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Interesting South American Fossils:
Herrerasaurus (top) and *Eoraptor lunensis* (bottom)

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Front Cover: *Herrerasaurus* and *Eoraptor lunensis*, two new dinosaurs from the Ischigualasto Formation, Argentina.

Images courtesy of the Paleonet and its links (www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/Paleonet/)

FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings all,

Thanks to all the contributors to the current issue – good to see some interesting new research is being imprinted into journals. Included in this issue are contributions from John Almond and Fiona Evans which should have appeared in the last issue but unfortunately slipped through our editorial net (apologies and thanks John and Fiona).

Well, the GONDWANA 10 Symposium has come and gone (June 28 – July 4), back in Cape Town for the first time since 1970. It seemed to be highly successful, thanks to Martin de Wit and all the other organisers for a stimulating and informative meeting – the take-away message was that palaeontology, although important, needs to make itself more accessible, interesting and relevant to the science community, but particularly to up- and coming students so that the “palaeontology research front” can broaden and strengthen. It appears that the next GONDWANA meeting might be in the Antarctic region in 2001!, better get those extra winter woolies ready just in case! The Human Palaeontology Dual Congress, also 28th June – 4th July was by all accounts also very successful, with a number of newsworthy snippets appearing in various newspapers.

Looming up ahead is of course PSSA '98, in Windhoek 14-17 September 1998. All seems to be going ahead for an interesting meeting, the first outside South Africa, it's excellent to see the large number of overseas delegates already registered.

The Year of Science and Technology seems to be going along pretty well with numerous educational projects and programmes buzzing around the country. Of numerous educational projects and programmes buzzing around the country. Of numerous earth science and palaeontological interest are various educational “products”, which have been funded by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, and produced by the Council for Geoscience, including; a series of 15 minute videos aimed primarily at early high-school goers, a series of four posters, audio tapes (young children) and printed schools and teachers training college curriculum booklets. For further information, contact your editor.

Cheers, Patrick

JEWEL FROM:

JOHN E. ALMOND, GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, BELVILLE

The principal or sole macrofossils recorded from a high proportion of Early to Mid Palaeozoic siliciclastic successions in southern Africa are trace fossils - sad, but true! My research over the past few months has been largely devoted to writing up several years' work on marine, brackish and freshwater traces from the Palaeozoic of the Western and Northern Cape. Ichnofaunas from the Early Palaeozoic Vanrhynsdorp and Table Mountain Groups (plus a few other chronostratigraphically less well - constrained successions), Early Devonian Bokkeveld Group, and the Permian Ecca Group have been reviewed. It is hoped to present some of this work at an ichnological conference in Mar del Plata, Argentina early next year as well as at the Gondwana -10 Symposium in June - July 1998. The recent discovery at Verlorelei (W. Coast) of rare arthropod trackways from the Klipheuwel Group represents the first fossil record from this predominantly continental red bed succession, which is probably of Cambrian age. The trackways (cf. *Meristomichnites*) closely resemble material known from the slightly younger (Early Ordovician) Graafwater Formation towards the base of the Cape Supergroup. While restricted, non - marine trace assemblages from the upper Witteberg (Lake Mentz Subgroup) have already been sampled in collaboration with Fiona Evans (Stellenbosch University), fieldwork in the immediate future will focus on the more diverse but poorly - known shallow marine ichnofaunas from the lower Witteberg Group (Weltevrede Subgroup). Some of this work will be carried out in conjunction with Professor Ed Cotter (Bucknell University, USA) who is currently on sabbatical at UCT and is interested in tectonically - mediated, small - scale cyclical sedimentation patterns in Late Devonian (Frasian) successions worldwide. The diversity of traces (c. 50 ichnogenera) now recognised from the western outcrop area of the Ecca Group far exceeds that recorded from large brackish to freshwater basins elsewhere in mid to late Permian Gondwana. The variety of depositional settings represented (offshore basin, turbidite fan, prodeltaic, delta front and platform) and abundance of good exposures make the western Ecca Basin an ideal testing ground for refining ideas on the recently defined Permian Ichnofacies.

This was established for subaqueous non - marine trace assemblages and has been applied principally to Permocarboniferous lacustrine successions in South America. When one also considers the fascinating continental facies ichnofaunas, including invertebrate and tetrapod tracks, burrows and coprolites from alluvial floodplain and shallow lacustrine settings, which have also been described from the Permian Triassic Beaufort Group, by Roger Smith (SAM) in particular, it seems likely that South Africa could become a world class Mecca for Palaeozoic trace fossil research.

