The Monte L. Bean Life Science Museum at Brigham Young University is a dynamic repository and trustee for a remarkable group of biological collections. These collections are used to celebrate the role of Jesus Christ as Creator, while enhancing student learning and mentoring and promoting faculty teaching and research. They also serve as a unique venue for inviting the public and scientific community to explore and contemplate intricate biological relationships and processes.

We accomplish our mission by

- Collecting and properly maintaining biological specimens and associated data to effectively support current and future research efforts;

- Providing and developing database options to better support research concerning the biodiversity and ecological complexities of the earth’s ecosystems;

- Producing and sharing quality research products in order to increase scientific knowledge and understanding;

- Facilitating an ongoing dialogue about issues and concerns related to faith and science as different but complementary ways of knowing;

- Educating our students and the public about the natural processes essential to sustaining the biological diversity and ecological health of the earth;

- Providing a forum for educating our students and the public about best earth stewardship practices;

- Promoting and facilitating quality learning and mentoring experiences for our students;

- Engaging the public effectively through compelling exhibits and innovative education programs in order to promote understanding and appreciation for the diversity and complexity of the earth’s biological heritage;

- Using the museum’s resources to develop and implement K-12 science education programs based on the Utah State Core Science Curriculum in order to enhance the education of our local public and private school children while providing powerful, “hands-on” training experiences for pre-service primary and secondary teachers.
Once again, the museum’s curatorial team has made productive use of the museum’s research collections in support of faculty and student research, as well as student learning and mentoring. Annually, the museum and Lytle Preserve research teams generate anywhere from 65 to 85 peer-reviewed publications! We are also constantly adding new specimens to the research collections through new field collections, exchange specimens, and acquisition of research-quality and mission-connected “orphaned” collections. With expanded and remodeled research areas and new compactor systems in several of the collection areas, we are now better able to properly store, care for, and make effective use of the museum’s invaluable research collections. At the end of 2015, the museum’s research specimens numbered more than 4 million across eight research-quality collections.

In 2015 our education team continued to provide our student educators, many of whom are preservice Biology Teaching majors, with extraordinary training experiences and regular performance reviews to help them improve their teaching skills. The museum’s education programming is built around the Utah State Core Curriculum Standards for Science and offers important training for our student educators while also providing invaluable support for our public and private school colleagues and their students.

Patty and Perry continue to have great success with the museum store. They use patron feedback to more effectively select merchandise that not only supports the mission of the museum but also provides our visitors with an impressive combination of interesting and educational products.

Public visits as well as research and teaching activity at the Lytle Ranch Preserve continue to increase, with more and more visitors coming during the peak bird migration season; and greater numbers of students and faculty from local, regional, and international institutions also using the superb facilities at the Lytle Preserve for teaching and research. The museum team continues to expand essential facilities at the preserve while constantly striving to maintain the area’s unique ecological and historical features. The Lytle Ranch Preserve is becoming an important desert field station known for supporting cutting-edge research while also facilitating student learning and mentoring in an exciting and unique outdoor environment.
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Kenneth W. Packer
Exhibit Designer and Lytle Ranch Preserve Coordinator-

Ken has been a dedicated and creative member of the museum team for more than 35 years. His artistic talents, particularly with three-dimensional artwork, have been instrumental in the planning and development of hundreds of exhibits in the museum. Ken also serves as the museum’s coordinator for the Lytle Ranch Preserve—a 700-acre field station in southwestern Utah located along the Beaver Dam Wash. Ken’s capacity for hard work combined with his impressive artistic talents has been at the center of the museum’s impressive growth and success.

Over the years, Ken has served the museum and the preserve in a variety of ways; he has worked with the museum’s education team, managed the live-animal facility, and helped maintain the museum’s physical facility by interacting with the university’s physical plant team. Ken applies his talents to address important artistic questions, while also pitching in to do the hard physical work of lifting, pushing, and moving to make sure that plans come together in a timely and spectacular way.

