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Norman Levi Riker
March 20, 1940 - January 11, 2021
Calvert Marine Museum Fossil Club Mourns the Loss of Fellow Collector, Preparator and Donor

A remembrance by Dr. Ralph Eshelman and Dave Bohaska.

Norman Levi Riker, age 80, of Dowell, Maryland, was an avid fossil collector, donor, and longtime friend of the Calvert Marine Museum. Norm was a founding member of the Calvert Marine Museum fossil club and was part of every museum excavation team that recovered whale and porpoise skulls from Calvert Cliffs in the 1970s and 1980s. Norm was the first person to systematically collect fossil sharks' teeth from Popes Creek providing valuable scientific information as to precise location. Access to the cliffs was down a steep gully. Norm would carry an extension ladder down and then climb the ladder so he could stretch the palm of his hand across the cliff face to feel for small sharks’ teeth protruding from the surface which he would then carefully collect recording the height above the beach and lateral distance from some well-known landmark.

Note the new day of the week, date, and time for our next fossil club meeting.
Monday, February 22, 2021, 7 pm, Zoom meeting. Public lecture by Dr. Victor Perez to begin at 7:30 pm. Zoom invitation to follow via email.
When he finished one section of the cliff as high and as far as he could reach Norm would move the ladder to the next section and continue his work for hours on end. When finished for the day he would then tote the ladder and fossils up the gulley and at home labeled and entered the data for each specimen.

**Ralph Eshelman**, the first director of the Calvert Marine Museum (1974-1990) recalls: Norm and I established a tradition of doing a fossil collection trip along the Patuxent River each Thanksgiving weekend before we put our collecting boat away for the winter. One year we had to postpone our trip for weather reasons so Ralph put away the life preservers, etc. A day later Ralph was getting ready to pull his boat when Norm called. He wanted to go fossil collecting. Off we went up the river as usual. A DNR marine police boat pulled us over for a routine safety check – no one else was on the river that time of year except for oystermen. The officer asked for Ralph’s boat registration, no problem. Then he asked to show him our life preservers. In our haste, Ralph had failed to retrieve the preservers he had put away for winter the day before. The officer would not allow us to proceed without life preservers. Fortunately, we were very close to Cat Creek Marina. We told the proprietor of our situation and he agreed to loan us two life preservers. The officer gave us a warning ticket and off we went to continue collecting on the river. On another occasion, we were using Norm’s small johnboat. After several hours, the wind really picked up and white caps were on the water. Norm, an experienced boater, knew it was not safe to continue back down the river in our little craft. We proceeded to the nearest available phone (probably Cat Creek Marina again - this was pre cell phone days). Norm called his wife Janice who brought Norm’s pickup for us to load the boat, gear, and fossils to get us safely back home.

During one Christmas-New Years holiday, Norm found a large dolphin skull along Calvert Cliffs. Since the usual CMM collecting staff were out of town, Norm formed a team of amateur collectors to salvage the skull. Norm’s specimen turned out to be the holotype of a new species *Macrokentriodon morani*. **Dave Bohaska**, former registrar of CMM and also a vertebrate paleontologist credits much of his collecting to Norm. When Norm saw an extreme low tide in the cove behind his home on some early weekend morning, he would wake Dave up with a phone call, get cursed at, and then turn up and drag Dave out collecting. Norm also donated at least 69 fossil specimens to the National Museum of Natural History, the Smithsonian Institution. They include 42 bird fossils, the majority of these collected from the famous Lee Creek Mine in North Carolina but some from Maryland including a miniature loon from Popes Creek. Other fossils include 8 cetacean fossils, seven seal fossils from both North Carolina and Maryland, seven peccary fossils, two sirenian fossils one from Popes Creek and one from near Parkers Creek, two fish, one horse, and one turtle fossil. Norm donated most of his large collection to the Calvert Marine Museum.

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Norm made the glass topped table under the Manana model in the photograph. An exceptional megalodon would be declared a “table tooth” in the field; some amazing Ecphoras and other fossils also made the grade.

