CRETACEOUS SEAS
FIRE HOSE

Saint Urho's Day 2018

Opuntia is published by Dale Speirs, Calgary, Alberta. It is posted on www.efanzines.com and www.fanac.org. My e-mail address is: opuntia57@hotmail.com When sending me an emailed letter of comment, please include your name and town in the message.

About The Cover: I took this photo at Mount Royal University while attending Paleo 2018. MRU puts its fossil displays out in the corridors instead of hiving them into a museum. More photos of the *Elasmosaurus* after the Paleo 2018 report.

PALEO 2018

by Dale Speirs

On the weekend of March 17 and 18, the Alberta Palaeontological Society presented a two-day convention for amateur fossil collectors. It was held at Mount Royal University** in Calgary, and I went along for the seminars.

I haven't collected fossils since I was a university student in the middle 1970s, but I have a quarter-basement full of them, the majority collected by my mother Betty. She lived in Red Deer and was a field palaeontologist for the University of Alberta. She mined the exposures along the Red Deer River from the Palaeocene era, 65 megayears old, just after the dinosaurs died out. Four fossil species were named after her: see OPUNTIA #42.5 for details. After she died, most of her personal collection went to the U of A in several truck loads but I ferried the better specimens to my house in Calgary.

After the usual opening ceremonies, the seminars began. There was only one track of programming. I approve of that because that gives the attendees a common shared experience instead of everyone hiving off to their own specialties and ignoring whatever the palaeontological equivalent is of Trekkies. (Suggestions on a postcard, please.) I wish SF conventions would reduce their tracks to fewer but bigger panels but that is a debate for another day.

** Calgary has two universities and a polytechnic. The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology is the oldest; the University of Calgary the biggest, and Mount Royal University the junior.

Above: Your humble editor takes a selfie with no more concern for the beast in the background than the man in the cover photo had for the other one.

Below: The audience was slightly younger than an SF convention. About half the attendees were in their 20s or 30s.

The poster board sessions were popular. For those not familiar with scientific conventions, it is customary for scientists, mostly graduate students, to display their latest research.

Not really a dealer bourse, but various societies had tables. It is illegal to traffic in fossils in Alberta, so the only commercial table was an artist.

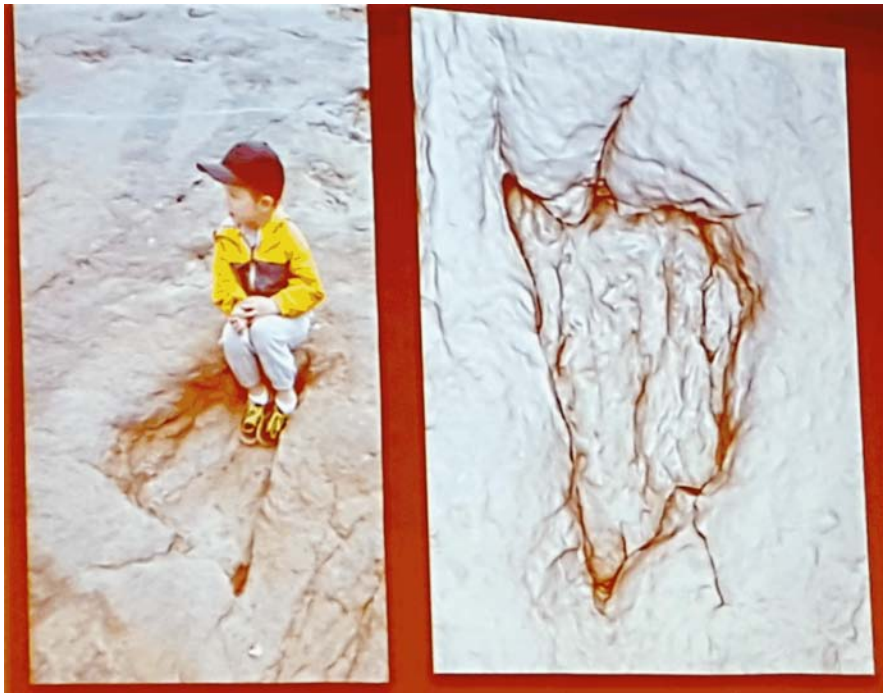
And so to the seminars. **"On the trail of dinosaurs from western Canada."** was presented by Dr. Richard McCrea, Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre in Tumbler Ridge, northeastern British Columbia. A puzzle of vertebrate palaeontology is that until 2000, no sign of sauropods was ever found in Canada, even though their bones have been quarried just across the border in Montana. Since then footprints of sauropods have been located in British Columbia, but still no bones. McCrea is shown below with a photo of himself holding a fossilized track of a sauropod from southeastern B.C. (a pes is the hind foot of a four-legged vertebrate).

Dinosaur tracks provide useful information. Almost never are there any drag marks from tails, indicating that sauropods and tyrannosaurs alike carried their tails off the ground. The length of the pace tells whether the animal was walking or running.

Tracks show pathology in some cases. One track McCrea studied was of a tyrannosaurid with a swollen toe on one foot. It may have been a broken bone, cancer, or congenital.

The slab of sauropod tracks below was in a quarry but the slope was unstable and it fell apart before they could be collected. Fortunately the quarry foreman took photos.

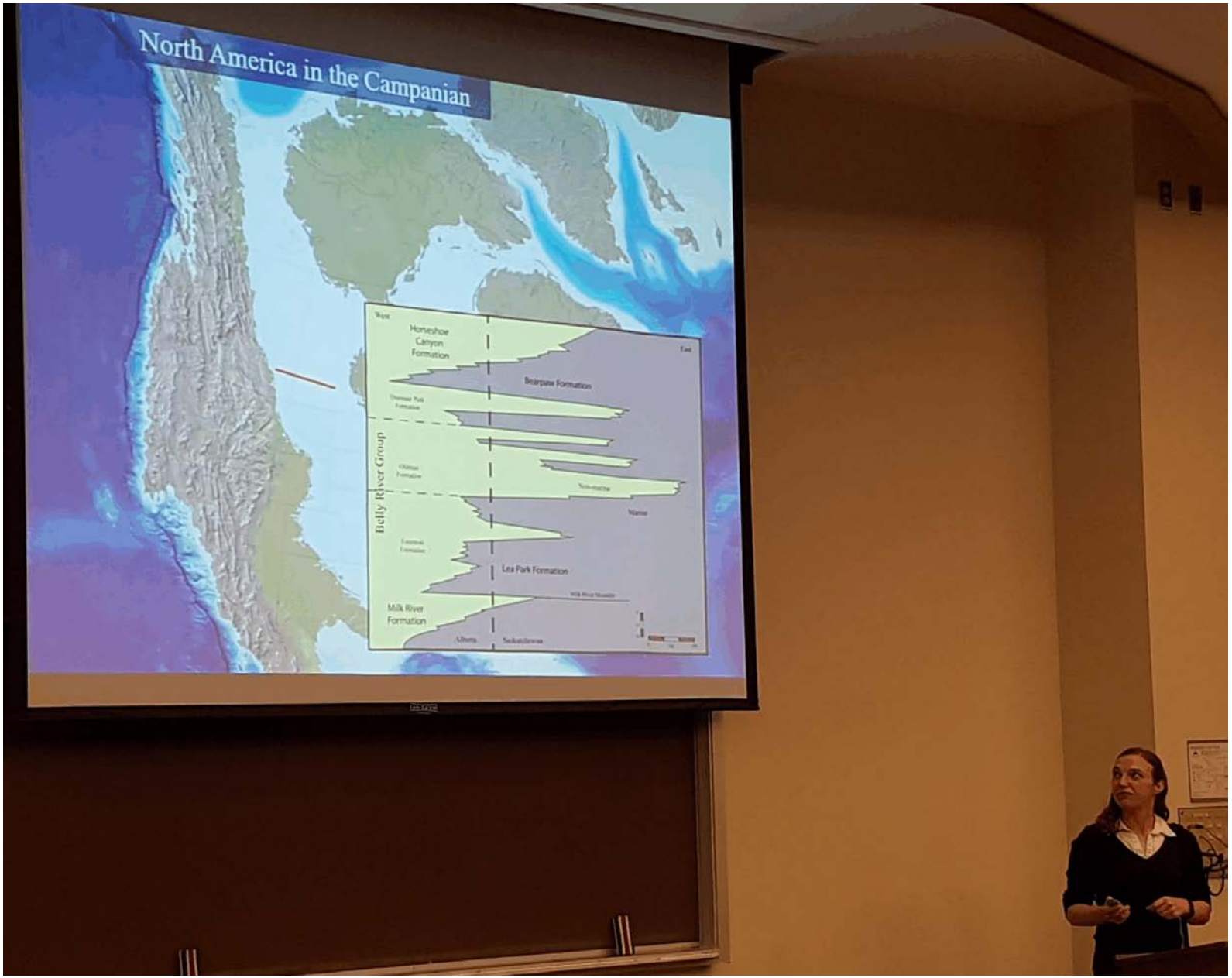
The best concentration of tracks was found in northeastern B.C. in the Peace River district. The lad sits in one of the tracks to show its size.



"Where the sharks and centrosaurs play: The northeastern-most exposures of the Dinosaur Park Formation in western Saskatchewan." was presented by Dr. Emily Bamforth, Royal Saskatchewan Museum, Eastend, Saskatchewan. Her talk was about *When Saskatchewan was beachfront property*. During the Late Cretaceous era at the height of the dinosaurs, Alberta was mostly underwater and Saskatchewan the eastern shoreline of the Bearpaw Sea, which ran from Yukon to the Gulf of Mexico (pale blue on slide below).

