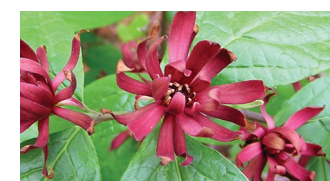
PRESENTATIONS

Lisa Yager, Research Coordinator; Melinda Lyman, Project Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy; and Matt Smith, Database Manager, recently presented "Prioritizing Cogongrass Control on Camp Shelby Training Site by Conservation Value and Rates of Spread" at the Weed Science Society of America's annual meeting in Chicago.

Biologist **Kathy Shelton** was recently named president-elect of the Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society and was named to the board of the Mississippi Wildlife Federation.

Native Plant Garden Tours  
Appreciate Mississippi's green gifts.

Swamp azalea, bellflower, smooth phlox, mountain laurel, and sweet shrub highlight the Museum's lush garden



tour, along with indigenous plants near the Museum entrance; the Liberty Garden, honoring 9/11 victims; Millennium Grove, perpetuating America's Famous and Historic Trees; and our nature trails. The tour is part of The Garden Club of Jackson's 2008 House and Garden Tour.

International Migratory Bird Day  
Come on over to their stopover.

Migrate to the Museum's grounds and nature trails, favorite stopovers for birds that fly between their breeding grounds in North



America and their wintering grounds in Central and South America. We'll gather for bird watching, nature hikes, and more. Join the fun and help support migratory bird conservation.

QUICK CALENDAR

**NatureFEST!**  
SAT · APRIL 12  
10AM to 4PM

**Native Plant Garden Tours**  
SAT · APRIL 26  
10AM to 3PM

**International Migratory Bird Day**  
SAT · MAY 10  
10AM to 3PM

**Snake Day: Mississippi Style**  
TUES · JUNE 3  
10AM to 3PM

Presentations at 10AM to 11AM and 12NOON to 1PM

**Katfishin' Kids**  
SAT · JUNE 14  
(Turcotte Lab off Hwy 43)  
8:30AM to 11AM

**Fun Fridays**  
(JUNE & JULY)  
10AM to 12NOON

Snake Day: Mississippi Style  
Don't let this one slip by.

Snakes alive! Biologist Terry Majure will help you spot the differences between venomous and nonvenomous snakes in Mississippi, separating myth from accurate information about native snakes' value in the ecosystem. Live snakes will be exhibited, with experts on-hand to answer your questions.

SPEAKER: Terry Majure, Museum Aquarium Coordinator

SNAKE EXHIBITS: Terry Vandeventer, Living Reptile Museum, Terry, Mississippi

Katfishin' Kids  
Teach your child to fish.

Children ages 5-14 will learn about fish and their habitats, tying knots, selecting lures, baiting hooks, and casting in the stocked catfish pond. T-shirts and goodies are free, while supplies last, along with lunch. The Museum, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks; Mississippi Wildlife Federation; and local Wal-Mart Stores are offering this event at Turcotte Lab, off Hwy 43 at Ross Barnett Reservoir.



Fun Fridays  
Hands-on action goes prehistoric.

Fun Fridays are interactive programs in June and July (except July 4) that coordinate with the *Dinosaurs!* exhibit. An adult must accompany children.

DATES	TOPIC
June 6	Dinosaurs
June 13	Fossils
June 20	Prehistoric Mammals
June 27	Prehistoric Fish
July 4	Museum Closed
July 11	Prehistoric Insects
July 18	Prehistoric Birds
July 25	Prehistoric Reptiles



Terry Majure captivates the crowd at last year's Snake Day.

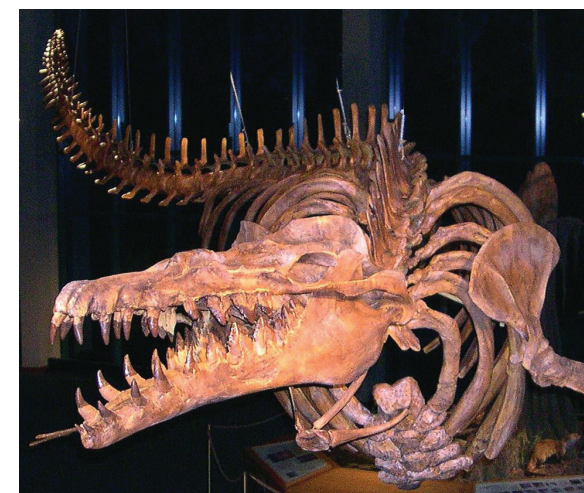


## Touring the Past: The Museum's Fossil Displays, Part I

Here are pointers to help you appreciate the Museum's prominent displays of diverse fossils from several different time periods of Mississippi's prehistoric past.