Palaeozoic fish continue to fascinate, with two joint papers on South African Devonian ichthyofaunas nearing completion. A short account of the Bokkeveld fish fauna was recently published in the new popular magazine *Stratigraphy*, where a brief notice of a new palaeoniscoid fish find from the Schoorsteenberg Formation (Ecca Group, W. Cape) of probable Kungurian (Late Permian) age will also appear soon. The Ecca fish specimen, though fragmentary, is important because well nigh no other macrofauna has been recorded from the western Ecca outcrop above the Whitehill Formation. Next year Fiona Evans and I plan to accompany the Ecca sedimentologist Dr Deville Wickens to the Tanqua Karoo in search of more fish material from the same horizon.

A long - standing general interest in Palaeozoic biotas of South America has been re - kindled by visits from three Brazilian scientists in the last year, including experts on Permian fossil wood (Laureen Sally Alves, UFRGS, Porto Alegre) and mesosaurid reptiles (Fernando Sedor, Centro Politécnico, Curitiba). I have been presented with a copy of the impressive abstract volume for the 15th Brazilian Palaeontological Congress which took place at Sao Pedro in August 1997. With about 180 papers (in English, Spanish and Portuguese) on all aspects of South American palaeontology, many of which should be very relevant to South African palaeontologists, their congress compares very favourably with our own biennial PSSA conferences. Next year I am hoping to be able to visit southern Brazil and Argentina and to use the opportunity to promote further academic exchange with Latin American workers, which should also be fostered by the Gondwana - 10 Congress in Cape Town. I would be glad to hear from local palaeontologists who are also curious to know what is

happening in their field on the other side of the Southern Atlantic and keen to establish contacts there (tel: 021 - 948 4754; email: gscience@iafrica.com).

PATRICK BENDER, GEOSCIENCE MUSEUM, PRETORIA

It's been quite a busy first half of 1998 in terms of conferences, with presentations at GONDWANA 10 and GEOCONGRESS, both on the Lower Beaufort Group ray-finned or actinopterygian fishes and their potential for correlation, although at the latter symposium I detailed more of the geological conditions inherent at my main research localities. At GONDWANA 10 I was able to establish contacts with, amongst others, delegates from Brazil and India, which could prove useful in the 'quest for correlations'. GEOCONGRESS involved presenting data and ideas to a largely geological audience, their ideas and feedback were invaluable.

I recently had the pleasure of a visit from fellow fossil fish student Raoul Mutter, Zurich Palaeontological Institute—we exchanged ideas and swapped notes on early actinops - Raoul has fairly recently started a project on large European Mid-Triassic actinopterygian fishes. Meanwhile I have a couple of papers in press, one in the Records of the W.A. Museum (Perth) on a similar Late Permian deep-bodied form from Australia and South Africa, the other in S.A.J.S., introducing the Wilgerbosch fossil fish site. But increasingly upfront in terms of priority, is the process of trying to fashion-into-Phd-shape most of my Lower Beaufort fossil fishes work.....looking to submit in the foreseeable future.

BERNARD PRICE INSTITUTE (BPI), JOHANNESBURG

We saw out 1997 in somewhat subdued style, with most of our folk away at various conferences, on field trips or on Sabbatical. However, the New Year bustled in with a full complement: we welcomed Richard Lewis back from the Antarctic, where he had spent the past three months as Field Operations Manager for the geological field parties of the South Africans, Germans and Swedes. This included seven cold weeks of mapping in the field, and many more weeks building stores, pulling out old South African depots dating from 1948 till present, and laying new depots.

Sean Modesto joined us from Canada for a two-year stint as a post-doc. Sean's research focuses on the anatomy and relationships of Palaeozoic synapsids and reptilian amniotes. He received an M.Sc. in 1991 from the University of Toronto for his work on *Edaphosaurus boanerges*, an early terrestrial herbivore from the Early Permian of Texas, and a Ph.D. in 1996 from the same institution for research on mesosaurs, from the Permian of South Africa and South America. He is currently researching the anatomy, relationships, and biogeography of anomodont synapsids from the Karoo Basin.