The chart superimposed on the map showed that the Bearpaw Sea did not slowly shrink and disappear, but sometimes re-expanded. The pale yellow is land and the grey is ocean; the time scale reads up from the bottom to the top line which is the Cretaceous-Palaeocene mass extinction.

The map also shows the Hudson Sea stretching horizontally across Canada. This meant that eastern Canada and the USA were part of a giant island.

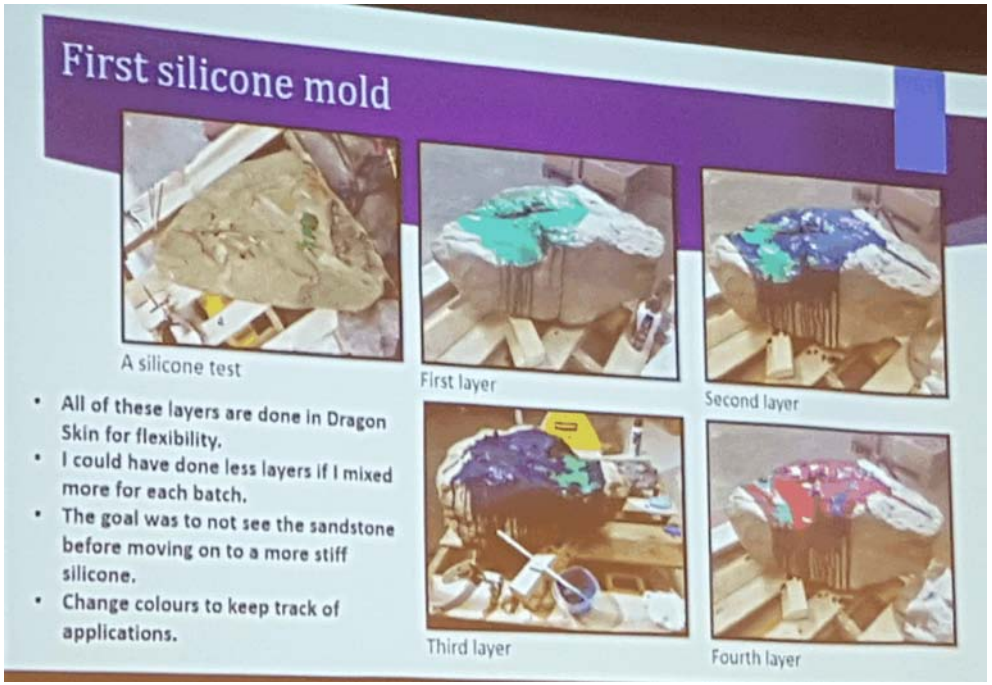


Bamforth discussed various fossil sites in Saskatchewan. Both marine and terrestrial fossils are often found in the same location, indicating the shoreline was not far away. Dead terrestrial dinosaurs such as hadrosaurs were washed out to sea on occasion.

There is an over-representation of juvenile animals but no one knows why. In some locations, manganese nodules are found, indicating deep water.

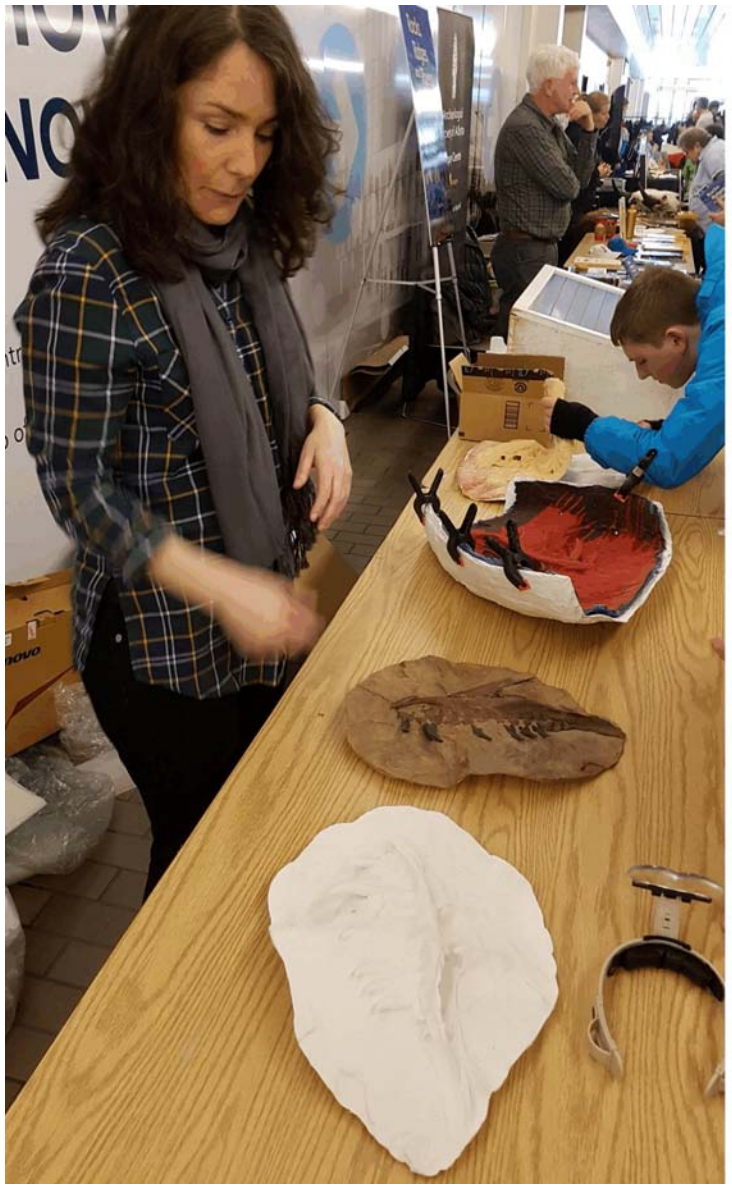
As the Rocky Mountains rose near the end of the Cretaceous, the sediments eroding down from them eventually filled in the Bearpaw Sea.

"British Columbia's first dinosaur skull: From discovery to preparation." was presented by Tammy Pigeon, Technical Assistant at the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre. She explained how she used the mold of an *Albertosaurus* skull in a sandstone boulder to create copies.



She showed the process and named the actual ingredients used, such as Dragon Skin, Smooth Sil 940, and Thi-Vex. Several in the audience were interested and took notes because they were thinking of similar projects. Thin layers of silicone are poured at a time and built up to form a laminated skin. Each layer is dyed a different colour to keep track of what has been done.

The silicone mold is then used to create a plaster mold in reverse, which is them used to make more silicone reproductions. The most difficult part is to slowly pull the completed silicone copy out of the mold without tearing it.



A set of molds showing the stages was later displayed in the bourse.

The three stages of a jaw and teeth are shown here. The plaster mold didn't photograph well but the brown resin copy, subsequently painted, shows the dark brown jaw and black teeth.

The furthest cast is the one that was taken from the original specimen. The last layer of silicone was red, and a close look will show the relief of the jaw.

"The Bighill Creek Formation (Late Pleistocene) of Alberta and its vertebrate palaeofauna: Endangered resources." was presented by Dr. Michael Wilson, who is a paleontological and geoarchaeological consultant. For some reason the photos I took vanished from my smartphone camera, but I did take notes.

The Pleistocene was the Ice Ages. As the continental ice sheet melted away, a huge load of gravel and sand was washed down the river valleys from eroding mountains. The deposits along the Bow River are called the Bighill Creek Formation, and are dated at 11,500 to 10,000 years old. Wilson and other collectors had a tremendous boon after the great flood of 2013 which devastated southwestern Alberta, including Calgary (see OPUNTIAs #264 to 266), but eroded out many new exposures of the BCF to explore. Gravel mining and skyscraper excavation are also good sources of Pleistocene fossils.

The BCF was deposited by river waters in two pulses of warm weather, with a cold snap in between when the rivers froze and erosion in the mountains stopped. The cold snap is known as the Younger Dryas and covered the northern hemisphere.

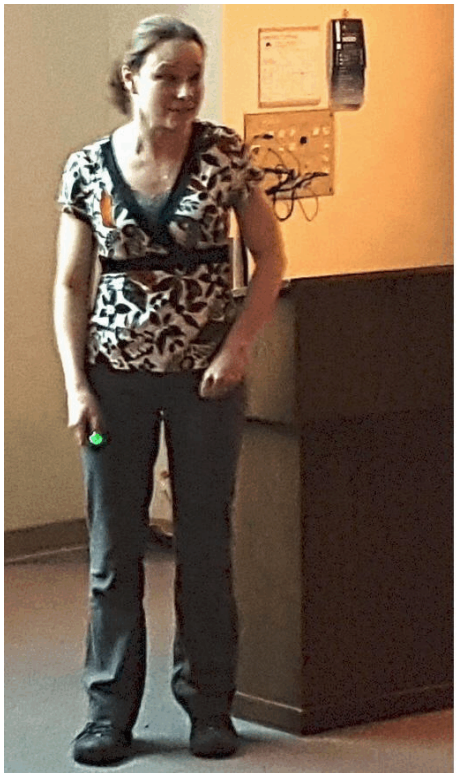
Fossil Pleistocene fauna of Calgary from the first melt included *Mammuthus*, *Bison antiquus*, *Equus conversidens*, *Rangifer tarandus* (caribou), and *Camelops hesternia* (camel). The cold snap killed off everything except the bisons. When the aboriginals arrived, the horse was long extinct and they never saw any until the Spanish re-introduced them.

"Faunal and climate change at the end of the Cretaceous: The Alberta perspective." was presented by Dr. Francois Therrien, Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology, Drumheller, Alberta.