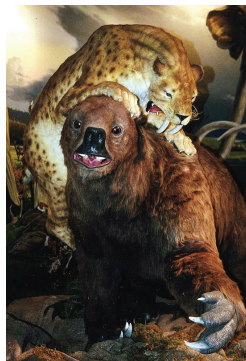
As you descend the Museum's right-hand staircase, you come face-to-face with a sixty-two-foot-long, thirty-four million-year-old (myo) extinct whale called *Basilosaurus*. "Basil," as the creature with a menacing, "crocodile-like" head is affectionately known at the Museum, was exhumed from the muddy mire of a landfill in Scott County during the unseasonably wet late summer of 2002. From the shape of Basil's lengthy spine and fossilized stomach contents, it was determined that Basil swam with an undulating motion and ate fish two to four feet in length.

Taking in the full scope of this serpentine king of the Eocene (Age of Ancient Whales), turn your attention to "Sloth Island," a Pleistocene (Ice Age) display. A prowling sabertooth cat and lurching giant ground sloth, both of which went extinct 10,000 years ago, pose near each other with a variety of their smaller contemporaries creeping in the foreground. The smaller animals, like the cottonmouth, bullfrog,



mink, and mole, are alive and well today. A smoldering campfire and stone spearheads represent the first people to populate the Americas some 15,000 years ago who would have encountered these animals, as well as other extinct giants. Saber tooth cats depended on young ground sloths for food.

Moving toward the long wall of fossils, you'll see that the largest of the displays, "Stories in Stone," contains older fossils on the far right and younger ones on the far left. Examine first the far right panels, where the deepest time in Mississippi is represented in a fossil selection from the 400 myo deposits of the Devonian Period (Age of Fishes). Bottom-dwelling sea creatures like *trilobites* (three-lobed crabs), *brachiopods* (lamp shells), *bryozoans* (moss animals), and *tabulate* (honeycomb) corals are the most commonly found Devonian animals. Fossils dating to the Mississippian Period (325 myo) follow and include horn corals, *blastoids* (sea buds), and *crinoids*



Saber tooth cats preyed on juvenile mastodons, mammoths, and giant ground sloths—easy targets for a big cat equipped with daggers! Photo taken at the George C. Page Museum in Los Angeles; courtesy of Dave Friend, Prehistorics Illustrated

(sea lilies). Like the previous group, all of these are animals, in spite of the plant-like appearance of some. Also observe pieces of a fossil scale-tree called *Lepidodendron*, a Mississippian-age giant club moss (of sorts) attaining heights over one hundred feet.

Devonian and Mississippian fossils occur naturally only in central Tennessee but can be found in northeastern Mississippi. Over the last twenty million years, southerly flowing rivers across the Mid South have carried hundreds of millions of small fossil-bearing rock fragments to points across Mississippi. As a result, children frequently find these ancient treasures in rural driveways. Although such driveways and country roads are paved with gravel from nearby pits, the river deposits in these pits are composed of rocks that have traveled a great distance over many millions of years.



Sea bottom creatures such as *crinoids* can be found in gravel laid down by Gulf-bound rivers over the last twenty million years.

Watch for Part II of the Fossil Tour in a future Newsline!

## Stories in Stone: the History of the Paleontology Collection

Though unseen by most visitors to the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, the biological research collections provide the foundation upon which much of our knowledge of animals, plants, and fossils is based. This is the sixth in a series of articles highlighting these collections.

If each fossil is a hard-copy record of yesteryear, the Museum's Paleontology Collection is a multi-volume story in the making.

It began with the appointment of its first curator in May of 1978 and currently holds nearly 7,800 catalogued lots containing over 23,500 specimens.

There are three fossil collections (vertebrate, invertebrate, and plant), a rock and mineral collection, and a comparative collection of the skeletons and shells of modern animals. Focusing on fossil-bearing deposits within Mississippi's boundaries, the collection specimens represent more than half of the state's eighty-two counties. To understand geographic species trends, the collection also includes finds from adjoining states. Fossils of any area of the earth, after all, do not conform to political boundaries.