At the beginning of the year we also welcomed several new students. Rosie Adendorf, from University of Natal, and Andrea Sanderson, from RAU, will both be tackling PhDs. Rosie will be looking at *Glossopteris*, while Andrea will be studying Cretaceous palynology. Ray Richter and Elizabeth Xenophonos are our new honours students: Ray is a full palaeontology student, while Elizabeth is part-geology.

In October last year Marion Bamford visited the University Paris VI to study the north African fossil angiosperm woods. She also spent some time at Université Claude Bernard in Lyon, France, studying Jurassic woods and learning new techniques. This visit to France was courtesy of the French Embassy. In November-December she attended two conferences in Australia. The first was held at Deakin University, Melbourne, and was on the "Permian of the Eastern Tethys". Here Marion presented a paper on South African Permian woods. The second was the "Palaeobiogeography of Australasian Faunas and Floras" Conference, held at Wollongong University, where she presented a paper on Tertiary woods.


Recent research on Namibian fossil woods has helped in correlating the South African and Namibian Karoo stratigraphy. This work is in collaboration with Bruce Rubidge, Ian Stanistreet and German geologists from the University of Wuerzburg.

In November Ann Cadman attended a symposium entitled "Palynostratigraphy of Low Latitudes" in Venezuela, where she presented the work done by Sue de Villiers and herself on West Coast palynology. Sue de Villiers was awarded her PhD very recently - our hearty hurrahs go

to this roller-blading mom. Sue's excellent and meticulous work has provided a detailed and thorough description of Early Tertiary palynology - a time period about which there is a dearth of such knowledge in southern Africa. She has now moved to Cape Town, but is still employed on a contractual basis by the BPI. An arrangement has been made with the South African Museum, whereby Sue uses their microscope and darkroom facilities, so that palynology continues apace, partly under the oaks (CT) and partly under the pollution (Jo'burg).


Our very best congratulations go also to John Hancox, who graduated at the same ceremony. John's fine PhD study was a ground-breaking analysis of the uppermost Beaufort/Molteno contact, and included the description of a totally new fossil fauna from this stratigraphic horizon.

Chris Gow has just spent several weeks doing fine preparation of the dentitions of some skulls of the Lower Jurassic herbivorous mammal-like reptile *Tritylodon* from the Elliot Formation. This fairly common genus has a cosmopolitan Pangean distribution. Its unique dentition is well described, but jaw function is not as well understood. Chris is now studying this



student, Ray Richter, a physical check of all fossils in the Karoo Vertebrates Collection was begun and is now nearing completion. This will mean that for the first time since the Great Trek from the old BPI location in Douglas Smit House to the present location in 1985, it will be possible to retrieve each and every fossil according to its recorded storage location. Previously it was not a problem not having this information, as the prodigious memory and intimate knowledge of the collection of James Kitching meant that a fossil needed for any reason could be located within minutes. Since James' retirement, that facility has gone with him and no reliable fossil retrieval existed to take its place, so it was essential for technology to fill the gap. All the location details are being added to the computerised database, so retrieval in future will hopefully be at least as reliable as James' memory!

Otherwise Mike's time has been filled with matters relating to the administration of the collections both in the BPI and in the Dept of Anatomical Sciences at the Medical School. In addition, he is involved in the



Bruce continues his search for the earliest land-living mammal-like reptiles. In February he was assisted in this mission by Sean Modesto and Johann Velman, John Nyaphuli and Joel Mohoi from the National Museum, Bloemfontein, when they ventured into the palaeontological wastelands south of Aberdeen. The Karoo heat was intense and the fossils few. During May Bruce accompanied Ian Stannistee and a team of geologists from the University of Wuerzburg, Germany to collect fossils in the Waterberg and Tuab Karoo Basins of Namibia. Fortune smiled favourably on this expedition and a few worthwhile specimens were recovered which will assist with biostratigraphic correlation of the rocks of those basins.

