

the *Nature* of things

AT THE GEORGIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

A sian Invader in Northeastern Georgia



Mary Freeman

The Joro spider, native to East Asia, has recently been discovered in Barrow, Jackson and Madison Counties – the first known occurrences in North America. Members of the Friends, take note of these photos and be on the lookout this summer!

Mr. Wesley Huffmaster of Colbert, Georgia, contacted the museum when he found a large, colorful spider with a giant web, a spider he didn't recognize. Mr. Huffmaster contacted the Museum, where Dr. Richard Hoebeke identified the spider. Director Bud Freeman made inquiries and soon heard of sightings of a strange big spider in Hoschton and Braselton – the Joro spider was

spinning webs there, also. Genetic analyses confirmed the identification.

A member of the genus *Nephila*, the Joro spider is a relative of our Banana spider of south Georgia and the Gulf Coast. It spins a similar big web, but is more colorful than the Banana Spider and it doesn't have those little tufts on its knees.

Like all spiders, the Joro can bite, but it isn't deadly poisonous.

This remarkable finding was published in the online journal PeerJ, (Hoebeke ER, Huffmaster W, Freeman BJ. (2015) *Nephila clavata* L Koch, the Joro Spider of East Asia, newly recorded from North

America (Araneae: Nephilidae) PeerJ 3:e763), available here: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7717/peerj.763>



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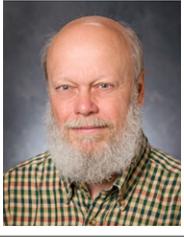
It is that time of year again! Membership renewals are now being accepted for 2015.

Memberships can be renewed online via our website at <http://www.gmnhfriends.org/membership/>.

If you prefer, you can mail your membership check to us. Simply complete the form on the back of this newsletter. Please make your check payable to Friends of the GMNH and mail to:

The Georgia Museum of Natural History
University of Georgia
Natural History Building
Athens, GA 30602-7882

From the Director



We've had a few cold days to remind us that winter still visits Athens, but the blooming daffodils and witch hazel are

harbingers of a welcome spring! During the fall Rick Hoebeke and I visited several sites around Braselton and east to Comer looking for specimens of a spider that would soon disappear as winter weather approached. We were fortunate and found several specimens and have now documented the first occurrence of the Asian Joro spider in North America. We expect to see them again during late summer and early fall—and hope you all will help us turn up new records. Did I mention that this spider is a bit large?

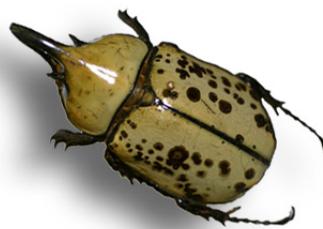
We were pleased to see two interpretive plaques installed beneath the full scale models of a Killer Whale and Great White Shark that are mounted on the outside of the Museum building. These are printed on textured vinyl, a medium that will lend itself to future outside artwork! Along with these plaques, the UGA sign shop also installed official signs in prominent locations on the building to help direct visitors to the museum.

During November I had the pleasure to be invited by Dr. Wilf Nichols to address the State Botanical Garden Board of Directors. Wilf first discussed the Garden master

plan that includes a proposal for co-locating a new building housing the Museum and I followed with an introduction to the Museum, its collections and outreach activities. The exact location of a large building has yet to be determined, but this is an exciting development!

Two articles decrying the world-wide perilous state of natural-history museums appeared this February. They were titled *Libraries of Life* (*New York Times* February 27, 2015, page A25) and *The Endangered Dead* (*Nature* vol 518, 19 February 2015) and both made strong points about the value of museum collections and the critical need for support, both in terms of housing and curators. I hope you find time to read them. The Museum is not in as dire a shape as many collections alluded to in these articles, but we are faced with many of the same issues. The support of the Friends is vital to the success of the Museum and to future efforts to secure a big home and long-term support for exhibits and the collections. -

-Bud Freeman



New Board Members

Dr. Mary Freeman has re-joined the Board. A former board member, she is a stream ecologist and a long-term member of Friends of the Museum.

