

Virginia Museum of Natural History
Research & Collection Committee Minutes
November 17, 2018
Martinsville, Virginia

The meeting began at 9:05 a.m., chaired by Monica Monday.

In attendance were Monica Monday, Melany Stowe, and Art Evans from the VMNH Board of Trustees and Jim Beard, and Kal Ivanov of the VMNH staff. Lisa Moerner was unable to be present until after the Committee meeting had adjourned to join the full Board of Trustees for its meeting. Michael Phillips was unable to attend the Committee meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

Items included review of recent acquisitions and VMNH Research Associate appointment renewals.

Present members of the Committee approved all recent acquisitions as recommended by the Executive Director and VMNH Collections Committee. Acquisitions of note included two large collections of bird eggs and animal skeletons. Over 900 bird eggs, from the late 1800's, were transferred to VMNH from Pocahontas State Park (R. Whalen) and after proper curation will be added to VMNH's extensive bird nest and egg collection. Ten boxes with 203 animal skeletons were transferred to VMNH from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DeRoche). The specimens will be added to VMNH's growing archeology skeletal reference collection and used to assist in the identification of animal remains from archeological sites.

The Research and Collection Committee members reviewed documents for ten Research Associate renewals expiring at the end of 2018. Recently, VMNH lost two Research Associates following the passing of John Holsinger (ODU), VMNH Research Associate since 1993, and Rowland Shelley (NCMNS retired), long-term supporter of the museum and Research Associate since 2018. Currently there are 44 active VMNH Research Associates.

OTHER BUSINESS

Dr. Kal Ivanov reported recent highlights of the Division of Research and Collections activities including staff changes, publications, collections work, outreach, and publicity.

Kal Ivanov discussed the recent departures of Dr. Alex Hastings (Assistant Curator of Paleontology) and Krystal Davis (Administrator of Science). Dr. Hastings departed VMNH in early October to join the Science Museum of Minnesota as the new head of

paleontology. Krystal Davis departed VMNH at the end of October to join Danville Parks and Recreation as the new coordinator of special events. Searches are currently underway to fill in these positions. Anticipated starting dates of the new hires are December 2018 (Administrator of Science) and July 2019 (paleontology curator). Research technicians Ray Vodden and Lucy Treado will assist in the day-to-day operations of the paleontology department until a new curator is hired.

Dr. Ivanov discussed the recent hiring of paleontology assistant Aryanna James. Aryanna will assist Ray Vodden in completing two large projects due in January – molding and casting of giant ground sloth (*Megalonyx*) bones, and the creation of a large number of fiberglass cradles for dinosaur bones, which will travel for an exhibit at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery, OH.

Present members of the Committee joined Dr. Ivanov in congratulating Dr. Beard for his recent election as a Fellow of the Geological Society of America in recognition of his scientific achievements.

Dr. Ivanov followed up by introducing recent publication activities at the Research and Collections Division. These included 1 manuscript in review (Ivanov et al., *Zootaxa*), 2 manuscripts submitted (Moncrief et al., *Proceedings Royal Society of London B*; and Beard et al., *Journal of Metamorphic Geology*), and 3 technical reports submitted (Moore, *Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, Inc*; Ivanov, *VA DCR-DNH, VA DCR-State Parks*). Dr. Ivanov announced the recent submission of a manuscript to VMNH's *Insects of Virginia* series. The manuscript authored by VMNH Senior Fellow Dr. Oliver S. Flint, Jr. and colleagues focuses on the scorpionflies and hangingflies of Virginia. Dr. Ivanov intends to have the manuscript published in early to mid- 2019. The year 2019 marks fifty years since the inception of the publication series.

Dr. Beard discussed his work on metamorphism in the Martinsville area, which was recently submitted to the *Journal of Metamorphic Geology* with a Virginia Tech student as a first author. Dr. Beard was pleased to announce that he and Dr. E. Moore were recently awarded a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The grant will provide support to move the geologic Marline core, currently being housed in Sheva, Virginia to the VMNH Douglas Avenue annex. The total grant budget is \$198,341 of which \$97,637 are funds from IMLS and \$100,704 is matching from VMNH. In addition, VMNH will be hiring two collections technicians in a temporary capacity to assist with cleaning, organization, and inventory once the move is complete. Dr. Beard announced student K. Broadwell (Virginia Tech) as the first grant recipient of VMNH's Pete Henika Fund award. The fund was recently created by a generous donation from Bill and Mary Jane Henika to support natural history research in Virginia. Another donation from Bill and Mary Jane Henika helped partially fund VMNH's most recent exhibit – *Fluorescent Minerals* – that opened to the public in September. Dr. Beard concluded his presentation by announcing his first peer-reviewed publication to reach 1,000 citations – an admirable feat.

Dr. Ivanov presented R&C education and outreach activities. This quarter, there were a total of 48 scientific programs, average of 4 programs per week, presented by R&C staff. These “face to face” activities included direct interaction with 4,471 participants including 3,321 at the VMNH. Activities included 29 education programs, 6 workshops, 5 presentations, and 8 outreach and display tables at various venues across the state. Among the most notable activities were research-based programs presented to students from the University of Lynchburg Summer Residential Governor’s School and the local Magna Vista High School Warrior Tech Academy. The Lynchburg Summer Residential Governor’s School has partnered with the museum since 2012 and they are already scheduled for 2019. During this quarter, VMNH hosted its most successful festival to date. The 2018 Dino Festival was attended by 3,400 children and adults of which 69% came from outside Martinsville and Henry County, resulting in a significant tourism boost for the area. In addition, there were 4 newspaper articles (Martinsville Bulletin) and 5 television appearances (WSLS, WSET, WDBJ, and Daytime Blue Ridge) regarding R&C activities.

Dr. Ivanov concluded his presentation by discussing R&C collection based activities. There were 15 visits (17 researchers and students) to VMNH’s collections, and nine outgoing loans recorded. In addition, paleo technician Lucy Treado has continued work on the BLM-funded project to fully digitize the collection accepted from the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum. This quarter, Treado cataloged approximately 1,000 specimens, including additional fossils from other projects.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. Art Evans highlighted the work of Drs. Moncrief and Ivanov in organizing the first general meeting of the Virginia Natural History Society. The meeting was held at the VMNH on October 13. Dozens of researchers and students attended the event allowing participants to learn about the different studies conducted by fellow researchers across the Commonwealth. Oral presentations and poster session took place throughout the day, with VMNH staff also offering attendees tours of the museum’s research collections

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.