

# *The Alumnidae*

Fall 2010

# *The Alumnidae*

Department of Zoology, Life Sciences West 501

<http://zoology.okstate.edu>

405-744-5555

## *Donation from Mercury Marine Expands Zoology's Fleet of Boats*

Mercury Marine of Stillwater has donated three boats to the OSU Zoology Department including a 17 foot Crestliner, a 17 foot Maxum, and a 26 foot Argos. The donation includes trailers for all boats. The smaller boats will provide excellent capabilities for work on smaller to mid-size reservoirs, while the larger Argos will facilitate research on large lakes across Oklahoma and the entire mid-continent. In addition to the research they will support, these boats will allow Zoology to expand its field trip offerings to students in numerous aquatic ecology courses. While most universities across the country are limiting field trip opportunities to students because of various financial and equipment constraints, Zoology continues to promote "hands-on" real world experience to our students. OSU Zoology greatly appreciates the support of Mercury Marine and its terrific Stillwater staff.



*The 26-foot Argos, one of three boats donated to OSU Zoology by Mercury Marine in Stillwater*

## *Greetings from the Department Head*

Zoology faculty and staff are undergoing some transitions that I would like to highlight here. Regents Professor Tony Echelle is retiring at the end of this semester after a long distinguished career at OSU. Tony will remain active as an emeritus faculty member maintaining his office on the third floor. We wish Tony and, his collaborator and wife, Alice, all the best and look forward to working with them far into the future. Dr. Joe Bidwell, Director of the Ecotoxicology and Water Quality Research Laboratory and associate professor in the environmental stress discipline will be moving to Australia to join the University of Newcastle. Joe has been the newsletter editor, including this issue, and has always done a terrific job. Ms. Naomi Cooper, manager of the Ecotoxicology and Water Quality Research Laboratory will also be moving back to her home country of Australia. We will miss our friends and colleagues, Joe and Naomi, and wish them continued happiness and prosperity Down Under! We welcome Dr. Michael Tobler who recently joined the Zoology Department filling Dr. Echelle's position. Finally, as of this writing we are in the interview process to fill Dr. Bidwell's position. We will have an announcement in the spring newsletter about this hire.

Have a wonderful holiday season and please remember to stop in for a visit if you are ever in the vicinity of Life Sciences West!

## *Annual Awards Celebration!!!!*

This upcoming year our awards celebration will be held on Saturday, March 26, 2011 in the newly renovated Murray Hall Parlor on the OSU campus in Stillwater, Oklahoma. We welcome all of our alumni to join us as we recognize and congratulate our top graduate and undergraduate students. If you would like to join us this year, please contact our office to ensure you receive an invitation: 405-744-5555 or [marsha.flasch@okstate.edu](mailto:marsha.flasch@okstate.edu).

## Faculty and Staff News

### French elected president of the National Association of Biology

**Teachers-** Zoology professor Dr. Donald French has been elected the 2012 president of the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT). At OSU, French is the coordinator of the Certificate in University Faculty Preparation Program. He also coordinates and teaches the introductory biology course, as well as graduate courses. His research focuses on teaching and learning of biology at the undergraduate level, and has been funded by the National Science Foundation, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, and Environmental Protection Agency. He will officially join the NABT Board of Directors on Jan. 1, 2011.



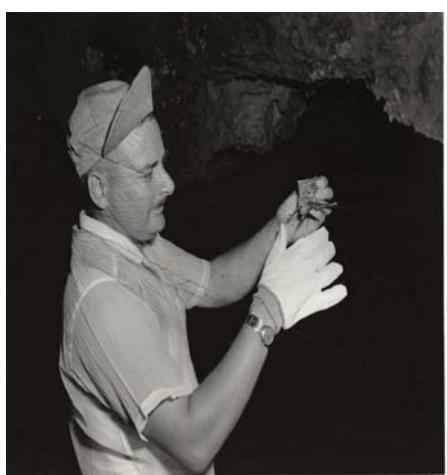
Dr. Don French

**Tobler Joins Zoology Faculty-** Dr. Michael (Michi) Tobler has joined the Department of Zoology as an Assistant Professor. Michi received his Ph.D. from the University of Zurich in 2008 and was based at the University of Oklahoma for much of the time he conducted his doctoral research. He then worked as a postdoctoral research fellow at Texas A&M University on a project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Michi's research efforts primarily are concerned with the evolutionary ecology of fishes. Using species inhabiting extreme environments, ranging from toxic springs and caves to desert rivers, he investigates how organisms adapt to hostile environmental conditions and how such adaptation can lead to the formation of new species. Michi has hit the ground running and undertook a complete revamp of the Department of Zoology website—please visit <http://zoology.okstate.edu> to check our new look. We welcome Michi and his wife Courtney to Stillwater!