Norm was a skilled fossil collector who made significant donations to the museum, but most of all Norm was a respected friend, colleague, and
supporter. As a small token of Norm’s contributions, a species of a beautiful snail known from Calvert Cliffs was named after him — Ecphora rikeri.

Cover photo of Norm holding a sperm whale tooth with shark tooth bite marks. Photograph by S. Godfrey.

Greetings Club Members!

President’s Column.

Most might have not noticed but the next CMMFC meeting will be held on a Monday evening, April 19th, beginning at 7pm. Dr. Godfrey has yet again arranged an excellent speaker for us so please add this time to your calendar and try to attend. Hopefully, we can have more zoom attendees with a different time than right in the middle of a Saturday afternoon.

It’s my wish that we all can meet in person at a CMMFC event at some point in 2021 so please do your part to keep yourself and those around you safe so that the virus stops spreading.

For me this is the best time of the year to get out to a beach and look for fossils. The water is clearing, the tides are lower (sometimes too low!!!), and less people are out on the beach. It is also the time of the year that presents the most danger with the freeze/thaw of the cliffs and the chance of hypothermia if one gets wet. Having the right gear and hunting with a buddy are the best ways to mitigate these risks so stay safe and act smart.

As for fossil trips, I am waiting for the details of a trip to Stratford Hall for April 17th. Club sign up for this trip was sent out via email in January. Hopefully this trip doesn’t get cancelled and we can resume collecting at other places as well in 2021. I hope everyone is doing well.

Submitted by Paul R. Murdoch Jr.

Members, You Can Now Renew Your Fossil Club Membership Online.

Members, You Can Now Renew Your Fossil Club Membership Online.

Rare Baleen Whale Periotic Donated to CMM

Ruth and Terrell Wilson recently donated a Miocene baleen whale periotic to our permanent collection. Their find was made towards the north end of Calvert Cliffs. For reasons not understood, it is an unusual place to find the remains of Miocene baleen whales. Many thanks. Photo by S. Godfrey.

Newsletter website: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/204/The-Ephora-Newsletter
Geology and Paleontology Technology for Everyone

By Dr. Victor Perez

Many people enjoy scouring the world in search of fossils, creating ample opportunities for new discoveries. These discoveries are not limited to professional paleontologists, but rather can be made by anyone. In fact, you might even have something new to science sitting in your house right now. The field of paleontology has benefited greatly from the natural curiosity of the public, but how would you know if you have something new or scientifically important? In general, the answer is to ask an expert by contacting your local museum or university. However, even an expert cannot tell you the importance of your fossils without some basic information. This article will provide an overview of some digital resources available that allow any collector to organize their collection like a museum would and contribute to paleontology research.

Any time you collect a fossil there is one absolutely critical piece of information that must be kept associated with it—its location. Paleontologists want to understand life on Earth in the context of time and space. In other words, how has life changed over millions of years and how does life vary across different environments? The location of your fossil can help to determine its geologic age and what type of ancient habitat it came from. The more precise your location data is, the more information your fossils can reveal about the past. The best way to record a precise location is to record the GPS coordinates of where you found your fossil. This can be done with ease if you have a smart phone. At the bottom of the Compass app, you should see the GPS coordinates of your current location (Figure 1). Alternatively, you can approximate the location of your fossil find using Google Earth. It also never hurts to take photos of how you found your fossil to provide more context for where it originated from.

Figure 1. Screenshot of the Compass app on an iPhone. You can see the GPS coordinates towards the bottom.

If you know the location of your fossil, there are other phone applications that can help you determine the age of the rocks where you are. Two of my favorite apps are Rockd and Mancos. Rockd is completely free, whereas Mancos costs $2.99 to download, making both easily affordable. Both apps use professional geologic maps that are compiled on www.macrostrat.org. So, if you prefer to do your research on a computer, you can just go directly to macrostrat to get your info. Once you select a location on the map, you will get an overview of the geology at that location, which will include the name of the geologic unit, its age, a description of the rock/sediment type, and in some cases a list of fossils and minerals that have been found there (Figure 2). Rockd also has a neat function called “paleo” that will let you see what the Earth looked like at different times (aka the paleogeography).