At the Lytle Preserve, Ken often works long hours in the hot sun with the on-site manager to repair or install flood control measures, plow and plant the agricultural panels, and install and maintain the fence-line of the preserve. When the college needed someone to oversee and manage a major retrofit of the Ellsworth Building, Ken willingly took on that job while continuing to fulfill his museum and Lytle Preserve assignments. When we were given permission to move forward with a major expansion and remodel of the museum, Ken spent almost two years interfacing with the general contractor, the various subcontractors, the architects, and the university physical facilities team to make sure things were handled in the best possible way. Ken always has gone the extra mile—to host a guest, to come back in the middle of the night to make sure the museum was properly secured, to help clean up a flood, or to make sure that the leak in the roof after a hard rain was not damaging valuable research collections in the herbarium or the insect range. Ken consistently applies his impressive talents, skills, and energy to enhance and promote the mission and message of the museum.
2015 Museum Summary Report

Introduction – The day-to-day operations of the museum require the effective coordination of several key elements: research, exhibits, education, and administration. The museum team is small, but their combined talents and skill sets complemented by their collective dedication to the museum’s mission consistently generate impressive results. 2015 was no exception. We made impressive strides with the research collections and the development and implementation of important exhibit and educational initiatives, all supported by a dedicated administrative effort. Celebrate with us as you review what we accomplished in 2015!

Education – During 2015, the museum provided a range of fun and educational activities to the university and public communities with our education programming and special events. Many of these programs have been in place for several years, such as Discovery Reading, Nature Experienceships, the BYU Night at the Museums event, Date Nights, and Family Nights. In 2015, we also participated in the new campus-wide Football Game Day Events; the purpose was to open the campus community to the public for home football games and create a welcoming atmosphere for those visiting Provo. The response was impressive! Late in 2015, one of our student educators, Nathan Hawks, developed a new museum program called “Discovery Drawing.” Each month young people eight and older were invited to the museum to learn how to draw pictures of various full-mounted specimens in the museum. This program has been a great success with 15–20 participants every month!

Exhibits – During 2015, we added several new elements to our “Common Vertebrates of Utah” exhibit (located in the basement of the original building). Specifically, we developed two new display panels with basic information about “Why We Collect” and “How We Collect;” the intent is to help visitors understand the purpose and value of the museum’s research collections. We also added comprehensive species lists for each of the Utah vertebrate groups (fish, birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians) along with threatened and endangered species designations within each group on the north exterior wall of the basement hallway. Many of our exhibits have also received audio and QR upgrades, which have improved the overall flow and feel of the museum.
Training and Evaluation of the Museum’s Student Educators – Every semester, the education team conducts a formal “performance review” with each student educator. This is a time for reflection, evaluation, and goal setting. Together, they review and critique representative video footage from each educator’s live-animal presentations. They also go over all written feedback from patrons who attended the shows, as well as the insights recorded by the educators themselves as part of a self-reflection assignment. They review the educator’s goals from the past semester, identify ways the educators have improved, and discuss new goals for the next semester. This process helps educators become more effective teachers and more confident in their ability to promote inquiry-based learning.

Museum Store – 2015 was a banner year for the museum store. Although there was a slight decline in the number of visitors since the June 2014 grand reopening, store sales per visitor increased. In fact, store sales in 2015 were the highest in the history of the museum. Several factors contributed to the increase in store revenues, including product development and merchandising based on customer demographic and psychographic research combined with analysis of past customer sales and current market trends. The store team was able to accomplish this while consistently supporting the museum’s mission and the store’s goal of developing and mentoring student employees.

