Nevada State Museum Newsletter

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Under One Sky
Getting Ready for Opening on June 22

After three years from inception —
After extraordinary collaboration among cultural organizations and agencies —
After impressive involvement by Native American communities —
After a major commitment of talent and expertise —

The long-anticipated main exhibit, *Under One Sky: Nevada's Native American Heritage* opens Saturday, June 22 in the museum's feature changing gallery. Additional *Under One Sky* exhibits open later this year: the *Under One Sky: Changing Art Gallery* in August and the *Under One Sky: Discovery Room* in October.

Come join the celebration, see the results of a remarkable collective commitment, and experience this showcase of Nevada's Native American heritage.

Above: Pictured is the representation of the water infested with tules that was the Paiutes favorite duck-hunting area at the Stillwater marshes.

Right: Hard at work readying the display area for Under One Sky requires all manner of talents and trades, including using a roller to spread the paint.

Views of the Past

The staff is standing in front of The Carson Weekly newspaper print shop on May 3, 1892. From left to right: George T. Davis, Charles Piper, Selig Olcovich, Issac Olcovich, and Isador A. Jacobs, who taught the boys how to set type and operate the printing press. This wonderful collection was donated in 1953 by Selig's wife Mattie Olcovich to the museum. She was quite pleased to give the collection and wrote, "... and now know, that there is a perpetual Memorial, in his Memory, and one, that he would have preferred in preference to any Marble or Bronze statue."

The Nevada State Museum History Program is assisting the Autry Museum of Western Heritage with their exhibition *Jewish Life in the American West: Generation and Generation* by providing a unique photograph of the Olcovich Brothers and partner George Davis outside their newspaper print shop in Carson City in May 1892. In addition, the museum is sending on loan for the exhibit a bound volume of their *Carson Weekly* newspaper from that period.

The Autry Museum's exhibition will open on June 21, 2002 and can be viewed through January 20, 2003. The exhibit focuses on a one hundred-year period from the 1820s through 1924 and through the use of documents, photographs, art, artifacts and media, will examine the contributions of Jewish immigrants to the political, religious, economic, cultural, and social history of the American West and the lasting legacy that has resulted.

Isaac and Selig Olcovich were the sons of a prominent Carson City Jewish family. Their father, Hyman, was one of four brothers who settled in Carson City in the 1860s and operated a dry goods store at the corner of Fourth and Carson Streets. Isaac and Selig got started in the newspaper business by publishing *The Sun*, a small semiweekly "story paper" from June 1889 through July 1891. The paper was well patronized by friends and family and the community. What is remarkable about this is the fact that the boys were only twelve and ten years of age. They stopped publishing *The Sun* in 1891 and began printing *The Weekly* with their partner George T. Davis. The paper, measuring five and one-half by eight inches and containing four pages was published Monday at a subscription price of $1.00 a year. The Olcoviches suspended publication of *The Weekly* on January 2, 1899, and eventually the paper was absorbed by the *Carson City Daily Appeal*. In the 1890s the Olcovich family began to relocate to Denver, Colorado. However, Hyman's son, Isaac, remained and in 1898 he started his own business in Carson City. The following year in March, 1899, he married Lizzie Barrett. Sadly, he died just two weeks later after the wedding.

The exhibit by the Autry Museum of the photograph of the Olcovich brothers print shop and copies of their newspaper *The Carson Weekly* will provide an opportunity for the public to learn about the amazing story of these two young Jewish boys' success in operating a newspaper in the American West.

Under One Sky Poster at Meeting

Under One Sky was represented at the Society for American Archaeology meetings in Denver, CO on March 22. There was a surprising amount of interest in the poster presentation written and designed by Gene Hattori and Alanah Woody of the Nevada State Museum Anthropology Program. There is increasing interest among federal archaeologists in public education, and most agencies are preparing to do small exhibits in their building lobbies, as well as traveling exhibits. They were very interested in the *Under One Sky* exhibition and our poster presentation, and wanted advice and information on the latest techniques and ideas. Approximately 300 *Under One Sky* flyers, as well as a number of business cards, were passed out during the four-hour presentation period. Because of the interest, we plan a follow-up poster next year at the SAA's meeting in Wisconsin to present the community response to the exhibition.—*Alanah Woody*

Nevada History Day Featured at the Museum

On March 16 the Nevada State Museum hosted the state championship for Nevada National History Day. The event is sponsored by the Nevada Humanities Committee and this year's theme, "Revolution, Reaction and Reform in History," inspired more than 130 students in the 6th through the 12th grades to enter one of the four contest categories of papers, exhibits, media or performances. Competitions are divided into junior and senior divisions and those placing first and second in each of the four categories are eligible for the national competition, scheduled June 9-13 in College Park, Maryland.