Newsletter website: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/204/The-Ecphora-Newsletter
Once you have recorded the location and the geologic age of your fossil, you now have the necessary information to determine the identity of your fossil and its scientific importance. If you want assistance identifying your fossil and want to make it accessible for potential use in research, the next step is to share your fossil. To do so, you will need a clear photo of your fossil with a scalebar (for example, a ruler or coin). You can find many different paleontology groups and pages on Facebook or Instagram that will help you identify your fossil. However, another option is to use the myFOSSIL mobile app or website (www.myfossil.org), which are social media platforms specifically for anyone interested in paleontology. Both are completely free; however, I personally prefer to use the website because it offers more functionality than the mobile app.

When you upload a fossil to the myFOSSIL eMuseum, you will be guided through the same process a museum uses to curate a fossil (Figure 3). The myFOSSIL community can help you identify your fossil and the information you provide will be verified by an expert. If your fossil has sufficient data associated with it, then your fossil will be marked as research-grade and will become accessible for use in future research. In general, scientists cannot conduct research on a fossil unless it is stored in an accredited museum collection. However, by uploading images of your fossil and its associated data, you will be creating a digital voucher for your specimen. These digital vouchers are aggregated in large global databases and become occurrence data, which basically means that your digital voucher validates a fossil occurrence from a specific time and place. With these tools anyone can participate in paleontology research and, collectively, we can improve our understanding of life on Earth!

Paleo Fiction by Dr. Peter Vogt

Local geologist Dr. Peter Vogt has written three books for teen readers that were inspired by Calvert Cliffs and their geology. All three are available on Amazon. If anyone would be willing to submit a review, I would consider it for inclusion in a future issue of The Ecphora. Photo submitted by Dr. Peter Vogt.

New Whale Species Identified in Gulf of Mexico

Submitted by Doug Alves.
Chimaera Chondrocranium Donated to CMM

I know very little about chimaera, so I was doing a little research to better familiarize myself with their anatomy. The skull that Zach gave us has an interesting feature called a tenaculum (the long dangly bit on top of the skull). I had no idea what this was, so I looked it up. Another name for a tenaculum is a cephalic clasper. Male chimaera use this cephalic clasper to hold onto females during reproduction.

So, turns out, our specimen is a male and I’ve learned something new today! Text and photo submitted by Dr. Victor Perez. ☼

Want to Learn More about Chimaeras?
This website had lots of interesting chimaera tidbits: https://sharkdevocean.wordpress.com/2014/08/26/introducing-chimaeras/

Submitted by Dr. Victor Perez. ☼

Ammonite Inside Out

Submitted by Bert and Lucy Williams. ☼

Casts for CMM Paleo

For many years, Connie Rankin has been making the archival jackets for the Miocene dolphin skulls and small whales in our collection. In addition to her skilled workmanship as a jacket maker, she is also a very gifted artist in making molds and exacting casts. As you can see here, her casts are so superbly well-painted that one has to pick up both the cast and original to tell which is which. Photo submitted by Connie Rankin. ☼

Physogaleus contortus Dentition Reconstructed

David Hoppe recently assembled this composite dentition of the Miocene shark Physogaleus contortus. It’s an extinct species so the dentition is a rough estimate, but I tried to base it off the extant tiger shark, as well as general trends in the morphology of shark teeth in different tooth positions.

Text and photo submitted by David Hoppe. ☼
A Giant Has Fallen…
The Smithsonian’s Emeritus Curator of Birds,
Dr. Storrs Lovejoy Olson

By Dr. Helen James

Image of Storrs Olson from: https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/vertebrate-zoology/birds/about/hall-fame

Storrs Lovejoy Olson was born to Beatrice Lovejoy Olson and Franklyn C. W. Olson on April 3, 1944, in Chicago, Illinois. His father was a PhD student in physical oceanography at the time, studying the water currents of Lake Erie. During his early years in Evanston, Storrs was exposed to biologists pursuing diverse projects including preserving fish and studying warbler migration at the F. T. Stone Laboratory of Ohio State University, on the shore of Lake Erie. The family moved to Tallahassee, FL, in 1950, where his father joined the faculty of the Florida State University (FSU).