Research Collections Theme – The 2015 annual report highlights the museum’s remarkable research collections. Consisting of more than 4,000,000 specimens, the museum’s research collections have an insured value of more than $55,000,000. This incredible array of specimens is organized into eight research quality collections including birds, fish, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, vascular plants, insects, lichens and bryophytes, and meiofauna. These collections are essential to the training and mentoring of hundreds of BYU students and the research and teaching efforts of more than 35 BYU faculty members. The collections also serve the worldwide scientific community as an important “library of life.” The museum’s research collections are our most valuable and precious resource!
Overview of the Museum’s Research Collections
(Leigh Johnson, Curator of Vascular plants)-

Photographs capture a moment in time. They document events, places, and objects that can be reviewed in the future. Similarly, the M.L. Bean Life Science Museum’s research collections document organisms for later study. More than just observational notes and more valuable than photographs, the research collections comprise actual organisms carefully collected and preserved: dried and pressed plants and lichens, alcohol-preserved fish and reptiles, pinned insects, and preserved mammal and bird skins and skeletons. These biological specimens can be examined and reexamined. They are repositories of morphological features, genetic information, distribution data, and historic documentation of particular species occurring at specific locations on particular dates in time. We can revisit localities where biologists made collections 100 years ago, but we may not find the same species they collected. Instead, we may find a shopping mall, a dairy farm, or an invasive, nonnative species that has eliminated what was once there. The preservation of specimens for study by present and future researchers has been part of the museum’s mission since its inception. Numbering more than 4 million specimens today, these collections support the research and teaching of BYU faculty and students in several ways. First, some disciplines require that ‘voucher specimens’ be preserved to verify the accuracy of the work. Second, because no research collection is infinitely comprehensive, loans to and from other institutions are necessary. Such loans are made between institutions, not individuals. Thus, without the research collections in the museum, BYU researchers would have to work primarily through another university. Third, by enhancing research capacity, the collections facilitate the ability of faculty and students to acquire competitive grant funding for investigating organismal biology at the cutting edge of science. Built on a strong legacy from the past, the museum’s research collections are paving the way through modern curatorial practices to address the research needs of today and tomorrow’s organismal biologists.
The museum’s research collections are cared for by a dedicated and highly trained group of curators, assistant curators, curator emeriti, collection managers, affiliate faculty, research associates, and students. Across the collections in any given year, 65 to 90 people—about 75% of whom are students—participate in caring for the collections. Oversight for each collection is provided by a faculty curator from either the Biology Department or the Department of Plant and Wildlife Sciences in the College of Life Sciences.
The insect collection at the M.L. Bean Life Science Museum is among the largest university-housed collections in North America. Although the collection emphasizes the western United States, it is worldwide in coverage. It has especially important holdings of beetles, stoneflies, and specially preserved specimens intended for molecular studies.

**Curatorial team:**
- Michael Whiting, Curator
- Riley Nelson, Assistant Curator
- Shawn Clark, Collection Manager
- Richard Baumann, Curator Emeritus
- Michael Hastriter, Research Associate
- Phillip Lawyer, Research Associate

The lichen and bryophyte collection, one of the largest in North America, contains more than 105,000 specimens, including 100 type collections. Specimens are primarily from the western United States but collections from around the world are also represented. More than 30,000 specimens have been obtained in connection with air-quality biomonitoring surveys in western U.S. wilderness areas and national parks. This collection also includes more than 1,500 archival elemental analysis samples which have been analyzed for 25 potential air pollutants.

**Curatorial team:**
- Larry St. Clair, Curator
Herbarium of Vascular Plants

The Stanley L. Welsh collection houses more than 600,000 vascular plant specimens. Among herbaria of the Intermountain West, it is the largest and represents the best geographic coverage and species representation. With historical collections spanning over 100 years and a large type collection that documents the names of new species. It is used regularly by researchers from BYU and throughout the world.

Curatorial team:
Leigh Johnson, Curator
Robert Johnson, Collection Manager
Stanley Welsh, Curator Emeritus

Herpetology (Reptiles and Amphibians)

The museum’s reptile and amphibian collection is the largest in the Intermountain West and among the most species rich of any mid-sized university-housed collection in North America. Although emphasizing the western United States, it is worldwide in coverage and includes almost 40,000 specimens representing 1,666 species, as well as 800 osteological specimens, 4,000 chromosome slides, and more than 30,000 DNA samples.