The collection contains a wide diversity of organisms from five time periods in which Mississippi is particularly fossil-rich: Middle Paleozoic (invertebrate impressions and casts in gravel, such as sea lily stem fragments and lamp shells), Late Cretaceous (thick-shelled oysters, giant marine lizards and dinosaurs), Eocene (whales and sand dollars), Oligocene (heart urchins and giant sharks), and Late Pleistocene (mastodons and big cats). Representative fossils from each of these time periods are on display in the "Stories in Stone" fossil exhibit.

Before the Museum's Paleontology Collection began, the Museum had accumulated some fossil specimens, receiving a dozen fossil lots from 1971



Scott Peyton, MMNS Collections Manager, standing in the Chickasawhay River near Waynesboro, just upstream from a fragmentary fossil rhino jaw in the sediment below. Only the back part of the jaw and one tooth is present.



A fragmentary jaw of a giant marine lizard-snake called a *mosasaur* collected near Selma, AL



Students from Wright State University (Celina, Ohio) assisting the Museum of Natural Science with the excavation of a thirty-four million-year-old fossil whale near Shubuta, MS.

to 1978 for exhibit purposes. The core of the Museum's collection was formed primarily by donations and one of these lots, a sizeable transfer from the Old Capitol Museum, which previously served as the default state repository for fossils.

Specimen registration records show that the first fossil accessioned into the collection was the vertebra of the thirty-four million-year-old (myo) toothed whale *Basilosaurus*, received in the summer of 1971. This is not surprising since whale backbones, rather large and easily recognizable log-shaped objects, are not uncommon in the Eocene age Yazoo Clay of central Mississippi.

The second fossil accessioned into the collection was a piece of petrified wood, which is also rather plentiful in central Mississippi and, because of its abundance, became our State Stone in April of 1976.

A donation of a third fossil in 1982 consisted of the partial remains of an eighty-three myo giant marine snake-lizard, called a *mosasaur*, found on the Tombigbee River. High school science teacher Leonard Ring of Columbus—who, by the way, taught our current Museum fossil curator, George Phillips, in the eighth grade—donated the *mosasaur*.

The Museum received the first of the two fossil collections from the Old Capitol Museum in June 1977. By the time the first curator arrived for duty, the growing fossil collection was in need of care and maintenance. The collection procedure and cataloging system that were developed, based on a method formerly used by the Smithsonian, are still in place at the Museum today.

### RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Phillips, George E. 2007. "The Black Prairie: Legacy of the Ancient Sea," pp. 8-11 in Harry L. Sherman (ed.), *A Very Remarkable Bluff [The Plymouth Bluff Story]*. Mississippi University for Women, Columbus, Miss.

Phillips, George E., & Charles N. Ciampaglio. 2008. *Faujasid echinoids in the Upper Cretaceous of North America*. *Journ. Miss. Acad. Sci.* 53(1): 118.

Phillips, George E. 2008. *Fossil goniasterid sea stars in the Southeast*. *Journ. Miss. Acad. Sci.* 53(1): 119.



ONGOING

**Come On Outside!**

Visit the Museum's Native Plant Garden and nature trails to experience the wonders of spring in Mississippi. You'll find trail markers and signs identifying plants and habitats. So come on outside and discover the rich variety of Mississippi flora!

**Fish Feeding**

Come meet some of our most fascinating aquarium inhabitants, every Tuesday and Friday at 10AM, and Sunday at 2PM.

**Creature Features**

Scheduled or spontaneous, these informal programs feature live or mounted animals. Scheduled every Saturday at 10AM and 2PM, Creature Features make learning fun!

**First Tuesdays**

**Naturalist Lecture Series**  
On the first Tuesday of the month, the Museum offers lectures addressing a variety of natural science subjects. Unless noted otherwise, the lectures take place from 12NOON to 1PM in the Museum's Rotwein Theater.

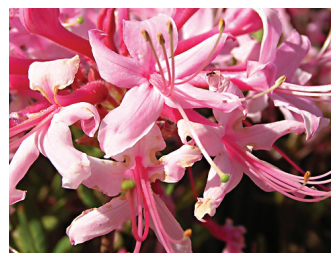
Lectures are free to Museum Foundation members or regular admission visitors. Please show your membership card at the gate. Regular Museum fee: \$5 for adults; \$4 for senior citizens; \$3 for children; \$2 for students with teachers. Members also receive a ten percent discount at The Dragonfly Shoppe.



