



Zoology alumni

Welcome to the first e-newsletter of the 2016-17 academic year. We're still buzzing from the 150th anniversary weekend, with large numbers of alumni taking part in the full range of activities on offer. Overall, our 16 events attracted more than 1700 attendees. It was really thrilling to meet so many of you during these events. We genuinely believe that this weekend achieved its aim of kickstarting a feeling of community and shared interest amongst alumni from across a span of many years. We hope to build on the success of the weekend so that the warm feelings of many of you towards the Department can be channelled into active support for the initiatives and projects we are planning, including a new final year field course in the tropics.

Christmas will soon be upon us; we strongly commend to you our 150th anniversary desk calendars, which contain magnificent photographs on zoological themes. A calendar would thrill that difficult-to-please aunt, or allow you to keep track of the date in your office, always reminding you (or indeed your aunt!) of the wonders of the natural world and the research going on in the Department.

So – what have we in store for you in 2017? We are beginning to plan for a day of activities to coincide with the Alumni Festival on 23 September 2017. We would like this to include a reception for alumni and guests, perhaps under the Finback in the newly built whale gallery! We are also tentatively planning a celebration of books written and presented by Zoology alumni. As ever, we would be delighted to hear from you with ideas for future alumni events and ways in which we might enhance the activities we provide for you.

Yours,

William Foster, Director of Alumni Relations

Alumni abuzz at the 150th anniversary celebrations



An impressive number of alumni and guests took part in the 150th anniversary weekend (23–25 September), with over 700 people listening to Sir David Attenborough in conversation with Dame Frances Ashcroft. Alumni plunged enthusiastically into the wide range of events on offer: handling rare books in the library, examining beetle larvae feeding on a mouse corpse, gasping at chemical explosions, drinking champagne, and identifying tricky intertidal invertebrates.

The weekend also helped build a stronger sense of community within the Department itself, as young and old, support staff and academics, newcomers and old hands, worked together to make the events a success. We enjoyed talking to members of the Department we had not met before, as well as to the large numbers of alumni and guests.

Here's a flavour of the weekend in the words of some alumni attendees:

"The lectures, the quiz, the films, and the 'Just a Marmot' game show were high comedy from witty scientists. I cannot wait for the 151st." Graham Lees

"The 'Eureka Moments' talks were fascinating and a great advert for zoology. The spot practical took me back to my finals in 1974 when I think we had some of Darwin's original finches as one spot." Alasdair Edwards (who won the spots test)

"What a wonderful zoological extravaganza!! From inspirational 'Eureka Moments' (I won't forget Nick Davies and the Dunnock's projectile sperm), to the thrill of holding a great auk's egg, and the magical talk by Mike Gunton on seeing life from the animal's perspective [we held our breaths for the baby barnacle goose]. I can't wait for next year." Fran Ashcroft



What makes wild birds and people talk to each other?

People in Africa are able to locate honeybee nests by following a particular bird species – the honeyguide. Recent research by Dr Claire Spottiswoode and colleagues, published in *Science*, shows that humans use special calls to encourage help from the birds, which in turn have special songs to recruit their human helpers.

[Read more](#)

Genomic insights into Lyme disease vector



The genome of the tick *Ixodes scapularis*, the vector of Lyme disease, has recently been sequenced and analysed by a team that included alumnus David Sattelle (University College London), a former member of the Laboratory of Molecular Signalling in the Department. Lyme disease is the most important vector-borne disease in Europe and the USA, and this latest work, published in *Nature Communications*, will provide a much surer foundation for understanding the biology of the disease vector.

[Read more](#)

New evidence for out-of-Africa migration



The first major genomic study of Aboriginal Australians is claimed to confirm that all present-day non-African humans are descended from the same single wave of migrants, who left Africa around 72,000 years ago. The research by an international team of scientists led by Professor Eske Willerslev is published in *Nature*.

Professor Willerslev will take up his post as the Prince Phillip Professor of Ecology and Evolution in the Department in 2019.

[Read more](#)

Supporting the Department

Alumna supports two 150th anniversary studentships

A Cambridge alumna has given a 'birthday present' of two research studentships to the Department, as it celebrates 150 years of zoology at the University.

One studentship is in the biology and ecology of Asia; the other, in marine biology, is in memory of Martin Wells. Martin, whose painting of *Nautilus* is shown, was a highly distinguished member of the Department's research and teaching staff from 1959-1995 and will be remembered fondly by large numbers of alumni. We are hugely grateful for this exceptionally generous contribution to our research programme from the anonymous donor.