Curatorial team:
Jack Sites Jr., Curator
Wesley Skidmore, Assistant Curator
**Ichthyology**  
*(Fish)*

The museum's fish collection contains more than 150,000 specimens. The collection includes fishes from throughout the world with emphasis on western North America and South and Central America. It includes a large collection of native western trout and Central American live-bearing fish. The collection also contains extensive alcohol-preserved tissues, frozen tissues, and DNA archives from western North American fishes.

**Curatorial team:**
Dennis Shiozawa, Curator  
Jerry Johnson, Assistant Curator  
Wesley Skidmore, Assistant Curator

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**Mammalogy**  
*(Mammals)*

Started in the early 1930s, the museum's mammal collection now has more than 39,000 specimens with major representation from western North America, specifically from the Intermountain West (Utah, Nevada, and Colorado) and Mexico. Many of the standard specimens (skins and skulls) are also associated with whole skeletons and tissue samples that are useful for genetic studies.

**Curatorial team:**
Duke Rogers, Curator  
Wesley Skidmore, Assistant Curator
Meiofauna are microscopic animals. They live in very small pockets of water around soil particles. Examples of meiofauna in the museum’s collection include nematodes (roundworms), tardigrades (water bears), and rotifers (wheel animals). The museum’s collection contains more than 500,000 specimens and grows by approximately 16,000 specimens each year. This collection includes specimens from various locations across North America; however, most come from continental Antarctica.

Curatorial team:
Byron Adams, Curator

Ornithology
(Birds)

The museum’s bird collection contains more than 10,000 specimens with representation from all orders and most bird families found in the world. Of particular value is a large collection of peregrine falcons collected across the globe, several hundred hummingbirds from South America, and major representation of species found in western North America. The museum also houses an oological collection of more than 2,300 bird egg clutches.

Curatorial team:
Byron Adams, Curator; Randy Larsen, Curator; Wesley Skidmore, Assistant Curator; Clayton White, Curator Emeritus
Highlighting the Museum’s Collection Managers – The museum’s three collection managers represent the full-time team which provides essential day-to-day management of the museum’s three largest research collections (arthropods, vascular plants, and vertebrates). Their extensive experience with research-quality collections provides an important foundation for the proper care of these priceless and often irreplaceable collections. The collection managers are remarkably dedicated and consistently bring to bear the skills and expertise required to provide for both the care and effective use of the museum’s research collections.

- **Robert Johnson (Vascular Plant – Herbarium)** – The Stanley L. Welsh Vascular Plant Herbarium team has been working on databasing and digitizing plant specimens for the last several years. Robert works with students to enter specimen label information into the herbarium database and to link those records to high-resolution images providing access to the herbarium for potential users worldwide. Robert also works with students to process new specimens obtained through field collections, or on exchange from other herbaria, or as gifts from researchers who choose to deposit their specimens in the herbarium. Because the herbarium is a significant U.S. repository of plant specimens, he also regularly processes loan requests for plant specimens from researchers across North America. Robert also works with colleagues at the USDA Poisonous Plant Research Lab at Utah State University in Logan, Utah, to characterize the chemical composition of plants that negatively impact the livestock industry. Because of the number and quality of specimens in the Welsh Herbarium, Robert is able to provide small tissue samples from a wide range of plant species which are then analyzed to obtain chemical profiles. Results are then used to inform range management approaches that ultimately benefit both livestock and wildlife.