An awards ceremony was held in the Assembly Chamber at the Nevada State Capitol and the top prizes for the day went to the following students: Russell R. Elliott $350 prize sponsored by the Nevada Corral of Westerners International for the best entry on Western history: Mackenzie Hodges, Pershing County Middle School; Frances Humphrey $200 prize from the history program at the Nevada State Museum for the best exhibit: Bryce Phillips, Pershing County Middle School; Hazel Van Allen Bretzlaff $300 prize from the history program of the Nevada State Museum for the best of show: McKenzie Loye, Hayley Huntley, Angel Driggs, Kate Reeser, Elizabeth Hodgon, Swope Middle School; Grace Dangberg $200 prize for the best paper: Alex Chichester, Swope Middle School; Grace Dangberg $200 prize for the best 20th century entry; Jennifer Young, Swope Middle School; Southwest Oral History Association $100 prize for the best documentary: Jessi Brinkerhoff, Pershing County Middle School; Nevada Mining Association $100 prize for the best entry on mining or technology: Stephen Cox and Buck Marion, "I Can Do Anything," Charter School.

Individuals or businesses that would like to fund a history day prize for next year please contact Bob Nylen at the Nevada State Museum, 687-4810, ext. 239.

The Bretzlaff Foundation History Program project funds assisted the museum staff with holding the event. The museum staff would like to thank the Nevada Humanities Committee staff, History Day judges, Nevada State Museum docents and volunteers, teachers, students and parents for making the event a great success.

Message From Our Director Jim Barmore

New museum signs are on the way!

The museum has worked with Young Electric Sign Company (YESCO) of Reno on a plan to install signs on the new north building and replace signs on the main museum. The goal is to unify the complex, enhance image, and identify the new building. Currently, visitors are missing out on opportunities in the north building, including the museum store, due to inadequate signs. Once installed all signs have a common and contemporary graphic standard and incorporate architectural elements from the historic mint. The plan will not change memorial signs or historical designations.

No state funds were available, so fund raising began last September with the "Tin Cup Tea and Chuck Wagon Social" at the Governor's Mansion. YESCO was a major sponsor for the event and later reduced the cost of signs through an in-kind contribution. Additional funds were raised through the Coin Show and donors. In April the Carson City Redevelopment Authority awarded the museum a grant through their Incentives Program for almost $7,000. This put the museum over the top.

By mid-summer, the museum will complete phase one encompassing five signs—four on the north building and one monument sign in Loftin Park. Additional funds are required for the remaining three signs on the main building. We thank our funding sources for making these exciting improvements possible.

Natural History Spotlights: Great Basin Rattlesnake

By GEORGE D. BAUMGARDNER, Ph.D.
Curator of Natural History, Nevada State Museum

Author's Note: — In preparing this article, I relied heavily upon Alex Heindl, curator of herpetology, Marjorie Barrick Museum of Natural History, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Mr. Heindl has spent many years researching rattlesnakes in Nevada and has considerably more academic knowledge about them and personal experience with them than I do. I wish to thank Alex for all his help and for his providing several articles he has written on this subject.

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Anyone that drives much in Nevada or explores its wilder places has the chance to see some of its rattlesnakes. For many, this occurs on secondary and unpaved roads in the less developed parts of the state. Snakes are more often seen on roads because there are few places for them to hide and because they will linger on the warm surfaces to bask. A traveler can see not only live snakes but also dead animals that have been struck by passing vehicles. Snakes are less likely noticed off of roads due to their camouflaged appearance and the possibility they will move out of someone's way before being seen.