The Cretaceous-Palaeocene extinction 65 megayears ago killed 100% of pterosaurs and non-avian dinosaurs, 90% of birds, 80% of lizards and snakes, 75% of frogs and mammals, 10% of turtles, 20% of crocodilians, and 25% of salamanders. Nobody knows why this was so.

Dinosaurs had begun to dwindle megayears before the Yucatan asteroid hit, but the climate didn't cool until just before the boundary. Alberta has bedrock that straddles the mass extinction but it is not possible to date the rocks to any better than plus or minus 100,000 years, so it can't be determined if the extinctions were instant or gradual.

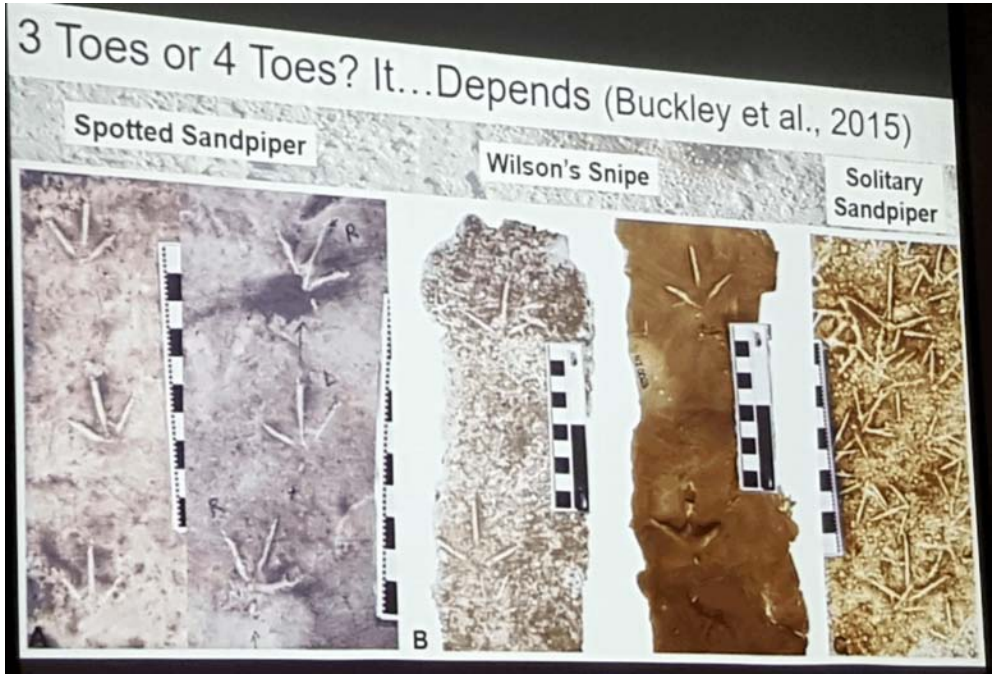
Alberta dried out as the Rockies rose but this did not affect the dinosaurs. Therrien suggested that the sudden temperature drop of 6°C at the boundary destabilized ecosystems just enough to push them over the edge. It definitely killed off aquatic invertebrates at the bottom of the food chain, which may have been the tipping point.



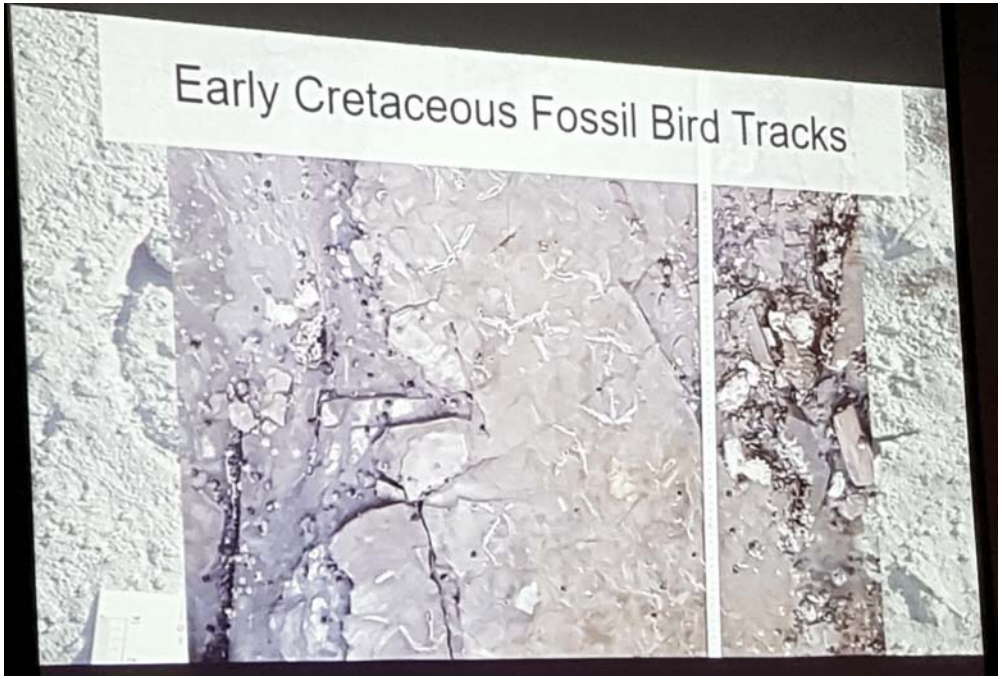
“Birding by foot: variation in the preservation of modern bird tracks and identifying fossil bird tracks.” was presented by Dr. Lisa Buckley, Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre.

Birds as birds lived alongside dinosaurs but managed to survive the mass extinction. Bird behaviour hasn’t changed, so modern bird tracks are studied to compare with fossil tracks.

Fossil bird tracks are rare because they only survived in fine-grained sediments. Dinosaurs were big enough that many of their tracks could be preserved in coarser sediments.



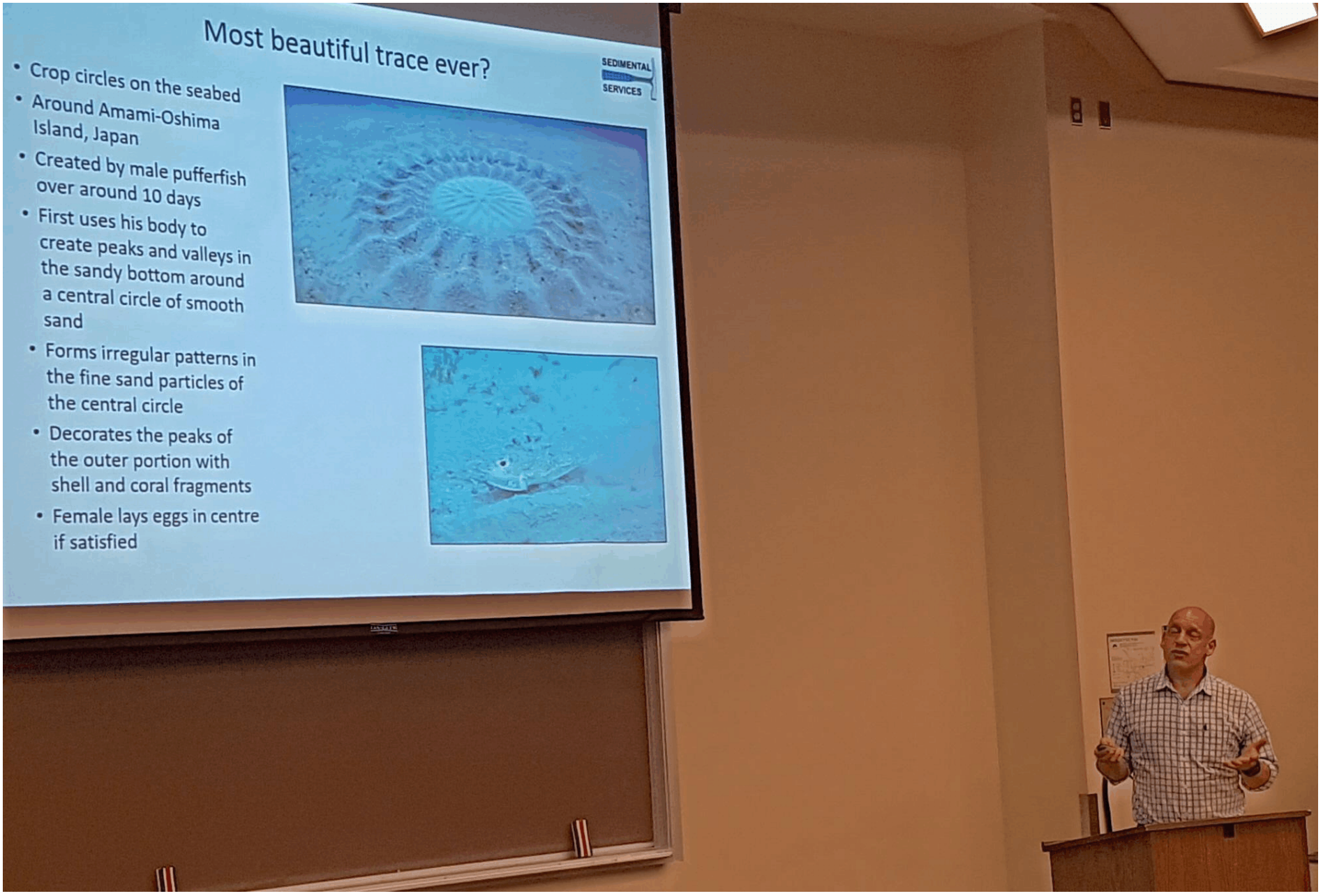
There is a great deal of variation in modern bird tracks even within one species. It depends whether they were walking on firm sand or mud, where only the toes leave marks, waterlogged sand, or sloppy sand, where the webbing shows. The suction as the foot withdraws from the sand or mud will change the shape of the track.