As a boy, Storrs had a keen interest in fishes and was building up a personal collection, when at age 12, a Christmas Bird Count with the prominent Florida ornithologist Henry Stevenson influenced him to change his focus to birds. Storrs became a teenaged assistant to FSU graduate student Horace Loftin, who was trapping and marking shorebirds on the Gulf Coast. Upon his high school graduation, Storrs moved with Horace and his family to the Panama Canal Zone and attended the Canal Zone Junior College. Storrs and Horace made many excursions together to collect and study tropical fish and birds. Storrs subsequently graduated from the Florida State University and worked on a master’s degree under the renowned avian paleontologist Pierce Brodkorb at the University of Florida.

Storrs’ Panama bird records earned him a friendship with Smithsonian ornithologist Alexander Wetmore, who was writing a monograph on the Birds of Panama. This led to temporary Smithsonian jobs followed by enrollment in a PhD program at the Johns Hopkins University (ScD 1972) with Smithsonian support. His dissertation research on fossil rails (Rallidae) of the South Atlantic islands earned him a friendship with Smithsonian Secretary S. Dillon Ripley, who was writing a monograph on the rails of the world. Within a few years, Storrs was hired as Curator of Birds at the National Museum of Natural History (March 1975). He retired from the Smithsonian as a Senior Scientist in May 2009, but he maintained an office in the Bird Division and continued his research until recently.

Storrs was a prolific scientist, publishing over 400 papers on the paleontology, morphology, systematics, and faunistics of birds; on the history and literature of natural history collecting; and even on systematics of bryophytes. He maintained an enormous correspondence on these topics and forged friendships around the world. Storrs was energetic in the field and led dozens of expeditions to collect fossils and bird specimens for the museum, including to islands of Hawaii, the Caribbean, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Japan, and the South Atlantic, and continental locales in North, South and Central America, Australia, and Europe. Although a member of the Department of Vertebrate Zoology, he served as de facto curator of the fossil bird collection in the Paleobiology Department throughout his career. His contributions to the Smithsonian collections include
over 6,000 specimens of recent birds, and extensive fossil collections, mainly from his island expeditions.

Storrs’ publications cover all regions of the globe and all time periods during what he called “the Ornithozoic.” Among his notable advances were a survey of the fossil record of birds in 1985, his discoveries of Hawaiian fossil birds with his first wife Helen James, a monograph with Pamela Rasmussen on the fossil birds of the Lee Creek phosphate deposits in North Carolina, numerous contributions on the Quaternary avifaunas of Atlantic and Caribbean islands, and his work to complete Alexander Wetmore’s opus on the birds of Panama. He also wrote on Eocene birds, fossil seabirds, and ornithological collections and literature. He was a great bibliophile who wrote about the history of natural history collecting and exposed several cases of specimen fraud in ornithology.

Storrs held strong opinions and expressed them colorfully and boldly, both in person and in writing. His lively reviews of ornithological publications earned him several awards from the Wilson Journal of Ornithology. There was some trepidation in the administrative offices of the museum when a new memo arrived from Storrs, who was sure to explain in rich language what they were getting wrong lately. He is remembered for diving into the debate about the dinosaurian origins of birds with similar gusto. Storrs received many accolades during his career, including the Loye and Alden Miller Research Award from the Cooper Ornithological Society in 1994, and the Smithsonian Secretary’s Distinguished Research Lecture in 2007.

Storrs’ first marriage ended in divorce. He is survived by his wife Johanna Humphrey, his sister Susan Olson-Wallace, his children Travis and Sydney Olson, and his granddaughter Linnea Louise Olson. Cards can be sent to Johanna Humphrey, 1504 Caroline Street, Fredericksburg VA 22401.