**APRIL 1** · TUE · 12NOON-1PM · LECTURE  
**Historical Ecology of Forest and Grasslands in Mississippi**  
SPEAKER: Timothy J. Schauwecker, Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture, Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS  
Land surveys in Mississippi were conducted from the early to late 1800s following land treaty settlements with indigenous tribes. Using these nineteenth century land surveys and contemporary reference sites, we are able to identify forest and grassland characteristics and understand landscape variation over the last 200 years.



**APRIL 12** · SAT · 10AM-4PM · EVENT  
**NatureFEST!**  
Bring the family for a fun celebration of nature—starring snakes, birds of prey, and fish—and a behind-the-scenes look at research, guided nature walks, and other outdoor activities. *See front page for details.*



**APRIL 26** · SAT · 10AM-3PM  
**Native Plant Garden Tours**  
Enjoy the Museum's beautiful gardens. *See page three for details.*

**MAY 6** · TUE · 12NOON-1PM · LECTURE  
**BATS: a Fly-by-Night Affair**  
SPEAKER: Chester Martin  
Research Emeritus, Environmental Laboratory, U.S. Army Engineer Research & Development Center, Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg, MS



An overview of the biology, life history, ecology, and management of bats, emphasizing native Mississippi species and their ecological importance. Chester Martin will cover bat anatomy and morphological adaptations for flight and foraging; hibernation, migration, roosting habitat, formation of maternity colonies, and habitat management.



**MAY 10** · SAT · 10AM-3PM · EVENT  
**International Migratory Bird Day**  
Learn more about migratory birds, and support conservation efforts benefiting them. *See page three for details.*

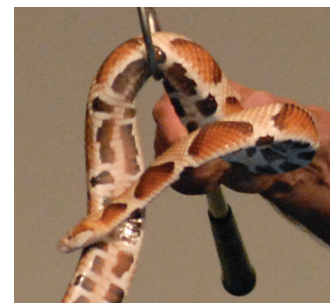


Call  
**601.354.7303**  
for information, reservations & resources

**MAY 20** · TUE · 10AM-12NOON  
**Volunteer Training for DINOSAURS! Exhibit**  
Learn about Dinosaurs and how you can be a part of this exhibit.



**MAY 24** · SAT · SPECIAL EXHIBIT OPENING  
**DINOSAURS!**  
Visit the Museum and travel back millions of years as you roam among robotic dinosaurs.



**JUNE 3** · TUE · 10AM-3AM · EVENT  
**Snake Day: Mississippi Style**  
Live Mississippi snakes will be on exhibit with experts available to answer your questions.



**JUNE 3** · 10AM-11AM & 12NOON-1PM · LECTURES  
**Snake Day Lectures: De-mystifying MS Snakes**  
SPEAKER: Terry Majure  
Aquarium Coordinator, Museum of Natural Science, Jackson, MS

Learn how to tell the differences between the six venomous and fifty-five nonvenomous snake types found in Mississippi. Majure will help you appreciate our native snakes and their ecological importance.

**JUNE 6** · FRI · 10AM-12NOON  
**Fun Friday**  
Dinosaurs

**JUNE 13** · FRI · 10AM-12NOON  
**Fun Friday**  
Fossils



**JUNE 14** · SAT · 8:30AM-11AM · EVENT  
**Katfishin' Kids**  
Free fun at Turcotte Lab, off Hwy 43 at the Ross Barnett Reservoir, for children ages

5-14, accompanied by an adult. Equipment and lunch are provided free. *See page three for details.*

**JUNE 20** · FRI · 10AM-12NOON  
**Fun Friday**  
Prehistoric Mammals

**JUNE 27** · FRI · 10AM-12NOON  
**Fun Friday**  
Prehistoric Fish

**JULY 4** · FRI · HOLIDAY  
**Museum Closed**

**JULY 11** · FRI · 10AM-12NOON  
**Fun Friday**  
Prehistoric Insects

**JULY 18** · FRI · 10AM-12NOON  
**Fun Friday**  
Prehistoric Birds

**JULY 25** · FRI · 10AM-12NOON  
**Fun Friday**  
Prehistoric Reptiles

ONGOING

**First Saturdays**

**Audubon Bird Walks**  
On the first Saturday of the month (February through November) walk on the wild side with experienced birders and Jackson Audubon Society members. Bird walks for family groups and beginners are from 8AM to 10AM at Lefleur's Bluff State Park Campground. Fee: \$3. For more information, call Mary Stevens at 601.956.7444.