Dr. Michael Tobler

**In Memoriam- Dr. Brian P. Glass-** Dr. Brian Glass, Emeritus Professor of Zoology, passed away on August 27, 2010 at the age of 91. Dr. Glass was born in Mandeville, LA on 21 August 1919 and grew up in China where his parents were Baptist missionaries. He then came to the U.S. where he received the A.B. Degree from Baylor University in 1940 before returning to China during World War II to serve as an intelligence officer with the 14th Air Force "Flying Tigers" and Office of Strategic Services. He received a Presidential Unit Citation and the Asiatic-Pacific Medal with two Battle Stars for his military service. After the war, Dr. Glass returned to the U.S. and received a M.S. degree from Texas A & M in 1946. He then came to OSU and became a faculty member while working on his doctoral degree, which he received in 1952. In 1966, Dr. Glass became Director of the University Museum (later named Museum of Cultural and Natural History) and was also Curator of Vertebrates in the Department of Zoology from 1948 until his retirement. Dr. Glass was a very active contributor to the American Society of Mammalogists, serving as Secretary-Treasurer for more than 2 decades. He and his students conducted most of the early surveys of mammalian fauna of Oklahoma. He also was responsible for an intensive survey of the mammalian fauna of Ethiopia. Dr. Glass received the Outstanding Service Award from OSU in 1965 and the Outstanding Teaching Award in 1966. He retired from the University in 1985 but remained an active member of the Zoology Department well into his eighties.



Dr. Brian Glass

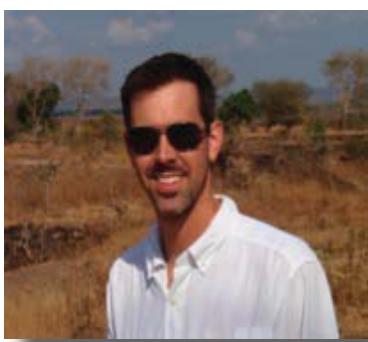
## Research in the Department



Dr. Jennifer Grindstaff

### Zoology Assistant Professors Receive NIH Grants

Drs. Jennifer Grindstaff and Alex Ophir have received separate research grants from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development of the National Institutes of Health. Grindstaff's grant for \$339,567 will evaluate the effect of different developmental environments on the health and behavior of an adult songbird, the zebra finch. Jen will test finches to see if fitness is maximized when developmental and adult environments are similar, or if individuals from high quality developmental environments have higher fitness than those from low quality developmental environments, regardless of adult environmental quality. Ultimately, the research should provide insight into the developmental origins of adult diseases and variation in behavioral responses. It also will help provide predictive information about the children most at risk from a low quality maternal or developmental environment and the most likely impacts on physiology and behavior.



Dr. Alex Ophir

Ophir's grant for \$349,175 will focus on the neurobiology of monogamy and social behavior in prairie voles, a rodent found throughout the Midwest USA. Prairie voles, like humans, are monogamous animals that form long-term pairbonds and exhibit behaviors that appear very similar to those that we humans might call 'love' for both a mate and for offspring. Alex's work will specifically examine how hormones in the brain regulate social affiliation, parental care (primarily from the father), territorial behavior, and memory. This research will provide a better understanding of what controls monogamy and offspring care by fathers and could ultimately contribute to understanding the causes of dysfunction in social attachment, such as autism or parent-infant bonding.

**Zoology to Construct Field Research Center-** OSU Zoology received \$350,000 to construct a new Field Research Building on lands assigned to the Department at Lake Carl Blackwell. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars were provided by the OSU Vice President for Research Office's Core Facilities and Facility Renovation Program and the remainder was matched with private funds. Zoology has a long history of conducting cutting edge field research and this facility will elevate that effort as well as make the department more competitive in garnering extramural funding from various federal, state, and nongovernmental agencies. The facility will include a chain link fenced area that will enclose the building and storage space for boats, vehicles, and trailers. The 6000 sq ft building will house 18 bays that will be assigned to Zoology faculty members for their research as well as a long central hallway that can be used to set up field experiments and to construct experimental field materials.

