

NATURAL INQUIRER

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Department of Biological Sciences

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ALUMNI NEWS

Constance Y. Chen (MS 2001) was named one of the runners-up for the Fort Hays State University Graduate Thesis Competition for her thesis entitled "Devising a Catchability Index Incorporating Weather to Re-evaluate Population Trends of Migratory Warblers in Western Kansas." Her graduate program advisor was **Dr. Greg Farley**.

FACULTY HAPPENINGS

Dr. Greg Farley assisted with the Wilson Home and School Educational Family Fun Night in Hays by presenting on the diversity and design of birds. Students were allowed to view a wide variety of eggs, wings, mounted birds and standard museum specimens from Kansas and elsewhere. The specimens of stuffed birds from around the world are part of the *outstanding* ornithological collection prepared and formerly curated by **Dr. Charles Ely**, who retired from the Department in 1995. The materials are currently housed in the vertebrate zoology preparation room in Albertson Hall, as well as in the Fleharty Range in the new Sternberg Museum of Natural History.

On November 27, **Mark Eberle** attended a workshop in Lawrence, Kansas, organized by The Nature Conservancy. Biologists from Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma met to identify important areas of biodiversity in streams and wetlands from the Sand Hills of Nebraska southward through central Kansas and Oklahoma to the Red River. This information complements an earlier summary compiled for terrestrial ecosystems in the central plains. The Nature Conservancy will incorporate the results of these meetings into their ecoregional planning process and use the information to evaluate conservation efforts.

On November 8, 2001, **Dr. Elmer Finck** gave a talk to the FHSU Chapter of Sigma Xi entitled "Free ranging domestic cats in the Flint Hills".

Dr. Jerry R. Choate (Professor of Biology and Director of the Sternberg Museum of Natural History) was an invited speaker at a symposium

sponsored by the President of Texas Tech University and held at that university on November 28 and 29. The purpose of the symposium was to assemble the most successful senior mammalogists in this country and have them discuss both their careers and their perceptions of the future of the academic discipline of mammalogy.

In addition to Dr. Choate, the participants in the symposium were: Dr. Robert J. Baker (Director of the Natural Science Research Laboratory at Texas Tech University), Dr. Rollin H. Baker (Director Emeritus of the Michigan State University Museum), **Dr. Michael A. Bogan** (MS 1966) (Director of the Midcontinent Ecological Science Center of the U.S. Geological Survey), Dr. William Evans (Professor Emeritus at Texas A&M University), Dr. James Findley (Director Emeritus of the Museum of Southwestern Biology at the University of New Mexico), Dr. Alfred Gardner (Curator of Mammals at the National Museum of Natural History), Dr. Donald F. Hoffmeister (Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois), Dr. Clyde Jones (Professor at Texas Tech University), Dr. Thomas Kunz (Professor at Boston University), Dr. James Patton (Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley), Dr. Carleton J. Phillips (Professor at Texas Tech University), Dr. David J. Schmidly (President of Texas Tech University), Dr. Don Wilson (Director of the Biodiversity Program of the Smithsonian Institution).

Dr. Bogan earned his MS in Biology under the direction of **Dr. Eugene D. Fleharty**.

Each participant presented a formal lecture and took part in informal discussions. The presentations will be included in a book that will be published by Texas Tech University in 2002.

Dr. Elmer Finck assisted with the bison roundups on Konza Prairie and the Circle 3 Buffalo Ranch during November.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

One of our outstanding graduate students in ornithology, **Matt Bain**, recently attended the 24th Biennial Meeting of the Prairie Grouse Technical Council in Woodward, OK. He presented one of 35 papers dealing with prairie grouse, specifically "*Guesser*" Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus*) Display. General topics included genetics, population ecology and modeling, conservation, and parasitology. The presenters came from throughout the U.S., as well as several Canadian provinces and Europe. Matt had helpful discussions with the experts in grouse biology and management, and met many perspective employers and contacts. He has also submitted a manuscript on this research for publication in The Condor, a premier North American journal of avian biology.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Congratulations to **Kelli Shoemaker and Renae Wellbrock**, medical technology advisees, who have been accepted into the clinical program at the University of Kansas. Kelli and Renae have received full scholarships to cover their educational expenses, including books and tuition.

ODDS AND ENDS

A group of students and faculty drove to Wichita State University on Nov. 1 to hear a lecture by Dr. Alan Feduccia, Professor of Paleontology at the University of North Carolina, speak on the Tertiary Radiation of Birds. Undergraduate majors **Eric Hoch, Eric Starkey, Trevor Van Eaton, Curtis Wolf** and M.S. candidates **Matt Bain** (BS 2000), **Jamie Timson** (BS 1999) and **Jim Schmidt** (BS 1999) were accompanied by **Drs. Channell, Farley, Finck** and Zakrzewski. Dr. Richard Zakrzewski is Curator of Paleontology and Professor of Geosciences, and attended graduate school at the University of Michigan with the speaker in the 1960's.

As an activity of the FHSU Science Day on November 19, **Dr. Eric Gillock** hosted a lab exercise called "Anthrax Hunters". In this activity visiting high school students were asked to examine specimens from several patients and determine which patients were infected with anthrax. Be assured they didn't use real anthrax, but a look-alike cousin!!

The annual Hays Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sat, December 15th following a tradition

that has continued for decades. Several groups will attempt to identify and count all the birds they encounter in a 15-mile diameter circle in Ellis county (approximately 177 sq. mi.). Last year 19 hardy participants, including **Drs. Farley, Morgan, Nicholson, Potter and Stark**, enjoyed -20° wind chills and located over 10,000 individuals of 62 different species. Several graduate students (**Constance Chen** (MS 2001), **Mark Omura, David Spalsbury** (BS 2000) and **Jamie Timson** (BS 1999) and undergraduate students (**Steve Kolarik, Nichole Lambrecht** and **Mary Schmidt** (BS 2001) also contributed to the effort. Please consider joining this year's adventure -- as observers at all skill levels are welcome!