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**Sculpey Polymer Clay Ammonite**

Jeri Cuffley’s at it again…having recently completed this polymer clay life-restoration of the ammonite Cameroceras. It lived mainly during the Ordovician period. Photos submitted by Jeri Cuffley. ☼

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Baby Megalodons Were 6-Foot-Long Womb Cannibals


Submitted by Ernest (Bert) H. Williams. ☼

Bitten Sperm Whale Tooth Found

David Hoppe found this impressive sperm whale tooth recently along Calvert Cliffs. Notice in the two following photos that there is a deep gouge mark at the base of the enamel crown. The gouge gives every indication that it represents a bite mark on the tooth. The gouge is too sharp for it to have been self-inflicted, rather the sperm whale tooth may have been bitten by a large predator or scavenger like megalodon. This is only the second-known sperm whale tooth that shows that it was bitten...the other one was found by the late Norm Riker in the Nutrien Phosphate Mine (formerly known as the Lee Creek Mine) in Aurora, North Carolina.

Photos submitted by David Hoppe. ☼

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Dolphin Skulls Quarried

CMM volunteers Pat Gotsis and Bill Prochownik found two dolphin skulls along the cliffs. Stephen Groff, Taylor Swanson, and Dr. Victor Perez joined them for the extraction. Here Victor and Stephen carry out one of the skulls.

Text and photos and submitted by Dr. Victor Perez.

Handsome Coprolite Found

Greg Pfaff found this lovely croc coprolite recently. In addition to its unusual shape, it preserves a variety of feeding traces. Photo by Dr. Victor Perez.

Great Hammerhead Chondrocranium for Shark Exhibit

Zach D’Alessio puts the finishing touches on a great hammerhead shark chondrocranium. This chondrocranium is one of the specimens that will be featured in our upcoming exhibit on modern and fossil sharks in the North Atlantic. Photo by S. Godfrey.

The Ghosts of Ancient Sharks at Mammoth Cave National Park


Submitted by George F. Spicka

Newsletter website: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/204/The-Ecphora-Newsletter
The Greater Your Storm, The Brighter Your Rainbow

Poozeum founder and coprolite collector, George Frandsen, was cleaning a new addition to his collection when it split in two pieces. George’s first reaction was to curse his bad luck by using the 4-letter expletive for a coprolite. He then examined the two pieces to see if it could be glued back together. This is when he saw vibrant iridescent colors in the center of the coprolite! His momentary frustration turned to great excitement knowing this fascinating natural wonder would have gone unseen if it weren’t for the piece accidently breaking.

The coprolite was discovered in the Santa Fe River in Columbia County, Florida. It measures 61mm X 30mm and weighs 58g. It is from the Pleistocene epoch (2,580,000 to 11,700 years ago). The coprolite’s maker is unknown. This is the only known coprolite that features iridescent coloring.

Text and photos submitted by George Frandsen.

For the Geologists in our Club

Jeri Cuffley and Gabriella Maier were commissioned to transform six basement poles into cave deposits (stalactites and stalagmites). Here is one of the finished poles. Photo submitted by Jeri Cuffley.

Newsletter website: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/204/The-Ecphora-Newsletter
Fossil-Collecting Heaven

Walt Johns and company both scuba dive and boat to hard-to-get-to-places where they find amazing fossils. Here is a selection of some of their recent finds.

A string of four associated carcharhiniform (gray shark) vertebrae.

David Hoppe with a large baleen whale humerus.

No comments needed. © Photos submitted by Walt Johns.

Newsletter website: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/204/The-Ecphora-Newsletter
Symphyseal Cow Shark Tooth Found

Stephen Groff found this lovely little N. primigenius symphyseal tooth in a fall of bed 10 recently. Photo submitted by Stephen Groff.

Whale Bone Squatters

https://www.hakaimagazine.com/videos-visuals/the-whale-bone-squatters/

Submitted by Doug Alves.