## Student Scholarships Available!

Students graduating from a two-year college (community or tribal) are eligible for substantial scholarships to enter OSU as Zoology, Physiology, or Biology majors through a National Science Foundation-funded S-STEM program. For more information visit <http://sstem.okstate.edu/> (or contact [kristen.baum@okstate.edu](mailto:kristen.baum@okstate.edu), [donald.french@okstate.edu](mailto:donald.french@okstate.edu), or [melissa.gentry@okstate.edu](mailto:melissa.gentry@okstate.edu)). Please also tell those you know about our program.



# *The Alumnidae*

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## *Research in the Department, continued*

### **Collection of Vertebrates Receives Grant from National Science Foundation**

**Science Foundation-** Dr. Karen McBee of the Department of Zoology was awarded a \$160,000 National Science Foundation Grant to upgrade the Oklahoma State University Collection of Vertebrates (COV). The grant will fund replacement of damaged and deteriorated cabinets for mammals in COV. The COV holds more than 13,250 specimens representing 26 of the 29 orders of mammals on earth today. These specimens represent biodiversity of mammals from every continent except Antarctica with an especially strong collection of Ethiopian animals. Some specimens are more than 100 years old. Materials from the COV are used in teaching and research activities throughout OSU life sciences disciplines. The specimens are the basis for research on patterns of habitat and climate change, genetic and evolutionary relationships, impacts of environmental contamination, morphology, and ecology. They are an important part of outreach activities with K-12 groups, with numerous school groups and youth organizations touring the COV every year. Specimens have been stored in three different locations in a variety of cabinets and boxes including ones hand made by Curator Emeritus Bryan P. Glass and his students during the 1950s. New cabinets will alleviate currently poor storage conditions and improve use of space renovated in 2009. Skeletal material will be housed in dust-free cabinets, and fragile tanned hides will be moved into custom cabinets similar to those for large, fragile textiles. NSF funding ensures protection of irreplaceable specimens, consolidation of specimens in one location, increased accessibility, and enhanced long-term management of mammals, which, in turn, facilitates collaborations with programs throughout OSU including the Colleges of Arts & Sciences, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Engineering, Architecture, and Technology, and Education. Funding for the project also will provide direct support to 1 doctoral and 3 undergraduate students who will be trained in curation and collection management.



Dr. Karen McBee



### *Graduate Student Accolades*

Anna Hiatt, a doctoral student working with Dr. Don French, is completing a term as the chair of the Graduate Student Committee for the Four Year College and University Sections of the National Association of Biology Teachers. Anna also won the Best Student Poster Award during the National Conference of the National Association of Biology Teachers in November 2010 in Minneapolis.

Will Jessie, an M.S. student in the Grindstaff lab, received an Edwin Glover Research Award for \$1,000 from the Payne County Audubon Society and a \$100 research award from the Oklahoma Ornithological Society.

Jay Burtka, an M.S. student in the Grindstaff lab, received a \$100 research award from the Oklahoma Ornithological Society.

Chad Boeckman, a doctoral student in the Bidwell lab, and Kenny Wallen, an M.S. student working with Dr. Kristen Baum, were awarded OSU Graduate College Research Fellowships for \$2,000 each in support of their summer 2010 research activities.

Justin Lack, a doctoral student in the Van Den Bussche lab, received the Karl F. Koopman Award at the 40th Annual North American Symposium for Bat Research in October 2010 in Denver.