Our other post-graduate students are progressing at varying speeds. Grigor Aitken is still awaiting examiners' reports on his palynological PhD. Patrick Bender is progressing on his PhD studies of fish of two Permian pools in the Beaufort. He recently returned from an excursion with Bruce to the Victoria West and Nieu Bethesda districts. Heidi Fourie is in the final stages of her PhD, describing the post-crania of several therocephalian mammal-like reptiles. Elizabeth Latimer, after an interruption due to an argument with a taxi, continues her PhD endeavours of sorting out the confusing taxonomy of the rhinesuchid amphibians of the Beaufort. She is quite excited about some branchial elements found in *Uranocentrodon*, and is looking at the lifestyles and niches of her "pets". Elizabeth hopes to complete her studies by October. John Neveling is approaching the last birth pangs of his MSc on the biostratigraphic transition between the *Lystrosaurus* and *Cynognathus* zones of the Beaufort. Alain Renaut is approaching the end of his MSc, and has found some interesting things concerning the jaw mechanisms of the kannemeyeriid dicynodonts, part of his broader study of their cranial morphology. Lloyd Rossouw of the National Museum, Bloemfontein, is working on his MSc on fossil springbok, and recently spent a few weeks at the BPI writing up his initial chapters.

THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS

Report by Marion Duncan

The song is wrong. Not everything about show business is appealing - as we are finding out in this Year of Science and Technology. Through consultants

Josemar (better known in the persons of the directors Joseph Fink and Marion Duncan), we are piling up the showbiz experience in 1998. The BPI has so far been represented in at least a show a month since February, and it looks as if that rate is going to carry on until the end of the year.

It started with the Yebo Gogga show at the Johannesburg Zoo in February when the BPI joined the Department of Zoology in its annual tribute to the world of insects. This time, however, live creepy crawlies were joined by Fang the African dinosaur and Fred the South African mammal-like reptile as well as Shelob the giant hairy Carboniferous spider and other BPI models in a display on the evolution of insects.

Then came the National Festival of Science and Technology (Scifest) in Grahamstown in March, where our robotic prehistoric creatures were a triumph- despite the nightmares caused to many of the 30 000 visitors because of Shelob.

In fact, the show was so good that the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology negotiated through Josemar to take components to various provincial Focus Weeks throughout the Year of Science and Technology. So our menagerie hit the road again and headed for Umtata in the Eastern Cape with Marion, Joseph and the Institute's own Marvin Carstens in attendance.

The venue was the Teachers' Training College Hall in Umtata, and the show ran from April 20 to 26 - a week that produced roller-coaster results ranging from personal disasters to professional victories. Said Marion: "We had endless problems with our accommodation, which was supposedly arranged before we left Johannesburg. The evening of our second day in Umtata, we arrived back at the hotel to find the staff playing Chinese Checkers with our belongings. Joseph's and my clothes had been thrown into our cases and put into Marvin's room; his clothes had been stuffed in his bags and put into an empty room; and the clothes and luggage of an anonymous third party were in our room. It took hours to sort out.

"As for the show itself, the impact we had was devastating - literally. None of the visiting teachers, teacher training students or schoolchildren had ever been exposed to prehistory before, and they were desperate for information - so desperate that all our labels were stolen from our display tables. We found ourselves with groupies: youngsters that would come back day after day to learn more.

"But the level of education (or lack of it) was frightening. Teachers and teacher trainees were asking us if it was true that the world was round. They did not know how day and night worked, or how the seasons happened. They had never heard of the solar system. It was emotionally draining to encounter such overwhelming ignorance, coupled with such a depth of desire for knowledge. Many of the trainees actually cried when we left."

After that, it was full steam ahead to the Wits Open Day on May 9, when much of the successful Scifest show was repeated (with embellishments that are only possible on home turf).

Unfortunately, the Open Day clashed with the Free State Focus Week in Bloemfontein from May 8 to 12. Solution? Simple: Joseph did a solo act with the BPI (Palaeo)'s static model Freda, Shelob the spider and the giant Carboniferous insects (Hermes the dragonfly, Frankie the prehistoric fly and Jo the cockroach) as well as a bootfull of fossil replicas, while the rest of the family (Fang, Fred the robotic Tapinocaninus, George the Gorgonopsian and his prey Lunch, a much-demised Aulacephalodon) stayed in Jo'burg for the Open Day itself.

As this is being written, our entire menagerie is on display at the biggest, longest show of the year - the Earth Expo in Cresta shopping centre in Randburg from May 26 to June 7. At the end of that run, there's two days before the next engagement for the robots: a three-day show at St Stithians College in Randburg from June 11 to 13. Then there's two whole days before the start of the next confirmed Focus Week show - for Mpumalanga, to be held in Nelspruit.