"Almost like being there: New approaches to deciphering animal behaviour from trace fossils." was presented by Dr. Jon Noad, University of Alberta.

There are a wide variety of trace fossils, such as marine worm burrows, and tracks by invertebrates walking across the seabed. Specialists in trace fossils rely a great deal on analogy with modern trace markings, such as tracks, nest digging, and foraging for food.

Snow cover is a great training ground for interpreting traces. Noad mentioned that apemen tracks have been dated to 3.2 megayears. His favourite trace is that of the pufferfish; see his slide.



"Soft tissues in the geological record: The next generation of palaeontology." was presented by Aaron van der Reest, MSc candidate at the University of Alberta.

Computers have enabled new insights. Palaeontologists use them to sort out into patterns millions of physical measurements made on fossils and thus spot trends or likenesses. Fossil bonebeds with thousands of bones from dozens of species can be analyzed faster by computer to provide statistics on the species of a given ecosystem. Biomechanics has taken giant strides with finite element methods to depict how dinosaurs walked or ran.

One area is the discovery that in some fossils, some of the original organic molecules are still preserved. Dinosaur feathers are primitive and a subject of dispute. Feathers of modern birds are made of beta-keratin. Using immunohistochemistry, antibodies from modern birds will react with dinosaurs feathers, proving they are the same.

Dinosaur bones have been found which show cellular structure, and original protein in microscopic amounts recovered. In Dinosaur Provincial Park in southeastern Alberta, a *Chasmosaurus* was found in 2014 which had blood vessels preserved in the bones.

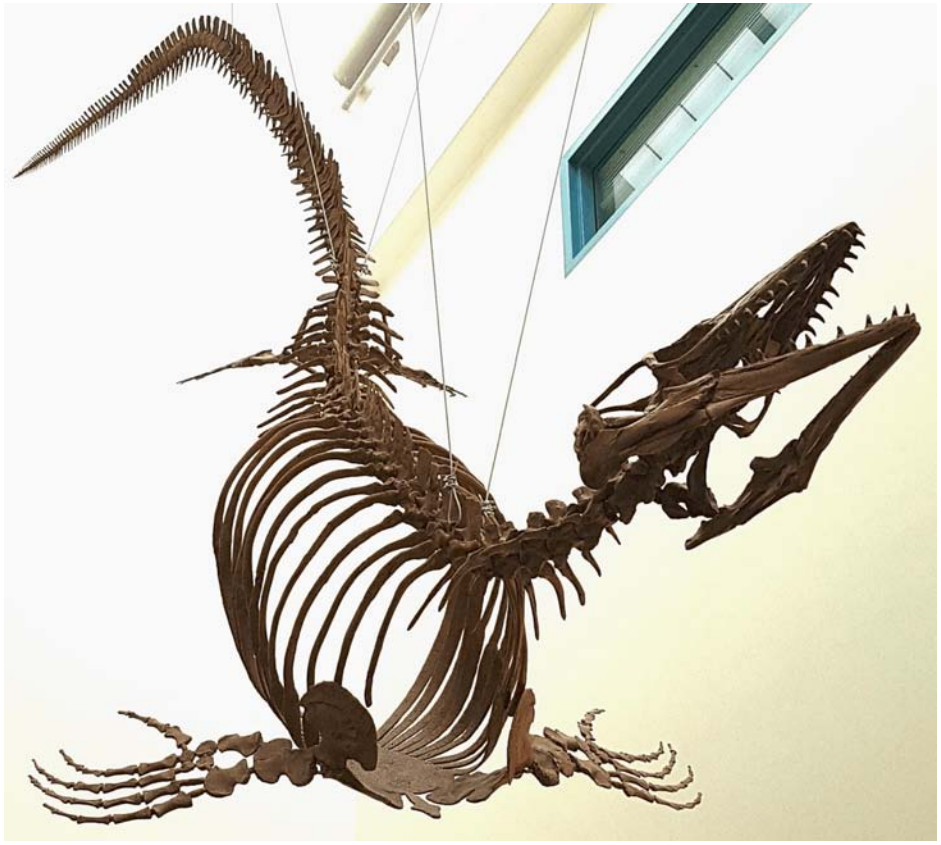
"Depth charges, dinosaurs, and lost love found: Amateur fossil collector Maurice Stefanuk (1924-2016)" was presented by Darren Tanke, Senior Technician at the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology.

Stefanuk lived in Drumheller, Alberta, in the heart of the world's richest Late Cretaceous fossil beds. Born of Ukrainian immigrants, he spent his entire life there except for four years in the Royal Canadian Navy during World War Two. He was jilted by his fiancee when he returned home and thereafter was a bachelor. When he was 85, he met her again by accident. She was a widow. He forgave her and they married in 2010, astounding everyone who knew him.

When a boy, he had found a *Tyrannosaurus* tooth, which sparked his interest in fossil collecting. After the war, he worked various jobs while discovering many dinosaur skeletons in his spare time. The Royal Tyrrell Museum used him as a contact person when they wanted to explore on farmland because he knew every farmer and could smooth the path for the palaeontologists.

CRETACEOUS SEAS
photos by Dale Speirs

In OPUNTIA #403, I showed photos of Mount Royal University's land Cretaceous fossils. In another wing they have a batch of aquatic fossils. Below is the sea turtle *Protostega*. At bottom is a mosasaur *Platecarpus*.



Elasmosaurus head below, and the rest of it around the corner shown at right.

Enchodus sp. Nasty looking, isn't it?

IF THE WIND COULD BLOW MY TROUBLES AWAY: PART 5
by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 4 appeared in OPUNTIAs #326, 355, 382, and 392.]

The Good.

"A Trader's Lot" by Twist Phelan (2007, in the anthology WALL STREET NOIR, edited by Peter Spiegelman) is about an aspect of hurricanes that few, if any, writers consider, namely their effect on commodity prices.

The story is about David Sherwin, a commodities trader on the New York Mercantile Exchange. He is on a downward slide and is reaching the tipping point into bankruptcy and dismissal from the trading floor.

A hurricane is headed for Louisiana but is predicted to miss the Henry Hub, the central natural gas processing facility in the USA. Sherwin's brother, a fisherman who knows the area, telephones him and says that the contrary to weather reports, the hurricane is going to hit the Hub. If it does, the price of natural gas will soar for obvious reasons.

Sherwin bets everything and buys as many natural gas delivery contracts as he can find. All on that day, when the hurricane touches the coastline, natural gas contracts soar to $12 a gigajoule (for comparison, the normal average is $3). If Sherwin sells immediately, he'll pay off his debts and have millions left over. But he is greedy and waits too long.

The hurricane swerves at the last minute. Natural gas contracts collapse below what Sherwin had paid for them, and it appears he is ruined. He leaves the building and goes off to contemplate suicide. It doesn't happen though. He walks back to the Exchange to face the music.

Sherwin finds his contracts have soared again. The hurricane missed the Hub, but in the panic to evacuate, a techie left a valve open, causing an explosion and fire which had the same effect as a hurricane. Sherwin has learned his lesson, and this time he sells. There is a saying among traders that you can be a bull or a bear, but don't be a pig. No one ever went broke taking their profits.

The Bad.

"And The Drowned Book" (2015), written by John Rogers and Paul Guyot, is a Season 2 episode of the television show THE LIBRARIANS, a group who work for a secret library that collects magical artifacts and tries to stop evil doers. In the second episode, the Librarians messed up and released a flood of magic into the world along ley lines, reactivating real magic. Fictional characters such as Prospero and Professor Moriarty have come to life, created by the new supply of magic.

In this episode, the Librarians have gathered at a museum gallery opening in Manhattan. As the rich folk mingle in the party, a Category 5 cyclonic storm suddenly forms over the island and disaster threatens. Never Brooklyn or Yonkers, but always Manhattan these disasters hit. Asteroids target Central Park as if there was a giant magnet buried under the duck pond, and never aim for Ten Sleep, Wyoming, or Hungry Horse, Montana. Prehistoric monsters avoid Staten Island in favour of a stroll down Wall Street. It is therefore no surprise that meteorological disasters run up the length of Manhattan.

The streets are flooding and the cyclonic winds are tearing off roofs. For the convenience of the plot and the Librarians, the U.S. Weather Bureau has a state-of-the-art station on the top floor of the museum. It is there that the Librarians go to monitor the progress of the cyclone. Using the computers, they learn that the winds are the personification of Ariel. The mastermind behind all this is Prospero, who intends to rule the world, bwah ha! ha!.

The ending involves a trip up to the torch of the Statue of Liberty and diverting immense magical energies through it against Ariel. The plan succeeds, and the storm is dissolved. The Sun shines gaily and blue skies are coming our way. Except that Prospero and Moriarty are still on the loose, and will stir up trouble in future episodes.

The Ugly.

The Asylum movie studio has inherited the mantle of those 1950s B-movies that might have been made better at no extra cost by a decent script, and minimizing SFX if the studio knew it couldn't afford good technicians. Asylum also saves money by ignoring continuity, about which more in a moment. I enjoy their movies as comedies, and only buy them out of the bargain bin.

Which brings me to 500 MPH STORM (2013), written by K. Lee and Hank Woon, and featuring a no-name cast. It is a fantasy film about an energy experiment gone wrong. I say 'fantasy' because there isn't the slightest attempt to adhere to logic and extrapolating science, and certainly no suspension of disbelief. It is just a meteorological anything-can-happen-and-does story, where 500-mph storms roar across the USA. The SFX are from the 1990s, apparently using 8-bit graphics cards.

