

the ROYAL Muse

An inspiring look inside your museum



A BEST field crew gets ready to survey wildlife on farm land near Assiniboia.

The BEST Program: wildlife and more

RSM biologists have a new name and lots more underway

The RSM program aimed at wildlife biology has recently gone through some big changes. To start with, we changed our name from *Life Sciences to Biology and Environmental Studies*—we're now the BEST! The Biology in our name is a nod to our collections and the role the RSM plays in wildlife research. Environmental Studies gives us room to examine sustainability issues, including how people learn about the world around them.

The BEST program has been attracting people and money to support a range of research and collections activities. As researchers, we are studying five different species at risk, using

radio-transmitters to track Badgers, Great Horned Owls, and snakes, documenting small mammal distributions, and how these animals respond to crop conversion. We are also learning more about visitor responses to The

Human Factor exhibit. The collections work is a two-phase effort to inventory and assess all of the specimens in our care. As of 2010, Cont. on pg. 2



One of Dr. Sutter's interests is wildlife education.



Dr. Poulin is studying snake populations in Saskatchewan.

A touchstone for ages and seasons

Ever look at a great scenic painting and wish that you were there—that you could actually feel the wind, the heat and the cold of it; that you might experience, in real time, the history, life, and environment it depicts?

One of the great things about a trip through the RSM is the realization that all the amazing things within its walls are right from your own back yard. Like a painting, the building on College Ave. and Albert St. in Regina, is a

representation of reality. It's a work of art and a microcosm of the province—a great place to get your head around something beautiful, ancient, alive and huge.

At this time of year, we visit and celebrate the societal touchstones of family and fellowship, hearth and home, tradition and the future. The RSM is a touchstone too. And it's all about home. Good time to visit. ■

— Editor

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Mermaid musings

Here is another installment of our children's story *Wascana Mermaid—the legend begins*. So call the kids in, find a comfy spot on the couch, and enjoy this freshly-minted local legend. The adventures will continue in future issues so stay tuned!

Frantically the rowers worked to keep the boat from the rocks. Faster and harder the mermaids swam towards the boat. Finally, they reached it—one on each side. They swam forth and back, matching their motions to that of the rowers. The rhythm of the oarsmen and the waves made by the mermaids slowed the boat. Still, it moved towards the rocks. The little mermaids looked at each other and with grim determination, pushed themselves, swimming stronger, swimming together and hoping as one they would succeed.

Still, the boat moved toward the rocks, yet more slowly. It hit the rocks. It did not crash into them. It had slowed down. The rowers pulled the shell-boat to shore. There was some damage, but it could be fixed—the rowers were safe.

Whimsy watched to be sure Hubert was safe. She saw him slowly raise his arm in a grateful wave. He did not know why, but somehow knew a “thank you” was in order. Whimsy was so happy! She smiled at Pipsy, together they had saved the boat and rowers. Together, they swam to Whimsy's shell for a well-earned rest.

The winds soon died down, and the mermaids ventured to the surface to enjoy the sunny autumn afternoon. They laughed and played and happy bubbles formed above them, rising like a fountain from the lake. Great Golden Eagle saw those bubbles and smiled. He knew the mermaids had become friends. He watched as they swam and talked and laughed together. How very different they were, how very much the same they were.

Below, on the lake, Pipsy saw the eagle and knew it was time for her to return to her home. She felt

BEST look... cont. from pg. 1

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This RSM newsletter is published quarterly by the Royal Saskatchewan Museum Associates to promote research, programs and activities at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum. You can be part of your newsletter. If you wish to submit something to this newsletter, or ask a question, you need only get in touch. We are as close as your telephone or your computer. All our information is available on our website—www.royalsaskmuseum.ca. For more information or to submit story submissions please contact:

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the BEST team consists of two research scientists, Dr. Glenn Sutter, Head of BEST and Curator of Human Ecology, and Dr. Ray Poulin, Curator of Vertebrate Biology, and Adam Crosby, our technician for the collections project.

Assessing the biology collections

The BEST program is responsible for over 122,000 specimens, including 400 reptiles and amphibians, 1,700 fish, 3,500 mammals, 5,500 plants, 11,000 birds, and 100,000 insects and spiders. Due to limited staffing and other constraints, the RSM is well below modern museum standards in the organization, recording, and storage of these items. Some collections need to be reorganized; many inventories are dated, incomplete, or exist only on paper; and several significant specimens need better care.

To fix this, a two year Biology Collections Assessment Project is underway. Phase one deals with collections that have been partially digitized, and



BEST staff care for Saskatchewan's biology collection of over 122,000 specimens!