In the three years I have traveled Nevada to study its animals, I have seen fewer than ten rattlesnakes. All of these animals have been on roads and approximately half have been alive. I have not aggressively hunted these creatures (i.e. flipping rocks, exploring likely refuges, etc.) but I have watched for them both to avoid unpleasant encounters and

to document their presence. My not seeing them away from roads is probably due more to their ability to blend with their surroundings and mobility than to their absence. I probably don't want to know how many rattlesnakes I have stepped over, walked around, or stood beside.

How then, do you recognize a rattlesnake? Many people realize they have encountered such a creature when they see or hear its rattle but this may not, by itself, be a foolproof way to identify a rattlesnake. Young snakes will have few rattles, any snake may lose rattles because these structures are fragile and can break, and some animals do not always shake their tails when disturbed. Another indication you might be seeing a rattlesnake is the animal having a large, stocky body and a blotched pattern but some non-venomous snakes have a similar appearance. The most common of these rattlesnake mimics in Nevada is the Great Basin Gopher Snake, also called the Bull Snake, (*Pituophis melanoleucus*). The gopher snake's body is normally skinnier than a rattlesnake's but this distinction might not be immediately noticeable to many people.

Several of the more diagnostic features useful in identifying Nevada snakes as rattlesnakes can be found on the heads of these animals (see Note below). When viewed from above, rattlesnake heads are more triangular in shape than those of other local snakes. This outline is due to the poison/venom glands that lie on either side of the upper jaws. Two other distinctive characters are loreal pits and moveable fangs. Loreal pits are single depressions on either side of the face between the nostrils and eyes. These "pits" are infrared sensing organs that help the snake find warm-bodied prey in low light. The fangs are hollow, needle-like structures that attach at the front of the mouth and fold against the upper jaws. When the snake strikes, these fangs rotate downward and are driven into whatever the snake is biting. At this time venom can be injected through these "needles." [Note: Loreal pits and moveable fangs are distinguishing features of pit vipers (Subfamily Crotalinae — rattlesnakes, cottonmouths, copperheads, etc.). All rattlesnakes are pit vipers but not all pit vipers are rattlesnakes. Worldwide, these characters are not unique enough to unequivocally identify an animal as a rattlesnake but they are sufficient to do this for Nevada because rattlesnakes are the only pit vipers in this state.]

Yes, I know, most people are not willing to get near enough to a snake to take a close look at the angle of its jaw, see its upper teeth, or count the holes in its face so we are back to — "How do you recognize a rattlesnake?" Probably the best way for most people to identify a snake in Nevada as a rattlesnake is to look for a combination of features including a triangular-shaped head, a blotched color pattern, and the sight and/or sound of a rattle.

With the coming of spring I thought it timely to highlight one of the rattlesnakes our readers might encounter. Six types (subspecies) of rattlesnake can be found in Nevada but five are largely confined to the Mohave Desert of the southern third of the state. A few populations of these southern snakes have been found north of the Mohave Desert but the Great Basin Rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis lutosus*) is the most common venomous reptile living in much of the northern two-thirds of Nevada. This subspecies occupies the geographic region of Nevada and adjacent states known as the Great Basin and can be found at elevations up to 11,000 feet but it is more common below 8,000 feet. It occurs in a wide array of habitats including areas with greasewood/shadscale, sagebrush, pinyon/juniper, and fir/spruce. Two common features of these habitats are scattered brush and rock. Desert situations having little brush and rock are less likely to harbor many of these snakes.

Great Basin Rattlesnakes can range from six to sixty-four inches in length with adults averaging thirty to thirty-six inches. These animals can be quite variable in appearance. Background color of their backs tends to harmonize with the surroundings and is normally gray, tan or yellow. There will be twenty to fifty dark blotches on their backs that can be oval, squarish, diamond like, or hexagonal in shape. These blotches tend to narrow into crossbands near the tail. Of the three animals I have examined closely, two had blotches shaped like irregular rectangles that had dark brown/black borders with lighter brown centers. The third snake was considerably larger than the other two and had more diamond-shaped blotches that were uniformly dark in color (Figure on page four).