The movie begins in the Gulf of Mexico on an offshore artificial island. As the batteries come on line, the fusion reactor powers up, meaningless script scrolls up computer screens, and everything is go. The supervisor says: *This is it. No more offshore drilling. From now on, clean renewable energy.* Intercut with the lab scenes are views of the famous balloon festival in Albuquerque, New Mexico. You know they wouldn't be doing that if it wasn't important.

Whatever the device is in the Gulf, it fires a giant particle beam straight up into the air. Within seconds, a Category 5 hurricane forms over the water. It's one heck of a storm because after five minutes it reaches New Mexico. I don't know the state that well but I feel safe in thinking that no matter what other problems they may have, hurricanes are not among them.

There are some hilarious SFX of a giant tornado sucking in balloons and popping them. A balloonist couple, Nathan and Mona Sims, in their early 40s and their teenaged son Johnny are in one of the balloons but manage to land and run for their SUV while the other competitors are sucked up by the storm.

Watch their SUV closely. When it drives away as they flee the storm, there is no rear licence plate. By the time they reach their house further north in the New Mexico desert, it has acquired an Oklahoma licence plate.

They barely have time to make a sandwich before Nathan sees the hurricane bearing down on them from the other side of the desert, so they immediately pile back into the SUV and head north again. The head-on view shows the vehicle now has a California plate on front. But wait! There's more! Several scenes later, the front plate has disappeared but the rear plate is now a California one.

This suggests a drinking game. Watch the vehicle closely, and every time the licence plate changes, disappears, or re-appears, chug a beer. You'll be buzzing before the movie is half over. I'm a teetotaler so I had to watch this movie sober.

What makes this movie famous is an extended car chase as the Sims family drive the SUV full speed across the state while being pursued by a tornado. This tornado is sentient. It follows every zigzag the vehicle makes, over hill and dale, and around curves and right-angle turns.

There is one hilarious shot where the SUV zooms past a television newshen who had been sent out to be photographed getting her hair mussed by the wind and the rain. She had her back to them and didn't see them until they passed her. She and the cameraman are sucked up by the tornado, which doesn't break stride as it continues chasing the SUV.

When the family drive inside an abandoned warehouse and stop for a moment to gather their wits, the tornado waits outside. When they exit the building, the chase resumes. The tornado finally gives up, the way a lion can only chase a gazelle for so long until it runs out of breath.

Next up is a tsunami crossing the New Mexico desert, chasing after the Sims and intending to finish the job the tornado failed at. Again, I doubt that New Mexicans have ever worried about tsunamis. Depending on the shot, the sky alternates between clear blue and a wall of thunderstorms. The SFX techies didn't seem sure whether they should have been showing blue skies, a hurricane, a tornado, or cloudbursts, so they alternated them in sequence.

Meanwhile, back at the superscience project, the reactor causing the bad weather is locked into some type of feedback loop. They can't shut down the doubletalk generators. The reactor core is going to explode and the world scoured clean by storms.

In the desert, the Sims have outrun the flood and are now cruising along under blue skies. The head shot of the SUV shows the front licence plate is still missing but a later rear shot shows the Oklahoma plate is back again.

They are heading for the mountains because supposedly the megastorms cannot reach them up there. As any Calgarian could have told the screenwriters, mountain tops do have storms. Every year in the Rockies adjacent to our city, a few hikers die when they are caught on a mountain during a storm.

En route, a pair of twin tornados chase the family, although not with the same tenacity as the previous tornado. Carrying on, Nathan explains to Mona and Johnny that the storms will eventually merge into a hypercane. His words, not

mine. What, no sharks? They pass wrecked cars that were obviously borrowed from a junkyard.

After further adventures too ridiculous to explain, Nathan leaves the wife and son on the mountain top, then drives off to save the world. He hooks up with a U.S. Army squad. They tell him they have no communications because all the cellphone towers are down. It seems they don't use shortwave radios anymore.

Nathan has a wild and crazy plan that just might work but which requires a lot of running through abandoned warehouses and driving hither and yon in Humvees. He doesn't stick around to help, as he runs back to his family. The soldiers all have families as well, but they have better discipline and carry on working. Whenever the plot slows, another tornado touches down or a lightning strike touches off a forest fire.

Nathan has many hidden talents. When the Sims family are caught in a forest fire, they find a helicopter sitting on a pad. Nathan can fly it, so they pile in and lift off in the nick of time. No licence plates on the chopper, but when the scene jumps to it flying high in the sky, it has changed the colours of its livery and magically transformed itself into a different make of helicopter.

Out in the Gulf, the crew manage to turn the particle beam horizontally. It seems to work, and blue skies cover the USA in seconds. Alas, the beam falters and the storms reappear, this time said to be Category 10 strength. Plan B is to disable the reactor by turning the beam around 180^{o} but it doesn't work.

Nathan crashes the helicopter off-camera, so we don't get to see if it changed colours again. The Sims's do some running around and make their way, on foot and within minutes, to a warehouse that is identical to the one they were in earlier on the other side of the state when all the fuss started. They try to get cellphone connections by climbing to the roof and holding their phones above their heads.

The beam is reset a third time after Plan B fails and succeeds, but the reactor core goes critical. The project is blown apart, the beam dies for good, and worldwide the skies clear within seconds.

The final moment of the movie has the Sims family standing on a road staring at a ruined city. It is possibly the worst matte shot in cinematic history, apparently done with PhotoShop Version 1. On the road nearby is a pile of wrecked cars. They were obviously photographed in a junkyard and then the image layered onto the matte. The problem is that they are out of scale next to the humans; the cars are about the size of golf carts.

All told, one of the funniest movies I've watched in years. If you are hosting a party, I highly recommend it as part of a drinking game or just plain fun heckling it.

FRONT PAGE CHALLENGE
by Dale Speirs

A SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT, written by Frances Hyland, is a 1933 murder mystery from the Mill Creek DVD pack of 50 Horror Classics. The movie is well leavened with comedy, and it is strange that it was packaged with a horror collection. The main characters are two rival newspaper reporters Patricia Morgan and Ted Rand, who have a love-hate relationship that eventually concludes with a marriage proposal at the end of the movie.

A millionaire named Harker takes a dive from his penthouse apartment. The fact that the other tenants heard him scream all the way down suggests murder rather than suicide. The reporters get more clues and do better investigating than the police, who at times disappear completely while everyone else roams about contaminating the evidence. There is one hilarious line when Harker's housekeeper snaps at a police detective and tells him that he's no Philo Vance.

Harker's neighbours include Mafia bosses and sharp-practice men. The vital clues are withheld until near the end. That doesn't matter though. The janitor skulks about with murderous intent blatantly obvious, and is depicted working his favourite method of killing people by gassing them.

The death toll in the apartment tower slowly but steadily increases. It almost includes Morgan, who is rescued just as she is about to be incinerated in the basement furnace. Justice triumphs. Some, not all, of the loose threads are tied up and everything explained in the fastest denouement ever seen. There is about one minute of who did what to whom before Rand and Morgan kiss, and the end credits roll. An average mystery movie but worth watching for the snappy dialogue.

From the Mill Creek DVD pack of 50 Mystery Classics comes MURDER WITH PICTURES (1936), based on a novel by George Harmon Coxe. The movie opens at a trial of an Oklahoma confidence man who gypped people out of oil investments. He is acquitted. Just to show no hard feelings, he invites a flock of newspaper reporters to his victory party.

Near the end of the party, photographers line up to take photos of the celebrants for the Society pages of their newspapers. Amidst the popping of flash bulbs (talk about obsolete technology; I haven't seen any since a boy in the 1960s), someone shoots the defence attorney with a silenced gun instead of a camera.

The police arrest the obvious suspect, a woman whose father was bilked by the con man, but since she is the leading lady, it is clear that she wasn't the culprit. It is learned that one photographer was off to the side and took a photo of the group at the moment the shot was fired, which would reveal the murderer. The film negative becomes the MacGuffin of the movie, and everyone begins chasing it.

There is a romantic subplot to pace the action and adventure. The movie shifts to Oklahoma at the end, where the denouement comes in the midst of a forest of drilling rigs. Lots of snappy dialogue throughout the film as the police, reporters, and bad guys keep tripping over each other in the chase for the film negative. An enjoyable movie.

MURDER IS NEWS (1939) is based on a pulp series by Theodore Tinsley, with screenplay by Edgar Edwards. (Available on DVD from Alpha Home Entertainment via Amazon or www.oldies.com) The protagonist is Jerry Tracy, a newspaper reporter who also does a radio gossip column on the side.

Tracy breaks the story of millionaire Edgar Drake's impending divorce. Subsequently Drake is murdered. Tracy races the other newshounds for the story and manages to get the inside track. Like any good amateur, he busily contaminates the evidence.

He can't be said to obstruct police though, as a detective gave him permission to snoop around because the police are hampered by proper rules of procedure, whereas Tracy can barge in wherever he pleases.

The corpse disappeared before the police arrived. Tracy is slugged unconscious so many times that it's a wonder he didn't end up a drooling vegetable in a nursing home by the end of the movie. The traditional rule of murder mysteries is followed when the most obvious suspect, Drake's stepson, becomes the second victim.

Tracy dashes about looking for clues, mainly by promising people to get their pictures in the newspaper if they help him. The final edition must have looked like a high school yearbook. Tracy and half the principal cast get themselves trapped by the murderer at the point of a gun. Just as he is about to kill them, Tracy, with a sudden bound etcetera, frees them.

