



University of Wisconsin-Madison

Department of Geology and Geophysics

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## Annual Report for 2003



*Museum turnover (left to right): John Rettig, Klaus Westphal, Richard Slaughter, and Carlos Peralta.*

### Changing of the Guard

After thirty-four years, the museum's director Klaus Westphal is retiring. Under his care, the museum has expanded from a few simple displays in Science Hall to the impressive collection of specimens exhibited today. Klaus established a tour program that has educated around 150,000 school children. He also collected and supervised the mounting of the first dinosaur skeleton to be displayed in Wisconsin. Klaus was a friendly director who loved to share his enthusiasm for geology with others. His work will continue to inspire museum visitors for decades to come.

Richard Slaughter, who has been the museum's assistant director for the past two and a half years, has taken over as director in 2004. Unfortunately, his old position will not be renewed at this time.

In addition, John Rettig, who founded the

Friends of the Geology Museum organization in 1977, has stepped down as its president. The museum has benefited immensely from his involvement over the past three decades. Carlos Peralta, a lecturer in the Zoology Department and a mineral enthusiast, has been elected as the Friends' new president.

### Visitors

Attendance at the museum was impressive again in 2003. About 11,500 visitors received guided tours, and there were approximately 6,000 self-guided guests who signed the museum's register. Given that most walk-ins do not sign in, a conservative estimate of our total attendance is 25,000. The museum enjoyed quite an international appeal drawing geology fans from 36 countries.



*Adam Behlke unveils the Triceratops skull at the open house.*

### **The Open House**

The museum had an especially exciting open house this year. The keynote speaker was Peter Larson from the Black Hills Institute of Geological Research. Pete gave a well-received talk on the natural history of *Tyrannosaurus rex*. Upon finishing his lecture, he made a surprise donation to the museum—a replica of the best-preserved *T. rex* skull ever found. The museum also unveiled its long-awaited Triceratops skull reconstruction to the applause of more than 150 people. Once again, Klaus was the leader for the legendary rock toss, an activity that sends throngs of children scurrying through the courtyard for minerals, fossils, and other geological booty courtesy of Burnie's Rock Shop and others.

### **Dinosaur Hunting in Wyoming**

In June, Joe Skulan led a three-week expedition to Wyoming to recover dinosaur remains from the Late Jurassic Morrison Formation. His crew consisted of twenty-four students from his wildly popular on-line course on Mesozoic vertebrates. The students got firsthand experience in excavating dinosaur fossils, evading scorpions, and swimming in 40°F creek water. They worked on a mass of disarticulated bones that included elements from an *Allosaurus*, a 40-foot-long carnivorous dinosaur. Lunches in the field consisted exclusively of military rations. Cheese tortellini, jambalaya, and country captain chicken were the most popular entrees. Beef patty with imitation

grill marks was less sought after. About 4,000 pounds of material was collected and most of this already has been prepared due to the dedicated efforts of Troy Stoneman. The museum extends its gratitude to the College of Letters and Science for financing this program.

### **Subterranean Paleontology**

High school students and teachers from Chippewa Falls, Watertown, and Waunakee spent two weeks in August crawling through caves and excavating bone deposits with museum workers. The bulk of their efforts focused on Murphy Cave, a newly discovered site in southwestern Wisconsin. The students are now developing their own research projects based on the fossils they collected. Although the objectives of their projects vary, the overarching goal of this work is to better understand how animal communities in Wisconsin have changed over the past 30,000 years. The museum thanks Carol Vandersluis and Wyalusing State Park for access to sites and the National Science Foundation for funding. Cave of the Mounds also contributed to this project by providing special tours, water-screening facilities, and a place to camp.

### **More New Exhibits**

A new gem case was installed in the museum with funds from the Department of Geology and Geophysics Weeks Bequest and the Friends of the Geology Museum. It is equipped with sixteen fiber optic lights, each of which can be positioned to maximize the brilliance of the museum's gemstones.