- **Skip Skidmore (Vertebrates)** – In order to provide proper care and use of the museum’s vertebrate collections (fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals), Wesley “Skip” Skidmore performs routine biannual fumigation and alcohol fluid maintenance for all vertebrate specimens. He also edits computerized data records for accuracy, records loans, and documents new acquisitions. New specimens are curated using standardized procedures, such as fixation in preservation fluids or mounting as dry study skins. Over the past couple of years, Skip has been particularly involved in databasing and digitizing more than 10,000 bird specimens into the Specify collections software. Skip also mentors 5 to 10 students each year as they work with the curators in caring for and studying the vertebrate collections. He also manages the museum’s new Wet Collections Storage Facility.
Dr. Shawn Clark (Arthropods) – With responsibility for approximately three million specimens, Dr. Shawn Clark (Arthropod Collections Manager) curates the largest of the museum’s collections. Thereby, he facilitates the research of numerous BYU researchers, as well as scientists from other institutions. His activities in 2015 included preparing loans consisting of more than 13,000 specimens. As time permits, he also conducts research on the agriculturally important beetle family Chrysomelidae. He also actively mentors many students including more than 20 student employees during 2015, plus several volunteers. An important subset of the arthropod collection is the insect frozen tissue collection, consisting of nearly one million specimens that are archived at extremely low temperatures. Remarkably, BYU has one of the largest and most important such collections in the world. These specimens are ideal for DNA sequencing and other molecular analyses.

2015 Lytle Ranch Preserve Summary Report

Introduction - Over the last several years the Lytle Ranch Preserve has experienced some remarkable changes, including construction of a new 3200 SF teaching and research facility and development of several long-term field research projects by a group of young faculty members in the College of Life Sciences at BYU. In 2015, the Lytle Preserve experienced a major increase in research and teaching activity, with more than 250 BYU students involved on site in either learning and/or mentored research experiences. In the 2015 annual report, Merrill Webb gives us an interesting look at the impressive birding opportunities at the Lytle Preserve and we provide updates for a couple of interesting research projects currently being conducted at the preserve.

Birding at the Lytle Preserve
(Merrill Webb) – There are about 20 species of Mojave Desert birds that make their home in the riparian community along Beaver Dam Wash in the southwestern corner of the state of Utah. No birder who keeps a state bird list should die before visiting the Lytle Ranch Preserve! The preserve is located along Beaver Dam Wash, and is owned and operated by Brigham Young University and managed by the M.L. Bean Life Science Museum.
On the drive to the preserve watch for Cactus Wrens and Black-throated Sparrows as well as the occasional Loggerhead Shrike which hunts from the tops of Joshua Trees. Birds that can be seen at the preserve include the common Black Hawk, White-winged Dove, Costa's Hummingbird, Phainopepla, Summer Tanager, Black-tailed Gnatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Verdin, Lucy's Warbler, and Bell's Vireo. The month of April is the best time to visit because daytime temperatures are still tolerable and the birds are vocalizing. Other species to look for are the Greater Roadrunner, Gambel's Quail, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Crissal Thrasher, Blue Grosbeak, and Hooded Oriole. When the figs ripen as many as three species of Orioles can be observed in a single fig tree. Persimmons ripen by late fall, and Red-naped Sapsuckers move in to feed on the fruit, which then attracts the large golden-winged tarantula hawks, wasps that feed on the juice made accessible by the woodpeckers. At night listen for the calls of the Western Screech Owl, Great Horned Owl, and Common Poorwill. A visit during the fall migration can also result in an opportunity to see several eastern vagrants. The first checklist of birds for the Lytle Ranch Preserve, compiled in 1996 by Merrill Webb, listed 185 species. The updated 2004 list contained 206 species, and the updated 2013 list totaled 244. These additional species represent contributions by many observers over several visits to the preserve. The Lytle Ranch Preserve really is a jewel in the desert!