The murder had nothing to do with the emotions of the Drake family scandal as the plot led the viewers to believe. Drake Equities was about to pull off a big deal, which would boost the stock price. With Drake dead, the stock price would have plummeted when the market opened the next day. That would have benefitted the murderer, who had short-sold the stock.

Because the murderer was quickly caught, thanks to Tracy, and the announcement made the deal was okay, the stock price went up instead of down. It is doubtful the police would have allowed the murderer to cover his short position from a jail cell, so he would have been ruined. All ends well, except for the two dead men and their grieving families, but those details are always glossed over in murder mysteries.

The movie was average for such a mystery. It took itself too seriously. Very little humourous dialogue, and what there was, was too forced. Worth watching once.

MYSTERY HOUSE was a short-lived old-time radio series with a twist. (This and hundreds of other OTR shows are available as free mp3s at www.archive.org) It was supposedly put on by a publisher actually called Mystery House, who used their staff to dramatize one of their forthcoming novels in front of a live audience. The reaction of the audience determined if the novel would be accepted.

Each episode was performed in two acts. At the end of each act there was a loud burst of applause, somewhat disconcerting to the listener. Comedies are better with live audience reaction, but it spoils the imagination for dramas if an audience is heard.

Be that as it may, "Death At Deadline", writer uncredited, was a 1945 episode of this series, set at a big-city newspaper. A boorish reporter, fired by the managing editor, tries to get back on staff but is given the bum's rush.

In the meantime, and at first apparently unrelated, the latest issue of the newspaper announces a big forthcoming expose about a gangster. The editor denies any knowledge of the story but is shot to death by the gangster. The killer was tipped off by the fired reporter, who used him for a proxy murder.

The motive turns out to be jealous revenge, as the editor's fiancee had rejected the reporter previously. She turns the table on him by planting a second fake story, and telling him the composing room foreman had testified that the original fake story had been snuck in by the reporter. The police try to arrest him but he draws a gun. He loses the draw.

The story moves briskly. In case the listener gets lost, the characters summarize the case so far after each commercial break. The format with the publishers and live audience was unnecessary, as the episode could stand on its own.

WHEN WORDS COLLIDE 2018

Calgary's annual readercon When Words Collide will be held the weekend of August 10 to 12, 2018, at the Delta Calgary South Hotel on Southland Drive and Bonaventure Drive SE. This is a multi-genre convention covering science fiction, mysteries, fantasy, romance, westerns, and historical fiction, held for the eighth time. Information from: www.whenwordscollide.org

Lots of writer workshops and panels on publishing, editing, writing, social media, and reading. The dealer bourse is strictly limited to books, with many small-press publishers attending. I've attended every WWC and enjoyed them all. My reports of previous conventions appeared in OPUNTIAs #71, 253, 266, 282, 318, 350, and 387.

Membership is capped at 750. Each year this convention, and the hotel, are booked up solid by June, so don't delay. One thing that I like about this readercon is that it is small enough to provide a common experience for all, not a mob scene like the Calgary Comic Expo that brings 60,000 costumers to town.

VANISHED WORLDS: PART 4
by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 3 appeared in OPUNTIAs #320, 338, and 403.]

AGE OF DINOSAURS (2013), with screenplay by Hank Woon, is an Asylum film about regenerated dinosaurs run amok in Los Angeles. They are the product of a biotech company who put them on display. The critters escape and the rest is obvious. For once, Asylum produced some reasonably good SFX. The dinosaurs are not quite the same quality as the Spielberg films but are passable.

The initial experiment went terribly wrong, mainly because too many wimps were in the laboratory. That all gets straightened out with a lot of blood. After the opening credits, the movie jumps to a laid-off firefighter and his bratty teenaged daughter.

They visit the grand premiere of the dinosaurs and have front-row seats, not just figuratively, when the animals escape. There is an hilarious scene where audience members hold up their smartphones to take photos, seconds before the screaming begins. The time for selfies comes and goes very rapidly after the dinosaurs prove smart enough to escape their cages and go after the audience.

The shouting and running begin in all their variations. A few scenes are blatant ripoffs from the Jurassic Park movies. Others are the usual monster movie scenes filmed countless times since the 1950s. The police fire away with small arms at the heavily armoured dinosaurs. They use pistols and rifles with standard clips that nonetheless can fire 100 rounds without reloading or melting down the barrel.

The dinosaurs break out into the streets and begin chasing selected supporting actors. A motorcycle policeman in fourth gear at full speed is unable to outrun a carnosaur. Either the bike needed a tuneup or that was one athletic carnosaur. The dinosaurs spread out into shopping malls, in and out of sports bars, and underground parkades.

The incident that surprised me was the television news helicopter covering the debacle. I thought for sure it would be taken out by a pterodactyl. Instead, the pilot stupidly comes down low for a close-up camera shot, low enough for a carnosaur to leap up and pull the chopper out of the sky.

As the main characters run about with pump-action shotguns, the army gunships arrive, and not a moment too soon. The biotech containment site had failed, and an entire herd of dinosaurs break out onto the streets. The silliest scene is a *Dimetrodon* (sailfin dinosaur) that somehow, within minutes of escape, made its way to the top of a 40-story skyscraper. I doubt that it took the freight elevator, and it certainly couldn't fly. It is blown off the roof with a rocket by an army chopper that also blows off a good-sized chunk of the top floors.

Some of the chopper pilots get down too low and are snatched out of the air by carnosaurs. Natural selection in action. One would think they'd fire a rocket at the dinosaur from a safe distance. Inside the biotech building, the fireman and his daughter get lots of cardiovascular exercise running up and down stairs trying to avoid the smaller dinosaurs.

They make it to the roof of the building and by a plot device known as "bloody ridiculous" are snatched up by a pterodactyl. It flies to its nest on the Hollywood sign up in the hills. Father and daughter manage to dispose of it before it can nibble on them. At that moment, the movie fades into the end credits. Presumably all the other dinosaurs downtown are either disposed of offstage or will continue to rampage in a sequel.

ZINE LISTINGS

[I only list zines I receive from the Papernet. If the zine is posted on www.efanzines.com or www.fanac.org, then I don't mention it since you can read it directly.]

[The Usual means $5 cash ($6 overseas) or trade for your zine. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas (the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount) or mint USA stamps (which are not valid for postage outside USA). US$ banknotes are still acceptable around the world.]

BANANA WINGS #69 (The Usual from Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES, England) SF fanzine with essays on conventions of yore and the English version of comic cons. Lots of letters of comment.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets. Please include your name and town when sending a comment. Email to opuntia57@hotmail.com]

FROM: Lloyd Penney 2018-03-13
Etobicoke, Ontario

OPUNTIA #402: That's a beautiful shot of prickly pears on the cover. The pointy ends are often seen, but not so the flower. Carnivorous plants have made the news here and there; is the huge plant that blooms and smells of rotten meat a part of that family?

[*Rafflesia arnoldii*, endemic to Sumatra, is not a carnivorophyte but it is a parasitic plant, living off tree roots. It has the world's largest flower, 1 metre in diameter and weighing 10 kilogrammes. It is nicknamed the carrion flower because of its strong odour of rotting flesh, used to attract pollinators such as flies. Not recommended for the home garden.]

Winter driving conditions are usually advertised on overhead alphanumeric signs on major highways around here, like the 401. But yet, with so much snow here and there, you'd think such signs would be unnecessary.

[Calgary's main crosstown freeway Deerfoot Trail and the ring road Stoney Trail are both regularly closed during snowfalls due to multi-vehicle pileups.]

[Calgary had a mild winter temperature-wise, with mostly -10° to -20°C daytime highs and only one cold spell, when it went down to -25° to -30° from Christmas to New Year's Day. On the other hand, we had regular heavy snowfalls, and I kept my weight down a bit constantly shoveling snow off my sidewalk. The piles along my boulevard were chest height by the time we finally got a chinook in the first week of March. Then a week later we got another 30 cm of snow.]

I have enjoyed Conan Doyle's non-Holmes work for a long time. I sometimes think we all need some adventure in our lives, and that used to come from unknown geography and science. If only there was a Lost World to keep us wondering.

[Well, there is still space exploration and science fiction.]

OPUNTIA #403: I wondered if the dinosaurs settled in shipment. If the saurian at Mount Royal University were in the box, they weathered the shipment quite well.

Did you see the latest version of MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS with Kenneth Branaugh? We didn't, and we gather it was in the theatres and out again rather quickly. I think like Holmes, there is a popular choice to play iconic characters in each generation. For me, Jeremy Brett was Holmes, and David Suchet was Poirot. I gather Branaugh's Poirot was unpopular.

[It came and went from Calgary theatres so fast that the DVDs were on sale the following week. I'll wait for it to show up in the bargain bin.]

OPUNTIA #404: I think all Cadillac Fairview malls called themselves the home of Team Canada for the Olympics. There's a few CF malls here, including Sherway Gardens to the south of us. Canada won 29 medals during the Olympics in South Korea, and at last report, we've won 10 medals so far at the Paralympics.

I remember downloading novels and short stories from Project Gutenberg back when I had several models of a Palm Pilot. I guess I could do the same thing for my current Samsung tablet. At this time, it would be the only way I could return to regular reading.

[Give it a try. The stories are now available in a wide variety of formats such as HTML and ebook, not just plain text. Also, instead of buying audio books read in a monotone, go to www.archive.org and download mp3s of old-time radio shows. Far better listening.]