TEACHERS

**WET and WILD Opportunities for Teachers**

The Museum offers two environmental education programs, Project WILD and Project WET, with CEU credits available. Interested? Contact Angel Rohnke or Rebecca Jones at 601-354-7303 for details.



**Teacher Resources**

Want to schedule a workshop, field trip, or reserve a resource kit? Learn more about how the Museum can help meet your classroom needs! Call 601-354-7303 or visit us online. [www.msnaturalscience.org](http://www.msnaturalscience.org)

**PRESCHOOL:** The Museum's "hands-on" Preschool Discovery Room is designed specifically for pre-kindergartners, ages 3-5.



DISCOVERY ROOM

**Visitor Access**

**PRESCHOOL CHILDREN**  
MON-FRI 1-4PM  
SAT 9:30AM-12NOON & 1-4PM  
SUN 1-4PM

**TIME FOR TWOS (AGES 2 & UNDER)**  
2nd TUE 1-4PM

**STORY TIME (AGES 3 TO 5)**  
WED 1:15, 2:15, & 3:15PM (AUG-MAY)  
TUE AND THU 10:15 & 11:15AM (JUNE-JULY)

**Reserved Group Access**

MON-FRI 9, 9:45 & 10:30AM

**MARCH - MAY CLASSES**  
**"Like Water? Live in a Marsh!"**

In this study of wetland creatures, children will note that many animals live in or near water. They will understand the difference between fresh water and salt water and a marsh and a swamp.

**JUNE CLASSES**  
**"Forever Fascinating - Dinosaurs!"**

Fossils are the petrified remains of plants and animals. Children will understand that the remains of dinosaurs are very special fossils. They will appreciate the characteristics and diversity of dinosaurs.

\*For Reserved Group or Summer Camp reservations/general information, call Joan Elder at 601-354-7303 ext.136.

**JUNE/JULY SUMMER CAMPS**  
**"WOW"**

*Fun with worms, owls and wild things*  
9:30AM-10:30AM (Age 2)  
11AM-12NOON (Ages 3 to 5)

Preschool Camp is offered this year in two duplicate sessions. Each camp, running for three consecutive Mondays, offers one-on-one, hands-on natural science experiences for children and their caregivers. Each camp is set up for sixteen participants—eight children, each with one adult.

**Camp Session I**

June 2 (worms)  
June 9 (owls)  
June 16 (wild things)

**Camp Session II (repeat)**

June 23 (worms)  
June 30 (owls)  
July 7 (wild things)



## Are All Fish Fins and Bones?

If you've ever eaten fish cooked whole, then you know they have bones.

What you may not know is that primitive fishes such as hagfish and lamprey lack true bones. Their skeletons are made of cartilage, a tissue lighter and more flexible than bone, and they lack jaws. Sharks, skates, rays, and ratfish (*Chondrichthyes*) also have cartilaginous skeletons. As a result, teeth are typically the only part of ancient sharks found, as cartilage does not become fossilized.

More advanced fishes, *Osteichthyes*, are the true bony fishes and the largest group with more than 25,000 species. Bony fish skeletons are calcified, making them much harder than the cartilage bones of the *Chondrichthyes*. The skeleton gives structure, provides protection, assists in leverage, and is a site