These animals den for the winter in rock crevices or animal burrows. Once it becomes warm enough for them to move around (approximately sixty degrees Fahrenheit) they will emerge from their refuges. In Nevada, this snake tends to be active above ground at lower elevations from April to July and at higher elevations from May through September. In spring and fall they may prowl during midday but in summer they avoid hotter times and are more active in mornings and late afternoons. When not too hot or cold they will also move at night. Adult Great Basin Rattlesnakes eat primarily warm-blooded animals like ground squirrels, kangaroo rats, and other rodents. Young snakes will eat lizards and mice. Unlike many other snakes, which kill their prey by constriction, rattlesnakes subdue their food by injecting the animal with venom. This venom not only incapacitates/kills the prey but also begins the breakdown of the tissue to be eaten.

Rattlesnake bites to humans are not to be taken lightly as they can result in considerable pain and even death but one should remember that the chances of being bitten are low and the chances of a fatal bite are even less. Those most at risk from rattlesnake bite are young children, whose smaller bodies allow for quicker movement of venom through their systems, and older adults with preexisting health problems. To put this matter in perspective I quote rattlesnake expert Alex Heindl who wrote "the likelihood of being involved in an accident while driving to and from an outing during which you might encounter a snake is far greater than the likelihood of being bitten by a snake once you are there." Even if bitten, the fatality rate from snakebite in this country is low. Fatality estimates I have seen range from one death in 500 venomous bites to one in a 1,000. Probably the best thing to do should you encounter a snake, particularly if you are uncertain as to what type it is, is to leave it alone. Typical strike distance for rattlesnakes is one-third to one-half their body length. Despite what you might have heard rattlesnakes cannot jump. If you must pass by a snake, try to do so by a distance of five to ten feet (the bigger the animal the greater the distance). Common sense precautions when in rattlesnake country, such as watching where you put your hands and feet, will go a long way in avoiding any unpleasant encounters with the rattlesnakes of Nevada.

For recommended actions regarding rattlesnake bites see the accompanying article on page seven of this newsletter by Alex Heindl. You might consider taking this article with you should you be traveling in rattlesnake country.

If you wish to learn more about plants and animals that live in Nevada feel free to contact us at the Nevada State Museum, 600 North Carson Street in Carson City.

Nevada Minerals... Go Gallium!

By DOROTHY NYLEN
Exhibit Preparator II, Nevada State Museum

There was a time when the government in Washington D.C. considered rescinding Nevada's statehood. That was after the Comstock Lode had apparently run dry and thousands of people left for "greener" pastures. Just when things looked darkest, silver and gold was discovered at Tonopah bringing thousands more in, setting off a whole new wave of mining statewide. New technologies and new discoveries have continued to open new opportunities for mining in Nevada. Many older mines have experienced rebirth. Ore bodies can be so rich in various metals and minerals that old mines can receive an entirely new focus. The Cordero Mine in northern Humboldt County (near the Oregon border), may be a noteworthy example of this.

Basque sheepherders originally staked the Cordero Mine in 1931. Surface evidence of mercury was discovered during the lambing season and "cordero," the name given to the mine, means lamb in Basque. Several different interests sought and produced mercury from this site over time and it became the largest producer of mercury in North America.

Today the Cordero Mine has exciting new prospects. A company called Gold Canyon Resources has discovered unusually high concentrations of a rare metal that has special value for high-tech wireless devices such as cell phones, automobile anti-collision guidance systems, as well as new semiconductor-based lighting systems and medical applications. The United States is the world's second largest consumer of gallium, but has no domestic source. Gallium has thus far been produced in fairly small amounts as a by-product of zinc and aluminum mining. It is presently imported in fairly small amounts from such countries as France, Kazakhstan and China. Low demand for the metal has been dictated by the high cost of procuring and producing it. The Cordero discovery may change that. If put into operation it would be the world's only gallium mine. If the metal can be extracted at reasonable cost it could be a real moneymaker adding another much needed element of diversity to Nevada's economy.

Gold Canyon Resources holds the right to all minerals other than gold and silver at the site. The company is donating a specimen of this ore to the Nevada State Museum for public viewing.