Said Marion: "It's got to the stage where the Premier's office from Mpumalanga phoned through to plead for the presence of the Wits dinosaurs. It's exciting, of course, and enormously gratifying. We're developing a national awareness of palaeontology and we're contributing successfully to the Wits Income Generation Programme because the Focus Weeks are earning money (from the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, or the Provinces, or a combination of the two). It's also exhausting. But it's well worth it, because we're achieving a level of exposure that we could only dream about until now."

* Other engagements for the year include the Focus Weeks for Kwazulu-Natal (July), Northern Cape (August), North West Province (September), Northern Province (October) and Gauteng (November).

ARTHUR CRUIKSHANK, LEICESTER, UK

It has been some time since I made a contribution to PALNEWS – not that it has been idleness on my part, but maybe just too busy! The Mesozoic Marine Reptile Programme has continued to run pretty well, with several projects reaching completion.

A) At last, Ewan Fordyce and I have submitted the New Zealand Cryptocleidid Plesiosaurid – it's gone to PALAEONTOLOGY for refereeing with fingers crossed!

B) The projects I started with John Long in Perth (WA) have more-or-less been completed: short papers (the one before lunch and the second after lunch); one described some long curated isolated plesiosaurian bones and the other dealt with small mid-caudal vertebrae from a theropod. However, the main paper describing two partial pliosauroid skeletons (a taxon close to the animal I described at Grahamstown in 1994) has also appeared. All three in the Records of the WA Museum.

C) A spin-off from the above, I found myself in the company of several South African colleagues in Perth at CAVEPS 6 (July 1996), with a short review paper resulting, co-authored by John and Ewan on Australasian plesiosaurs.

D) The Molteno palaeoecology paper, with John and Heidi Anderson as

senior authors, has appeared in PALAEONTOLOGY volume 41 part 3. It all started in 1993 over beer at a braai. Dangerous that!

E) Offering papers to International Symposia is also dangerous for burning midnight oil, destroying trees (in the form of computer print-outs) and losing hair. However, having taken up the challenge, two papers were offered and accepted for GONDWANA 10. Plesiosaurus of course, but they don't feature too often in Gondwana literature (with Ewan Fordyce), and a joint paper with Sue Gay, a Ph.D. student of some years ago, on the biostratigraphy of the Tanzanian Ruhuhu Valley, viz-a-viz the Beaufort. Interesting results, I think.

F) Spurred by the opportunity to attend the PALSOC meeting in Windhoek, I have put together a first long-shot attempt at a palaeocology of the Late Permian in the NE Karoo Basin of Kwazulu-Natal.

G) Having taken on board some ideas on Heterochrony from John Long and Ken McNamara of Perth (WA), I am trying to rationalize functional reasons for the Plesiosauroid / Pliosauroid split. Its all down to neotony acting on pliosauroid juveniles in a situation similar to the niche partitioning effected by crocs., to keep their juveniles away from dad and being eaten. But watch this space!

H) My current student Leslie Noe is writing up his Callovian (M. Jurassic) Pliosaurus and the Leicester Museum's other research associate (Richard Forrest) is looking at predation patterns, as evinced by tooth marks on Plesiosaurus linus bones. It's all go in Laurasia!

BILLY DE KLERK, ALBANY MUSEUM, GRAHAMSTOWN

In early January I was asked to help with the part production of a video focusing on research being done on SA vertebrate fossils. This educational video, being produced by Meldt van der Spuy, was sponsored by DACST and I look forward to seeing the whole program soon. Discovery Channel - Jurassica were also in town for four days in May filming part of a program entitled "When Dinosaurs Ruled Africa". This is one program in a series of five which will be completed by the end of the year. Apart from filming some of the work we are doing in the lower Cretaceous Kirkwood Formation, I was also able to organize the filming of a re-enactment of the famous Tendaguru Basin expedition carried out by the Germans in Tanzania in 1908.

On the research front - at the beginning of the year I was eventually able to get around to the preparation of a plaster jacketed block of Kirkwood mudstone which we had collected in June 1997. At the time the block "just looked interesting". It has so far yielded a most exciting prospect in the form of a partly articulated baby ornithomimid (holotype?) dinosaur. We had been finding many fragmentary bits of other individuals in the same general area but were frustrated by not finding something more substantial to work on. Watch this space!

In February I was able to secure the co-operation of a partnership of Radiologists at the Greenacres Hospital in Port Elizabeth to do a series of CaT scans and X-rays on the small theropod dinosaurs (Kirky) that we are currently describing. The X-ray images were very revealing and the CaT scans also helped a great deal in the preparation of the specimen. We now know that the teeth and jaws are not present - pity!