**Research update at the Lytle Preserve**  
(***Sam St. Clair, Faculty Member in Plant and Wildlife Sciences*) –  
Working with 3 graduate students and 6 undergraduates during two trips to the Lytle Preserve, Sam St. Clair established experimental plots at the preserve in fall 2015 to examine how fire, precipitation timing, and competition between plant species influence plant invasion patterns and wildfires in the Mojave Desert. Results from a pilot study in 2014 suggested that the establishment, growth, and seed production of two aggressive plant invaders, cheat grass and red brome, increased significantly following early to mid-fall precipitation during the previous year. Other data obtained during this study showed that the positive effects of fall rain on invasive plant growth are magnified in areas that have recently been burned. The experiments set up in late 2015 will test whether several other aggressive invasive plant species, not included in the pilot study, will respond in a similar fashion to fire and fall precipitation patterns.

(***Skip Skidmore, Assistant Curator of Vertebrates*) –  
Skip recently completed a master’s degree in wildlife, with Randy Larsen (Curator of Birds) as his graduate advisor. Skip's research focused on questions related to the influence of water availability and wildfire on Gambel's Quail (*Callipepla gambelii*) at the Lytle Preserve. During this research project, Skip mentored 9 undergraduate students, providing them with valuable field experiences as well as opportunities to practice
basic wildlife management techniques. Results from Skip’s study showed that quail expanded their home ranges when water resources were removed. However, the data also suggest that the quail did not exploit other water sources and that their mortality rates did not change. Quail populations were also shown to use areas burned by wildfires at levels similar to unburned habitats. The quail also preferred habitats with gentle sloping topography and protective vegetative cover as found in the wide wash bottoms typical of the Beaver Dam slope.

The Western North American Naturalist –
In 2015, the museum’s natural history journal (WNAN) published two monographs about the conservation genetics of desert minnows and the plant communities of Zion National Park. Review was also completed for an exceptional work by Alan R. Myrup (Faculty, Timpview HS) and Richard W. Baumann (MLBM Curator Emeritus) detailing the dragonflies and damselflies of Utah – to be published in 2016. We continued implementing improved software at the journal. For example, PeerTrack helps our associate editors quickly find reviewers for manuscripts, and the streamlining of editorial tasks using this software has reduced our time to publication by 22 days in 2015. Another new software, Edifix, helps us correct errors in the “literature cited” section of manuscripts. This ensures that other researchers receive credit when our authors cite their works in WNAN publications. Interns are critical to journal operations. In 2015, Morgan Baker (English major) attended the Council of Science Editors conference in Pittsburgh, PA. That experience gave her a broad perspective on science publishing that she now brings to her daily work at WNAN. Another intern, Megan Young (Animation pre-major), created a taxonomy to categorize articles by subject so we can get a historical and current view of the journal’s overall content. We thank these students for their hard work and dedication.

Acknowledgements – Once again Randy has done an outstanding job designing the 2015 Annual Report, while Janene and the WNAN editorial team have done a great job of making sure the narrative is just right. The museum team, from education to research to exhibits to administration, have made this year not only incredibly successful but truly memorable. Our student employees have also been remarkable, and most importantly they have helped stretch the time and energy of our small full-time staff so that great things consistently happen. A simple thank you never seems adequate when we stack up all the hours from so many people. But one thing is perfectly clear: the people who work at the museum have a great sense of dedication and affection for the Monte L. Bean Life Science Museum.
Research Publications

Janene Auger – Managing Editor – Western North American Naturalist

Ian Baldwin – Research Associate – Lytle Ranch Preserve


Richard Baumann – Emeritus Curator of Insects

Shawn Clark – Collection Manager – Arthropods


Michael Hastriter – Research Associate – Insects


Richard Heckmann – Museum Research Associate


Jerry Johnson – Assistant Curator of Fishes


Robert Johnson – Collection Manager – Vascular Plants


Randy Larsen – Assistant Curator of Birds


Riley Nelson – Assistant Curator of Insects

Dennis Shiozawa – Curator of Fishes


Larry St. Clair – Curator of Nonvascular Cryptogams


Samuel St. Clair – Faculty Researcher – Lytle Ranch Preserve


Jack Sites – Curator of Reptiles and Amphibians


Michael Whiting – Curator of Arthropods