A colonies of dermestid beetles in the “Bug Barn” help biologists prepare bones for the RSM collection including these skulls of a pelican and several small hawks and owls.

phase two will focus on collections where little or no digital information exists.

Bones from bugs

Tucked away at the Museum is a very important little shed. Inside the shed are colonies of dermestid beetles, which will eat almost everything but are especially fond of fur, feathers, meat, skin, and other soft tissues. Under the right conditions, a ‘hot’ colony can quickly reduce a dead mouse to a gleaming skeleton, ready for the collection drawer. Over 250 specimens have been prepared this way since the shed was built two years ago. Ironically, these are the same critters that need to be kept out of the collection, so they don't feast on mounts and study skins. That's why the colonies have their own “Bug Barn!”

sad at the thought of leaving her friend. When she told Whimsy the eagle had come to take her back, they both cried. How sad not to have each other to play games with and tell secrets to – and make colourful waves and bubbles. They thought how wonderful it could be if Pipsy came back sometime with the eagle, and looked forward to more adventures.

The little mermaids hugged each other, and bubbles burst above them in beautiful colours—each shaped like a little tear. They parted and the gentle eagle flew to the lake's surface, gathered Pipsy in its wings and soared into the wide blue sky.

Whimsy watched as they flew away—the kind golden eagle and her friend. She and Pipsy were very different from each other. Their hair and skin were a different colour, their fins shone a different shade. Whimsy knew she and Pipsy were also very much alike.

They smiled at their differences—and their sameness. They made beautiful bubbles together, and the waves they made were glorious. They had worked as one to save the rowers and the boat. Whimsy and Pipsy learned even though they were different, if they worked together they could make good things happen.

Whimsy turned her eyes from the sky and saw Hubert standing on the shore watching the eagle as it soared overhead. She noticed that in his hand he held a fine smooth stone. It was the stone he had reached for in the lake when she first saw him. She knew he believed it to be his lucky stone, and somehow it held the power to shape his future. ■

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In the lab: cougar collection

What happens to animals donated to the RSM? They become part of RSM's collection and are studied to learn more about wildlife in Saskatchewan. Here, technician Adam Crosby prepares a young cougar. Special thanks to Jason Reddekopp and Ken Armstrong, Conservation Officers from Sask Environment, for providing this specimen to us. It doubles the provincial cougar collection!



Curious cows observe RSM fieldwork. Grad students assist RSM biologist, Ray Poulin as he bands a Burrowing Owl at one of the many nest boxes installed in cooperation with local ranchers and farmers.

2010 – A special year for biodiversity

Inspired by the biodiversity convention that was signed at the Earth Summit in 1992, the United Nations has declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB). The Alliance of Natural History Museums of Canada Museums, which includes the RSM, is working to enhance the IYB through activities like “The Green Wave,” a national tree-planting event planned for May 22.

Research highlights:

Assessing the effectiveness of crop conversion as a conservation tool

The RSM and its U of R partners are studying whether crop-conversion can be a conservation tool.

In 2008 and 2009, the crew surveyed more than 90 crop, crop-conversion and native grass sites in southern Saskatchewan looking at the numbers of Burrowing Owls, hawks, ground squirrels, badgers, small mammals and grasshoppers at each site.

Assessing the impacts of agricultural land-use on Deer Mice ecology

Deer Mice are common across the prairies and food for many predators. To learn more about them we are studying their diets, physical condition, numbers and range in different types of farm land. Our aim is to identify the impacts of farming on this common but important species.

Using stable isotopes to age Burrowing Owls

Scientists have never been able to accurately tell how old these endangered birds are, hampering efforts to conserve them or understand their migration patterns. Preliminary research suggests we may be able to determine a Burrowing Owl's age from the hydrogen isotopes in its feathers. To test this idea, Burrowing Owl feathers from across Alberta and Saskatchewan were collected and are now being analyzed.

Saskatchewan small mammal biodiversity project

Scientists know little about the small mammals in Saskatchewan—where species occur, or even which species we have! We are currently using owl pellets and small mammal trapping (we expect to process 50,000 mice, voles

and shrews!) to fill some of these knowledge gaps, focusing on species at risk as well as a few others. Conclusions will be published in a book on the mammals of Saskatchewan.

Snake habitat selection in southwest Saskatchewan

Eastern Yellow-bellied Racers are a threatened species in Canada. The only known populations occur in Grasslands National Park. The RSM and its partners are tracking snakes outfitted with radio-transmitters, to discover which habitats they prefer and the locations of their wintering dens. This information will be used to build a national recovery strategy. ■



BEST staff also various festivals and public events to give visitors a closer look at some of their work.