## Alumni Updates

**OSU Alumni Pledge Continued Support of Zoology Graduate Student Research-** The Bob and Julia Bollinger Field Research Grant is awarded annually to an outstanding Zoology graduate student. Students receiving this \$1,000 award must be conducting field research (or have a field component) on a non-game species and use the funds to further their research. It has been awarded each of the past four years and Bob and Julia have pledged to continue the award for another eight years. Bob was born in Stillwater and has lived in Oklahoma all of his life. In 1972, he graduated from OSU with a B.S. in Zoology and then worked on a M.S. at OU (on reptile behavior). Family circumstances led to a big career change and in 1983 he pursued a career in financial planning. Within a year, he had obtained securities, insurance, real estate, and variable annuities licenses. In 1984, Bob joined an established planning firm in Norman. He returned to Stillwater in 1986 and his downtown office has been busy ever since. His Certified Financial Planner designation was conferred in 1987 and he then founded Bollinger Financial Advisory, Inc., a Registered Investment Advisor with the Oklahoma Department of Securities. In 1988, he became a Registered Securities Principal while supervising three other representatives. Now in his 27th year of practice, Bob provides many services to a loyal clientele. As a consumer advocate, he has helped consumers file complaints against illegal and unethical sales practices with various regulatory bodies and has served as an arbitrator for the National Association of Securities Dealers. Bob has served on many community boards and activities, including as President of Habitat for Humanity. Julia, received her Ph.D in Entomology from OSU and studied the population dynamics of the alfalfa weevil. She received her M.S. (Biology) and B.S. (Wildlife Management) from Arkansas State University. In 1990, Julia became a Visiting Assistant Professor in Biology at Tulsa University and joined the Department of Biological Sciences at Arkansas State University as an Assistant Professor in 1991. After resigning from this position to move back to Stillwater, Julia joined the OSU Zoology Department for one year as a Visiting Assistant Professor. She taught the General Biology courses. Julia's last teaching position was in the Microbiology and Molecular Genetics Department at OSU. Julia has numerous research presentations and publications. Bob and Julia are avid backpackers and have packed in seven countries. They have nine year old twin girls who also love hiking.

**Zoology Alum Co-authors Research Article in Science-** Dr. Dave Onorato recently co-authored a research paper on the benefits of an introduction program to help stabilize population numbers for the endangered Florida panther that was published in the prestigious journal *Science*. The study evaluated panther populations after the introduction of females from Texas that were moved to Florida to help increase panther genetic diversity and increase population numbers. The results indicated that the introduction of the Texas animals had a significant positive influence on a number of key panther population metrics. Dave received his Ph.D. from the OSU Zoology Department in 2003 and currently works as an associate research scientist with the Florida Panther Project, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.



Dr. Dave Onorato

## On the Origin of the name Alumnidae from Drs. Jerry Wilhm and Herb Bruneau

Shortly after Dr. Wilhm became department head in 1981, he wanted to initiate a newsletter for our alumni. He requested faculty and students to suggest names. Some of the names submitted were The Daily Buccal, The Pheromone, Symbiont, The Umbilicus, Cohort, Homeothermal Journal, Echo Locator, North American Chat, The Zoological Chat, The Zoological Cowboy, and Convergence. Dr. Bud Burks, former professor of Zoology and director of the Water Quality Lab until his retirement in 1995, came up with the name Alumnus. Dr. Tony Echelle suggested that the name should reflect the family of alums; hence the name Alumnidae. The first issue of The Alumnidae was dated Summer 1983. Some of you will recall the editors of the first four issues, Ann Redelfs and Luann Sewall Waters. Boyd Dill was the editor of issue 5 in 1986, and Joe Rackley from #6 through #11. Dr. Bruneau's retention of past issues of Alumnidae allowed many details to be provided in this article. Indeed, he had copies of two other publications of the Department of Zoology. Biodegradable News ran from 1972 until 1986 and Natural Selection was issued from 1995 until 1998.

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## *Keep in Touch and Help Us Grow Stronger*

We hope you enjoy The Alumnidae, and we hope to hear from you about future issues. To be sure that you continue to receive the newsletter, please update address and email information with the OSU Alumni Association at <http://www.orangeconnection.org/ng/UPDATEYOURINFORMATION/tabid/958/Default.aspx>.

If you have comments, questions, or contributions for The Alumnidae send them directly to [joe.bidwell@okstate.edu](mailto:joe.bidwell@okstate.edu)

## **YES! I want to support the ZOOLOGY DEPARTMENT at Oklahoma State University!**

### **1. DESIGNATION**

- Zoology Excellence Fund (223750)
- Wilhm Teaching Assistant Award (228230)
- Scholarships for Zoology Students (224550)
- Burks Student Award (223590)
- Dr. Michael Steelman Scholarship (229830)
- Collection of Vertebrates
- Zoology Animal Care Fund
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. AMOUNT \$** \_\_\_\_\_

### **3. OPTIONS**

- Check – Please make payable to the OSU Foundation
- Credit card # \_\_\_\_\_
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### **4. CONTACT INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me regarding additional gift opportunities.

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Or log onto our website to make a gift:  
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