OPUNTIA #405: Lunar New Year's celebrations here were a little muted, and as usual around here, we didn't find out about those celebrations until after they had happened. Some have the tradition of eating at a Mandarin restaurant, but we waited until the rush was done, and ate elsewhere. Speaking of eating, I never saw the limited edition Ritz snowflake crackers, but then, it's nothing we really look for anymore.

[I thought they tasted better than the regular kind but the company wasn't kidding when they said limited edition. I looked for them again a few days later and they were gone.]

I see I must take the time to go and explore fanac.org again, especially the newszines of various times, and delve into the Fancyclopedia. There's still a lot to see and read there.

[If you don't see anything you like at Project Gutenberg, then there are lots of old-time zines to download over yonder at Fanac.]

OPUNTIA #406: More great urban artwork. When Rob Ford was the mayor here, he couldn't tell the difference between graffiti and murals, and had several of them painted over. Now, Rob's brother Doug is the new leader of the Ontario Conservative Party, and may be more right-wing than [Alberta Tory leader] Jason Kenney.

The METRO magazine is still available in Toronto, but is not found in the subway. The subway paper, 24, was shut down when Postmedia and Torstar exchanged with each other 36 different newspapers, and then both shut all 36 down.

[24 disappeared years ago from Calgary. The CALGARY HERALD (centrist business broadsheet) and the CALGARY SUN (right-wing populist tabloid) sold off their palatial headquarters and moved in together on a single floor in rented premises. They have different editorial staff but share printing and common area expenses. I haven't bought a copy of either of them in decades. I occasionally see a SUN that someone left in a food court but never a HERALD. They'll be extinct in print form in another decade at most. METRO, a free newspaper, has pretty much destroyed both of them. I pick up METRO daily, mainly for the sudoku puzzle. The news I read on the Internet the day before.]

OPUNTIA #407: [re: teardowns] In Toronto, land is just too valuable for mere gas stations to remain on site, even if it is still viable. Not far from us is the former site of a Shell station, which was torn down. It took several years for a huge variety store/supermarket to be built in its place. That huge store is now empty, surrounded by fencing, and waiting for new tenants.

Recent transit news in Toronto is the idea that with the TTC's next bus purchase, riders will be able to plug in their smartphones and tablets into USB ports for recharging. The subway extension up to Vaughan is a great addition, and the digging for the Eglinton underground LRT will soon be done, we all hope.

Mallon, J.C., et al (2018) **A "bloat-and-float" taphonomic model best explains the upside-down preservation of ankylosaurs.** PALAEOGEOGRAPHY, PALAEOCLIMATOLOGY, PALAEOECOLOGY 497:117-127

Authors' abstract: *It is widely held that, within the Cretaceous fluvial and marine deposits of North America, ankylosaur remains are typically preserved upside-down; however, this anecdotal observation has yet to be substantiated. Likewise, none of the various hypotheses that purport to explain the frequent occurrence of overturned ankylosaurs has been tested either.*

This study is the first to apply quantitative and modeling approaches to address these shortcomings. We find strong statistical support for the dominance of upside-down occurrences, and favour a "bloat-and-float" model to account for them.

According to this model, ankylosaur carcasses become reworked into fluvial or marine settings where they bloat and overturn prior to their final deposition. Differential floating behaviour between ankylosaurids and nodosaurids may have implications regarding the occurrence of the latter in marine depositional environments. This consideration of ankylosaur taphonomy might similarly help to explain the purported frequency of overturned glyptodonts, which share a similar bauplan with ankylosaurs.

Using a sample of 36 specimens from Cretaceous deposits of Alberta, we demonstrate that ankylosaur specimens occur more frequently upside-down than not. Of the four hypotheses that have been advanced to account for the frequency of upside-down ankylosaur occurrences, only one (the "bloat-and-float" hypothesis) withstands experimental scrutiny. We therefore concur with previous assertions that carcass inversion resulted from bloating in aquatic settings prior to deposition.

This account is consistent with known depositional data and consideration of parsimony. Nodosaurids would have been more apt to float out to sea than ankylosaurids, an upshot resulting from their comparative instability in water and lack of tail clubs. The "bloat-and-float" model of ankylosaur taphonomy may likewise account for the frequent occurrence of upside-down glyptodonts, which share some similarities with the ankylosaur bauplan.

Wolbach, W.S., et al (2018) **Extraordinary biomass-burning episode and impact winter triggered by the Younger Dryas cosmic impact ~12,800 years ago. 1. Ice cores and glaciers.** JOURNAL OF GEOLOGY 126:165-184

Authors' abstract: *The Younger Dryas boundary (YDB) cosmic-impact hypothesis is based on considerable evidence that Earth collided with fragments of a disintegrating ~100-km-diameter comet, the remnants of which persist within the inner solar system ~12,800 y later. Evidence suggests that the YDB cosmic impact triggered an impact winter and the subsequent Younger Dryas (YD) climate episode, biomass burning, late Pleistocene megafaunal extinctions, and human cultural shifts and population declines.*

The cosmic impact deposited anomalously high concentrations of platinum over much of the Northern Hemisphere, as recorded at 26 YDB sites at the YD onset, including the Greenland Ice Sheet Project 2 ice core, in which platinum deposition spans ~21 y (~12,836–12,815 cal BP).

The YD onset also exhibits increased dust concentrations, synchronous with the onset of a remarkably high peak in ammonium, a biomass-burning aerosol. In four ice-core sequences from Greenland, Antarctica, and Russia, similar anomalous peaks in other combustion aerosols occur, including nitrate, oxalate, acetate, and formate, reflecting one of the largest biomass-burning episodes in more than 120,000 y.

In support of widespread wildfires, the perturbations in CO2 records from Taylor Glacier, Antarctica, suggest that biomass burning at the YD onset may have consumed ~10 million km^2, or ~9% of Earth's terrestrial biomass. The ice record is consistent with YDB impact theory that extensive impact-related biomass burning triggered the abrupt onset of an impact winter, which led, through climatic feedbacks, to the anomalous YD climate episode.

ibid **2. Lake, marine, and terrestrial sediments.** JOURNAL OF GEOLOGY 126:185-205

Authors' abstract: *Part 1 of this study investigated evidence of biomass burning in global ice records, and here we continue to test the hypothesis that an impact event at the Younger Dryas boundary (YDB) caused an anomalously intense episode of biomass burning at ~12.8 ka on a multicontinental scale (North and South America, Europe, and Asia).*

Quantitative analyses of charcoal and soot records from 152 lakes, marine cores, and terrestrial sequences reveal a major peak in biomass burning at the Younger Dryas (YD) onset that appears to be the highest during the latest Quaternary.

For the Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary (K-Pg) impact event, concentrations of soot were previously utilized to estimate the global amount of biomass burned, and similar measurements suggest that wildfires at the YD onset rapidly consumed ~10 million km2 of Earth's surface, or ~9% of Earth's biomass, considerably more than for the K-Pg impact [Cretaceous-Paleogene boundary when dinosaurs became extinct].

Bayesian analyses and age regressions demonstrate that ages for YDB peaks in charcoal and soot across four continents are synchronous with the ages of an abundance peak in platinum in the Greenland Ice Sheet Project 2 (GISP2) ice core and of the YDB impact event (12,835–12,735 cal BP). Thus, existing evidence indicates that the YDB impact event caused an anomalously large episode of biomass burning, resulting in extensive atmospheric soot/dust loading that triggered an "impact winter."

This, in turn, triggered abrupt YD cooling and other climate changes, reinforced by climatic feedback mechanisms, including Arctic sea ice expansion, rerouting of North American continental runoff, and subsequent ocean circulation changes.

Speirs: The Younger Dryas episode cooled Earth by about 5°C, enough to cause glaciers to begin advancing again and conversion of northern forests into tundra. That changed the lifestyle of northern humans from sedentary to nomadic.

Retallack, G.J., et al (2018) **Late Pleistocene mammoth trackway from Fossil Lake, Oregon.** PALAEOGEOGRAPHY, PALAEOCLIMATOLOGY, PALAEOECOLOGY 496:192-204

Authors' abstract: *Behavior of Columbian mammoths (Mammuthus columbi) is revealed by a newly discovered trackway at the Pleistocene locality of Fossil Lake, Oregon. Our 8 by 20 m excavation of the mammoth trackway found 117 tracks, including one 20-m-long adult trail, partial trackways of 3 additional adults, a yearling and a baby all heading generally west.*

The tracks are in the Marble Bluff biotite tuff (43.2 cal ka), which forms a surface horizon to the Pogani silty clay loam paleosol (Natrargid), with a cracked surface and a columnar-structured, subsurface (Bn) horizon, like soils under desert soda pans with alkali shrubland.

Columbian mammoths may have moved like modern elephants with infants in matriarchal groups through landscapes of sagebrush and grassland, and this trackway includes a limping female attended by concerned juveniles. Grassland paleosols common in the Fossil Lake Formation, are now rare in the same region, perhaps related to extinction of proboscidean and equine grazers.

Rabinovitch, A., V. Frid, and D. Bahat (2018) **Use of electromagnetic radiation for potential forecast of earthquakes.** GEOLOGICAL MAGAZINE 155:992-996

Authors' abstract: *A forecast of an earthquake should identify the first stages of earthquake development: nucleation and stick-slip. We show that a forecast cannot be achieved by seismic measurements due to their high attenuation, but can be obtained by judicial filtering of electromagnetic radiation.*

Results show that electromagnetic radiation emitted from fractures (FEMR) during the early stages of an earthquake is less attenuated than seismic measurements due to the high frequencies involved, but could be cluttered by external noise. Based on our previous studies, an analysis of FEMR constructed on a profile of individual pulses can remove part of the clatter.