[Read more](#)

New final-year field course in the tropics

The Department, in association with the Cambridge Conservation Initiative, is a global centre for research in biodiversity and conservation. It is our ambition to become a world leader in teaching these subjects too, attracting the very best undergraduates to study these vitally important disciplines. To achieve this, our students need to spend some time in the tropics, where biodiversity is at its most complex and the problems of conservation most acute.

Uniquely among UK universities, in Drs Chris Jiggins and Ed Turner, we have staff members who work in the two major research sites in the new and old world tropics (Panama and Borneo), and we would be able to put on excellent field courses at these sites. But getting students there is expensive. We do not want them to bear the full costs and would welcome support from alumni so that all suitably qualified students could attend, regardless of their financial situation.



[Read more](#)

Sir Quentin Blake's illustrations 'light-up' the Museum



Celebrated children's illustrator, Sir Quentin Blake, came to Cambridge on 11 July to unveil the exterior blinds of the Museum of Zoology. The blinds are now enlivened by a series of illustrations specially created by him and related to the Museum's collections. The illustrations are visible on the podium of the David Attenborough Building, on the outside of the blinds which shield the Museum's exhibits from the harmful effects of sunlight.

40 year reunion for Part II class of 1976



Adrian Lister (far left in photograph) writes: 'On Saturday, 24 September, the Part II class of 1975-6 held a reunion event to mark 40 years since graduation. Tracking people down was a challenge, but we managed to gather 20 out of the class of 34. Between us we attended many of the weekend's events, including the champagne reception in the new Museum foyer, and then went off for our celebration dinner at the Royal Cambridge Hotel. It was wonderful to see people re-connecting and I strongly recommend the exercise to other year groups. We are staying in touch and are already talking about another event in a few years' time'.

Who links Cambridge Zoology with Prussian morphology?



Hans Gadow (1855-1928) is the answer! Hans represents a link between the Department of Zoology and the great continental tradition of comparative morphology. His memory is celebrated in the Department through the Hans Gadow Memorial Fund, a trust fund that periodically provides for the appointment of a lecturer whose role is to deliver one or more lectures on vertebrate biology.

[Read more](#)

Eureka Moments!

11 zoologists, 11 moments of discovery

Prof Michael Akam FRS
Prof Nick Davies FRS
Prof Malcolm Burrows FRS
Prof Michael Bate FRS
Prof Jennifer Clack FRS
Prof Helen Skaer



Prof Tim Clutton-Brock FRS
Prof Andrew Balmford FRS
Prof Rebecca Kilner
Prof Ron Laskey FRS
Prof Simon Laughlin FRS

Eureka moments

Eleven members of the Department describe their moment of discovery in a film made for the 150th anniversary weekend. Alumni were enthralled to hear Simon Laughlin address his filing cabinet, Jenny Clack reveal the digits on the first land tetrapods, and Nick Davies describe the brief cloacal kiss of the Hedge Betty.

[Watch trailer](#)



Fin-back again

The Museum of Zoology's iconic Finback whale, which arrived here 150 years ago, has been re-erected in its own magnificent glass display area. After being in storage for three years, its successful re-assembly paves the way for the opening of the refurbished display galleries in August 2017.

[Read more](#)



Alumni photographs grace 150th anniversary calendar

A 2017 desk calendar, featuring splendid photographs by alumni on zoological topics, will be available to buy for just £5 from the end of November. Pre-order by email now.

The twelve photographs were chosen by competition: the winning entries were by Jamie Gundry (PhD 2003-10), Jake Snaddon (PhD 2004-8) and Andrew Gillis (Research Fellow). The cover photo is by Tim Cockerill (PhD 2008-13).

[Pre-order](#)



Don Giovanni wishes the Department a happy 150th anniversary

Simon Keenlyside (St John's 1980), who read Part II Zoology in 1982-3, has been singing the title role in Mozart's 'Don Giovanni' at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. On Saturday, 22 October, during a live relay of the opera, shown to a global cinema audience of over three million, he wished the Department 'Happy Birthday!' on its 150th anniversary.

[Watch clip](#)

Our campaign for the University and Colleges of Cambridge is raising funds to attract the brightest minds, create the finest facilities and give the freedom to create more world-changing ideas. To do this, we need your help.

Dear
World...

Yours,
Cambridge

Department of Zoology

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