Note: Gallium was first discovered in France in 1875. It melts at around eighty-six degrees Fahrenheit. It literally melts in a person's hand, but is considered non-toxic. Amazingly, the silver-blue magnetic metal boils at 4,357 degrees Fahrenheit. Melted it has the consistency of mercury, but it apparently looks more like aluminum.

Doug Southerland Retires After 27 Years With Museum

DOUG OUTLINES HIS CAREER WITH THE MUSEUM

I started working at 600 North Carson Street in 1975 and have always felt it was a great honor to work at the Nevada State Museum. Here are a few of my memories, both good and bittersweet.

In 1976, I had the honor of participating in the nationally sponsored Freedom Train and the production of Carson City minted bicentennial coins. I utilized my land surveying skills to secure the Indian Hills property for Nevada State Museum in 1977. 1979 provided me with the honor of opening the cornerstone removed from our Capitol Building, which held many treasures of Nevada's past.

In 1984 I was successful in securing a grant to restore the U.S. Branch Mint's interior and save her exterior woodwork. In 1990-1992, the Mint was in danger of closing due to seismic instability. Due to the efforts of Mel Green and others, the Mint was saved from the wrecking ball.

Along the way I have been involved in more than forty-seven full gallery exhibitions, including the care, restoration and conservation of hundreds of objects that were placed in my care. Here are some of the special exhibits I remember . . .

1981: Curator and exhibit manager on the history of gambling.
1982: The exhibits at the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society in Las Vegas.
1984: The Nevada Ghost Town and Weapons galleries, two of my favorite subjects.
1985: The Wild Horse in Nevada — a controversial topic: we told all sides.
1988: Received a letter of commendation from the Oakland Museum for my presentation of their exhibit in our Capitol Building of Silver in the Golden State.
1993: The State Constitution exhibit in the Nevada State Library and Archives Gallery.
1994: Installation of the Mint Theatre in the newly stabilized Mint Building.
1995: The Earth Science Gallery, featuring general and local displays on plate tectonics, Nevada's Devonian Sea, and the Black Rock Mammoth.
1996: The beginning of the History Gallery complex — as yet unfinished.
1997: Acquiring and restoring a 10,000-oz. beam scale for our Mint exhibit and our conservation of our Basque sheep camp wagon.
1999: The Millennium slot machine exhibit, a unique experience.
2001: Selections from Collections, the premier show in our new North Building, showcasing all of the museum's curatorial programs.

Coming Events

NEVADA STATE MUSEUM

May 28: The Ichthyosaur: Nevada's State Fossil, program by Jennifer Hoglar and Bradley Kosch, Nevada State Parks.

June 25: Nevada's Early 20th Century Ghost Towns, by Ghost Town Historian Stanley Paher.

These programs are part of the museum's Frances Humphrey evening lecture series held on the fourth Tuesday of every month from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. There is no charge for the programs. The Loftin Park entrance on the north side of the museum complex will be used for all programs. For more information call 687-4810, ext. 239.

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NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

May 8: Far East Adventure by Train, by Virginia Nuzum.

June 12: McKeen Car Restoration Project, by Chris deWitt.

Programs at the Nevada State Railroad Museum are held in the Interpretive Center at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, and are sponsored by the Friends of the Museum. Admission is free.

New Docent Officers Installed

New officers were installed for the coming year on May 1 in luncheon ceremonies at the Pinon Plaza in Carson City. Returning for her second year as chairman is Penny Fairfield. The new vice chairman is Joyce Duncan, secretary/treasurer is Jan Hunt, corresponding secretary is Renee Brimm, and Jack Gibson will continue as parliamentarian. Committee chairpersons are Joyce Duncan, membership; Thelma Williams, placement; Harold Werbel and Edna Henner, programs; Pat Puchert, publicity; and Jan Hunt and Pat Puchert, tours.

Robert Nylen, Nevada State Museum curator of history, was the installing officer.

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SNAKEBITE! Recommended actions — and what to avoid

By Alex Heindl, Curator of Herpetology,
Marjorie Barrick Museum of Natural History,
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Editor's Note: The following article was supplied to the *Nevada State Museum Newsletter* by Alex Heindl. Except for a small part omitted for space, this text is original. You might consider taking this article with you should you be traveling in rattlesnake country. We thank Alex for allowing us to reprint his work.