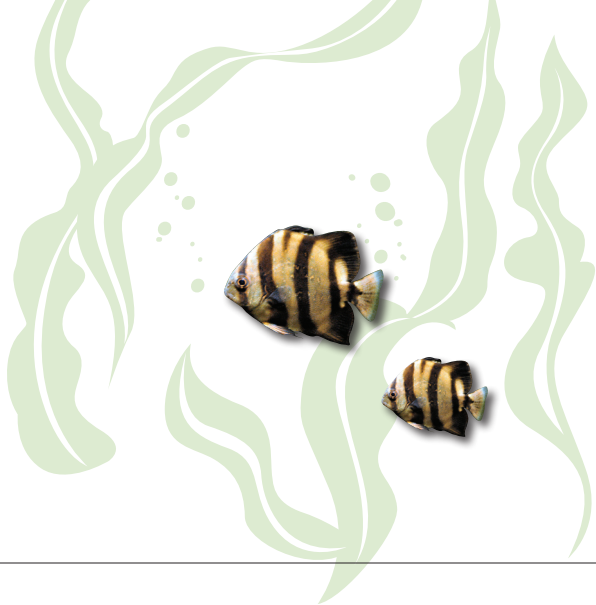


Carolina - Fish Skeleton

of red blood cell production. Some bones can also be found in between the muscles in addition to the vertebral column, cranium, jaws, and ribs of the fish skeleton.

Because fish float in water, they do not need their limbs for walking. As a result, the skeletal structure of the fins and tail are not always attached to the rest of the skeleton. The bones and hard structure of fins and the tail attach only to the muscles and

not the spinal column, allowing the fish more flexible movement in the water. Be sure to look at these beautiful swimmers on your next visit to the Museum to see all the different, truly amazing forms a fish skeleton can take.



## Hit the Trails to Enjoy Nature and a Healthy Walk

With spring's arrival, the Museum trails in LeFleur's Bluff State Park beckon walkers and nature lovers.

Until the leaves are back in full force, the tallest sweet gums, oaks, and beech trees—some 90 years old—can easily be seen, towering in the long vistas.

Helpful new signs inform walkers of the direction and distance to the Museum or picnic area. Birdwatchers and Museum naturalists who lead wetland programs for school groups and summer camps will love the two swamp-level viewing decks that have been built along the sloughs on the blue and red trails. Local eagle scouts are adding benches to make these decks even nicer for sitting and relaxing. Removal of privet hedge in certain places,



One of our newly constructed viewing decks at swamp level on the blue trail

with the help of Millsaps student volunteers, has really opened up the views across the forest floor, and new gravel has been added to the red trail surface.

As Governor Haley Barbour and Deuce McAllister say, "Lets Go Walkin', Mississippi." The Museum's trails are the perfect place to do just that and treat yourself to a healthy dose of nature, as well. You can access the trails, starting at the Mayes Lake end off of Lakeland Drive, for \$3 per car or through your Museum entrance fee. With the \$42 annual pass to all Mississippi state parks, you have year-round unlimited access from the trailhead in the park's picnic area during open hours. Come walk the trails and fall in love with the swamp!



## New Research Staff

**Lisa Yager** has joined the Museum's Conservation Biology staff as the Research and Collections Coordinator. She is coordinating the State Wildlife and Section 6 (threatened and endangered species) grants. She has worked for The Nature Conservancy and the University of Florida and was a Peace Corps volunteer in New Guinea. She holds a Ph.D. in forest resources from Mississippi State University and an M.S. in rangeland ecology/management from Texas A & M.

**Sherry Surrette** is the Mississippi Natural Heritage Program Coordinator, working with the development and maintenance of Mississippi's biological database of rare, threatened, and endangered species and habitats. She formerly worked with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and holds a Ph.D. in biology from the University of Mississippi and an M.S. in agronomy from Mississippi State University.



Lisa Yager



Aaron Francois



Sherry Surrette



Jeremy Copley

**Aaron Francois** is an Associate Biologist with the Mississippi Natural Heritage Program staff, assisting with environmental reviews and maintenance of the biological database. He holds a B.S. in biological sciences from the University of Southern Mississippi. An Illinois native, he looks forward to learning more about Mississippi's natural flora and fauna and the conservation efforts surrounding them.

**Jeremy Copley** is an Associate Biologist in Research and Collections. He previously worked with the USDA Wildlife Services to reduce runway hazards at Columbus Air Force Base and also worked on a Mississippi State University Department of Forestry project to determine methods for maximizing growth in pine plantations. He holds a B.S. in wildlife and fisheries from Mississippi State University.

## Education Staff Transitions

**Georgia Spencer**, Education Coordinator for three years and Project WILD Coordinator for seventeen years, retired January 31. Project WILD is one of the most widely used conservation and environmental education programs among K-12 educators. A well-respected leader in Mississippi's conservation community, Georgia became the Museum's Education Coordinator in 2004. The educational team looked to her for guidance and wisdom in ensuring quality programming for all Museum visitors. Her leadership will be missed across the state but especially here at the Museum. Thank you, Georgia, for your invaluable service, years of dedication, and most of all your (WILD) enthusiasm!



