

**VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH AND COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE MEETING  
Aug. 21, 2021**

Present at the meeting were Dr. Art Evans, Dr. Tom Benzing, Melany Stowe, Mark Buss, Roberto Quinones Dr. Adam Pritchard, Dr. Kal Ivanov, Dr. Hayden Bassett, Dr. Nancy Moncrief, and Ben Williams. Committee members Dr. Carole Nash and Lisa Moerner participated via phone.

Committee Chairman Dr. Art Evans called the meeting to order.

The minutes were unanimously approved with no additions or corrections.

The members of the committee who attended in-person signed off on the museum's recent acquisitions, which represented a quorum.

Dr. Adam Pritchard provided an update on the recent paleontology trip to Wyoming. The trip, a longstanding museum tradition established by former paleontology curator Dr. Nick Fraser, took place throughout much of July. Pritchard, Paleo Technician Lucy Treado, Dr. Brooke Haiar and several of Haiar's students excavated fossils at multiple sites within Wyoming's Morrison Formation. The majority of fossils in the formation are long-necked sauropod dinosaurs that existed about 150 million years ago. Pritchard said that the team excavated bones from a relatively small sauropod measuring about 40 feet. When asked about challenges faced, Pritchard said that one of the biggest challenges was assuming too much knowledge and experience from volunteers and figuring out how to address these less-experienced team members in a helpful way. Prompted by questions from Dr. Tom Benzing and Mark Buss, Pritchard said that the museum is compensated for these trips in the form of supplies, but he agreed with their assessment that it's worth examining whether VMNH staff could be more directly compensated for the time they spend teaching volunteers during the trips.

Dr. Art Evans asked the curators to highlight some of their work over the previous quarter.

Dr. Pritchard said that a paper he contributed to concerning *malerisaurus* was recently accepted to the *Journal of Papers of Paleontology*.

Dr. Nancy Moncrief said that she recently published a paper regarding the first armadillos recorded in Virginia, both of which are in VMNH collections. She has a paper about tree squirrel skeletal injuries in review at the *Journal of Mammalogy*, and a checklist of the mammals of the Barrier Islands — the culmination of decades of work — was recently accepted for publication.

Dr. Kal Ivanov said that after a lengthy hiatus from fieldwork during the pandemic, he has visited nearly 50 sites across 24 counties since March 2021. He has also started a

new project examining the terrestrial isopods of Virginia and plans to present data at the Entomological Society meeting in October. He also mentioned that his department has acquired a high resolution imaging system which it has used for photographing small insects. The imaging system is available to anyone in the museum.

Dr. Hayden Bassett discussed the ongoing Smith River Survey, which has been using ground-penetrating radar to find archaeological disturbances in lieu of the much more cumbersome traditional method of digging test pits. The two year effort is funded by the National Park Service and Department of Historic Resources to assess the impacts of flooding on these sites, but Bassett said that the funding also allows VMNH to examine these eight archaeological sites in greater detail than was previously possible. The early results of the ground-penetrating radar will be reported on at the next Research and Collections Committee meeting.

Bassett added that he recently published an article in the Journal of Southeastern Archaeology, has a manuscript in review with the journal Heritage, and is currently working on a manuscript for a large geospatial study conducted for late woodland sites in the counties of Henry, Patrick, and Floyd.

Bassett also said that the museum's Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab (CHML) has been doing a lot of humanitarian work recently; the CHML has used satellite imaging to assess impacts of an earthquake in Haiti and a hurricane that impacted Honduras. Additionally, the CHML is developing a public/private partnership with Iridium Satellites, which is the largest provider of satellite phone and GPS technology in the world. The company is now a corporate sponsor of VMNH and made an in-kind donation of equipment and satellite air time.

Bassett added that his department has benefitted from a program for virtual interns that was developed with the State Department and the Smithsonian.

Dr. Tom Benzing said that the triceratops skeleton that VMNH recently installed in the Waynesboro Public Library has been well-received and generated a lot of buzz. He added that the Wayne Theater's science speaker series will be kicking off in September with a program from Dr. Art Evans.

Dr. Art Evans moved to adjourn the meeting.