*Clint Boyd and Troy Stoneman plastering a dinosaur bone in Wyoming.*

Reuben Johnson also put together an exhibit on the Mexican Chicxulub meteorite impact that may have eradicated the non-avian dinosaurs about 65 million years ago. This display includes pieces of impact breccia—the pulverized material that was ejected from the crater when a meteorite, measuring probably 10 – 20 km in diameter, slammed into Earth near the tip of Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula.

### **The Museum’s Most Valuable Assets**

The museum benefits considerably from its many student workers and volunteers. Liz Leslie started the year as the museum’s project assistant, but left in August to pursue a teaching assistantship. In her two years of service, Liz catalogued thousands of specimens and dutifully maintained the department’s “rock garden”. Beth Valaas, the new project assistant, is a Master’s student who studies the Banded Iron Formation of northern Minnesota. Like her predecessor, much of Beth’s time is spent tending the mineral collection.

The fossil preparation lab is under the supervision of two remarkable undergraduate geology majors, Adam Behlke and Clint Boyd.

In 2003, they finished reconstructing the museum’s Triceratops skull and led two expeditions to Montana to collect dinosaur fossils from the Late Cretaceous Hell Creek Formation. They both presented posters on their research at the annual meeting of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontologists. Clint and Adam also manage ten student volunteers who collectively logged more than 500 hours of lab work last year.

The museum’s tour program would not exist without our dedicated guides. In 2003, twenty students took the time to share their knowledge of geology with thousands of museum visitors. Giving tours can be exhausting and the museum is grateful to its guides for their dedication.

### **Museum Donors**

The museum’s collections were enhanced with contributions of minerals and fossils from Andy Clark, Catharine McClellan, and the Wisconsin Historical Society. Ken Ciriacks, Dave Divine, Bob Sneider and the Friends of the Geology Museum each provided substantial monetary gifts. Thank you for investing in the future of the museum.



*High school students getting ready to excavate in Murphy Cave, Wisconsin.*

## **The Geology Museum thanks its staff and its many dedicated volunteers**

Maya Acker, tour guide  
Brooke Alderfer, tour guide, volunteer preparator,  
expedition member  
Cyrus Anderson, volunteer preparator  
Andy Arntz, volunteer preparator, expedition  
member  
Miriam Barquero-Molina, tour guide  
Adam Behlke, fossil preparation lab supervisor,  
expedition leader  
Clint Boyd, fossil preparation lab supervisor,  
expedition leader  
Jessica Daynor, tour guide  
Leslie Dundore, tour guide, volunteer preparator  
Jake Eaton, tour guide  
Adam Eisenach, tour guide  
Peter Gill, tour guide, student assistant  
Lou Goodman, Saturday morning host,  
volunteer preparator, expedition member  
Julie Hill, volunteer preparator  
Anna Huntley, tour guide  
Dan Hyslop, volunteer preparator, expedition  
member  
Stephanie Kautzer, volunteer preparator,  
expedition member  
Lynnette Kleinsasser, tour guide

Matt Kuchta, museum specialist  
Carrie Larson, tour guide  
Elizabeth Leslie, project assistant, tour guide  
Shasta McGee, volunteer preparator, expedition  
member  
Simon Masters, tour guide, volunteer preparator  
Carrie Moeller, tour guide, expedition member  
Tyler Munson\*, tour guide  
Summer Ostrowski, tour guide, volunteer  
preparator, expedition member  
Christine Pagelsdorf, tour guide  
Laramie Roecker, volunteer preparator,  
expedition member  
George Rothdrake, volunteer preparator  
Dr. Joseph L. Skulan, museum specialist  
Troy Stoneman, tour guide, volunteer preparator,  
expedition member  
Brooke Swanson, tour guide  
Ian Sweeney\*, volunteer, preparator, expedition  
member  
Rebecca Tedford\*, tour guide  
Elizabeth Valaas, project assistant  
John Worzala, tour guide

\*Individuals no longer with the museum



### **... and the Friends of the Geology Museum**

John R. Rettig, Past President  
Carlos Peralta, Incoming President  
Richard Emerson, Vice President  
John Evans, Treasurer  
Maxine Triff, Secretary

*Thank you!*

*Dr. Klaus W. Westphal, Director*

*Dr. Richard Slaughter, Assistant Director*