Dr. Stephen A. Kowalewski (Steve), Professor of Anthropology, is an archaeologist who has carried out field work in Georgia, the Greater Southwest, and Oaxaca, Mexico. He has worked with the collections and the people of the Georgia Museum of Natural History since coming to the University of Georgia in 1978. He said, "The museum is the cranium or the brain of natural science, the place where the information is remembered, built up, seen in new ways, and taught."

the Nature of things

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From the President



It is commonly believed that in well-explored countries like the United States the fauna is thoroughly known,

especially the popularly studied organisms like birds and butterflies. The mammals, reptiles and amphibians have received less attention, but there are now many regional field guides for these groups that enable an interested naturalist to identify whatever they encounter in the field. These books rest on over two centuries of activity centered in the museums of the world. But there are still surprises, even in the well-known fauna of the eastern United States. Just this year a new species of Leopard frog was described from the New York City metropolitan area! Within this new century a new species of Tiger Swallowtail was recognized in the mountains of Virginia and North Carolina and a common early spring butterfly, the Spring Azure, was shown to actually consist of at least five distinct species. Most dramatically, in 2009, a new genus and species of salamander from the north Georgia mountains was discovered and named. And these examples are of well-studied groups in a modern nation. I mention these to illustrate a point -- that we still don't have a comprehensive knowledge of the natural world, even in our own backyard. New kinds of living organisms lie, unseen

and undetected even in places like the largest American metropolitan area and in groups as well studied as butterflies. What then can we expect to discover in less well-studied flora or fauna, like insects, fish or mosses? In addition to the discovery of new forms of life museums document that life in their collections. Like a library, each museum specimen is a record of when and where it lived. These collections can be used in creative ways that we cannot always imagine. For example, Henry David Thoreau kept meticulous records of when the plants around Concord, Massachusetts, first leafed out, bloomed and set seed. 150 years later, using herbarium specimens from the same region, scientists demonstrated that the same species Thoreau studied now bloom three weeks earlier than they did in his time. Similar studies worldwide have confirmed the same basic observations.

These are just a few reasons that museums have played a vital role in the our past, present and future. They are worthy of our support and I am pleased that so many of you continue to support our Georgia Museum of Natural History. Tell your friends and neighbors about us and visit our new website and join us at <http://www.gmnhfriends.org/>. You can also find us on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-the-Georgia-Museum-of-Natural-History/118978554815021>

--Dale Hoyt

New Collection of Arthropods

The Museum has an amazing collection of arthropods (UGCA) with over 2 million pinned specimens including a sizeable collection in alcohol. We just received a nice addition of 50,000 plus curated specimens of ants collected from west Georgia, near Columbus.

Curated specimens are especially valuable because they are identified, labeled and have associated locational and environmental data. Doug Booher, a Museum Collection Associate, was instrumental in the acquisition of this valuable collection, which was assembled by Dr. John Graham at Berry College. The Museum is grateful to both of these individuals for making this a reality. Doug has been working extensively with the Museum's ant collection and together with Ben Gochnour, a graduate student in Entomology, and three Museum undergraduate interns — they have re-organized the unidentified ant holdings (see photo). Doug, a doctoral student at UCLA, has been surveying extensively in Georgia, cataloguing the native ant diversity. His efforts have revealed the presence of 3 species new to science and 58 species previously unrecorded from Georgia establishing Georgia as having the largest native ant diversity east of the Mississippi.



Join the Friends and support the Museum

Membership includes: a subscription to *The Nature of Things* newsletter, invitations to museum events, Friends programs, and field trips. Membership and donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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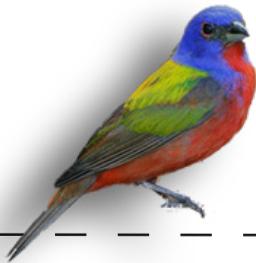
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