Honourary members celebrated at 2009 AGM

Ron Borden, Director of the RSM

February 1983-June, 1996



Ron Borden's history with the RSM and the RSMA is really what museums are all about.

In 1986 Ron convinced government to allow a non profit organization "Friends of the Museum" to work within one of its institutions. And he boldly stepped outside the constraints of museum security and dedicated funding to purchase a robotic dinosaur. This was an immediate hit! Today, that same robotic dinosaur, Megamunch, is still a huge success.



Ron encouraged and directed the development and opening of the Earth Sciences Gallery (1989), and the First Nations Gallery (1993).

After fire struck the museum on February 16, 1990 Ron kept the museum open and argued that rather than repairing the smoke damaged Life Sciences Gallery it should be totally replaced. He won. The RSM went on to develop one of the finest natural history galleries in Canada.

A crowning career achievement was to have the museum receive Royal assent. The designation 'Royal Saskatchewan Museum' was awarded and announced at the opening celebrations of the First Nations Gallery.

Ron Borden worked throughout the museum community and in 2001 was awarded

an honorary lifetime achievement award from the Museum's Association of Saskatchewan.

Ron has left a wonderful legacy. His foresight, dedication and energy are all attributes visible with the RSM today.

Donne Hoppe, Executive Director, RSMA and Manager of Apperley Place

Mid 1990-August 1999



Donna was part of the museum team during a very exciting period—gallery development. She recalls how she felt privileged to work with the Board of Directors at that time and the museum staff who willingly assisted to support the Associates in their endeavours. Endeavours such as the various fund raising events they held for the developing galleries. Donna said "The phrase "volunteering time, energy and expertise" was demonstrated over and over again with commitment and passion," and how well the Associates and Museum staff worked together, "Hand in hand, both worked to realize a vision with integrity, creativity, patience, gratitude and humour. There was a willingness to extend oneself, living a little larger perhaps."

As manager of Apperley Place Donna brought personal gifts to the museum. She had the ability to listen to the likes and tastes of people and assist them in making appropriate choices.

Donna made an important comment in her letter of acceptance, "to not be afraid of a challenge, to understand fully the rewards of commitment and passion, and to laugh. Indeed it never really was a job but an experience." ■



Fun fact

A technician working on the moose in the gallery used lipstick to touch up around the mouth and nose! His colour? Sparkling sandstone.

Guest comments:

"Very interesting. Staff were extremely helpful. Thank you"

Dec. 10, 2009, Regina, SK

"Wonderful to the eyes. It opened mine."

Dec. 17, 2009, Regina, SK

"Great Museum! Thank you!"

Dec. 19, 2009, Fredericton, NB

"Great to see Megamunch again!"

Dec. 23, 2009, Vancouver, BC

"What a fantastic museum! Well done."

Dec. 24, 2009, Calgary, AB

"Great improvements: Great job"

Dec. 26, 2009, Edmonston, AB

"Great memories"

Dec. 27, 2009, Tokushima, Japan

"Megamunch still scares me..."

Dec. 27, 2009, Halifax, NS

"Great museum. Thank you, thank you very much."

Dec. 28, 2009, Memphis, Tennessee

"Really loved this museum. Great work. We will visit again"

Dec. 29, 2009, Niagara, ON

Happy New Year to all from your RSMA Board



We have embarked on a plan of renewal and hope to provide added value to you our members and to the community at large. The Board is also in the process of reviewing its operations and exploring how we can grow our membership. A new committee structure has been created and we have embarked on the development

of a new strategic plan. Stay tuned for updates over the course of the year.

As we start a new year and a new decade we consider the things of the past year for which we are thankful. In the summer of 2009 we hired Rob Hubick who oversees the RSMA day to day operations. Rob rounded out our staff and brought support to Margot Mack, our program co-ordinator and Pat McGillis our gift shops manager. We are

also thankful for all our staff who assist Margot, Pat and Rob in delivering programs and the home grown and home spun merchandise you will find within our shops, and in supporting the RSM in its endeavours. ■

— Wayne Hellquist
RSM Associates Board of Directors

Happy New Year from the staff of the RSM Associates



2009 has been an exciting year at the RSM. Pat, Gift Store Manager for both Apperley Place at the Museum and Cumberland Gallery Gift Shop at the Legislative Building, and her staff have done a great job of introducing new and wonderful Saskatchewan made products. Sales have been good at both stores with many customers commenting on the quality and unique

selection. Pat is clearing out some of her Christmas stock so come in and check out the great deals.