It was again nice to be able to join Bruce Rubidge, Johan Welman and their field team for a week in February to look for fossils in the lower Beaufort along the southern fringe of the Karoo basin (West of Jansenville). What splendid hospitality we enjoyed from the Karoo farmers and although we were not wildly successful in finding new dinocephalians or dicynodonts, we do now know where not to look in the future. Maybe we'll have better luck closer to Grahamstown in the new year.

Folk in the Eastern Cape are also being informed of the dinosaurs which have been found in this province as I've been presenting invited lectures to various clubs and interested groups in East London, Port Elizabeth, Fort Beaufort and King William's Town. SciFest'98, held between 28 March and 5 April, was again a busy time and although palaeontology didn't have as high a profile as last year there were never the less some good palaeontology, and geological displays set up by the BPI (Wits) and Rhodes University. Bob Brain also presented a fascinating key-note lecture which drew in the crowds. The SciFest is GROWING!!

FIONA J. EVANS, UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

Let me not repeat what others have said about how wonderful Australia was; suffice it to say that I learned an incredible amount (about acid preparation,

collections in the Western Australian Museum, and field work in Australia- what it entails and what amazing material there is!) and met some dynamic palaeontologists who have been very helpful in discussions of my research in particular. I have since been to the Karoo on the 6th International Conference on Fluvial Sedimentology post conference field trip with Roger Smith, Brian Turner, John Hancox and Gideon Groenewald as excursion leaders. This opened my eyes to the wealth of tetrapod fossil material there is in South Africa, and gave my sedimentological background a boost, not to mention my catering skills! The recent trip to Namibia to see collections in the Windhoek Geological Survey Museum proved very useful and I was pleased to note that the fish collection there is small but impressive. Together with Roger Swart from NAMCOR, Windhoek, Roger Smith and I headed to the area of Tses, Southern Namibia, to look at some of the fish localities in the Dwyka and also the Whitehill Formation (Ecca Group). I hope to return soon to collect further material for study.

Laureen Alves and Fernando and Sibelle Sedor have recently returned to Brazil after a month-long visit to South Africa. John Almond and I sped off to Louriesfontein and Calvinia to show them the Whitehill Formation, the equivalent of the Irati Formation in the Parana Basin of Brazil and Uruguay. At the top of our wish list were mesosaurid reptiles and wood; however we collected more fish and saw more crustaceans than they had hoped for!

I am to visit the Natural History Museum in London, and possibly the Tyrell Museum in Drumheller and the Vancouver Geological Survey before the end of the year, and will report back on any palaeontological delicacies which I find!

TOM MASON, ARMAGH PLANETARIUM, IRELAND

I am busy putting the finishing touches to a show for our Star Theatre about the Death of the Dinosaurs. It is an imported show from the USA which we have modified and supplemented with a display in the earth science display area. If all goes to plan we will have a Megalosaurus skeleton, baby dinosaurs, lots of eggs nests and eggshells on display, plus a display on

flight with Archaeopteryx and Pterodactylus casts on show. We are busy building and scrounging. I have casts en route from RSA (National Museum, Bloemfontein: Thanks Elize and Johann), plus others from the USA and the Ulster Museum. We will have a "Dig your own Dinosaur" patch with Coelophysis and Compsognathus skeletons cunningly concealed under sand in a big wooden frame. The little punters will brush away the sand, and Eureka, a skeleton.

The Planetarium is being rewired to make our display areas more flexible and easier to light with modern (cheaper and cooler running) lights. I have invested in new computer equipment, and upgraded the software and have applied for grants to upgrade our archive and production facilities, this will enable us to make our own shows in house again. With the vote for "peace" north and south I hope that it translates into more business. We had 100000 visitors during the first IRA ceasefire period, and we hope that this will steadily build up again.

I am also off to Canada during July to see old friends and travel to the dinosaur sites along the eastern Rockies. I'll be visiting the Drumheller and Red Deer sites amongst others. Really looking forward to fossicking again. The local fossils are all dull old things from the carboniferous, when Ireland was a subtropical paradise. Under 30 metres of water, but subtropical.

Maybe with global warming we can have a "kyk weer", and I can stock up on sunscreen.

