

GEOLOGY MUSEUM 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

The Magnificent Seven

Thanks to the generosity of Bob and Ramona Sneider the museum was able to install seven slabs of sandstone in its lobby this spring. These specimens are from central Wisconsin and were deposited along an ancient shoreline during the Cambrian Period, roughly 500 million years ago.

Each slab has a different story to tell. One contains a pair of circular impressions from jellyfish that are thought to have been washed ashore by a storm and then quickly buried. Another is covered with the trails of a slug-like animal that wriggled across the sea floor in search of food. The smallest of the slabs records the stroll of a crab-like arthropod



Father and son admire the Cambrian shore in the lobby of Weeks Hall.

that left behind a slight dimple in the sand each time it moved one of its feet. And then there are the ripples – many of the

sandstones have undulating surfaces that were created by waves as they rolled across a tidal flat or through very shallow water.



Visitors to the museum peer through a microscope to see the famous zircon.

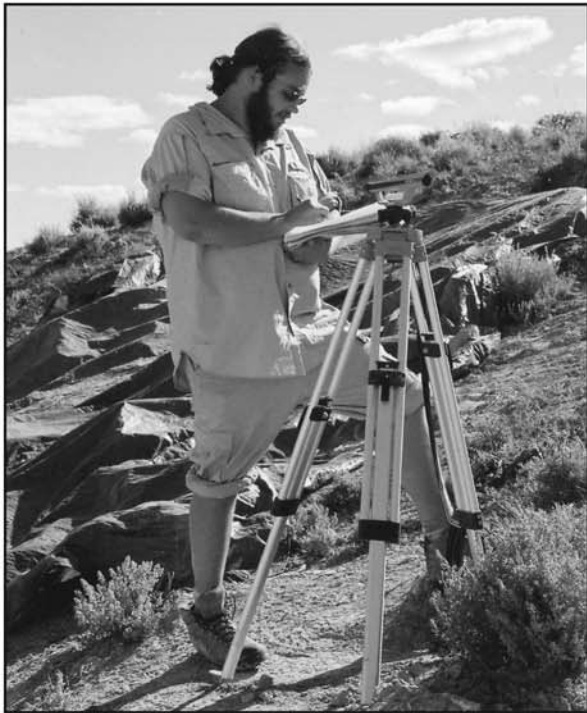
4.404 Billion – A Jazzy Little Number

In April, the Geology Museum attracted international attention when it hosted a celebration of the oldest known terrestrial object, a 4.404 billion year old zircon from Australia. This special one-day event included the first ever public viewing of this geological curiosity. UW-Madison researchers John Valley and Aaron Cavosie were joined by their Australian colleague Simon Wilde from the Curtin University of Technology to educate visitors about their discovery. The museum thanks them for sharing their expertise and unique specimen.

In conjunction with the exhibit, a concert was held that evening in Memorial Union to explore the idea of Deep Time and to commemorate the zircon. The museum commissioned saxophonist and composer Roy Nathanson to create “The Rock Concert,” which he performed with his band the Jazz Passengers. This debut concert used words and music to provide one person’s musical answer to the question, “What is 4.4 billion years?” The day’s events were organized through the Stony Muse, a program administered by Joe Skulan that fosters collaborations between geologists and artists.

“Do you like scientific kinds of things? I love this. The University of Wisconsin now claims to... on display at the university... they're saying they have the world's oldest object. It is a 4.4 billion year old rock. Wow. 4.4 billion years old! They're claiming it's a Larry King kidney stone.”

- David Letterman on the Late Show



Westward Ho! Matt Tibbits helps survey the dinosaur bones at the Westphal Quarry.

Field Notes

The museum once again sent expeditions to Wyoming and Montana this summer to collect dinosaur fossils from the Morrison and Hell Creek Formations, respectively. The Wyoming crew resumed excavation at the Westphal Quarry, which continued to yield gigantic sauropod bones. Other great finds included a shoulder spike from an armored dinosaur and a nearly complete fish skeleton. As an added bonus, Klaus Westphal, the former director of the Geology Museum and the quarry's namesake, visited the site along with several of his family members including his grandson Daniel.

The Montana field crew, under the leadership of students Clint Boyd and Adam Behlke, unearthed much of a semi-articulated skeleton from a duck-billed dinosaur. The bone is exceptionally well-preserved and stained a handsome chocolate brown. The specimen includes a string of at least 30 vertebrae, which hopefully will have a skull at its end.

New Face in Cyberspace

In December 2005, a new Geology Museum website was launched. Laura Mitchell, the museum project assistant, redesigned and updated our website. Highlights now include a page that focuses on rocks, minerals and fossils commonly found in Wisconsin and a geology-related news feed that updates daily. In just two months over 2,500 different visitors have checked out our site.