Margot, our Program Co-ordinator, and her staff have done a great job of creating new and exciting adult and children programs. These programs continue to be popular and continually sell out well in advance. Make sure you keep an eye on our website www.royalsaskmuseum.ca for updates on all our programs. As a member of the RSM Associates you are entitled to discounts and special promotions at the gift stores and for our programs.

We look forward to an exciting 2010 and hope you will take advantage of all we offer. New and fresh ideas are always welcome so please feel free to drop us a line with your suggestions. Or better yet, stop in and see us. Thank you for your support and we look forward to hearing from you.

The management and staff wish you a prosperous and wonderful 2010. ■

— Robert Hubick, B. Comm.
Executive Director, RSM Associates

Public & community programs & events at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum

January 16 Saturday, 9:30-11:30 am

Winter Wonderland!

Megamunch Club #5. Bring your toques and mitts today as we explore the great outdoors!

January 18 Monday, 7:30 pm

Nature Regina

Public welcome.

Visit <http://nonprofits.accesscomm.ca/mhs> for more info.

January 19 Tuesday, 12:10-12:50 pm

Invasive Weed Management

PCAP presents *Native Prairie Lunchtime Speaker Series*

January 19 Tuesday, 7:30 pm

Regina Archaeological Society presentation

Public welcome. Visit <http://gentt.sasktelwebsite.net> for info.

January 20 Wednesday, 7:00 pm

RSMA Board of Directors monthly meeting

January 22 2:00 pm

Citizenship Ceremony

January 24 Sunday, 1:00-4:00 pm

Winter Wonders!

Young Explorers #1. Come prepared to delve & dive into the snowy facts of winter wonders!

January 30 Saturday, 9:30-11:30 am

On the Brink!

Megamunch Club #6. All about Saskatchewan's endangered animals!

February 4 Start time TBA

Celebrity Reader Event

Presented by Sask Archives Board

February 15 Monday, 7:30 pm

Nature Regina

Public welcome.

Visit <http://nonprofits.accesscomm.ca/mhs> for more info.

February 16 Tuesday, 7:30 pm

Regina Archaeological Society presentation

Public welcome. Visit <http://gentt.sasktelwebsite.net> for info.

February 17 Wednesday, 7:00 pm

RSMA Board of Directors monthly meeting

February 21 Sunday, 1:00-4:00 pm

Burrow In!

Young Explorers #2. A favourite afternoon featuring the SBOIC's newest ambassador GEORGE.

February 26 Friday, 7:00 pm

Regina Delta Blues Festival

For more info please visit www.reginablues.ca

February 27 Saturday, start time TBA

Belly Dancing performance

Visit www.royalsaskmuseum.ca for more

The *What's On* section of the RSM website will keep you posted on what is happening and what is coming up. Track our online calendar for up-to-date details on numerous special events throughout the year for seniors and adults as well as programs for kids and families.

Also, be sure to check out the *Kids Domain* section featuring interactive and downloadable games, crafts and a kids encyclopedia providing information about Saskatchewan birds, mammals, and insects!

March 7 Sunday, 1:00 pm

Kumon Learning Center Awards Ceremony

March 15 Monday, 7:30 pm

Nature Regina

Public welcome.

Visit <http://nonprofits.accesscomm.ca/mhs> for more info.

March 16 Tuesday, 12:10-12:50 pm

Riparian Assessments

PCAP presents *Native Prairie Lunchtime Speaker Series*

March 16 Tuesday, 7:30 pm

Regina Archaeological Society presentation

Public welcome. Visit <http://gentt.sasktelwebsite.net> for info.

March 17 Wednesday, 7:00 pm

RSMA Board of Directors monthly meeting

March 28 Sunday, 1:00-4:00 pm

What lurks beneath?

Young Explorers #3. Discover the facts about those pond & marsh-dwelling creatures!