I have also just heard that the assault on the departments at UK universities continues, and my departmental alma mater at Queens University is scheduled to be closed down. They are "too small". I sometimes despair that the teaching of students is completely driven by the accountants. They are rapidly joining lawyers, estate agents, used car salesmen and politicians as my least favourite humans!

To all of my favourite fossil-hunting humans, stay well.

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL MUSEUM, BLOEMFONTEIN

Johann Welman is continuing with research on various aspects of archosauromorph braincases. He is giving talks at the Gondwana 10 meeting in Cape Town at the end of June and the SVP meeting in Utah in September. A virtually complete skull and skeleton of *Moschorhinus* has recently been added to the permanent display in the Palaeontology hall at the National Museum. Francois Henning, who has shown a keen interest in Palaeontology since his school days, has taken up a permanent post as technician in the Palaeontology department.

James Brink is continuing work on the caprine. A new locality for the new species has been recorded in the Kouga Mountains, which is the third site in which caprine has been found.

The Florisbad Quaternary Research Department conducted test excavations at the Cornelia-Uitzoek type locality in March to establish the feasibility of a longer-term research programme at the site. Contrary to common wisdom, it seems that the site is still very productive. Our dig was focused on the basal gravels in which we found the remains of what appears to be a collapsed hyaena burrow. New material recovered includes a complete horn set of an ancestral black wildebeest, proboscidean remains and lots of Bondi springbok.

Further work at Erfkroon, a new Cornelian site on the Modder River near Florisbad, is planned for July with co-workers from Wits and Duke University.

PSSA FINAL NOTICE

10th Conference of the Palaeontological Society of Southern Africa – PSSA '98.

Final notices and calls for papers ahead of the final closing date of 15th

August 1998. Please note, if you have already submitted your details, this does not apply to you.

Conference dates: 14 – 17 September 1998.

Venue: Geological Survey of Namibia Auditorium, Windhoek

Registration fees: R450 (R300 for students)

Post Conference Excursion: Will run from 18th –23rd September, but please note that the excursion is fully booked. Participants will disperse from Noordoewer after the excursion. The cost is R 650.00.

Contact Person: Roger Smith (rsmith@samuseum.ac.za)

Accommodation: Will be at the Hotel Safari – opposite the conference venue. Please make your reservations directly with the hotel – e-mail: safari@iwwn.com.na – Tel: 09264-61-240240 – Fax: 09264-61-295652
PO Box 3900, Windhoek, Namibia.

Papers and Posters:

Please send your abstract, not later than 15th August 1998.

Abstracts as hard copy (typed), or digital copy (Wordperfect or compatible/ ASCII text) should be sent to Patrick Bender (bender@tm.up.ac.za.). E-mailed abstracts will be acknowledged within 3 working days. If you receive no acknowledgement, please send it again.

Papers can be about any aspect of palaeontological interest, a total of 20 minutes is allocated for the presentation including 5 minutes for questions.

Nominations for new committee members should be e-mailed to Roger Smith, or speak directly to him at the PSSA. Voting will take place during the BGM.

RUSSIAN MAMMOTH SOCIETY:

EXPEDITION FOR MAMMOTHS TO YAKUTIA

Esteemed Gentlemen!

The Russian Mammoth Society avails itself of the opportunity to welcome

you and invite you to co-operation in the field of palaeontology.

Today we have at our disposal information from utterly reliable sources (including video and physical evidence) that in Yakutian North there was discovered a well-preserved, whole mammoth body. A young individual of approximately 25 to 30 years of age laying in permafrost for at least 20000 years (it could be as true as 40000 years). Primary prospecting pioneered some hide and hair. Secondary experience proved to be more fruitful and revealed right front foot with three hoofs and skin. Nearby there is a haired part of the hide. We have all grounds to suppose well preserved soft tissues and innards of the beast. It seems obvious that the young creature weakened from injury or from being bogged down in the swamp. This boon is certainly of considerable scientific and museum interest. Currently we are planning an expedition to this place under the aegis of the Academy of Science of Russia.

Let us know if you wish to join!
Press-secretary Serguei M. Konotopov
The Russian Mammoth Society Ltd.
E-mail: mammoth@corbina.ru

PSSA MEMBERS ON EMAIL:

This list will be updated on a regular basis as I receive new or changed addresses.

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Reminder:

*Deadline for contributions for the next issue of PAL NEWS is
15th November 1998.*