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Venomous snakebite is a relatively uncommon event in the United States. Though no systematic, nationwide compilation of annual bite statistics exists, it appears that only a few thousand bites get reported each year. Viewed alone this figure seems large, but considered in terms of our 275 million-plus population, the problem takes on a more realistic prospect.

Common or not, venomous snakebite's potentially life threatening nature makes it a condition to be taken seriously. Properly treated, most bite victims easily survive with little more than a few unpleasant memories to remind them of the incident. In the United States, only about 0.1%—just one in a thousand—of bites is fatal. Fatalities are more likely to result from bites to young children because of their small body mass. Elderly adults, particularly those with heart or lung ailments, are also more at risk because of their generally less robust health than are other population segments.

Recent statistics show that most bite victims are men between the ages of twenty and forty, and that most bites are on hands and feet. Alcohol is typically involved in behavior leading to a bite and the victim is commonly attempting to impress friends when the bite occurs. Truly accidental bites are considerably less frequent. But regardless of contributing circumstances, what course of action is best when a bite does occur?

First, **reassure** the victim. Calm him down. The likelihood that the bite will be fatal is very small. Each year, more people are killed by lightning or attacks by domestic dogs or even bee stings than die from snakebite. Even the ride to the hospital is statistically more hazardous.

Next, **remove** any restrictive clothing, jewelry, etc. from around the bite—particularly objects lying between the bite and the heart. Swelling associated with snakebite can cause such items to seriously restrict circulation, with potential consequences more troublesome than the bite itself.

To the extent possible, ***immobilize*** the bitten limb and keep it at or just below the victim's heart level. Unnecessary motion simply speeds blood flow and spreads venom more quickly.

Rinse the bite area to prevent any venom on the skin from entering the wound.

Do not apply a tourniquet. Unnecessarily restricted blood flow invites gangrene. A compression band such as an ace bandage may be applied around the wound so long as it does not overly restrict circulation. Wrap it as for a sprained ankle, i.e., one or two fingers should easily slide underneath.

Do not cut the victim for purposes of withdrawing venom. Serious harm can be done by well-intended but ill-applied incisions that damage blood vessels, tendons, ligaments and nerves. Venom extractors are of questionable value unless applied within seconds after the bite is delivered. If you use an extractor, apply it and leave it in place until the victim is under professional medical care. Continuous removal and reapplication can create a pumping action that aids venom spread.

Do not apply ice. Frostbite or freezing may do more damage than the bite itself. Cooling the area around the bite by wrapping it with a water-soaked cloth may help by slowing circulation.

Do not apply electric shock. This now rejected "treatment" does nothing to alter venom action and may have serious, even lethal, side effects.

Offer no stimulants; avoid giving anything by mouth. Coffee, tea, soft drinks (sucrose sugars and sugar substitutes), alcohol and tobacco all increase heart rate, blood pressure and, thereby, the spread of venom. Sport drinks (Gatorade, Power Aid, etc.) should also be avoided because they may obscure electrolyte imbalances caused by the venom and make assessment of the bite's effects more difficult. *A little water is ok if the victim is dehydrated, but avoid giving anything by mouth until it is determined that surgery will not be required as part of treatment.*

Transport to medical care. If possible, **inform** the intended facility you are en-route. Give the victim's age, sex, weight, general health profile (e.g., allergies, health problems, etc.), current status, and your anticipated time of arrival. Advise where the bite is located (e.g., hand, foot), when it occurred and what species of snake delivered it. Different types of snakes produce different types of venom. If you cannot positively identify the snake, describe what it looked like and the terrain where it was found.

If immediate transport is unavailable, call or send for help if you can. Do not leave the bitten person alone and avoid having him walk unless absolutely necessary. In such cases, move slowly and without unnecessary exertion. If swelling or other symptoms (dizziness, nausea, etc.) increase markedly, stop and have the victim lie down until symptoms subside. If they do not, stay where you are and wait for help.

Remember: *Although venomous snakebite clearly warrants timely medical attention, bites from North American species are only rarely, in actuality, life threatening.*