Visit www.geologymuseum.org to see our new home on the internet.

When you visit the website you'll also notice that the Geology Museum sports a colorful new logo that features images of the Boaz Mastodon and quartz crystals. Laura designed this logo as well, with the goal of encompassing more of what visitors can see on a trip to the Geology Museum.



www.geologymuseum.org

OUT FOR THE COUNT IN 2005

Number of people receiving guided tours: **12,300**

Number of countries with registered visitors: **27**

Pints of super glue purchased for field and lab work: **40**

A Prehistoric Page Turner

Step into the museum on a Thursday morning and you may find kids comparing *Archaeotherium* (a prehistoric relative of pigs) to the popular storybook pig-heroine Olivia.



Or perhaps they're peering into chunks of amber looking for fossil arachnids to accompany Eric Carle's "The Very Busy Spider."

Geared toward preschoolers, each storytime involves exploring earth science through books, hands-on projects and museum specimens. Past topics have included ancient insects, lions, dinosaurs and plants. Offered bi-monthly, this new program is attracting first-time visitors to the museum and introducing a new generation to geology and paleontology.

Kids at storytime are captivated by a tale read by Brooke Swanson.

Lots of Bingo and Pirate Lingo

For the second year in a row, snow flurries didn't deter geology fans from attending the museum's annual open house in May. A carnival-like atmosphere surrounded the event. Children snagged fossils from an Ordovician sea while fishing with the Pirates of the Paleozoic. Shouts of "BINGO" could be heard from the new lecture hall, where visitors played a geology-themed version of the game. Additionally, Rich Slaughter gave a talk on the seven Cambrian sandstone slabs that now adorn the museum lobby.

Thanks go out to Burnie's Rock Shop and Paul Mayer for donating give-away material for this special day.

Ahoy, paleo-matey!

Captain George Rothdrake unhooks a Paleozoic fossil from the line of a happy open house attendee.



Positive Impacts

Luis Marin, an alumnus of the department and a professor at the Mexican National University, donated three core samples from the Chicxulub meteorite impact crater which lies buried beneath the Yucatán Peninsula. This impact is widely considered to be responsible for the demise of dinosaurs, and the museum is privileged to have these important specimens in its collection. There are only two museums in the United States with core material from the Chicxulub impact – the Smithsonian, and now us. Thank you Luis.

The Friends of the Geology Museum, in addition to supporting the Montana field program, also purchased

a strangely shaped ammonite shell which is now on display. We are glad to have the Friends as partners and appreciate their contributions.

A special thanks is owed to Ken and Linda Ciriacks, the Department of Geology and Geophysics, and the College of Letters and Science for jointly funding the museum's Assistant Director position for another two years. This position is essential to the success of the museum, and we are grateful for this support. The museum also received major gifts from David Jones, Jay and Silvia Nania, and Bob and Ramona Sneider. Thank you all for investing in the museum.

The following people contributed to the success of the Geology Museum in 2005:

Graduate Assistants

Carrie Moeller
Laura Mitchell

Undergraduate Assistants

Adam Behlke
Clint Boyd
George Rothdrake
Matt Tibbits
Meredith Wismer

Saturday Host

Lou Goodman

Special Project Personnel

Steve Bower
Matt Kuchta
Craig Pfister
Rick Sewell
Troy Stoneman

Emeritus Director

Klaus Westphal

Devils Lake Tour Coordinator

Jake Eaton

Tour Guides and Volunteers

Maya Ackerman
Brooke Alderfer
Andy Arntz
Angie Barbian
Nate Batterman
Kat Bevington
Matt Brenner
Anna Carriveau
Sarah Covington
Amalia Doebbert
Sarah Edwards
Nick Garibaldi
Erin Harney

Jess Hersh

Anna Huntley
Dan Hyslop
Nick Kanter
Carrie Levitt
Rebecca Moeri
Mark Norton
Kacie Piirto
Melinda Rau
Laramie Roecker
Laura Roesler
Stacy Schaapveld
Craig Schiller
Kurt Spearing
JoAnnah Sprecher
Troy Stoneman
Colman Sutter
Ian Sweeney
Beth Valaas
Jake Van Kerkvoorde

... and the Friends of the Geology Museum

Carlos Peralta – President
Richard Emerson – Vice President
John Evans – Treasurer
Maxine Triff – Secretary

We appreciate your help.

Thank you!

Rich Slaughter, Director

Brooke Swanson, Assistant Director

Joe Skulan, Instructor and Researcher