CMM Fossil Club Meeting and Lecture by Dr. Victor Perez

Time: Feb 22, 2021 07:00 PM Eastern Time.
Lecture to begin at 7:30.
Join Zoom Meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81617137904
Meeting ID: 816 1713 7904

Although Tim Scheirer has retired from the Exhibits Department at the Calvert Marine Museum, he is still very busy artistically. Here is his most recent stainless-steel creation, a modern sea turtle on display at the North End Gallery in Leonardtown, MD. Photo submitted Tim Scheirer.
Minutes from the CMM Fossil Club Meeting November 14, 2020

Grenda Dennis, Vice President, presiding

1. Christa Conant, Treasurer, report
   Membership 45 paid, 15 life.
   Members approved $1500.00 for internships.

2. Field trips
   October: Purse State Park
   Nov. 28: Odessa, DE. Cancelled until after harvest, will try to reschedule.

3. Stephen Godfrey: Paleontology Department
   a. Corrections and revisions made to turtle chapter of book, and resubmitted.
   b. Reviews in for odontocetes and seal chapters and currently updating.
   d. Sperm whale tooth showing megalodon bite marks to Acta Polonica. Shows interactions of two macropredators.
   e. National Geographic filming at CMM: Story about coprolite in 2010 publication (Josh Smith and Stephen).
   f. Small coprolites in paratype stargazer.
   g. Victor Perez working on shark exhibit, to open on mezzanine 01 July 2021. Specimens sent to Exhibits Department for mounting.

4. Dave Bohaska: Smithsonian museums closed

Old Business: Ruler design moved to next meeting

New Business:
   1. Elections: January nominating committee.
   2. Zoom meetings: Suggest Monday or Thursday about 7:00 pm; more people could attend.

Lecture: Dr. Kay Behrensmeyer, Smithsonian Institution, on taphonomy. Spoke particularly about projects at Amboseli National Park, Kenya; and Petrified Forest National Park, Arizona.
Submitted by Dave Bohaska.

Handsome Croc Tooth Found

Marcus Jones found this large Miocene croc tooth recently along Calvert Cliffs. Photo submitted by Marcus Jones.

New Song Leads to Ocean Discovery

Researchers find new population of blue whales in Indian Ocean.


Submitted by Yasemin Tulu.
CALVERT MARINE MUSEUM
FOSSIL CLUB EVENTS

Note the new day of the week, date, and time for our next two fossil club meetings.

Monday, February 22, 2021, 7 pm, Zoom meeting. Public lecture by Dr. Victor Perez to begin at 7:30 pm. See page 13 for Zoom link. Talk Title: "Sharks and Rays of Florida: a 45-million-year history". Victor will provide an overview of his dissertation research on chondrichthyan diversity from the Eocene through the Pleistocene of the Florida platform. He will also provide an introduction to myFOSSIL (www.myfossil.org) and how it can be used to curate personal collections.

Monday, April 19, 2021, 7 pm, Zoom meeting. 7:30 pm Zoom public lecture by Dr. Hali Kilbourne.

Title: “Sea Level Rise in Maryland”
Bio: Dr. Hali Kilbourne is a Research Associate Professor with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, at the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory campus. Before coming to Southern Maryland, Dr. Kilbourne was a visiting professor at McDaniel College and held a prestigious U.S.

National Research Council postdoctoral position with which she worked at the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration Earth System Research Laboratory. She specializes in the fields of Paleoceanography and Paleoclimatology. Her research focuses on understanding the climate of the last 2000 years to provide context for modern changes and to improve our understanding of climate system processes driving climate variability. Such information can help us improve climate models used for predicting future climate change by providing datasets of historical climate variability for data-model comparison. ☼

Coprolite Found along Calvert Cliffs

Marcus Jones found this large Miocene croc coprolite recently along Calvert Cliffs. Photo submitted by Marcus Jones. ☼
**The Ecphora** is published four times a year and is the official newsletter of the Calvert Marine Museum Fossil Club. The Editor welcomes contributions for possible inclusion in the newsletter from any source. Submit articles, news reports of interest to club members, field trip reports, and/or noteworthy discoveries. All opinions expressed in the newsletter are strictly those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the club or the museum as a whole. Copyright on items or articles published in *The Ecphora* is held by originating authors and may only be reproduced with the written permission of the editor or of the author(s) of any article contained within.

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