Georgia Spencer

**Crystie Baker** works as an Outreach Educator for south and southwest Mississippi. She has taught various college-level biology labs, such as Intro to Biology for Non-Biology Majors, Microbes in Health and Disease, and Biology II. She holds a master's in biology education and a bachelor's in biological sciences from the University of Southern Mississippi. She currently lives in her hometown of Hattiesburg.



Crystie Baker

**Angel Rohnke**, a Museum Educator since 2005, has become Coordinator for Education and Project WILD. Angel grew up in upstate New York and attended the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse. She holds a Master of Professional Studies in environmental interpretation and a B.S. in environmental forest biology. With a strong desire to have a positive impact on Mississippians and their environment, she finds her experiences here nourish her interest in the interpretation profession, which she considers one of the most effective ways to ensure successful future conservation.



Angel Rohnke



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**Volunteer Notes**

**Digging in for spring**

Museum volunteers became winter gardeners alongside our Museum staff to thin and improve the health of plants in our indigenous plant beds. Cheerfully donating down-in-the-dirt time, volunteers help us provide visitors a yearlong display, highlighted by our spring showcase and native plant sale at NatureFEST!

Proceeds from plant sales go back into the garden, where rarely seen gems are easily viewed. Making their brief appearance this spring are green and gold daisy and least trillium. These spring ephemerals will be among the other great natives available at the NatureFEST! plant sale. Green-thumb volunteers will join staff in answering questions.



**Meet Ann Peden**

The Museum is pleased to welcome Ann Peden as leader of our volunteer program. A native of Jackson and Clinton, Ann worked first as a volunteer, then as part of the Museum education staff in the summers between her high school and college years. After graduation from Millsaps College, Ann taught middle school language arts in Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina before serving as



Education Coordinator for the The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. With husband, Eric, and son, Sam, she moved back to Clinton three years ago and is delighted to be "home" again at the Museum!

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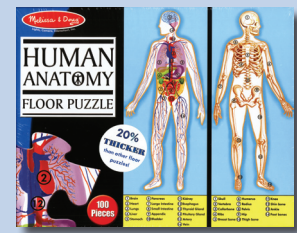
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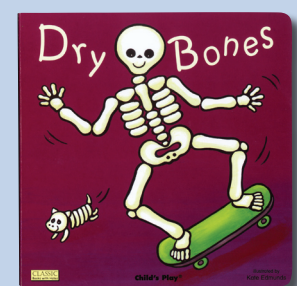
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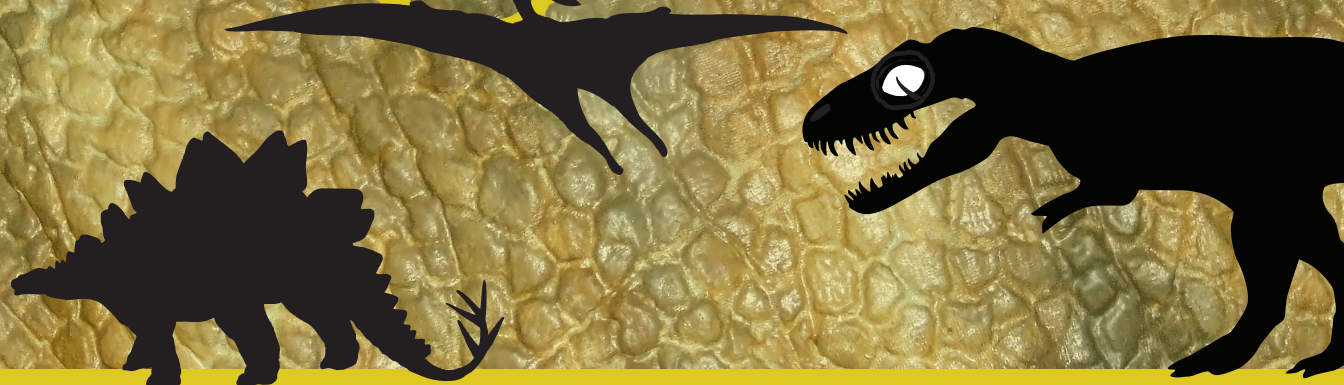
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