Suna, F., M.L. Roderick, and G.D. Farquharc (2018) **Rainfall statistics, stationarity, and climate change.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 115:2305-2310

Authors' abstract: *Precipitation shows large year-to-year variations, and there is interest in whether there have been long-lasting changes. We use a global land-based database (1940-2009) of annual precipitation and find evidence for changes at around 14% of the global land surface.*

In contrast, around 76% of the global land shows little or no change. Our results emphasize the importance of fully accounting for natural variability when assessing long-term precipitation change.

Zhao, L., et al (2018) **Gut bacteria selectively promoted by dietary fibers alleviate type 2 diabetes.** SCIENCE 359:1151-1156

Authors' abstract: *Short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs) are produced by various human gut microbes. SCFAs act as an energy source to the colonic epithelium and are also sensed by host signaling pathways that modulate appetite and inflammation. Deficiency of gut SCFAs is associated with type 2 diabetes.*

Adopting a high-fiber diet promoted the growth of SCFA-producing organisms in diabetic humans. The high-fiber diet induced changes in the entire gut microbe community and correlated with elevated levels of glucagon-like peptide-1, a decline in acetylated hemoglobin levels, and improved blood-glucose regulation.

The gut microbiota benefits humans via short-chain fatty acid (SCFA) production from carbohydrate fermentation, and deficiency in SCFA production is associated with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM).

We conducted a randomized clinical study of specifically designed isoenergetic diets, together with fecal shotgun metagenomics, to show that a select group of SCFA-producing strains was promoted by dietary fibers and that most other potential producers were either diminished or unchanged in patients with T2DM.

When the fiber-promoted SCFA producers were present in greater diversity and abundance, participants had better improvement in hemoglobin A1c levels, partly via increased glucagon-like peptide-1 production. Promotion of these positive responders diminished producers of metabolically detrimental compounds such as indole and hydrogen sulfide. Targeted restoration of these SCFA producers may present a novel ecological approach for managing T2DM.

Vosoughi, S., D. Roy, and S. Aral (2018) **The spread of true and false news online.** SCIENCE 359:1146-1151

Authors' abstract: *We investigated the differential diffusion of all of the verified true and false news stories distributed on Twitter from 2006 to 2017. The data comprise ~126,000 stories tweeted by ~3 million people more than 4.5 million times.*

We classified news as true or false using information from six independent fact-checking organizations that exhibited 95 to 98% agreement on the classifications.

Falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information, and the effects were more pronounced for false political news than for false news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or financial information.

We found that false news was more novel than true news, which suggests that people were more likely to share novel information. Whereas false stories inspired fear, disgust, and surprise in replies, true stories inspired anticipation, sadness, joy, and trust. Contrary to conventional wisdom, robots accelerated the spread of true and false news at the same rate, implying that false news spreads more than the truth because humans, not robots, are more likely to spread it.

Speirs: You have heard the old saying that a lie can travel around the world while the truth is still pulling on its boots.

25TH ANNUAL WORLD WIDE PARTY ON JUNE 21

Founded by Benoit Girard (Quebec) and Franz Miklis (Austria) in 1994, the World Wide Party is held on June 21st every year. 2018 will be the 25th year of the WWP.

At 21h00 local time, everyone is invited to raise a glass and toast fellow members of zinedom around the world. It is important to have it exactly at 21h00 your time. The idea is to get a wave of fellowship circling the planet. Rescheduling it to a club meeting or more convenient time negates the idea of a wave of celebration by SF fans and zinesters circling the globe.

At 21h00, face to the east and salute those who have already celebrated. Then face north, then south, and toast those in your time zone who are celebrating as you do. Finally, face west and raise a glass to those who will celebrate WWP in the next hour. Raise a glass, publish a one-shot zine, have a party, or do a mail art project for the WWP. Let me know how you celebrated the day.

SAINT URHO'S DAY
by Dale Speirs

My mother was Alberta-born and raised but was a pure-laine ethnic Finn on both sides of her family, which makes me half-Finnish. She spoke Suomalais to her elders but never taught it to us kids on the grounds that it was a useless language in Canada. One tradition we had was to celebrate St Urho's Day every March 16. This observance was created in 1956 by Richard Mattson, a Minnesota native of Finnish extraction.

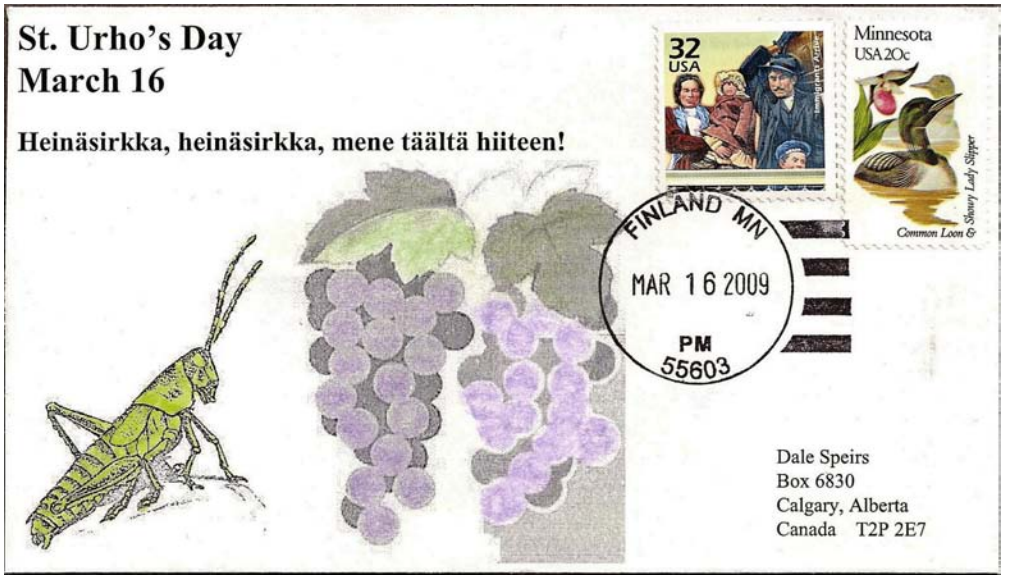
Finland is 81% Lutheran, and like most Protestant nations, does not have any sort of national day based on a saint as do Catholic countries. Mattson decided to remedy the situation in order to have an excuse to party, and invented Saint Urho, the name coming from a Finnish word meaning hero or braveheart. He fabricated a legend which later went through several changes and finally settled into the modern version.

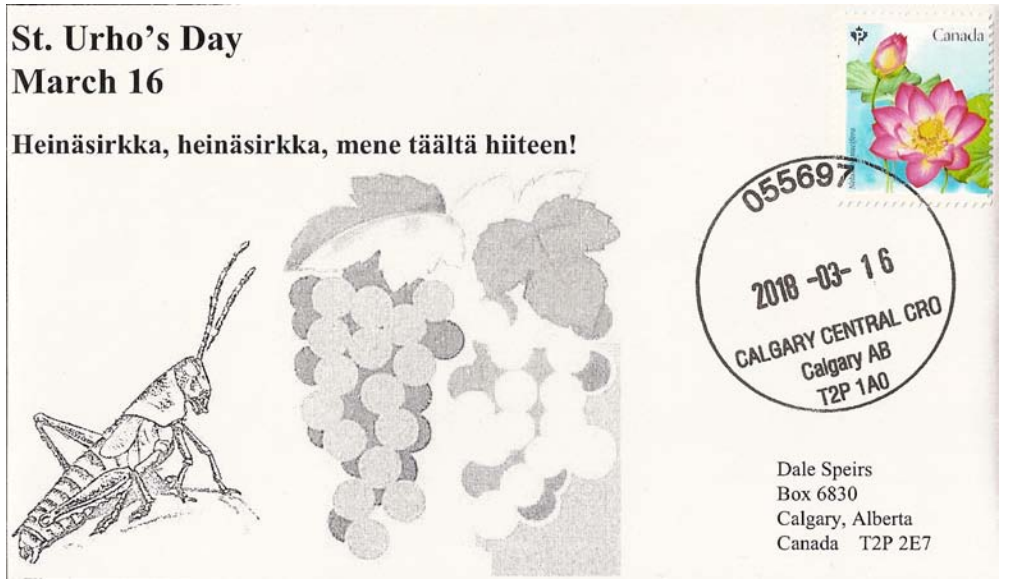
In the version accepted today, St. Urho banished a plague of grasshoppers from Finland who were destroying the grape crop. He shouted "Heinäsirkka, heinäsirkka, mene täältä hiiteen!", which translates as "Grasshopper, grasshopper, go from here to Hell!", thus saving the crop. Wine, of course, is made from grapes, so one can guess how Finnish expats celebrate the holiday.

My mother made St. Urho's Day cards to send to relatives, of which I still have some of the covers they were sent in. Since she sent them in advance of the holiday so they would get there on time, they are not postmarked March 16.

I decided to remedy the situation and created mail art covers for postmarking with the correct date. I carried on the tradition after her death in 2002 as a memorial to her, and each year make five covers using a template I created on my computer.

My mother's family (both sides) homesteaded at Eckville, Alberta, which was colonized by Finns and Icelanders, but the town is named after its founder, an Irishman, Arthur Eckford, so the Finnish connection is not obvious. For postmarking, I originally selected Finland, Minnesota, and Siontula, British Columbia. Sointula, on one of the islands between Vancouver Island and the mainland, was colonized as a Finnish utopian commune. The name means "place of harmony". Nowadays I just take the covers to the Calgary Central post office, where I have my box number.





Urho is a common male name in Finland. One of its past presidents was so named, seen on this stamp.