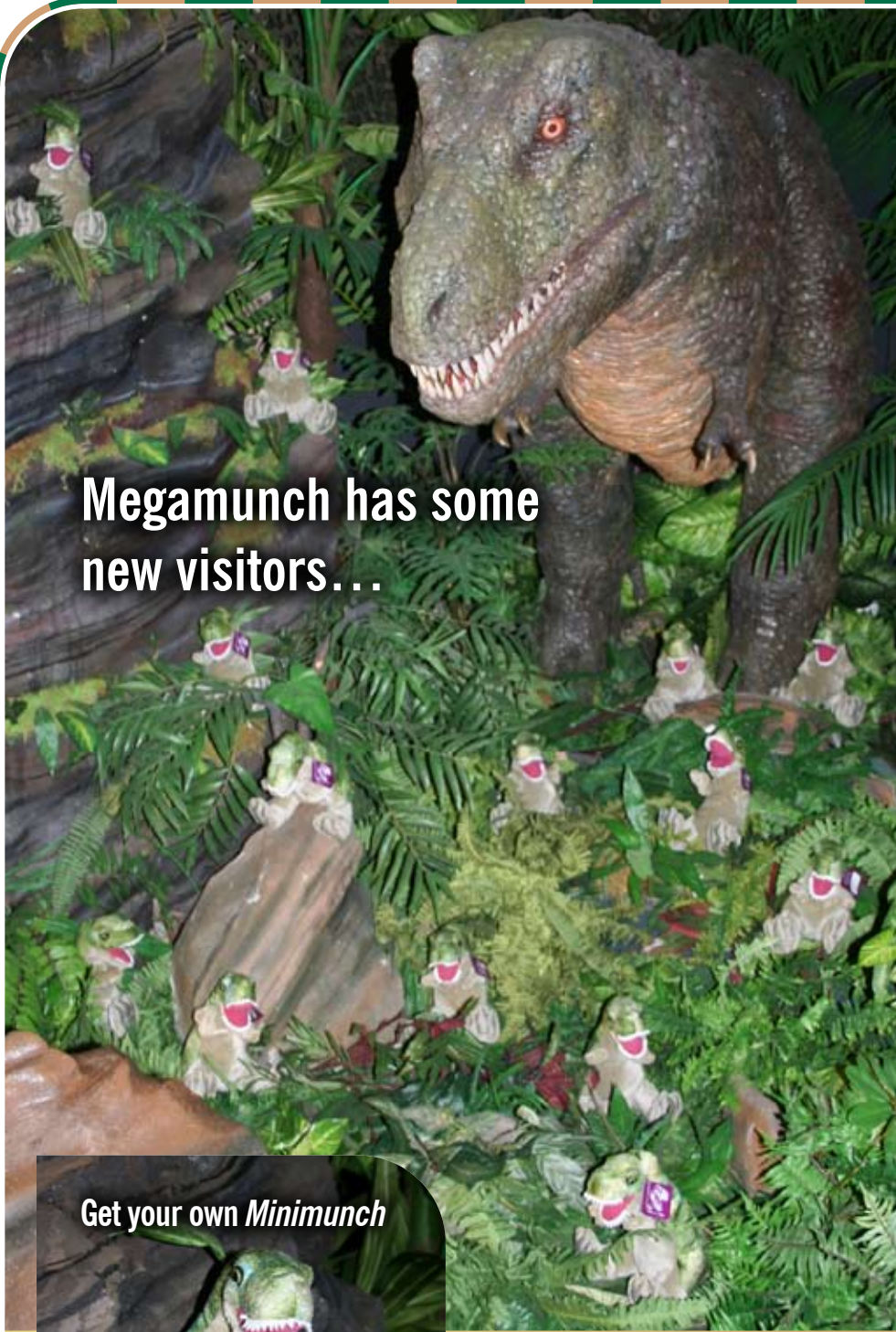
Kids & Family

Concerts, Films and Special Events

Workshops

Talks





Megamunch has some new visitors...

Get your own *Minimunch*



or bring a smile to the dino-lover in your life!

RSMA members can purchase their very own for only \$15.00!



2445 Albert Street, Regina, SK, S4P 4W7
Phone: (306) 757-5951



Saturday mornings 9:30-11:30 am

Perfect for 5-8 year olds! Each program includes plenty of facts and fun, with crafts, experiments, stories, gallery visits, and snacks!

\$10 + GST/program

January 16

Winter Wonderland!

Bring your toques and mitts today as we explore the great outdoors!

January 30

On the Brink!

All about Saskatchewan's endangered animals!



Sunday afternoons 1:00-4:00 pm

Perfect for those "fact-finding" 8-11 year olds! Each program is 3 hours of educational fun, crafts, experiments, stories, games, gallery visits and snacks!

\$12 + GST per program

January 24

Winter Wonders!

Come prepared to delve & dive into the snowy facts of winter wonders!

February 21

Burrow In!

A favourite afternoon featuring the SBOIC's newest ambassador GEORGE.

March 28

What lurks beneath?

Discover the facts about those pond & marsh-dwelling creatures!

April 25

Soar into Spring!

An afternoon of springtime facts, fun & games!

Pre-register for either club at the RSM Gift Shop or by calling 757-5951 with a credit card.

